

## TAUNTON

Taunton, the settlement on the Tone, sits on both sides of the river sheltered between the Quantock hills to the north-east and the Blackdown hills to the south. The urban area now extends over almost the entire parish of Wilton and large parts of Trull, Bishops Hull, Norton Fitzwarren, Staplegrove, Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton parishes. The original town probably lay on the higher ground south of the river near the later castle, where a minster and cemeteries were probably located in the 7th century. That area was possibly transferred to Bishops Hull in the 11th century to keep the castle outside the borough.<sup>1</sup>

Before the late 19th century Taunton was divided between two parishes: St Mary Magdalene (1,300 a.), often simply known as St Mary, and St James (1,455 a.). St Mary's parish comprised the borough and the southern part of the suburb of East Reach or Extra Portam with the farming hamlets of Holway, Haydon and Shoreditch and a few individual farmsteads. Detached fragments of Stoke St Mary lay in the parish and Taunton plots lay between Wilton and Pitminster. St James' parish comprised the built-up area between the borough and the river, the priory and north side of East Reach, North Town, the hamlets of Rowbarton, Hope Corner, Pyrland, Obridge and Lyngford and farmsteads at Priorswood, Wellsprings and Greenway. A detached area called Lower Portman farm (64 a.) c. 2 miles north-west of Hope Corner is now in Kingston St Mary. The main area measured 3 ¼ miles (5 km) north to south and 2 ¼ miles (3.5 km) east to west at its widest in the south but the urban area in 2024 was 4 ¾ miles (7.5 km) east to west.<sup>2</sup>

Parish boundaries are irregular presumably because originally the Taunton Deane estate was one large ecclesiastical entity served from its minster. St Mary's boundary ran along the former town ditch from north to east gates, a stretch which was apparently adjusted

---

<sup>1</sup> Bishops Hull, intro. This article was completed in 2024.

<sup>2</sup> SHC, tithe awards, St James, St Mary.

in the 19th century to avoid passing through buildings, turned east down the centre of East Reach and the Black brook, which divides it from West Monkton, to the London road. The boundary with Ruishton runs south along a stream, the Beadding Brook in the 9th century but since unnamed.<sup>3</sup> The southern boundary with Stoke St Mary and Pitminster was irregular but parts of the western boundary with Wilton followed the Shoreditch road and further north the Sherford stream as far as Shuttern. The remaining western boundary with Wilton and Bishops Hull was extremely irregular, in the case of the former probably respecting the boundary of Taunton priory's estate, but finally following the castle moat to the river.<sup>4</sup> In the 1680s perambulations were still carried out and boys were whipped at Fair Oak south of Haydon and given beer at Shoreditch presumably to help them remember the bounds.<sup>5</sup> St James' parish boundary ran from north to east gates, down the centre of East Reach and north along the road to Lambrook and the river. A plot west of that road opposite St Margaret's chapel lay in West Monkton until the later 19th century. It was apparently disputed in 1249 between the bishop of Winchester and the abbot of Glastonbury, lord of West Monkton.<sup>6</sup> The boundary with West Monkton continued along the river east of Lambrook to a stream from the north, which it followed to the lane from Cheddon Fitzpaine to Pyrland. The northern boundary with Cheddon and Kingston St Mary is irregular but most of the western boundary with Staplegrove followed Mill Leaze stream to the river Tone, which forms most of the southern boundary with Bishops Hull to the town bridge.<sup>7</sup> In 1885—6 St Mary's was extended to include part of West Monkton, Wilton east of the Sherford stream, mainly Cutliff

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. tithe award, St Mary; OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.12 (1890 edn, surv. 1887); G. B. Grundy 'The Saxon Charters of Somerset', *PSAS*, LXXIII, supp. 9.

<sup>4</sup> SHC, tithe award, St Mary.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/TN/15 (1685—6).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. tithe award, St James; T.J. Hunt, 'Three Medieval Documents for Glastonbury relating to the Hospital of St Margaret near Taunton', *PSAS* CV (1961), 52—5.

<sup>7</sup> SHC, tithe award, St James.

and Pool farms, and three detached plots of Corfe parish. St James' lost land to Staplegrove.<sup>8</sup> In 1933 Haydon was transferred to Stoke St Mary parish.<sup>9</sup>

By the 20th century Taunton had spread far beyond its ancient boundaries and there were several borough boundary extensions.<sup>10</sup> In 1964 the council rejected a suggestion that the identities of Trull, Staplehay, Staplegrove and Bishops Hull should be protected as 'they no longer have a separate identity'.<sup>11</sup> In 2024 the urban area was bounded east and south by the M5 motorway and extended west to Rumwell, Bishops Hull.

## LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Taunton sits on Mercia mudstone cut through from west to east by the alluvial Tone valley with ancient landslips. There are pockets of river deposits and alluvium from tributary streams many of which have changed course but the alluvial area of the Sherford and Stockwell streams remains largely open land used for recreation.<sup>12</sup>

Taunton rises fairly gently either side of the river although the slopes are broken by the valleys of several streams especially to the south. St Mary's parish reaches *c.* 40 m. (125 ft) at Shoreditch in the south and St James' parish *c.* 48 m. (156 ft) at Pyrland in the north-west. The town centre lies between *c.* 15 and 18m. (50 and 60 ft) with a gentle rise south to Mary and Upper High Streets and Shuttern reaching *c.* 22 m. (73 ft) at Shire Hall. Mary Street rises sharply from west to east presumably due to The Mount. The land falls away eastward down East Reach and south-east in Holway Road into and out of the valley of the Black brook.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> TNA, RG 12/1876; SHC, D/R/ta/34/12/1; D/P/tau.m/13/9/7.

<sup>9</sup> SHC, D/PC/sto.s.ma/1/1/2, p. 82; 2/2; Youngs, *Local Admin. Units*, I, 439.

<sup>10</sup> Below, local govt.

<sup>11</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/3/37/2, p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> Geol. Surv. Map, 1:50000 sheet 295 solid and drift (1984 edn); sheet 311 drift (1976 edn).

<sup>13</sup> OS Map 1:10560, Som. LXX. NE, SW (1889 edn).

## WATERCOURSES

The river Tone broadly follows its historic course west of the town bridge but to the east several navigation and flooding improvements have altered its route especially between Firepool and Obridge. Until the early 19th century there was a large island with house and timberyard attached to bridge. It may have influenced the siting of the bridge or was possibly the west bank before the cutting of the medieval millstream. A large cutwater west of the bridge separated the river and millstream until they merged further east.<sup>14</sup> A small detached section called Swan island remained until the 1880s.<sup>15</sup> From the 17th to 19th century land within the river, said in 1862 to have a habit of splitting and forming islands called ‘hassocks’, was let with the fishery.<sup>16</sup> The river by the former livestock market was altered c. 1956 and that by Priory Avenue in 1964 confining the river to one channel, which east of Firepool is straight, deep and wide to prevent flooding.<sup>17</sup> South-east of the bridge a large horse pond, possibly replacing replaced the pool recorded in 1555, was accessed from the street causing flooding. The area was raised and paved by the later 19th century but the horse pond was not completely removed until the mid 20th.<sup>18</sup>

Taunton streams were diverted for milling and watering and until the later 19th century were used as sewers.<sup>19</sup> The Wilton or Gaol stream originated near Wilton church and in the 19th century was augmented by an overflow from the Sherford stream but still dried out in summer. Water was diverted, mainly to Wilton House, possibly from the 18th century, but the Gaol stream continued through Paul’s, later Crescent, field to the river.<sup>20</sup> The Sherford stream, Scitere in the 9th century, Shirefordlake in the 14th century and Sherford

<sup>14</sup> SHC, A/DAS/2 (12277); Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3).

<sup>15</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/9/1, 2/3/3, pp. 73—4; T/PH/rea/3/134.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/100 (1661); DD/DP/58/8; PAM 226: T. Hugo, ‘A ramble by the Tone’, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/25/4, p. 284; 24/133/7653; 24/1/157/9601.

<sup>18</sup> E. Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton* (Taunton, 1883), 13—14; SHC, T/PH/hps/1, f. 1; tithe map, St James; D/B/ta/24/1/7/185-6, p. 211; D/DC/tau.d/24/4/4 (1909).

<sup>19</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/1 (1886); below, local. govt. sewerage.

<sup>20</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/3/13, pp. 5, 11; D/DC/tau.d/25/9 (1235).

Water in 1630, rises in Otterford parish.<sup>21</sup> It forms the parish boundary with Wilton, its present straight course was cut possibly in 1332 and powered Pool Wall mill, in existence by 1208. It fed the fishponds, the castle moat via the town rhyne, and supply rhynes down High Street. William, bishop of Winchester, presumably William Giffard (1100—29), gave the Sherford stream to the priory.<sup>22</sup> A weir above the straight stretch to Pool Wall allowed water to flow to the priory site along what is now called the Stockwell stream. From *c.* 1800 a sluice and a cut allowed excess water to be diverted into the Gaol stream.<sup>23</sup> Below Pool Wall Mills the stream was covered *c.* 1894 and partly filled in during the late 1930s.<sup>24</sup> In the 1980s it was dammed to create a small lake in Vivary Park whose outflow runs over weirs into Wilton's Gaol stream.

The Stockwell stream, from Stockwell in Pitminster, diverts from the present Black brook near Fullands and was formerly known as the Black brook or the Priory, Winter's or Town stream. Alluvial deposits indicate it may originally have flowed south behind King's College into the present Black brook. In 1332 the priory was given the right to take water replacing the watercourse from the Sherford stream.<sup>25</sup> It runs through a man-made course by Mount Walk and Gwynne Lane to Silver and Tancred Streets, where it was largely culverted at an early date, a lead pipe was recorded in 1387, via the priory site to the river.<sup>26</sup> In 1615 Robert Hill was allowed roadside waste in Silver Street to scour the 'ancient channel' under the highway. He diverted water to South Street, across East Reach and over priory fields, still partly open in 1839. During the 19th century Stockwell stream supplied water to the town and

---

<sup>21</sup> G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, 12; B.L. Harl. MS 408, f. 213; Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/10.

<sup>22</sup> *Cal Chart* 1327—41, p. 318; below, econ. hist., mills.

<sup>23</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/1 (1886); DD/DP/37/2; DD/SAS/C795/TN/107.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1894); DD/SFR/w/32.

<sup>25</sup> Geol. Surv. Map, 1:50000 sheet 311 drift (1976 edn); SHC, DD/SP/459.

<sup>26</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 44394.

Tancred Street tannery.<sup>27</sup> Under an Act of 1840 the market house trustees were to embank and repair it.<sup>28</sup>

The present Black brook, which flows from Fosgrove in Pitminster north-east across Holway was possibly the 16th-century and later Pisces, Pisford or Pissel water. Near the bottom of East Reach it turns east to form the southern boundary of West Monkton, a stretch called Wyndicks lake in the 17th century. It was joined by the Broughton brook, also known as the Hayd brook through Haydon, and the Ruishton boundary stream before entering the Tone until the motorway diverted water into a new channel.<sup>29</sup>

Canal construction severed streams north of the river and may have created the T-shaped pool on Flook House land, drained by the later 19th century. Greenway stream was probably the 17th-century Blackpool or Blackwater, which flowed north of Flook House and through Grasscroft to the river at Firepool. In the 1690s the tenants of Firepool mill were accused of impounding so much water that fording the Blackpool was impeded.<sup>30</sup> Cockpit farmstead by Blackpool was also known as Endford.<sup>31</sup> North Town House east of the present Station Road was Blackpool House until 1843 or later.<sup>32</sup> The watercourse was largely culverted west of the road by 1888 and the rest with its branch rhynes was piped in the 1920s to construct the livestock market.<sup>33</sup>

Mill Leaze stream, dividing St James' parish from Staplegrove and still partly open, ran under the Staplegrove Road at Fairwater Bridge recorded in 1669.<sup>34</sup> The large ponds along the stream near French Weir in 1839 may have resulted from the custom, until the early

---

<sup>27</sup> SHC, DD/MT/3/1; DD/SP/18/10; tithe maps, St James, St Mary.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. DD/AY/31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/5 (5 July 23 Eliz. 1581); 10 (1618); 18/27; 73, ff. 52, 59, 325/134; 23/20; DD/X/HPS/4 (1642); DD/WY/8/5/3 (2748); OS Map 1:25,000, sheet 128 (2014 edn). Adjoining fields were String, an old stream name, and Windex in 1839: SHC, tithe award, St Mary.

<sup>30</sup> SHC, DD/DP/8/4; DD/MT/15/1 (1693); DD/SP/18/18—19, 129; tithe award, St James.

<sup>31</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864); SHC, tithe award, St James; D/B/ta/24/1/7/215.

<sup>32</sup> SHC, T/PH/rea/2/8; DD/CH/30.

<sup>33</sup> OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.6—7 (1888 edn).

<sup>34</sup> SHC, DD/SP/18/35; 334, f. 20d; DD/MT/15/1 (1692); tithe map, St James; Geol. Surv. Map, 1:50000 sheet 295 solid and drift (1984 edn).

17th century or later, of diverting water from above the weir to allow it to be repaired. Water formerly crossed Staplegrove Road, presumably under Frieze Hill Bridge recorded c. 1605, to feed Flook Well, and was cleaned by owners of adjoining property in the 1680s.<sup>35</sup> After the well was destroyed and until culverted the entire stream ran south of Staplegrove Road to feed a ditch west of Bridge Street and Pollard's cut from the river.<sup>36</sup> Kingston stream now runs south towards Wellsprings, through a diversion to serve Lyngford known as the Cundit in the 17th century and divides with branches, possibly made for watering meadows and mostly culverted, discharging into the river at Obridge, Priorswood and on the West Monkton boundary.<sup>37</sup> Obridge tenants paid 6s. 8d. for the water and objected to a diversion in 1726.<sup>38</sup>

## FLOODS and DRAINAGE

Flooding was aggravated by rival millers refusing to open their hatches or adding boards to weirs.<sup>39</sup> The manor courts ordered regular scouring of watercourses and allowed tenants to construct flood defences in 1613. The cut from the Sherford stream of c. 1800 failed to protect the fields behind Wilton House from flooding. North Town had railed, raised paths and steps and the roads were causeways in the 17th century.<sup>40</sup> Bridge Street had ditches on both sides, with eight illegal privies in the 1680s and still crossed by bridges in the early 18th century.<sup>41</sup> The turnpike trust regularly replaced the open ditches in North Town as they caused flooding and in 1827 drained Bridge Street and raised the roadway.<sup>42</sup> The 1876—7 floods surrounded the town but despite fears of sickness the Board of Health was reluctant to

---

<sup>35</sup> SHC, DD/SP/3; 96 (1645); 334, f. 38d; DD/MT/15/1 (1686); tithe map, St James.

<sup>36</sup> Goldsworthy, *Recollections*, 4—5; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.11.5 (1888 edn); Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 16.

<sup>37</sup> SHC, DD/SP/20, 23/3, 10, 38; A/DIF/114/21; tithe award, St James; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.5 (1888 edn).

<sup>38</sup> SHC, DD/SP/23/68.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/4; 18/1, 23; 22/10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/37/2; DD/SP/18/4, 18, 20, 35, 37, 46, 99, 107, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/86; 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. D/T/ta/8, p. 301; 9, p. 322; 10 (1836); DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (610), C2402/53 [extract from *Taunton Courier*, 8 May 1827].

spend money on alleviation works outside its area.<sup>43</sup> After serious flooding in the winter of 1882—3 the remnant of the old island by the bridge was removed, the river was dredged, the banks altered and floodgates were installed at Pollard's cut and penstocks on the old lockgates below the town.<sup>44</sup> The work was unfinished when a short, severe flood in March 1889 left North Town under water and swamped lime stores at Pollard's sawmills in Wood Street causing a major fire. Following a competition a flood prevention scheme was drawn up including clearing obstructions, removing control of mill weirs and hatches from millers, widening and deepening the river, building new bridges, closing Pollard's cut and using the disused Grand Western Canal to store flood water.<sup>45</sup> However, in 1894 floodwater inundated cellars in North Street, Vivary Park and the railway, stranding many trains and their passengers.<sup>46</sup> The great flood of October 1960 broke French Weir and damaged c. 300 houses and 100 shops costing £100,000 and a national appeal fund was established.<sup>47</sup> Another in January 1961 led to more flood prevention including further alteration to the banks, which averted major flooding, but floods in 1968, 2000 and the early 2010s affected areas of the town.<sup>48</sup>

## COMMUNICATIONS

### River

The Tone was an important means of transport for bulky goods until the mid 19th century.<sup>49</sup> In 1638 John Malet (c.1593—1644) undertook to improve navigation between Bridgwater and Taunton but there was little improvement west of Coal Harbour, Creech St Michael.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. D/WB/t/10/1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/8/1 (Nov. 1882—Nov. 1883).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. T/PH/rea/1, no. 110; A/DIF/44; A/CPK/2/2/34; D/RA/9/17; DD/X/WEA/1.

<sup>46</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 14 Nov. 1894; BNA accessed 18 Feb. 2020.

<sup>47</sup> SHC. A/DIF/114/19; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3; DD/X/WEA/1; A/EPF/204; TNA, HLG 50/2536.

<sup>48</sup> *Midweek Gazette*, 24 Nov. 1993, 11; SHC, A/DIF/114/23; A/BAV/2; DD/X/WEA/1.

<sup>49</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1381—5, pp. 511—12; BL, Add. MS 30289 (45); *Cal. Inq. Misc.* VII, p. 259; below, con. hist., trade.

<sup>50</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons* 1604—29, s.v. Malet, John, of Enmore, Som.: accessed 20 Apr. 2019.

Malet's daughter and heir Elizabeth married John Wilmot, earl of Rochester and by letters patent of 1684 the navigation interest was vested in her three daughters who sold it in 1698 to John Friend of Taunton for £330.<sup>51</sup> That allowed a group of Taunton merchants and clothiers to obtain an Act in 1699 for improving the navigation, making new channels and towpaths, selling shares, charging tolls and acting as Conservators of the Tone for life. A 1708 Act enabled the installation of locks at Obridge by engineer John Wilson.<sup>52</sup> River channels at Firepool and Obridge bypassed weirs while the northern Back Water took any overflow over Firepool weir. By 1710 additional wharves by the town bridge had public access from St James' Street by Chaplin's Lane, last recorded in 1825. A wharf across the river had warehouses until the 1990s.<sup>53</sup> River passengers included prisoners from Ilchester for the assizes in 1817.<sup>54</sup> The canal company repaired and reinforced riverbanks and towpaths by piling in 1828.<sup>55</sup> By 1830 water shortages impeded navigation and loading limits were imposed.<sup>56</sup> The river was also used for pleasure boating and the Metford family had a boathouse at Firepool.<sup>57</sup>

In the 1830s the Conservators dammed the mouth of the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, which drew water from the river. After litigation they had to sell their river rights to the canal company, which had to keep the river navigable and allow the Conservators to inspect the canal annually, which they did until 1939.<sup>58</sup> In 1882 when the sewage works was operational the council dredged the river keeping it navigable until c. 1900 and commercial navigation rights were not extinguished until 1969.<sup>59</sup> Firepool and Obridge cuts were filled by tipping in the 1970s for a major road and roundabout, Firepool Lock was restored in the

---

<sup>51</sup> SHC, DD/SF/13/2/49, 51; DD/TC/10, 24.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Q/RUa/1; A/DIG/1; DD/MK/91, 1—5; DD/MY/41; M. Siraut, *Somerset Wills*, 49, 116, 143.

<sup>53</sup> SHC, Q/RUi/1; DD/SP/18/86; DD/TC/15; DD/SP/416; DD/AY/2, 6; DD/CH/86/6; DD/HR/4; DD/DR/3; tithe award, St James.

<sup>54</sup> *Taunton Courier* 10 April 1817: BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2023.

<sup>55</sup> OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.12 (1914 edn); SHC, DD/MK/89.

<sup>56</sup> M. Siraut, 'Coal Harbour', *A Maritime History of Som. I* (Taunton, 2010), 113.

<sup>57</sup> SHC, DD/TC/15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, p. 27; DD/MK/50, 65, 67 and cat., DD/TC/36.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/8/1 (1882—3; C. A. Buchanan, *The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal* (S.I.A.S. 1984), 5.

1980s and pontoons were placed along the river but by the 2020s canoeists were the only regular users because of obstacles including low bridge clearance.<sup>60</sup>

### Canals

Nothing came of the 1790s scheme to link the Exe and Bristol Channel via Taunton but in 1810 construction of the planned Grand Western Canal from Topsham, Devon to Taunton began with permission to take over part of the Tone above the town bridge.<sup>61</sup> The Bridgwater and Taunton canal, completed in 1827, joined the river at Firepool and used the town wharves. Under an 1832 Act when the Grand Western Canal reached Frieze Hill it must connect with the river. The Parliamentary Cut was controlled by locks at French Weir and was crossed by a stone bridge.<sup>62</sup> A towpath ran along its northern bank and that of the river as far as the town bridge.<sup>63</sup> In 1838, after completing a flight of eight locks from Frieze Hill to a bridge under Staplegrove Road, an aqueduct over the Kingston road and a lift, it was united with the Bridgwater and Taunton canal at Firepool where there were wharves, a south bank towpath, a lock and lock house.<sup>64</sup>

The Grand Western never got further west than Tiverton, Devon and in 1867 the Bristol and Exeter Railway bought it converting the aqueduct to a railway bridge. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal remained open accessed from the river through Firepool Lock. Although commercial traffic ceased in 1907 a lockkeeper and a boatman were still employed in 1911 and the canal became a leisure amenity.<sup>65</sup> A pair of stone limekilns at Firepool, apparently unused, survives beneath an 1860s pumping station and an 1877 railway water tank both disused since the 1960s. In 1889 steam-powered engines were installed and

---

<sup>60</sup> SHC, DD/X/SML/6, p. 34; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/6(22 Aug. 1978).

<sup>61</sup> C. Hadfield, *The Canals of South-West England* (Newton Abbot, 1967), 95; SHC, DD/TC/19; Q/Rup/4—5, 8; 36 Geo III c. xlvi.

<sup>62</sup> Buchanan, *Bridgwater and Taunton Canal*, 5; SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/9.

<sup>63</sup> SHC, DD/X/WBB/27 [map 1840].

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Q/RDd/37; Q/Rup/126; DD/SP/257 (Oct. 1839); DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

<sup>65</sup> Buchanan, *Bridgwater and Taunton Canal*, 6—7; TNA, RAIL 813/7—8; RG 14/14236.

the engine driver and his family occupied a house on the west side until 1914 or later. Its reservoir was originally a canal basin with wharf and coal was delivered by barge.<sup>66</sup>

### Roads

Roads meeting at the town bridge possibly represent Anglo-Saxon routes. The line of Canon Street and Silver Street, even though the middle section, Tancred Street, is out of alignment, have suggested to some archaeologists that the river crossing was originally near the present Priory Bridge.<sup>67</sup> Early 16th-century merchants left money for road repair and causeways, especially route through East Reach to Bathpool and to Shoreditch from the east gate.<sup>68</sup>

By the later 18th century the pattern of major routes was broadly identical to that of the early 20th century and may have existed for centuries. Roads converged north of the town bridge from West Monkton, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Kingston St Mary and Staplegrove through Bridge Street.<sup>69</sup> From the east the London road merged with the Bridgwater road to run up East Reach joined by roads from Holway, Stoke St Mary and Orchard Portman. From the south-west the road from Pitminster through Wilton joined the road from the west via Wellington and Bishops Hull. There were few cross routes in the south but north of the river they linked hamlets and farmsteads and an east—west route from Staplegrove to Obridge ran through Rowbarton and Kilkenny recorded in 1652.<sup>70</sup> The Rowbarton blacksmith was accused of enclosing part of that road in 1750 and was forced to lay it open again. Between 1822 and 1839 it was closed and a new road made along the footpath to Kilkenny, which

---

<sup>66</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; DD/DP/69/8; tithe award, St James; TNA, RG 14/14234; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 10; SWHT, Som. HER 44376; Buchanan, *Bridgwater and Taunton Canal*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Taunton, Canon Street*, 1994; TCS 94 excavation report.

<sup>68</sup> TNA, PROB 11/13/242; F. W. Weaver, *Somerset Wills 1501—30*, 26—7, 124—5, 137—8, 178, 187.

<sup>69</sup> SHC, DD/SP/18/25, 37; 297 (1651); TNA, PROB 11/403/17.

<sup>70</sup> B. Harley and R.W. Dunning, *Somerset Maps*, map 1782; SHC, DD/DP/C1358/38; DD/SP/18/23.

eased access to the Cheddon road but made east—west journeys difficult until St Andrews Road was made in 1886.<sup>71</sup>

Chip formerly Cheap Lane, an old market way from Staplegrove and Norton Fitzwarren *c.* 1600, was repaired by adjoining owners in the 1650s. It emerges at the southern end of Staplegrove Road but in the 17th century could only be accessed by a stile at the northern end.<sup>72</sup> Before the canal was built Firepool Road, renamed Canal Road, was possibly a foot or bridle path linking lower Kingston, now Station, Road with the road to West Monkton, now Priorswood Road, and Obridge.<sup>73</sup> The canal company turned in to a carriageway from the canal to Kingston Road, claiming it was private *c.* 1832, and the railway company metalled it before 1875.<sup>74</sup> The road from Obridge to Lyngford crosses Priorswood Road and may be the Lyngford Crossway recorded in 1701.<sup>75</sup> A route south through Obridge to the mills crossed the river to Priory Lane, now Priory Avenue and Mill or String Lane, now Leycroft Road but its bridges were destroyed in the 18th century. A small ferry was in use in the early 19th century.<sup>76</sup>

Taunton Turnpike Trust, established in 1752, became responsible for the main routes including town streets and built tollhouses and gates, usually provided with weighing machines by the 1780s. The Wellington road was provided with a large tollhouse, rebuilt in 1815—16, and gate at Shuttern and the turnpike continued along Upper High Street, down High, Fore and East streets into East Reach.<sup>77</sup> There were stopgates at the New Castle, Shuttern for traffic from Wilton Street, abandoned *c.* 1790, the East Reach end of Holway Lane until *c.* 1799 and at Folly or Holway Gate, New Cross Lane, a tollhouse.<sup>78</sup> One of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1822; SHC, DD/SP/18/127; DD/DP/C1358/38; DD/SP/255 (1805); tithe award, St James.

<sup>72</sup> Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/10; SHC, DD/SP/18/17, 19—20, 27; 334, f.22.

<sup>73</sup> Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1782; SHC, SANHS Tite Colln, canal map 1794.

<sup>74</sup> SHC, DD/MK/58; *Taunton Courier* 20 Jan. 1875: BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2023.

<sup>75</sup> SHC, DD/SP/358.

<sup>76</sup> Below, this section, bridges.

<sup>77</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/8, p. 289; J.B. Bentley and B.J. Murless, *Som. Roads*, I, 53—4.

<sup>78</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/5, p. 4; 6 (1781, 1783—4); 7 (1795, 1799)

busiest, the Spital tollhouse in West Monkton was replaced after 1815 by a substantial house with a collecting room south of East Reach, later a garage and since demolished.<sup>79</sup> Beyond Taunton the road deteriorated as by 1819 parishes used pauper labour rather than skilled workmen.<sup>80</sup> The turnpike from Bishops Lydeard entered the town through a gate at Frieze Hill. The awkward curve by the Staplegrove boundary was made c. 1784 to move the road further from Fairwater House.<sup>81</sup> The Frieze Hill gate and part of the road were abandoned in 1832 to accommodate the canal bridge. The house was demolished c. 1840 and a new one built across the road.<sup>82</sup> The North Town gate near Black Horse Lane was moved further north before 1842 and later removed entirely.<sup>83</sup>

The road from Milverton to Bridgwater and Burrowbridge through Greenway Lane, the highway to Rowbarton in 1652, and Priorswood Road, was never turnpiked within Taunton.<sup>84</sup> The Kingston road was turnpiked in 1752 with a gate at Rowbarton but the footpath north of the gate was the responsibility of the occupier of Pyrland in 1769. There were gates south of the Greenway and Cheddon turnings and a large gatehouse west of Kingston Road, later Rowbarton House. The roadway was considerably lowered c. 1842 to pass under the railway making it vulnerable to flooding and a gradual raising since has made it impassable for tall vehicles. Cheddon Road was turnpiked from the Kingston Road gate probably to start a route to Bridgwater, never completed.<sup>85</sup> Its turnpike house was pulled down before 1880. Further south the Cockpit toll bar or gate near the entrance to Canal Road in 1830 subjected goods going into town from the canal to toll, leading to a dispute with the

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. D/T/ta/8 (1806, 1815); DD/DP/181/2; tithe award, West Monkton.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (610).

<sup>81</sup> Bentley and Murless, *Som. Roads* I, 55; SHC, A/DIF/114/21; D/T/ta/5, plan; 6 (1784).

<sup>82</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/9, p. 507, 520, 532, 534; 11, p. 51.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. DD/MK/58; DD/TAC/6/1/4; D/T/ta/11, p. 51; *Taunton Courier* 29 March 1837: BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2021; Goldsworthy, *Recollections*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> SHC, DD/SP/18/23; Bentley and Murless, *Som. Roads*. I, 56.

<sup>85</sup> SHC, DD/SP/21/1; D/B/ta/24/1/3/100; 24/1/8/231; DD/DP/C1358/38; DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (610); Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1822; Bentley and Murless, *Som. Roads*, I, 57—8.

canal company.<sup>86</sup> The iron tollhouse was replaced c. 1843 by a permanent building, later used as a shop and demolished to create Priory Bridge Road.<sup>87</sup>

The Taunton to Chard road left Eastgate at Silver Street. The trust may have widened the junction creating the curved corner with East Reach.<sup>88</sup> The Folly Gate tollhouse at the corner of New Cross Lane, now Holway Avenue, with a sidebar across the lane, was replaced in 1812 by a new tollhouse in Silver Street but after deciding to dispose of it Folly Gate re-opened in 1844.<sup>89</sup> Following demands to site it town a replacement was built before 1862 near Pisces Bridge at the Stoke road junction.<sup>90</sup> The road to Stoke St Mary from Pisces Bridge forms the parish boundary so is probably ancient. Further east a road to Haydon was impassable by 1810 and disappeared after 1839.<sup>91</sup> In 1816 a Shoreditch tollbar was authorised where the roads divided to Chard and to Honiton, Devon.<sup>92</sup> The Honiton road was not turnpiked until c. 1840 by the Honiton and Ilminster Trust. The alternative route via Trull and Blagdon Hill was turnpiked by the Taunton Trust as far as the Devon boundary.<sup>93</sup>

The route from South Road through New Cross Lane, recorded in 1567—8 and now Holway Avenue, to Holway and Lower Henlade in Ruishton was not turnpiked, although sometimes so-called.<sup>94</sup> Holway Lane, now South Street, had a stopgate, abandoned c. 1799. The turnpike trust sold the road south of the built-up area and it was thrown into an adjoining field. The modern name South Street may date from this period when it was separated from the rest of Holway Lane, now Road. The through road was restored in the 1840s although for

---

<sup>86</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/9, p. 440; DD/MK/58; *Taunton Courier*, 27 Jan. 1926, (memories of postman): BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2021.

<sup>87</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/11p. 143; Som. HER 32433.

<sup>88</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (610).

<sup>89</sup> Bentley and Murless, *Som. Roads*, I.57; Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1822; SHC, D/T/ta/5, p. 8; 8, pp. 164, 195; 11, pp. 51, 171—4; tithe award, St Mary; *Taunton Courier*, 28 Aug. 1817, 15 May 1844: BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2023.

<sup>90</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/11, p. 535; 12, pp. 2, 10, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/3/12; tithe award, St Mary.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. D/T/ta/8, p. 320; Q/SR/361/1/10; DD/CH/103/5.

<sup>93</sup> Bentley and Murless, *Som. Roads*, I, 32, 57.

<sup>94</sup> SHC, DD/SP/2 (Holway 100, 17 Dec. 1567, 7 Eliz. 1568); DD/DP/3/12.

a while fenced off at the south-east end.<sup>95</sup> Holway Road was widened before 1964 by building a parallel roadway for eastbound traffic.<sup>96</sup> Side roads at Holway and Haydon greens were made after inclosure.<sup>97</sup>

The increase in wheeled traffic and repair costs led to the widening, closure, abandonment or re-alignment of roads.<sup>98</sup> The 1817 Turnpike Act allowed the trust to demolish the White Lion and all property north of Eastgate, inns and other buildings near the present Cheapside and in Upper High Street and the front sluice at Pool Wall mills provided they improved the water supply.<sup>99</sup> The 1840 Taunton Roads Act divided the town into five turnpike districts based on the ultimate destination of roads and removed town tollgates. The trustees resisted and only after public meetings and threatened litigation in 1844 were the gates moved out of town, the Cockpit gate not until 1851 when the house was sold.<sup>100</sup> The large Shuttern tollhouse, which had a weighbridge and stoneyard and housed the turnpike offices and records, was sold for an eye hospital and a new yard made on the corner of Burton Place beside the gaol.<sup>101</sup> In 1875 all town roads were disturnpiked, a few tollhouses were sold but most stood on the highway and were demolished.<sup>102</sup> In 1908 the borough applied to have the main east-west route through Rowbarton designated a main road and from the 1920s the section now Priorswood Road was widened and realigned.<sup>103</sup>

Road access from the west was progressively eased in 1847—9 by extending Park Street to Wellington Road and in 1894 by creating Corporation Street from Park Street to

---

<sup>95</sup> Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1782, 1822; OS Map 1:63360, sheet XXI (1809 edn); SHC, D/B/ta/5, p. 4, 7 (1779); DD/CH/118/3; D/T/ta/11, p. 175; tithe award, St Mary; DD/CHA/22; DD/SAS/C212/13/2.

<sup>96</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/17.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/342 [1].

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. D/T/ta/8, pp. 55, 91—3, 118, 233; D/P/tau.m/9/1/1—2; Q/SR/378/3/46.

<sup>99</sup> 57 Geo. III c. lxvii, schedule.

<sup>100</sup> SHC, Q/RUo/35; Q/SR/536/147, 538/147; D/T/ta/11, pp. 177, 179, 193, 296, 393, 425, 440; DD/DP/74/1; DD/SAS/C795/TN/149; DD/X/HUN/6/29 (*Som. Co. Herald*, 25 Jan. 1851).

<sup>101</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/9, p. 4; 11, pp. 526, 535, 618; DD/SAS/C909a/5; Wilton, tithe map.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. D/T/ta/23; Q/AB/2, 83.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. D/R/ta/23/4.

Fore Street.<sup>104</sup> Mary Street, Upper High Street and Shuttern were widened c. 1957—9 destroying the Victorian police station and many Georgian houses.<sup>105</sup> By 1923 a through route from Mary Street through Billetfield and Mansfield Road displaced the central section of Mount Lane, the western section having been closed in 1875.<sup>106</sup> In 1983 Mount Lane was closed completely to create Hurdle Way from the west end of Mansfield Road to the top of Silver Street.<sup>107</sup> Paul and Mount streets also suffered the loss of many early houses for road widening.<sup>108</sup> A 1929 planned ring road with new river crossings was partially carried out from the late 20th century.<sup>109</sup>

In 1884 the borough required all new streets to be numbered with even numbers on one side and odd on the other, some existing streets kept their continuous numbering. Back courts were numbered, although names were still being used in 1910.<sup>110</sup> Thomas Penny paid for 12 lime trees to be planted on the Parade in 1880 following road widening.<sup>111</sup> From 1892 and in 1914 silver birches, limes and other trees were planted along many streets but were vandalised. However, pollarded trees were a feature of many streets until the mid 20th century and survive in Corporation Street and Holway Avenue. From the later 20th century trees were re-planted around the Parade and in pedestrianized streets.<sup>112</sup>

In the 1900s car use increased, a speed limit of 10 m.p.h. was recommended in 1904 and in 1911 motorists were directed to keep left but continued to drive down the centre of the road due to parked vehicles.<sup>113</sup> Taunton's first roundabout was installed in 1933 at the

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C2550/12; D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1893—4); OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.12 (1890 edn, surv. 1887, 1904).

<sup>105</sup> SHC, DD/FIV/1/85; DD/X/BYE/19.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Q/SR/873/8—16; D/B/ta/3/3/1 (1875), 4/3/4 (1923).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. C/GP/HF/596.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. PAM 829: *Taunton and District Planning Scheme* (1929); A/DIF/106/7; 116 (216, 11917, 12115, 12162); DD/FIV/1/45; D/B/ta/24/1/118/4988; D/DC/tau.d/24/2/12; 25/13 (1958); D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), boxes 3, 6; DD/TBL/74 (plan).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. DD/X/BYE/19.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/3/1 (1884); 31/1/7, pp.457, 533; TNA, IR 58/2643—4.

<sup>111</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/1/7, pp. 457, 533.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/3/1 (1892); 4/3/2 (1894—1900); 4/3/3 (1914—15).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/9/6 (May 1904), 4/6/2 (1911); A/DIF/101/3/63.

junction of Corporation and Fore Streets and from the 1950s traffic lights were placed at the main junctions.<sup>114</sup> One-way streets were first introduced in 1875 as a temporary measure for the Bath and West show but from 1948 one-way systems were installing starting with the Parade. Belisha beacons were installed on pedestrian crossings.<sup>115</sup> In 1966 there was concern at accidents involving pedestrians and in the 1970s High, Paul and Billet Streets were largely closed to traffic followed by the west end of St James' Street and south Fore Street in the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> In 2020 East Street was pedestrianized temporarily during the coronavirus pandemic.

By 1934 the weight of traffic led to unheeded calls for a by-pass and by the 1960s main streets were gridlocked in summer.<sup>117</sup> In 1972 the first section of the M5 motorway was constructed as a by-pass. Toneway dual carriageway linked it to the town centre through Priory Bridge Road and after 1983 south through Victoria Parkway, now Critchard Way, to East Reach and north to Priorswood Road by the Obridge Viaduct.<sup>118</sup> Several businesses and 54 houses in East Reach, Priory Avenue, Lambrook Road and Wheatley Crescent were destroyed to build Victoria Parkway.<sup>119</sup> In Rowbarton widening and one-way schemes at the junctions of Cheddon, Kingston and St Andrew's roads in the 1970s resulted in the demolition of a chapel, shops and houses.<sup>120</sup> In 1978 more than 2,000 vehicles an hour passed through North Street at busy periods.<sup>121</sup> The 2011 Tangier Way from Wood Street to Tangier diverted some traffic from the centre. Redundant railway freight tracks south of the main line

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. A/DVY/1; D/B/ta/4/3/6, pp. 33, 70.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/3/1 (1875), 4/3/7 (Aug.—Dec.1959, Oct. 1963); A/EOB/1 (Apr. 1948).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. PAM 248, 668; DD/X/SML/7, p. 3; C/GP/HF/196—7; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/13 (22 Aug.), 23 (28 Feb.).

<sup>117</sup> *Somerset Regional Report: a survey plan* (1934), map 6; SHC, D/DC/tau.d, unlisted box 19 (1938—9), 91; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3.

<sup>118</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/226/14366; A/DQO/404/8/68; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/8 (5 Feb.); C/S/4/42.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/36/1, passim; A/DQO/404/8/35, 45.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/24/2/48.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 57.

were converted into Trenchard Way, planned in 1991 but only opened in 2018, to link Staplegrove Road with the railway station and Priory Way.<sup>122</sup>

Parking spaces were allocated along streets in 1925 and cars were parked on the Parade in 1929.<sup>123</sup> Slum clearance enabled the council to provide car parks especially west of High Street and by 1955 street parking was restricted.<sup>124</sup> In the 1960s the council estimated 6,000 spaces were needed preferably in multi-storey car parks although street parking was still available.<sup>125</sup> Two multi-storey car parks accessed from Paul Street were built from the 1970s but drivers preferred open level parking. By 1978 there were still only *c.* 3,500 spaces in public car parks.<sup>126</sup> Underground car parking was rejected in the 1990s but another multi-storey car park was completed in the 2020s at the railway station. Park and ride car parks in Staplegrove and at the motorway junction were designed to relieve pressure in the town centre.<sup>127</sup>

### Bridges

There may have been ferries across the river, such as that from Obridge to Lambrook in the early 19th century but the main crossing was the town bridge over the Tone also called Tone or North Town Bridge and of early date.<sup>128</sup> In 1362 the bailiffs were granted bridge tolls for seven years for repairs to Pol, presumably Paul's, Bishops Hull, and Tone bridges.<sup>129</sup> In 1493 merchant Henry Bishop left £4 to remake the town bridge 'breast high' and others gave generously to bridge repair.<sup>130</sup> The stone bridge was dangerous in 1628 when it was declared a county bridge. Although Thomas Gerard in 1633 described it as a fair bridge, it was still

<sup>122</sup> VCH Office, Taunton, copy SCC, 5049578/HW/CA/0054; SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/219 (5 Nov.).

<sup>123</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/6/3 (1925); below, *econ. hist.*, market.

<sup>124</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/6, pp. 8, 10, 17—18, 58; A/DIF/114/21.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/4/3/7 (May 1960, Dec. 1962, July 1964).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/24/1/162/9801; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/9 (20 Jan.); D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 63; DD/FIV/2/16.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* D/DC/tau.d/2/2/26 (7 Oct.).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* A/DIF/44; A/DAS/1/390/43—4; SHC, PAM 226, 3, 5; M.H. Jones, *Harry Frier, Somerset's Unknown Painter*, 48.

<sup>129</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1361—4, 203; Bishops Hull, forthcoming

<sup>130</sup> TNA, PROB 11/10/31, 11/39/450; Weaver, *Som. Wills 1501—30*, 37.

awaiting repairs in 1635.<sup>131</sup> After trying to fine St James' parishioners for non-repair in 1655 the county again accepted responsibility.<sup>132</sup> In 1685 and 1694 the county tried unsuccessfully to pass responsibility to the borough.<sup>133</sup> Before 1750 four pillars were built on the river bed apparently to support cottages on the south-east of the bridge. A house on the south-west was on pillars or arches in the water in the early 20th century.<sup>134</sup>

In 1768 as part of the perambulation of St James' parish a man was paid to go under the arch nearest the site of the north gate.<sup>135</sup> In 1791 the bridge had six arches but at only 10 ft wide, less on the approaches, it was too narrow for 19th-century traffic.<sup>136</sup> In 1810 both approaches were widened necessitating demolition of property.<sup>137</sup> There were in effect two bridges linked by a solid section against an island. In 1811 the northern section was demolished under an Act of 1809 and a wide single-arched bridge designed by Josiah Easton was built at a cost of over £9,350. The southern section retained its three pointed arches. A dam was built during construction with a temporary roadway. Although intended to be a toll bridge, tolls do not seem to have been imposed.<sup>138</sup>

In 1834 the island was destroyed and the whole bridge was replaced by one bridge, designed by Richard Carver and Thomas Maddocks of the canal company, which paid for the central of three wide round-topped arches with ironwork by the Saverys. The broad roadway had wide pavements and lamps, later considered an obstruction, and a pump removed in 1871. By 1850 the town repaired it and other county bridges, the county refunding only half

---

<sup>131</sup> E. H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39*, pp. 75, 83, 106 132; E. H. Bates, *Gerard's Survey of Somerset, 1633*, 55; SHC, Q/SR/61/16, 197—8, 73/119.

<sup>132</sup> E.H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1646—60*, pp. 44—5, 156, 210, 247, 266; T.G. Barnes, *Som. Assize Orders 1629—40*, p. 34—5.

<sup>133</sup> SHC, Q/SO/7, ff. 330, 455, 461; Q/SO/8, ff. 297, 376.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/77/5; DD/SP/268 (1807), 257 (1839); DD/FIV/4/58.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. D/P/tau.m/4/3/6 (1768).

<sup>136</sup> J. Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, rev. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), 123; SHC, Q/AB/73.

<sup>137</sup> SHC, DD/CH/77/51; DD/X/WHI (plan, 1809).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2 (12277, 12281, 13264); Q/AB/73; Q/SR/387; DD/ES/7.

the cost.<sup>139</sup> It was feared a flat-bed bridge would impede navigation and possibly increase flooding but James Henry Smith, the borough surveyor, designed a steel bridge completed in 1895 after lowering the gradient and altering the alignment.<sup>140</sup> It was rebuilt in 1932 incorporating the 1890s balustrades each with two pairs of double lamps by the Phoenix foundry of Glasgow and was restored in 2024.<sup>141</sup>

Priory Bridge to the north was planned in 1919 to provide work for the unemployed and relieve pressure on the town bridge.<sup>142</sup> It was completed in 1922 and altered for flood prevention in 1955—6. Other bridges north-east of the town bridge comprise a footbridge opposite the Brewhouse theatre built c. 1993, the market bridge opened in 1965, a footbridge at Firepool Weir, now closed, Trenchard Way bridge built in the 2010s, Obridge bridge, now for pedestrians and cyclists only, and the Obridge viaduct opened in 1983.<sup>143</sup> West of the town bridge a footbridge, built in the 1980s into Goodland Gardens was demolished in 2024. Tangier Way bridge was completed in 2011.<sup>144</sup> Designed by Moxon architects the tied-arch bridge carries a new road link between the northern and western approaches to the town centre.<sup>145</sup>

The French Weir footbridge carried the market path to Paul's Bridge and linked the Wellington and Staplegrove roads by a lane now French Weir Avenue. The town mill tenants had to repair it as the weir was built for their benefit. In 1672 the miller was required to

---

<sup>139</sup> SHC, T/PH/rea/3/134, 136; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; Q/AB/17, pp. 82a, 83; Q/SR/580/100, 726/17; D/B/ta/2/1/5, pp. 303, 413.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. A/CPK/2/2/34; A/CEM/1; A/DIF/106/1; D/B/ta/3/12/1 (1894); DD/CWC/ta/unlisted G/2468.

<sup>141</sup> VCH Office, Taunton, R. Lillford, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Somerset Architects and Surveyors' (2022), 496.

<sup>142</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/3 (1919).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d (M/1289). box 2; DD/X/PTB/4; ; C/S/4/42; T. Mayberry, *The Vale of Taunton Past* (Chichester, 1998), 110.

<sup>144</sup> Bishops Hull, forthcoming.

<sup>145</sup> *Building Design*, 9 Dec. 2011.

double the rails with boards to prevent children falling in the river.<sup>146</sup> A concrete bridge on brick piers was built when the weir was reconstructed in 1914 and rebuilt in 1967.<sup>147</sup>

Blackbrook bridge, in existence by 1419, may have replaced the pre-Conquest Blacanford.<sup>148</sup> A county bridge in Ruishton parish, it carried the London road until replaced by a wide 20th-century concrete structure.<sup>149</sup> Upstream the Black brook was crossed by String bridge, Holway bridge, probably the 15th-century Stonybridge, and Pisces bridge. Recorded as Pyffordes in 1493, Pisces bridge probably replaced a ford and was a stone county bridge in the route to Chard, rebuilt *c.* 1752 and *c.* 1861 as two-arched brick bridge.<sup>150</sup> The Stoke road crossed Broughton Brook probably by Wydmedebrigge bridge recorded in 1520 and 1607, Wideman in 1615—16. Bridges over the Hayd brook were repaired by Holway titling from the 15th century as they carried a church and market path. The Stockwell stream bridge near Bishop Fox's school was designed in the 1980s by Richard Kindersley in brick with incised lettering.<sup>151</sup>

Flode bridge recorded from 1393, also called Flute, Fleet, Flook or Shuttern bridge was repaired with three trees in 1619 indicating a timber superstructure.<sup>152</sup> A county bridge carrying the west road, it was often in poor repair as the county tried to make the borough responsible for it.<sup>153</sup> In 1809 a house was demolished and land taken to improve it as it was dangerous and open on both sides.<sup>154</sup> The county rebuilt it *c.* 1843 but the Gaol stream was culverted in the 20th century.<sup>155</sup> The timber Grassgrove or Grasscroft Bridge, presumably

---

<sup>146</sup> SHC, DD/SP/64, 18/38; DD/MT/15/1 (1692—3).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/95/33, 101/4/71; A/DKW/1/33.

<sup>148</sup> F. W. Weaver, *Somerset Wills 1383—1500*, 300; SHC, DD/SP/325/1; SWHT, Som. HER 18147; A. G. C. Turner, 'Some Old English passages relating to the episcopal manor of Taunton', *PSAS* XCVIII, 118—22.

<sup>149</sup> SHC, DD/WY/7/10/8; SWHT, Som. HER 18147.

<sup>150</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1441—2; DD/SP/18/16, 86; 27; 325/21, 34; D/T/ta/5, p. 2; Q/AB/2; 17, p. 80; Q/SR/644/210—11, 726/17; TNA, PROB 11/10/31.

<sup>151</sup> SHC, DD/MT/11/2; DD/SP/10; 18/86; 74, f. 220; 325/34.

<sup>152</sup> TNA, E 210/1258; SHC, Q/SR/19/14; Q/SO/8, f. 269, 484v; DD/SP/18/7.

<sup>153</sup> SHC, Q/SR/80/4—5; Q/SO/9, f. 405v; T.G. Barnes, *Som. Assize Orders 1629—40*, p. 34; M.C.B. Dawes, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1666—76*, 21, 34.

<sup>154</sup> SHC, Q/AB/73; A/AKV3; DD/X/OLD/1.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Q/AC/4; Q/AB/85; T/PH/rea/3/147.

over the Blackpool, was recorded until 1700 or later.<sup>156</sup> The Cundit Stream bridge took the Cheddon road over the Kingston stream in the 17th century.<sup>157</sup>

The Bridgwater and Taunton canal was well provided with brick bridges, which survive. The station and freight bridges, improved c. 1930, and Obridge railway bridge carried the line over roads. There was no road bridge over the railway until the Obridge viaduct opened in 1983, followed by Trenchard Way in the 2010s.<sup>158</sup> A wooden footbridge over the railway from Chip Lane was rebuilt in 1880 as an iron bridge, popularly called Forty Steps, replaced in the 2010s. The level foot crossing from Plais Street was closed in 1888.<sup>159</sup>

### Trams

By 1881 street tramways were planned along East and High streets, converging at a new river bridge and dividing north of Bridge Street with lines to the station and over the river to Tangier. The Taunton and West Somerset Electric Railways and Tramways Company, later Taunton Electric Traction Company, was formed and obtained the Taunton Light Railways Order in 1897 authorising a tramway from Kingston Road to East Reach near Alfred Street and down High Street to Vivary Park gates. A 1900 order reduced the route, omitting High Street and going no further north than the station, to carry passengers, animals, goods, minerals and parcels.<sup>160</sup> Despite plans for other routes only the main line was built, extended in 1909 to Salisbury Street, Rowbarton.<sup>161</sup>

The 3½-ft single track with passing loops opened in 1901 using open-topped, double-decker trams carrying up to 4,000 passengers a day. The granite setts were noisy but the council refused to allow the rails to be set in tarmac. The company employed c. 20 people

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/14, 18/35, 85; 20.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/20 (nd, 1665).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/27/1, pp. 11—13; C/S/4/42.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; D/B/ta/2/2/2 (1888), 3/12/1 (1888).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Q/SR/726/6, 12; Q/Rup/395, 496; Q/Ruo/14; A/DIF/101/3/61; 114/8.

<sup>161</sup> J. B. Perkin, *Exeter and Taunton Tramways* (Midhurst, 1994), [74].

including 12 uniformed drivers and conductors. Drivers were restricted to 10 m.p.h. but often did 25 m.p.h. down East Reach to the depot, which had staff facilities and workshops. After problems with the six double-decker cars on the steep curves they were sold to Leamington and Warwick Tramways c. 1905 and single-deck cars, which only carried 24 passengers, were introduced.<sup>162</sup> In 1903 there were 773,318 passenger journeys and the tramway paid 5 per cent dividends. Although large numbers used the trams having only one line limited long-term viability but there was no capital for a larger network. In 1920 trams ran every seven to ten minutes on weekdays from 6.40 a.m. until 10.30 p.m. but there were fewer than 300,000 passengers. In 1921 the company made a loss but the borough refused to reduce electricity costs or buy the tramway. The council cut the power supply, closed the service, bought the plant, dismantled the infrastructure, re-using poles for street lighting in Greenway Crescent, sold the trams and introduced diesel buses to the detriment of the town environment. The East Reach depot retained its tracks and inspection pits until demolition c. 1983.<sup>163</sup>

### Railway

In 1835 Isambard Kingdom Brunel drew up plans for a railway through Taunton.<sup>164</sup> In 1841 46 railway employees were resident and a contractor was buried in St Mary's churchyard in 1843.<sup>165</sup> The Bristol and Exeter Railway owned the station and line but they were operated by the Great Western Railway Company until nationalisation in 1948.<sup>166</sup> The station, with up and down platforms on the same side, opened on 1 July 1842 when the first train arrived at 11.15 pulled by *Castor*. By January 1845 there were two-hourly services to and from Paddington except on Sundays when there were only four each way including the mail. The

---

<sup>162</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/3/9/6 (1900), 24/1/29/19; A/DIF/72; 101/3/61; 101/14/276; 114/8.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. DD/DC/tau.d/24/4/4; A/DIF/44, 95/32, 114/8; Perkin, *Tramways* [74]; for buses see econ. hist.

<sup>164</sup> SHC, Q/Rup/126.

<sup>165</sup> TNA, HO 107/972; headstone in churchyard.

<sup>166</sup> SHC, Q/Rup/178; Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/405/207, 493.

journey took over six hours stopping at all stations. Additional morning services ran between Bath, Bristol and Exeter.<sup>167</sup>

In 1868 the station was rebuilt with up and down sides, an overall roof and a footbridge. In 1896, after the 1892 conversion from broad gauge, the main platforms, all with facilities for travellers, were lengthened and bay platforms added.<sup>168</sup> The railway provided easier and cheaper transport for passengers, bulk and heavy items. mail and parcels. It gave work to those employed at the station, on the track and the trains, railway police, local carriers, cab and bus proprietors, tradesmen, manufacturers and suppliers and led to the establishment of new hotels, refreshment rooms and travel agencies.<sup>169</sup> By 1901 366 residents in St James' parish were railway employees. In 1911 at least 587 Taunton people were employed by the Great Western Railway rising to 1,800 in 1943 when nearly 3,700 people in Taunton worked in the transport and distributive trades. The change from steam, closure of the engine shed and workshops and loss of freight traffic reduced employment.<sup>170</sup>

In 1883 Taunton was major rail junction and land was bought east and west of the station for shunting freight, goods offices. longer platforms for larger trains, branch lines to Barnstaple, Minehead, Chard and Yeovil and signal boxes, closed between 1972 and 1987 when electric signalling was completed. In 1896 a goods relieving line was laid on the bed of the Grand Western Canal and its aqueduct across Station Road. The adjoining 1860 engine shed was rebuilt as a standard-gauge roundhouse of 26 bays facing a turntable.<sup>171</sup> A large goods depot and freight marshalling yard east of the station extending to Obridge was begun in 1895 on a high platform built with earth from Flax Bourton near Bristol and completed by

---

<sup>167</sup> SHC, Q/Sz/4.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. Q/Rup/273d; PAM 3148; DDHWN/11; DD/TBL/42/9/3 (*Taunton Mail* 29 Jan. 1896), p. 4. The plans dated 1894 are in Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/409.

<sup>169</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/19/765.

<sup>170</sup> TNA, RG 13/2278, RG 14/14234—45; SHC, PAM 579; T. Sharp, *A Plan for Taunton* (1948), 16.

<sup>171</sup> SHC, Q/Rup/410; C/GP/D/51; PAM 3148.

1905.<sup>172</sup> The engineering depot was extended as far as Priorswood Road in 1912 followed by a concrete works.<sup>173</sup>

The 1868 passenger station comprised a two-storeyed south building with a large canopy covering the vehicle waiting area facing the station hotel both of local brick, the latter probably built in two phases.<sup>174</sup> The similar but single-storeyed north side was rebuilt in the 1930s when there were four through platforms, as the line was quadrupled, and a subway. A travel centre, now disused, was added to the north side in the 1970s. The original goods station was replaced in the 1890s by a larger building to the south-east. Petrol sidings were installed in the 1930s and accommodation for staff was purchased.<sup>175</sup>

In 1964 there were 145 passenger trains a day in winter and 181 in summer. An average of 6,000 travellers a day used the station in winter and 14,000 in summer.<sup>176</sup> Accidents were few and usually resulted in minor injuries but a sleeper train fire east of the station killed 12 people in 1978.<sup>177</sup> Branch lines and stations between Taunton and Castle Cary were closed during the 1960s, agricultural produce moved by road, 18 daily freight trains were withdrawn and the marshalling yard or freight concentration depot was mechanised and extended for container traffic, general freight, coal and livestock.<sup>178</sup> In 1964 the engine shed was converted for diesels but was demolished a few years later, The turntable bed and the high retaining wall by the road survive.<sup>179</sup> The west goods yard by Chip Lane was cleared c. 1966 for commercial development.<sup>180</sup> In 1992 when the 150th anniversary of the station was celebrated the fastest journey to London was 1¾ hours partly due to the closure and bypassing of intermediate stations. The Great Western Hotel became offices in

---

<sup>172</sup> Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/250/296; SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/3 (*Taunton Mail* 29 Jan. 1896), p. 4.

<sup>173</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/3 (1912); below, econ. hist., industry.

<sup>174</sup> SHC, A/BLG/5.

<sup>175</sup> Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/210, box 258/4; SHC, A/ABN/2/18.

<sup>176</sup> SHC, A/BVX/5, p. 23.

<sup>177</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 1 May 1907: BNA accessed 20 Sep. 2021; TNA, RAIL 1053/65/5; 1053/96/9; SHC, DD/ASC/11/4/12.

<sup>178</sup> SHC, D/PC/sea/2/2/2 (1962).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. PAM 3148.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/37/2 (March 1966).

1952 but was restored by the YMCA in 2018. The Railway Tap was sold in 1954 to Bristol breweries.<sup>181</sup> Most of the railway estate, 89 a. in 1964, was cleared for housing in the late 20th century and the track depot relocated to Fairwater in Staplegrove. The goods depot closed in 1986—8, the freight line was later used for a road, the goods station was demolished c. 2015 and the marshalling yard was cleared for residential development.<sup>182</sup>

Following privatisation in 1995 the station and tracks belonged to Network Rail and services were operated by Great Western and Cross Country train companies in 2024. In 2019 there were over 1,585,000 passenger movements into and out of the station but that fell by three quarters during the covid pandemic.<sup>183</sup> In 2020—21 a new booking hall and multi-storey car park were built on the south side.<sup>184</sup>

## Air

M. Salmet brought the *Daily Mail* aeroplane to Taunton in 1912 and flying events were popular in the 1930s including zeppelin visits.<sup>185</sup> In 1930 an aerodrome was planned. Sites at Haydon and Holway were proposed and used for events. Haydon continued to be recorded as a private civil airfield with a 69-ft grass runway in the 1990s but was little used.<sup>186</sup>

## POPULATION

There were 64 burgesses in 1086, presumably tax paying households, making it the third largest town in the county but the number of other tenants is unknown.<sup>187</sup> The 13th century saw both a sharp increase in the farm of the borough and in the hundred penny, paid by male

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/118/4992; Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/250/296.

<sup>182</sup> SHC, A/BVX/5, p. 23; PAM 3148.

<sup>183</sup> [www.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage](http://www.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage): accessed 25 Nov. 2021.

<sup>184</sup> [www.orr.gov.uk/sites/annex-a-obridge-yard-taunton](http://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/annex-a-obridge-yard-taunton): accessed 25 July 2023.

<sup>185</sup> SHC, DD/FIV/5/423, 427; A/CHD/3.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. C/CSEN/2; *Somerset County Gazette*, 10 June 1933; SW Regional Planning Conference, *The Airport Study* (1994) [Haydon Farm].

<sup>187</sup> *Domesday*, 234.

villeins aged over 12 except those in the bishop's service and possibly also by burgesses, which more than doubled between 1209 and 1286.<sup>188</sup> In 1377, after plague in 1348 and 1361, there were 539 taxpayers over 14 in the borough and 452 in the rural and suburban areas.<sup>189</sup>

Later tax returns offer little reliable population information but in 1548 the number of communicants was estimated at 3,000.<sup>190</sup> There were twice as many baptisms as burials in St Mary's in the later 16th century and in the early 17th century baptisms in both parishes numbered c. 160—175 a year, which would indicate a population of up to 5,000, and substantially exceeded burials.<sup>191</sup> However, only 380 adult male heads of household were recorded in the borough in 1635 and an estimate of 776 households in 1703 included parts of Wilton and Bishop Hull.<sup>192</sup> The stated population of 12,000 in 1683 is unlikely although c. 3,000 Taunton men over 18 reportedly signed the allegiance rolls.<sup>193</sup> A 1689 poll tax giving Taunton a population of 20,000 was possibly an error for the hundred. A survey of St Mary's parish in 1714 for voting purposes found fewer than 1,000 households but gives no indication of the number in St James'.<sup>194</sup> Marriages were particularly high in the early 18th century, over 130 a year in the 1720s, probably many were rural couples and young immigrant workers. Baptisms indicated a possible population of 6,000 or more peaking at c. 7,000 in the 1720s before falling sharply to c. 4,000 by the 1740s. Burials exceeded recorded baptisms by the mid 18th century but more baptisms took place outside the parish churches and only one chapel has surviving registers covering most of the 18th century. However, all registers show a marked mid-century decline in baptisms, marriages and burials with baptisms remaining

---

<sup>188</sup> T.J. Hunt, *The Medieval Customs of Taunton Manor*, xxxix—xl.

<sup>189</sup> C. C. Fenwick, *The Poll taxes of 1372, 1377 and 1381*, 423—4; TNA, E 179/169/31. Young children and paupers may have accounted for a further 500—1000.

<sup>190</sup> E. Green, *Somerset Chantries*, 25.

<sup>191</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/1; D/P/tau.ma/2/1.

<sup>192</sup> H. Byard Sheppard, *Courts Leet and the Court Leet of the Borough of Taunton* (Taunton, 1909), 42—3. His argument that there was no decline in population in the 18th century is contradicted by all the sources.

<sup>193</sup> *Cal. SP Dom.* 1683, pp. 9, 251.

<sup>194</sup> Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 387, 597—8.

low until the 1770s.<sup>195</sup> Removal orders for over 400 individuals and families survive from the mid 18th century and many more would have gone voluntarily.<sup>196</sup> The number of voters fell from 727 in 1722 to 456 in 1774.<sup>197</sup>

In 1790 Joshua Toulmin's survey of the built-up area within the town's turnpike gates including parts of Wilton and Bishops Hull found 5,572 people in 1,118 houses, excluding almshouses. Children accounted for a third of the population.<sup>198</sup> Richard Locke estimated the population of the two parishes as 5,800 in 1,160 houses close to the 1801 census figure of 5,794.<sup>199</sup> By 1831 there were 11,139 residents and there were *c.* 700 births a year by 1853. The population rose from 14,368 in 1871 to 19,535 in 1901. The birth rate fluctuated but was usually over 20 per 1,000 but the death rate fell dramatically from 21.4 in 1873 to 13.3 in 1889 due to improved public health. Most growth was in St James's parish from 1,614 people in 1801 to 11,269 in 1901, half that growth after the 1870s. By contrast the population of St Mary's doubled to 1851 then remained largely static.<sup>200</sup>

By 1921 the ancient parishes had a population of 15,778 but the borough had 24,199.<sup>201</sup> The Second World War caused a surge of immigration including thousands of evacuees, civil servants and military personnel, which increased the borough population to *c.* 32,650 in 1947.<sup>202</sup> In 1972 the borough's population was 38,300 in 12,404 houses but most expansion lay outside the borough.<sup>203</sup> By 1981 there was a substantial fall in the population of the town centre and Rowbarton, partly reversed by early 21st-century residential development

---

<sup>195</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/1; D/P/tau.ma/2/1; D/N/turc/3/3/2. No registers survive for Mary Street chapel before 1747.

<sup>196</sup> Below, soc. hist.

<sup>197</sup> T.H.B. Oldfield, *History of the Boroughs of Great Britain* (1792), 456.

<sup>198</sup> Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 598—9.

<sup>199</sup> R. Locke, *Supplement to Collinson's Hist. Som.*, ed. F. M. Ward. (Taunton, 1939), 144; *Census* 1801.

<sup>200</sup> *Census* 1831—1901; SHC, A/BIV/3; A/EPF/250/4/1.

<sup>201</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1931), *Census*, 1931.

<sup>202</sup> SHC, C/PL/2/25, p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* A/EPF/250/4/1—6; D/B/ta/4/22/1 (1952, 1972).

in former commercial areas. By 2011 c. 39,000 lived in the two ancient parishes out of c. 63,500 in the town with a slight increase by 2021.<sup>204</sup>

## SETTLEMENT

### Archaeology

There is surprisingly little archaeological evidence from Taunton, despite the presence of the archaeological society from the 19th century and professional archaeologists from the 1970s. The town centre is characterised by shallow stratigraphy with none of the deep build-up of deposits seen in many medieval towns.<sup>205</sup>

The earliest evidence comes from chance finds during construction, mostly poorly recorded in the 19th century. This includes reindeer bones, possibly associated with stone tools, from Rowbarton, woolly rhinoceros bones from Wilton Gaol and giant elk bones from Tangier.<sup>206</sup> A few palaeolithic handaxes are known, most significantly from Cotlake Hill, Pitminster to the south of the town and Norton Fitzwarren to the north where there are surviving late glacial gravel terraces.<sup>207</sup>

For the Mesolithic, there is almost no evidence, just occasional finds of flint and chert tools. In the Neolithic, as well as some scatters of stone tools and debris, there is at Nerrols Farm, Cheddon Fitzpaine, a ditch, which may have formed part of a ceremonial monument such as a cursus was associated with several small pits.<sup>208</sup> Early Bronze Age settlement was also recorded at Nerrols Farm where a ditched enclosure contained a circular house.<sup>209</sup> There

---

<sup>204</sup> *Census*, 1981, 2011, ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity [2021].

<sup>205</sup> The archaeology section was contributed by Chris Webster, SWHT and material on both settlement and built character by Julian Orbach.

<sup>206</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 37499, 44412, 44414.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 43525, 44292.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 44792.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 26899.

was also a possible round barrow.<sup>210</sup> This area appears to have been favoured for settlement throughout the Bronze Age and into the Roman period.

Somerset is noted for its Middle Bronze Age metalwork hoards and two have been found in the Taunton area, one at the Workhouse in 1877 and one at Sherford, Wilton in 1879.<sup>211</sup> There is little activity recorded in the later Bronze Age but in the Iron Age the first signs of settlement were recorded at 1 High Street during redevelopment in 1974.<sup>212</sup> This comprised a few pits and a curving ditch that may have indicated a round house.

The best evidence for Roman settlement lies to the south at Holway. Casual finds of coins cover a large area and excavations at Ten Acres during the construction of the M5 recorded rectangular wooden buildings.<sup>213</sup> More recent work at Hilly Fields was less conclusive but suggested that settlement was close, probably under existing housing.<sup>214</sup> Excavations at Cambria Farm, Ruishton on the opposite side of the M5 discovered Roman material, including building material that hinted at the presence of a villa in the vicinity, although further work has failed to locate this.<sup>215</sup> In the town centre, occasional sherds, residual in medieval deposits, suggest that the area was in agricultural use. Evidence has accumulated recently supporting the idea that the traditional date of 410 for the end of the Roman period may have meant very little to those who lived through it in the west of Britain. The settlement at Holway appears to have been most active in the 4th century with a large coin hoard buried sometime after 395.<sup>216</sup> A 6th-century coin was found on Cheddon Road in the north of the town.<sup>217</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 42710.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. 17833, 44416.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. 41410.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 43671.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 44781.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 28221.

<sup>216</sup> *PSAS* XXVII (1881), 51—9; CXXIII (1979), 89; CXXIV (1980), 30—1; CXXXII (1988), 97; CXLII (1999), 202; SWHT, Som. HER 44244, 44781.

<sup>217</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 43987.

The next archaeologically visible activity is the establishment of a burial ground on a slight ridge of high ground by the river Tone; a site which later became the castle.<sup>218</sup>

Bayesian modelling of radiocarbon dates suggests *c.* 650 for the start of burial over an extensive area.<sup>219</sup> This presumably accompanied a minster church, part of a reorganisation of the church as Wessex took control of the area. No evidence of the minster has been found but this area of Bishops Hull parish is likely to have formed the focus of urban development, later swept away by the development of the castle.

Although the castle is first mentioned in 1138, it is likely to have been founded soon after the Norman conquest, deliberately replacing the minster as the local power-base. Urban development took place around a triangular marketplace, possibly outside a now-lost gate to the castle, along the roads to the east and north. Cess-pits containing Saxo-Norman pottery covered by a cobbled surface were recorded when the marketplace was excavated in 1996.<sup>220</sup> Development along East Steet was recorded at the former County Hotel site (44665) where occupation was recorded from the late 12th century.<sup>221</sup> The town boundaries must have been fixed by 1158 when the priory was laid out respecting them.

Despite written reports of severe destruction of the town in the Civil War, no evidence for this has been discovered during archaeological excavations, nor is there much pattern in the survival of pre-war buildings.<sup>222</sup> There is evidence for the construction of defensive ditches around the east side of the town from the east gate, through the priory site to the river and of fighting around the west gate of the castle.<sup>223</sup>

### Early town

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. 44407.

<sup>219</sup> C. Webster, *Taunton Castle* (2016), 151—2, 240—2.

<sup>220</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 44678.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. 44665.

<sup>222</sup> R Taylor, 'Taunton Town Houses, 1500—1700', *Post Medieval Archaeology* 8 (1974), 63—79.

<sup>223</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 15361, 44688. 44436, 28388; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 271—5.

A proto-urban settlement may have been in existence by the 7th century taking advantage of a river crossing and consequent meeting of roads. South of the river, a possible line of defence, the land is slightly higher. Taunton, the settlement on the Tone, was named by 722. Traditionally the British were said to have been driven out of the area in 682 by Centwine and there was possibly already a minster. King Ine reputedly built Taunton, probably some kind of fortress, after his victory over the British in 710 only for it to be destroyed by Queen Aethelburh in 722 after it was taken by rebels.<sup>224</sup> Discoveries on the castle site and the Saxon stonework in Wilton church suggest that the original town was west of the present town centre in Bishops Hull parish. By 970 when the bishops of Winchester gained complete control there was an established market and trade.<sup>225</sup> Near Mount Lane evidence was found of a possible 10th-century bank, implying the town had grown substantially.<sup>226</sup> Despite its 64 burgesses, market and mint the 1086 borough has not yet been located.<sup>227</sup> Possibly, as in other towns, the settlement was moved to create the castle ensuring that it and its large curtilage lay outside the borough. The river crossing and the confluence of several roads would have facilitated trade and the bishops of Winchester may have directed relocating the town, marketplace and burgage plots. Although the town ditch may be 11th-century, only 12th-century material has been found in the town centre except in cesspits.<sup>228</sup> If the 12th-century town was within the ditch it must have expanded rapidly as by the 13th century or earlier the St James' Street area was built-up as were East Reach and North Town. That may reflect the great increase in population and the importance of having cheap lodgings and

---

<sup>224</sup> M. Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (1996), 38—9, 42—3; E.H. Bates, *Muchelney Cart*, 4—5.

<sup>225</sup> Below, landownership.

<sup>226</sup> SHC, C/ENAH/7/1.

<sup>227</sup> *Domesday*, 234. 'Taintona' burnt in 1111 might possibly be Taunton: Mayberry, *Vale of Taunton Past*, 21.

<sup>228</sup> *PSAS* CXXXII (1988), 97; CXL (1997), 142; CXLI (1998), 186—7; CXLIII (2001), 175; CXLIV (2002), 139—62; SHC, C/ENAH/7/3.

stabling and space for cloth racks, sawpits and other industrial processes outside the borough gates.<sup>229</sup>

There were medieval almshouses in St James Street until the late 19th century and west of the church old gabled houses, possibly where three houses were new built c. 1420, were demolished in the late 1950s.<sup>230</sup> Medieval development south of the river was much denser on the east side, even allowing for a large enclosure around St Mary's and the priory site. On the west the castle took up most of the level ground and apart from Shuttern there was little development west of the High Street burgages.

One of the peculiarities of the south Fore Street, East Street and High Street burgages is that they are not straight and if those on either side of the street are paired, they follow a reverse S-shape typical of ploughed fields. A similar pattern is found south of Shuttern, on the north-east side of Bridge Street, in the northern section of Station Road and the east side of Kingston Road in Rowbarton in both streets and property boundaries but not in East Reach or Silver Street which presumably developed on grassland. Burgages in the main streets mostly conformed to the one and a half perch (25 ft) width associated with the 11th—12th century.<sup>231</sup> Unusually the main streets had little back access until late 20th-century redevelopment.

The principal medieval streets were spacious, 14th-century tenants were allowed to lay timber and 'fenes'<sup>232</sup> for improving their houses provided they were removed at fair time.<sup>233</sup> By the 15th and 16th centuries the manor allowed buildings to be extended forward into the street, often for shops, and beams, hoists, posts and pentices for annual payments.<sup>234</sup> Numbers 15 and 18 Fore Street are medieval buildings with substantial forward extensions.

<sup>229</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 44443; above, this section, population.

<sup>230</sup> Below, soc. hist., almshouses; SHC, DD/SP/408; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3.

<sup>231</sup> A. Catchpole, D. Clark, R. Peberdy, *Burford: buildings and people in a Cotswold town* (2008), 20—1. Curves still visible from the air in the 1960s: SHC, DD/X/ROW/1.

<sup>232</sup> Either 'feins' hay [thatch] or 'fiens' dung [for cob or daub].

<sup>233</sup> B.L. Harl. MS 408, ff. 212—13.

<sup>234</sup> SHC, DD/SP/325/4, 71, 99; T/PH/win 1505—6; T/PH/hps/1.

The lost 56 High Street was similarly extended.<sup>235</sup> Many passages off the main streets had rights of way enforced although few as drastic as the requirement that a man keep the doors of his new building open during the day because he had built over a right of way in 1592.<sup>236</sup> In 1728 a man had extended his shop near Cornhill and another had replaced his pillared frontage with a brick one blocking the pavement.<sup>237</sup> Many houses had jettied upper storeys until the early 19th century.<sup>238</sup>

Many medieval and early modern buildings probably resembled those in south Fore Street with gables facing the street. Most were timber-framed, plastered and thatched. Thatching continued in minor streets into the 19th century. Several plastered cob houses owned by the Crown survived on the main streets in 1817.<sup>239</sup> The old houses in the marketplace were built of oak, brick, lead and pantiles, common roofing before Welsh slate was brought by rail.<sup>240</sup> Since the 17th century brick has been the dominant building material throughout the town and suburbs.

### Medieval Streets

The principal street, three-sided around the marketplace, is Fore Street, recorded by name in 1310.<sup>241</sup> Some burgage plots are wider on Fore Street, it has been suggested they are earlier but possibly the street was designed to have larger and more important properties. Houses were slated or tiled and a c. 1220 stone house stood on the corner of Fore and High Streets.<sup>242</sup> The marketplace was encroached on with the building of the High Cross, Guildhall and other permanent buildings. Durkeshamell Lane of 1450 was presumably Shambles Lane.<sup>243</sup> The

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/19/765.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/49 (Apr. 1592).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/60 (1728).

<sup>238</sup> Goldsworthy, *Recollection*, 8—9; SHC, A/DPB/1/1/1.

<sup>239</sup> TNA, CRES 2/1156.

<sup>240</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, p. 41.

<sup>241</sup> TNA, E 326/4956.

<sup>242</sup> 'Somerset Archaeology 1974—5', *PSAS CXX* (1976), p. 73; *CXXXII* (1988), 101.

<sup>243</sup> SHC, DD/PM/7/2/17; below, econ. hist., mkt.

1652 Spicers Lane, ending at the Ship, now 69 High Street, might possibly be south Fore Street.<sup>244</sup>

North Street ran out of Fore Street to the north gate and bridge. The Brydgate recorded in 1307—8 is probably another name for the north gate. In 1652 the parishioners had to repair the arch of Grasscroft gate, possibly the same.<sup>245</sup> North Street's west side bordered the castle moat and houses and workshops were built along it by the 14th century. A house called Castlegate stood north of Castle Bow by 1440. The moat was last scoured in 1494, by the 1520s was apparently built on behind North Street and 16th and 17th-century tableware was found elsewhere in the fill.<sup>246</sup> Mill Lane dates from at least 1384, a post-medieval revetment wall built and regularly rebuilt was probably for flood prevention as the lane was apparently built over an old man-made watercourse. Its section of moat was probably filled up in the 17th century with rubbish including old shoes and offcuts of leather but it was described as the St Mary's boundary rhyne as late as 1827.<sup>247</sup> There were at least 17 cottages on the moat in 1617—18.<sup>248</sup>

The east side of North Street contained several medieval houses until the 20th century. Those at the southern end were substantial buildings indicated by the late medieval corbels found at 52—3 and c. 1475 fireplace found during remodelling of 56 c. 1916.<sup>249</sup> Adjoining 54—5 had 'old ceiling beams' until gutted by W.H. Smith in 1920.<sup>250</sup> That store collapsed in 1959 when Lloyds demolished 56 and undertook deep excavations. Further north the former general post office occupies the site of the late medieval Spread Eagle inn.<sup>251</sup> The former Half Moon at 36, since rebuilt, had massive south walls containing a probable spiral

---

<sup>244</sup> SHC, DD/SP/356.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. T/PH/win 1305; DD/SP/18/24. Grasscroft tithing began outside the gate.

<sup>246</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1340—1, 1374—5, 1409—10, 1493—4, 1523—4; DD/SP/325/2; TNA, C 44/28/3; A.W. Vivian-Neal, 'Materials for the history of Taunton Castle', *PSAS* LXXXVI, 58—9; Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/10.

<sup>247</sup> SHC, DD/PM/7/2/4, 11; DD/WAT/14/1; D/P/tau.m/13/10/4.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/325/167.

<sup>249</sup> *PSAS*, LXIII (1917), xxxvii; SHC, A/DWX/1/11; A/DAS/2 (12300, 12311—13).

<sup>250</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/50/804.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2 (12310, 12345); A/DIF/44; DD/TAC/9/1, pp. 33—4; *PSAS*, LV (1909), 93.

staircase.<sup>252</sup> Further north were several gabled houses with later shop front extensions.

Another stood on the corner of St James Street until the early 20th century and was given a half-timbering finish, later removed.<sup>253</sup> In St James Street an old house with carving and plasterwork survived until 1865.<sup>254</sup>

East of the marketplace Church Lane, recorded in 1310, ran to St Mary's church.<sup>255</sup> In the 1590s the borough court forbade the keeping of stables in the lane.<sup>256</sup> By 1680 it was known as Great Magdalene Lane.<sup>257</sup> It accounts for the change from Fore Street to North Street although the lane entrance was destroyed in 1960.<sup>258</sup> The east end was linked with Middle Street by Whirligig Lane, from a stile or whirligig, recorded by 1545. It was widened at the southern end for vehicles in 1934.<sup>259</sup>

East Street, recorded by 1270, linked Fore Street and the east gate.<sup>260</sup> In the later 14th century there was a cross in the middle of the highway near the junction with Paul Street, possibly the Rush cross recorded in 1613, which may have marked the change from Fore to East Street.<sup>261</sup> Prestigious East Street houses included the Three Cups later the London Inn and its eastern neighbour retained its four-centred arched doorway with carved spandrels until demolition after 1864.<sup>262</sup> Numbers 18 and 18a, one of the few surviving two storey houses, had old panelling and a mantelpiece removed for sale c. 1913.<sup>263</sup>

Magdalene Lane from East Street to St Mary's church was recorded by the 13th century, named Easter Church Lane in 1354, Popes Lane in 1528 and later Alms Lane, from

---

<sup>252</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/40/524.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2 (12345—8); DD/FIV/4/57—8.

<sup>254</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865; BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, T/PH/rea/3/49; D/B/ta/24/1/6/164—5.

<sup>255</sup> TNA, E 326/4957, 4996.

<sup>256</sup> SHC, DD/SP/49 (1592—98).

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. A/EGV/1.

<sup>258</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1548—9, p. 364; SHC, A/DQO/404/16/30.

<sup>259</sup> TNA, C 66/753 cited in C. Brett, *Crown Revenues from Som. and Dorset*, supp., 87; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/87/1910.

<sup>260</sup> TNA, E 326/4955.

<sup>261</sup> Magdalen College, Oxford, Ford 24, 68; SHC, DD/SP/50 (Jan., May 1613).

<sup>262</sup> SHC, A/DAS/2 (12304).

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. DD/TAC/2/3/8.

the almshouses, or Little Magdalene Lane.<sup>264</sup> South from East Street Paul Street, recorded from the late 13th century, was also called Pole Street and included Mary Street.<sup>265</sup> Back Cheapside, sometimes called Cranbourne Alley, links East and High Streets and possibly originated as a passageway dividing houses from their burgage plots.<sup>266</sup>

High Street south of Fore Street, probably developed by the 12th century and named in the 13th, had long narrow burgage plots especially on the west side.<sup>267</sup> Until the mid 19th century Upper High Street, extending to Shuttern, was part of High Street and its two properties facing down High Street still have High Street addresses.<sup>268</sup> The southern end of High Street is much wider, possibly the site of St John's Cross and its well recorded from 1597.<sup>269</sup> In 1846 a possible late medieval, three-storey house survived with substantial outbuildings.<sup>270</sup> In 1922 both 66 and 67 apparently had cruck roofs but have been demolished, 53 is a smaller and much altered 16th-century house refronted in 1883 and 1924, the possibly late medieval, twin gabled 52 was demolished *c.* 1960 and further south a two-storey, twin-gabled house destroyed in 1885 had a screens passage with carved spandrels to the doorway, beamed ceilings in the main room, probably divided and extended for a shop, a four-light mullioned window at the rear and a massive north wall.<sup>271</sup> A pair of three-storey gabled buildings further south survived *c.* 1865 and others may have been refronted to conform to the three-storey with parapet type that dominated the central streets by the mid 19th century some with decorative plaster cornices.<sup>272</sup> On the east side 24 and 25, demolished

---

<sup>264</sup> TNA, E 326/5009, 5037, 5091, 5094, 5102; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/42, DD/CH/58.

<sup>265</sup> BL, Harl. Ch. 50 E 29; Highclere Ho., box FF/B3, no. 6; TNA, E 326/4977; E 304/6/18; SC 12/29/6; SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/14 (1271).

<sup>266</sup> *PSAS* CXXIV (1980), 30—1.

<sup>267</sup> *PSAS* CXXVII (1983), 25; TNA, WARD 2/57a/204/39, 79.

<sup>268</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/14 (1271); 57 Geo. III c. lxxvii, schedule.

<sup>269</sup> SHC, DD/SP/49 (Apr. 1597); 50 (15 Apr. 1616).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* A/DAS/2 (12306).

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/4/3/4; 24/1/18/739, 24/1/19/765, 24/1/54/911, 24/1/58/1032.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.* T/PH/rea/3/43; C/CPO/5/4.

in the 1960s, had hipped gables behind a parapet and a central door leading to Court 8 so had probably been a single large house.<sup>273</sup>

Shuttern had burgages by 1330, house plots had been taken out of Paul's Field north of the street by the late 17th century and barns were replaced by dwellings.<sup>274</sup> The name 'westeschetere' or 'sheter' in the 13th century and la Shethurne in 1350, may derive from the early stream name Scitere, the rising land or its position at a boundary corner.<sup>275</sup> At its east end was the area called Cole Green by 1325, with a 'Pons Perilous' or Pumparrells, not Shuttern bridge but presumably a footbridge over the stream.<sup>276</sup> Cole Green was developed by the late 17th century and by the 19th included Crescent House north of the road and Shuttern House on the south.<sup>277</sup> Pool Wall, part of modern Upper High Street, was built up by the 17th century.<sup>278</sup> Both Shuttern and Upper High Street formerly had several steeply gabled houses.<sup>279</sup> Some houses were built on the lord's waste.<sup>280</sup>

### Post-medieval town

In 1555 the borough comprised North, Fore, High, East and Paul Streets, Shuttern, Mill Lane, the Market Place including Mercery Lane, Church Lane and St Mary's Churchyard. North Street had an island of three burgages including one with three houses, which divided one burgage, divided the approach to the bridge into Grope and Horse Lanes until they were cleared away after 1769.<sup>281</sup> Part of Horse Lane survived as the passage to the horsepond, now

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. DD/FIV/1/84.

<sup>274</sup> TNA, E 326/4980; SHC, DD/HLM/8; DD/DR/28.

<sup>275</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1247—8, 1270—1, 1282—3; F. W. Weaver, *Buckland Cartulary*, p. 77. Shuttern is a stream name in Devon but Shute names are in boundary angles; J.E.B. Gover, *The Place Names of Devon* (Cambridge, 1932), I. 184, II. 417, 493; A.H. Smith, *Place-name Elements* (Cambridge, 1970), II, 109, 115—16.

<sup>276</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1325—6; DD/DP/80/1; DD/X/HKR/2. Presumably it was unsafe, there was a Pomparleys at Obridge mills: DD/SP/334, f. 21d.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. DD/HLM/8; DD/SP/74, f. 244, 75 (1613), 83 (1699), 197; DD/CH/138/1, pp. 44—7, 117—18.

<sup>278</sup> TNA, PROB 11/180/199; SHC, DD/HLM/8.

<sup>279</sup> Jones, *Harry Frier*, 92; SHC, A/DAS/2 (13080); D/B/ta/24/1/20/836.

<sup>280</sup> SHC, DD/SP/319/87—8, 217; 419 (1717).

<sup>281</sup> Ibid. T/PH/hps/1; D/B/ta 31/1/1, pp. 3, 19; DD/TAC/2/3/1, pp. 11, 87, 91; 6/1/1.

paved access to Goodland Gardens. Cann Street north out of Shuttern was named in 1570.<sup>282</sup>

Mary Street, part of Paul Street until the early 19th century, included land on the corner with High Street known as the Stawle but was built up by 1700.<sup>283</sup>

A high quality, late-medieval house, called the banqueting house in the 17th century and belonging to 18 Fore Street, stood apparently isolated where the present Bath Place meets the Crescent.<sup>284</sup> It had at least one three-light medieval window beside a four-centred doorway on the ground floor, gable finials, elaborate chimney pots and a fine ribbed plaster ceiling in one room. It was converted and extended as seven cottages called Noah's Ark, demolished c. 1858 except for one cottage, later a shop, on the corner of Bath Place.<sup>285</sup> In 1606 the Bell inn was built in High Street of three storeys with twin gables and projecting windows on the first floor. Later the ground floor was extended over the pavement but in 1839 it was demolished and rebuilt in its back yard with two shops profitably occupying the street frontage.<sup>286</sup> The White Hart in 1653 had wainscot with benches and in the hall 20 turned pillars, large windows with iron and wooden casements and inner door portals.<sup>287</sup> One merchant, probably of Fore Street, had an oak chimney post, panels, joists, rafters, elm boards and laths in 1614 implying he was about to add an extension.<sup>288</sup>

In 1635 a visitor found Taunton "a pleasant and dry place, the streets handsome, and fayre, and well built".<sup>289</sup> Many large old houses survived including several inns often of the cross-passage type. Some were gable-end to the street and three storeys high with lofts in the gables while others had four rooms on each floor and a shop. Several had two parlours or two halls and galleries, two-storey porches and brewhouses, cellars, workshops and stables ranged

---

<sup>282</sup> TNA, PROB 11/52/319.

<sup>283</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/16 (1276); T/PH/bb/4; DD/BR/py/120.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C112/17; DD/PRY/1; DD/SP/357 [bdle 2] (1694).

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2 (12302, 12314, 12317—20, 12404); A/DIF/116/228; D/B/ta/13/1/1; DD/S/AM/1, pp. 326—9, 336; *Taunton Courier*, 7 July 1858: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

<sup>286</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C1540/2/3.

<sup>287</sup> North Devon RO, 1142B/FP71.

<sup>288</sup> SHC, DD/TOR/422 (1614).

<sup>289</sup> *SDNQ*, XIX, 269.

around courts behind. A few had no kitchen and one house had a chamber with a trap door although no attic was recorded perhaps indicating crude flooring of an open hall. Later in the century there were more three-storey houses and fewer courtyards as service rooms were incorporated into the main house with bedrooms above.<sup>290</sup> A new house in High Street in 1695 had a 'great gate' possibly an older feature on the site.<sup>291</sup>

### Town defences and the Civil War

The castle although outside the borough was possibly envisaged in the 12th century, when the keep was built, as part of the defence of Taunton and western England.<sup>292</sup> The borough was surrounded by the Hurleditch, recorded by 1158, but probably dug earlier as in places there were additional ditches, disused and allowed to fill up. Possibly it encompassed old and new boroughs.<sup>293</sup> In 1215—16 the burgesses paid £13 6*d.* 8*d.* towards enclosing the town and a cleric lost land in the process.<sup>294</sup> There was no formal plan or symmetry. The deep irregular ditch was possibly constructed and was certainly used as an administrative boundary rather than a defence, which could have rarely been necessary. Its high earthen bank could have been surmounted by a timber palisade if danger threatened. It circuited the borough for about a mile, probably following burgage boundaries, except west of Fore and North Street where the perimeter wall of the castle and its moat formed the boundary.<sup>295</sup>

The south-west boundary is uncertain; the rhyne from Pool Wall mill to the castle moat was known as the town rhyne as late as 1882.<sup>296</sup> However, the Hurleditch was dry and the line of Cann Street is more likely as it is higher, forms the boundary with Bishops Hull

---

<sup>290</sup> SHC, DD/SP/1609—95; below, soc. hist.

<sup>291</sup> SHC, DD/HLM/8.

<sup>292</sup> Bishops Hull, forthcoming.

<sup>293</sup> 12th-century pottery was found in them near Tancred Street: *PSAS*, CXXXI (1987), 221; Mayberry, *Vale of Taunton Past*, 22.

<sup>294</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1215—16, 1218—19.

<sup>295</sup> T.B. Dilks, *Bridgwater Borough Archives, 1400—45*, p. 88.

<sup>296</sup> SHC, DD/PRY/1; Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396.

and in 1324—5 part of the ditch was in Hull tithing.<sup>297</sup> The Shuttern section survived under cottages in 1858 and one house stands well below Upper High Street presumably built in the ditch.<sup>298</sup> Property at Pool Wall was described as at Hurlleditch in the 16th century.<sup>299</sup> In 1332—3 a new ditch c. 16 ft wide was made at ‘vivary’.<sup>300</sup> From there the ditch followed the southern edge of Mary Street burgages to the Mount, Hurl Ditch Mount until c. 1810, and the former Mount Lane, before turning sharply north-east to the east gate where burgages adjoined the town ditch in 1393 and 1430.<sup>301</sup> That stretch was apparently filled in during the 17th to 18th centuries.<sup>302</sup>

From the gate the ditch turned sharply north-west and formed the later St Mary’s parish boundary. The unusual diagonal straight lines north and south of Eastgate indicate that East Street was already built up to that point and had to be included within the ditch as economically as possible. In 1589 the north-east ditch was 50 ft wide although already encroached on and the owners of the priory manor claimed part.<sup>303</sup> The vicar had a bridge over and later a gate into the ditch, which the manor let for pasture by the 1300s and on which people kept cloth racks.<sup>304</sup> Changes in ground level are still evident, some may be Civil War earthworks but parts of the eroded medieval bank are visible in Lower Middle Street and the former vicarage gardens. In c. 1612 the inhabitants petitioned against a lessee who enclosed the ditch as the bank was a lookout for fire by the night watch and a recreational walk, implying it survived to a useful height and was wide enough to patrol. Part

---

<sup>297</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1324—5.

<sup>298</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 6 Sep. 1854: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

<sup>299</sup> SHC, DD/SP/86, f. 117.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. T/PH/win 1332—3.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid. A/ASW/1; DD/CWC.bw/31; DD/SF/2/52/1 TNA, E 210/1258.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/170; DD/X/SOM/47/8; PSAS CXXXVIII (1994), 20, 180; CXXXIX (1995), 176.

<sup>303</sup> SHC, DD/SP/22/50.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/325/11; T/PH/win 1307—9, 1320—1, 1324—5, 1326—7, 1340—1, 1505—6; Weaver, *Somerset Wills 1501—30*, 32; below, rel. hist.

of Mount Lane and Lower Middle Street apparently developed on the ditch.<sup>305</sup> Ditch houses were recorded from 1573.<sup>306</sup>

There were castle precinct gates and town gates, which may have preceded the ditch. The town's north gate was on the approach from the bridge, the west gate at Shuttern guarded the old route from the west and the east gate stood at the top of East Reach. They were not aligned with each other and there was no south gate implying their sole purpose was to control access as the main south routes were covered by the west and east gates respectively. The early gates may have been bars. The bishop of Winchester was required to provide timber for the borough 'barres' and other enclosures in the 14th century when the ditches were said to belong to the commonalty of the borough.<sup>307</sup> The arch of Grasscroft gate, possibly the north gate, needed repair in 1642 and the east gate was apparently substantial.<sup>308</sup>

During the Civil War the lack of walls made the town, unlike the castle, difficult to defend. Earth bastions were thrown up but were not very effective except at absorbing cannon shot. Redoubts and trenches were dug outside the medieval bank.<sup>309</sup> The town defences were probably abandoned after the war although the east gate may have survived as the White Lion, which occupied two thirds of the width of East Street.<sup>310</sup>

By 1777 4 ½ a. of overland in the ditch was covered in buildings and a brickfield.<sup>311</sup> However, the site of the ditch was known and marked the borough boundary c. 1819 when a man whose house lay across it was denied a vote and property at the north end of Whirligig Lane was said in 1850 to be on the former 'moat'.<sup>312</sup> There is no evidence for defences north of the river but from 1687 to 1708 'The Barre' was recorded at Grassgrove, possibly across

---

<sup>305</sup> SHC, Q/SR/16/40.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/72, f. 102; T/PH/wlt (644/20/1); DD/SAS/C795/41 (Holway tithing).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. T/PH/win 1264—5.; B.L. Harl. MS 408, f. 213.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/24.

<sup>309</sup> SWHT, Som. HER 1657—8. 44378; SHC, DD/X/COLL/3; PSAS CXLVI, 163.

<sup>310</sup> Above, this section, roads.

<sup>311</sup> SHC, DD/AY/16.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. DD/HC/6/1/3; DD/CH/138/1, pp. 114—15; DD/SAS S1122/1/35.

Kingston, now Station, Road marking the end of the urban area.<sup>313</sup> It may be the bar the waywardens of St James were ordered to remove in the late 1690s.<sup>314</sup>

### After the Civil War

Between 1642 and 1644 armies from both sides caused extensive damage by deliberate and accidental firing of houses and stripping of thatch. The war probably destroyed buildings north of East Reach and in North Town and possibly around St Mary's church and the west sides of Fore and North Streets. However, there is no archaeological and little documentary evidence for the extensive destruction often claimed and many damaged houses were soon restored. A woman whose house and goods had been burnt built a small house on waste at Rowbarton before 1647.<sup>315</sup> By 1652 a new house had been built on the site of St James 'Cowhouse' in the highway in North Town by a man who was wounded and lost his house in the war.<sup>316</sup> Three burnt houses in Obridge tithing, had bricks and stones removed in 1649 but two burnt burgages on Black Horse Lane were 'reedified' and an alehouse in St James' parish burnt by soldiers was rebuilt before 1656.<sup>317</sup> In 1652 a cottage south of East Reach was recorded as burnt in the wars but another had been replaced by two 'mansions' by 1647.<sup>318</sup> Six houses on the north side were recorded as 'burnt down in the late wars' even when rebuilt.<sup>319</sup>

Some rebuilding may have been of poor quality and a house of that period in Fore Street fell down in the 19th century.<sup>320</sup> However, a contract for a two-storey, brick house and shop in 1654, probably in Canon Street, stated that the planked floors were to be 40 ft long,

---

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/8/4, 73/5; DD/SP/18/71—2. Avice de la Barre recorded had property in Taunton c. 1250: *ibid.* T/PH/hbs/1/7.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. DD/MT/15/1 (1697—9).

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/22/11.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/TN/44; DD/SP/98 (1652).

<sup>317</sup> Ibid. DD/VL/1/7; DD/SP/18/20; Q/SR/94/101.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C785/TN/16; DD/SP/98 (1652); DD/X/HPS/4 (Apr. 1647).

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. DD/VL/1/7; D/DC/tau.d/25/19 no 581.

<sup>320</sup> Goldworthy, *Recollections*, 15.

there were to be four-light windows in the chambers, two chimneys, a buttery and a 22-ft shop with five windows under a chamber all plastered and thatched.<sup>321</sup> Some public houses in the marketplace, presumably post-war and timber-framed, were later given brick walls.<sup>322</sup>

King Street recorded 1690 to 1727 may have been part of East or Fore Street.<sup>323</sup> Kinges Lane west of North Street with houses by 1693 was presumably Mill Lane, which with Mill Bow linked North Street with the town mills.<sup>324</sup> North and Fore Street's west sides included back cottages and gardens on the moat but were replaced by large houses with shops in the 19th century.<sup>325</sup> One older house survived west of the Fore Street until 1969 with an arched and pillared screen to the stair hall and a decorative plaster cornice to a first-floor room.<sup>326</sup> The south side of Fore Street once described as 'remarkable for architectural beauty' has lost many buildings but has some notable survivors. One of its last losses was the former White Hart, but having been gutted for a large store its only original feature was a probable early 17th-century staircase.<sup>327</sup>

East Street's north side had many two-storey gabled houses with attics including the Three Widows. The shops on the corner of Magdalene Lane included 8, given a half-timbered façade in the 1930s or 1940s but demolished in the late 1960s with the others including 5—6, brick with brick pilasters, and twin-gabled 15, despite being listed.<sup>328</sup> The 17th-century Squirrel in Magdalene Lane was rebuilt in the 19th century.<sup>329</sup> Similar houses formerly stood south of East Reach and east of North Street.<sup>330</sup>

South of East Street between the 17th-century Gray's and Pope's almshouses stood two three-storey steep gabled houses, one of which had a large, pointed arch of three rows of

---

<sup>321</sup> TNA, C 3/440/51.

<sup>322</sup> SHC, DD/SF/2/52/3/6.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/42/1 (1696—1727). The later King Street dated from the 1820s.

<sup>324</sup> Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 164; SHC, DD/SP/79 (1661).

<sup>325</sup> SHC, DD/SP/96, 297—8.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid. A/BNO/2; D/B/ta/24/1/207/10279.

<sup>327</sup> Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 10; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/181/10771.

<sup>328</sup> TNA, PROB 11/298/650; SHC, A/ESP/1; D/B/ta/3/37/1, p. 115; DD/FIV/2/8.

<sup>329</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/6/1/4; A/DAS/2 (2330).

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/44, 46, 101/1/16, 101/6/123; D/B/ta/24/1/207/11422.

brick on corbels to the rear. Said to date from 1638 they contained oak-mullioned windows but were demolished in 1933 with Pope's almshouses for a large garage.<sup>331</sup> Silver Street, possibly named from the Stockwell stream, was at least partly built up by the 17th century.<sup>332</sup> On its west side at least one large, thatched house survived into the late 19th century.<sup>333</sup> Further east the section of Holway Lane, now South Street, was built up by the 1660s.<sup>334</sup>

In 1679 a great messuage east of High Street was described as newly built on the site of three houses.<sup>335</sup> Hunts Court, Bath Place since the 1840s reputedly after the bath chairs once based there, was originally a large burgage plot attached to 18 Fore Street and 69 High Street, a single house probably until the early 17th century. Its entry became a public thoroughfare with a vehicle entrance through the great gate at the west end and by the 1680s there were houses and gardens both sides of the passage, malthouses and the Quaker meeting house. The whole remained in single ownership until 1785—6.<sup>336</sup> In the 1690s Celia Fiennes found Taunton a large town with some brick and stone buildings but mainly timber and plaster, “a very neate place, and looks substantial as a place of good trade”.<sup>337</sup>

### The 18th-century town

The original St Mary's churchyard was larger than the burial ground enclosed c. 1700. It included the present Church Square and Magdalene Street, formerly Black Boy Lane, whose houses were described as in the churchyard.<sup>338</sup> Churchyard inhabitants included 22 voters c. 1698, it was given as an address and still formed the northern boundary of East Street

<sup>331</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/44 (M1/21—2); D/B/ta/24/1/84/1805; DD/SAS/S2721/6/14.

<sup>332</sup> TNA, SC 12/29/6; Ekwall, *Oxf. Dict. Eng. Pl-Names*, 329 ‘Monksilver’.

<sup>333</sup> SHC, A/DIF/44.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/206.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/319/8.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid. DD/PRY/1/1—11; DD/SAS/C795/TN/37; DD/SP/357 [bdle 2] (1694).

<sup>337</sup> *SDNQ* XVIII, 237.

<sup>338</sup> SHC, T/PH/hps/1; TNA, E 317/SOM/411.

burgages in the early 18th century.<sup>339</sup> Vicar Emmanuel Sharpe (d. 1679) reportedly used gates to keep traffic away from the church and in 1748 chains were proposed to stop wheeled traffic passing from Great Magdalene Lane through the churchyard into Little Magdalene Lane.<sup>340</sup>

In the early 18th century several houses were rebuilt or refurbished with bricks and Cornish and blue tiles and Silver Street House probably replaced an earlier farmhouse.<sup>341</sup> However, mid century economic and population decline led to the loss of houses. In St Mary's parish in 1740 only five houses were down in the main streets but by 1744 there were nine. Empty and demolished houses and 'broken' traders reduced the rates.<sup>342</sup> A decayed house in Shuttern was converted to three small dwellings before 1751, Benjamin Hammet demolished houses south of Upper High Street *c.* 1777 to create a shrubbery for Wilton House and in 1797 he bought 11 tenements and a brickyard in Shuttern, which became a timberyard.<sup>343</sup> A High Street inn was replaced by a yard and not redeveloped with houses and shops until after 1822.<sup>344</sup> Many houses on Paul Street, Mary Street and Shuttern were replaced by larger ones with grounds, especially on the south. One house, which had been divided into eight dwellings, reverted to two.<sup>345</sup> Three houses in South Street were replaced by a cottage. In the 1760s there were decayed buildings in the marketplace and East Street, although rebuilding began before 1783 possibly including 48 East Street, a former private school.<sup>346</sup>

One house in North Street reflected the ups and downs of the local economy. After increasing in value from £100 in 1646 to £300 in 1665 and having been divided into several

---

<sup>339</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/27, p 12 (1606); DD/SAS/C795/TN/159/1; DD/CH/80/1; DD/X/HYD/1; DD/DP/114/17/1.

<sup>340</sup> TNA, CRES 2/1156; SHC, DD/SAS/TN/15 (vestry min. 1748).

<sup>341</sup> SHC, DD/SP/419 (1717—18, 1728; DD/DP/54/4).

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.* DD/SAS/TN/15 (1734—48); D/P/tau.m/13/1/1.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.* DD/DP/97/3,6; DD/SAS/C432/37; DD/DNL/39.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.* DD/CH/110/4.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.* D/DC/tau.d/25/15, 25/16 (1276).

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/31/5/2; DD/CH/106/2; DD/DP/42/1 (176); DD/SP/178 (1802).

dwellings by 1728 it had fallen down by 1756. It was rebuilt after 1761 and between 1786 and 1796 acquired a back court of tenements.<sup>347</sup> The creation of courts east of North Street led to legal disputes over encroachment and light.<sup>348</sup> In St James' parish street names seem to have developed later. Canon Street was used for an area larger than the later street and 16th-century back street was probably the present Middle Street.<sup>349</sup> By the mid 18th century St James, Middle, Canon and Tancred Streets, Coal Orchard Lane, and Radford's Lane or Court were named.<sup>350</sup> By the early 17th century several cottage sites had been divided, one into eight dwellings and before 1700 one of the houses at Priory Gate, was divided in four and had a back dwelling.<sup>351</sup> At the west end of Middle Street are Melville House of c. 1740 with panelled rooms and Chadwick, now Dennet, House. Both had attached coachhouses and stabling and large gardens now part of a car park where Melville's summer house survives.<sup>352</sup>

However, with the economic decline the former pittancer's estate of up to 18 cottages was only six cottages and a garden in 1757 and large houses replaced cottages on Canon Street from the late 18th century including Priory House or The Priory.<sup>353</sup> Described in 1823 as a lately-built 'gothic' stuccoed double mansion in a walled garden, it was demolished c. 1973, leaving only the gate piers and flanking walls, which contain medieval carved fragments.<sup>354</sup> Late Georgian Canon House and Grove House and others west of Canon Street were demolished after 1970 for a car park. The south-east corner was redeveloped with large houses set back from the street including Priory Lodge and Laburnum Cottage cleared in the

---

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/68/5.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. DD/TRANS/3/21 (1790, 1793, 1848—9).

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/375, p. 7; 376 (1608).

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. DD/HS/1/5; DD/SP/379 (1704); DD/DP/9/1; Q/REI/35/25b (1767).

<sup>351</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/409; A. Webb, *Som. Wills*, 177.

<sup>352</sup> PSAS CXXIII (1979), 99; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/125/6155; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/5 (12 July, 23 Aug. 1977).

<sup>353</sup> SHC, DD/SP/409 (c. 1620, 1680, 1757); DD/SAS/C2273/1/D2/1.

<sup>354</sup> *Taunton Courier* 12 March 1823; BNA accessed 22 Mar. 2018; SHC, A/APN/2/6 (1961); A/DIF/116/214.

20th century but further north a group of Georgian town houses survive, mostly as offices, including the former Canon Lodge and Barton House.<sup>355</sup>

There were many large houses in the later 18th century, a 'half house' on East Reach had ten rooms in 1777, in 1779 a three-storey brick house had underground cellars and two principal floors each 12ft high and many similar houses were probably built in the later 18th century.<sup>356</sup> Good quality 18th-century houses in High Street included 21 and 22 demolished in the later 1970s and Powlett House, greatly altered and partly demolished for a shop in 1900.<sup>357</sup> In 1788 a proposed apothecary's house with shop and surgery on Fore Street was to be of rendered brick with prominent splash and string courses, sashes, ornamented door case and semi-circular fanlight, first-floor drawing room and marble and stone chimneypieces including one of black marble from the old house. The house is unidentified, but the mention of render for the front is significant, stucco not being widely employed in Taunton until after 1800.<sup>358</sup> At The Mount cottages were replaced *c.* 1786 by the house named The Mount, probably designed by architect George Hare. It was demolished in the late 19th century for a shirt and collar factory. Adjacent Mount House possibly of similar date on the site of a farmyard, was rebuilt and incorporated into the barracks *c.* 1880.<sup>359</sup> In Mount Lane, Star Plot Lane in 1815, was Star Plot or Plat, a group of six or seven, probably 18th-century dwellings, which were bought *c.* 1909 to expand Huish's school. They were demolished with the other cottages in the lane including an old house with carvings.<sup>360</sup>

Great Magdalene Lane had up to 14 houses on its south side which, with the market stall storeyard were destroyed in the 1780s, despite strong objections, to allow Sir Benjamin

---

<sup>355</sup> SHC, tithe award, St James; DD/FIV/1/28; DD/X/BHS/4 (map); DD/X/SOM/59/1/4/2; below, built character.

<sup>356</sup> SHC, DD/HC/16/7/33; DD/MY/35.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/37/3 (Sep. 1973, Feb. 1974; A/CMY/453).

<sup>358</sup> Ibid. DD/DP, box 96 (1788).

<sup>359</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/178 (1800; DD/CWC.bw/31; DD/DP/9/14; DD/SP/185).

<sup>360</sup> SHC, DD/DP/93/1; DD/CH/74/8, 102/1; DD/VL/1/1, 2/6; D/B/ta/24/1/19/762; 24/1/40/508; DD/TAC/6/1/4; A/AHO/1.

Hammet to build his new street of gentlemen's houses from Fore Street to the front of St Mary's church.<sup>361</sup> Hammet provided a carriageway as required to Huish's almshouses on the old lane but was accused of obstructing their light and air.<sup>362</sup> At the east end of Great Magdalene Lane the Ring of Bells survived until the 1800s when it was replaced by two houses in a similar style to Hammet Street but asymmetrical and set back behind the line of the former lane as the north part of Church Square.<sup>363</sup> During the 1780s Hammet Street's original 15 houses were completed with rear gardens, since lost, central entrance doors with semi-circular fanlights and broken pediments, 12-pane ground and first floor windows and 6-pane windows on the second floor. Some had underground cellarage.<sup>364</sup> Few survive as built, by 1839 the three south-west houses had become six and 6 had been subdivided. By the 1880s 14—18 were converted into a large furniture store with top floor windows shortened to accommodate a signboard. Although mostly rebuilt as separate shops in the 1890s the fenestration and chimney stacks were unlike the Georgian originals and 18 remained part of the corner store site with a late Victorian doorway. Number 14 was rebuilt in 1931 to form the goods entrance to a large Fore Street store until c. 1970 and no attempt was made even to align the roof ridge with its neighbours.<sup>365</sup> Having been a hotel 2 was a shop by 1890 with two pairs of large glass windows flanking recessed double glass doors.<sup>366</sup> Numbers 1—3 were demolished for Lloyds Bank. Early 21st-century attempts have been made to create replica windows and doorcases replacing 19th-century and later glass shopfronts but some doors are not centred or have non-standard fanlights.

Sir Benjamin Hammet bought much of Hunts Court including 11 houses on the north side in 1791 replacing them with eight new ones although his plan to demolish 18 Fore Street

---

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/97/2; D/P/tau.m/23/37; 28 Geo III c. lxxix.

<sup>362</sup> SHC, DD/DP/43/5, 97/1.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. DD/X/HKR/2—3.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/97/1; DD/HS/4/2; A/DAS/2 (12330); DD/DP/52/1; below, built character.

<sup>365</sup> SHC, tithe map, St Mary; DD/X/WBB/191/2A/ENM/2; DD/S/FRI/12, no. 20858; DD/CH/111/6; D/B/ta/24/1/74/1538a, 24/1/232/15205.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/63/2; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 30.

to make a wide roadway was not carried out.<sup>367</sup> Near the west end of the court was a large 18th-century house known as Riscons or Shrapnels.<sup>368</sup> In the later 19th century a large yellow-brick block was added facing the Crescent. Its is now offices.<sup>369</sup> At the end of the 18th century the street layout of the town centre was much as it is today except that there was no Corporation Street.<sup>370</sup>

### The 19th-century town

The Crescent, still one of the town's finest streets, was begun in 1808 after William Kinglake bought Paul's field, houses, coach houses, stables and two little meadows for the purpose.<sup>371</sup> The first terrace was divided from the second by a path utilised as access to their rear premises and now Crescent Way. The proposed terrace opposite was never built. Although a former path, until the 1860s The Crescent was a private road maintained by householders who enjoyed the use of Paul's, later Crescent, field.<sup>372</sup> That right was surrendered in 1929 to enable County Hall to be built and the Crescent's north end near Hunts Court was widened c. 1932.<sup>373</sup>

In 1843 Bath Place was largely bought by William Beadon who replaced most 'shop houses' with an attached row of 12 houses with large shop fronts before 1854. Although condemned in the early 20th century for their bulging windows they remain shops. The two houses at the west end of the row, 12a—b, may be earlier.<sup>374</sup> By 1846 Beadon had replaced Hammett's houses on the north, the soap boiler's premises, passages and privies, with several substantial houses of which six survive.<sup>375</sup>

<sup>367</sup> Ibid. DD/DNL/39; DD/DP/93/4.

<sup>368</sup> Noah Shrapnell held the property in 1740: Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 207.

<sup>369</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/2273/1/T1/5.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2 (12398), copy 1794 plan.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. DD/X/BWR/4; DD/AY/12, 33A; Q/RDd/33; below, built character.

<sup>372</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau,d/25/9 (1235); A/AFU/1—59; D/B/ta/2/1/3, p. 644.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/178/1; D/B/ta/3/9/11, p. 226.

<sup>374</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 26 Aug. 1846: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, DD/DP/39/6; DD/PRY/1/17, 19, 29.

<sup>375</sup> SHC, DD/PRY/1/27.

The south-west of Fore Street including shops, a counting house, back court dwellings, stables, smithy, warehouses, a slaughterhouse and the electric lighting depot were demolished *c.* 1894 to build Corporation Street.<sup>376</sup> Most buildings on the north-east side, some described as ancient, were rebuilt from the later 19th century. One shop had a medieval doorway and window in its back wall until 1919. Back courts there, one built *c.* 1827, were cleared to build large stores.<sup>377</sup> Acacia House, home of photographer Montagu Cooper who built an ornamental single-storey studio on the garden, was the last private house in East Street, destroyed in the 1930s to build the Co-operative store.<sup>378</sup>

The west side of North Street was rebuilt piecemeal. A new three-storey block was added to the Castle Hotel destroying the symmetry of its late Georgian façade, most of which was demolished with the portico in 1928 for shops.<sup>379</sup> Further north the confectioner and restaurant at 19 had pedimented and pilastered upper floors extending above Mill Bow by the late 19th century, destroyed after 1925.<sup>380</sup> Number 25, a four-storey house with double entrance doors accessed by a flight of steps over a basement area, was demolished in the early 1890s for Chapman's tall glass shopfront. North Street House, number 31, was a three-storey late Georgian house also accessed by a flight of steps over an area and was converted into three shops in the early 20th century and later demolished.<sup>381</sup> The Bridge, built up by 1447, was rebuilt in the 1870s on the west with shops, two of which were demolished in the 1960s. In 1890 Edwin Thomas replaced houses and shops and Goodland's coalyard on the east side with tall shops with narrow, pedimented gables, which were a feature of Taunton's commercial buildings of the 1890s.<sup>382</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Ibid. A/AOW/16; A/CNC/1; DD/X/MIS/1.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid. DD/TAC/6/1/1, 4; DD/CH/84/4; DD/BR/mks/1; DD/X/STONE, folder 3.

<sup>378</sup> Below, economic history, retail and prof. services.

<sup>379</sup> SHC, A/DAS/2 (12337, 12365); D/B/ta/24/1/67/1296; *PSAS*, LXXIV, lxiii.

<sup>380</sup> SHC, A/DIF/101/1/12; A/DQO/404/5/15; A/BEN/55; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid. DD/FIV/1/94; A/DAS/2 (12345).

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. T/PH/win 1447—8; D/B/ta/24/1/10/317; A/DAS/2 (12303); A/DQO/404/16/29; Wilts and Swindon History Centre, 1075/001/396; VCH Office, Lillford, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Somerset Architects and Surveyors', 284—6.

In the early 19th century older properties in St James parish were replaced by blocks of cottages and large detached houses on Tancred Street were replaced by new streets and courts.<sup>383</sup> West of Tancred Street courts included Frenchay Street or French Hay Place whose three-storey houses on the south side survive in the Eastgate Gardens development, which replaced French's tannery in the late 20th century.<sup>384</sup> Charles Harman, cabinet maker and organist of St Mary's, built Harmony Row to the south and Concord Place east of Tancred Street in the early 19th century.<sup>385</sup> The former had six rooms over three floors, semi-circular fanlights over the paired front doors and metal window box holders. They were demolished in the early 1970s.<sup>386</sup> His 1840s Harmony Cottages opposite, possibly on the site of a sheep market, were one-up one-downs with a communal front garden. Intended as almshouses but not so-used, they survived until 1962.<sup>387</sup> The silk factory expanded over Concord Place but had its own court of 14 houses.<sup>388</sup>

In 1826 Thomas Norman bought large houses, gardens and land north-east of Tancred Street extending east to the priory fields ditch. He laid out King Street in 1827 with its tiny four-roomed and smaller houses, a court later known as Norman's Place and 16 houses in Paradise Square. He still owned 31 houses in King Street in 1842 but sold plots to carpenters, plumbers and others to build courts.<sup>389</sup> King Street became so notorious that its name was obliterated from the map although it survives as the anonymous street along the entrance front of a block of flats.<sup>390</sup> Duke Street was created c. 1894 to link Tancred Street and Foundry Square, built on an estate called Fauntleroy, by demolishing houses on Tancred

---

<sup>383</sup> SHC, DD/SP/379, 411; DD/DP/47/6; D/DC/tau.d/25/7 (1252).

<sup>384</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d 36/19; DD/SAS/C212/MAP/148; DD/DP/3/12; DD/HS/2/25—6; DD/X/BUSH/16b.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. T/PH/bb/4; DD/CH/22.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. DD/FIV/1/34—5.

<sup>387</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865; BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, DD/DP/184/2; DD/SAS/C212/map148; D/P/tau.m/4/1/1—2; D/B/ta/2/1/6, p. 125, 4/2/4 (1962).

<sup>388</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 65; DD/SAS/C212/MAP/151; D/B/ta/24/1/28/1844.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/416 (1826); D/DC/tau.d/25/6 (801, 1061), 25/7 (893), 25/8 (281); DD/AY/150; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 57, 61—2; DD/CWC/ta/unlisted box 5; DD/CH/120/6.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/170/10250.

Street and Foundry Row.<sup>391</sup> Foundry Square, had 12 houses by 1871 and a foundry and lace factory on the east side. After 1876 the east side was cut through to link with Eastbourne Road.<sup>392</sup> Henry Cox 's 1840s house and garden opposite Foundry Row survived until the mid 20th century.<sup>393</sup>

At Coal Orchard north of St James Street wharves and coalyards were covered with industrial buildings and back courts of cottages between the 1820s and 1860s. One survivor is Court 2 now Foundry Road.<sup>394</sup> Apart from the 1860s shops on either side of the entrance to Lower Middle Street most of the south side of St James Street was redeveloped from the later 1960s to 1980s.<sup>395</sup> On the north-east side six tenements in the churchyard were cleared c. 1890 for the present almshouses and three large houses adjoining Priory Gate with the courts and former foundry behind them were cleared in the mid 20th century to extend the cricket ground. Two surviving houses may date from c. 1842.<sup>396</sup> Lower Middle Street linking Middle Street with St James's Street was known as Registry Place from the 1840s former register office.<sup>397</sup> Before 1850 thatched cottages with diamond leaded windows and the Black Boy inn were demolished to widen Black Boy and Radford's lanes. More houses including 30 dwellings in Burton or Willment Square built before 1814 were destroyed in the mid 1860s to replace those lanes with an extended Magdalene Street and build Huish's new almshouses.<sup>398</sup>

---

<sup>391</sup> Tristram and Roger Fauntleroy owned property in 1510s: TNA, C 1/311/40; E 179/169/180; PROB 11/52/319.

<sup>392</sup> SHC, DD/CH/22; DD/DC/tau.d/25/6 (1028, 1061); tithe award, St James; DD/SAS/2016/48; TNA, RG 10/2374.

<sup>393</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 63; DD/SAS/C212/MAP/151.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid. DD/HR/3—4; DD/X/WBB/183.

<sup>395</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865 BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, DD/KIT/4/19; T/PH/rea/3/49; D/B/ta/24/1/6/164—5; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3; DD/X/SML/8.

<sup>396</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/18; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 54.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C/2550/12; D/B/ta/4/3/1 (1884); 24/1/6/164—5, 34/9/3.

<sup>398</sup> Goldsworthy, *Recollection*, 22; SHC, tithe award, St Mary; T/PH/bb/4; DD/SP/ 411 (1814); DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 81—4; DD/SAS/C212/Map151; D/B/ta/2/1/3, pp. 609, 629—30, 634, 733; 3/1/1 (1864); 13/1/1.

Redevelopment in East Street included 1822 Cheapside, replacing an island of buildings including an inn and a smithy.<sup>399</sup> The 1784 London Inn was repeatedly extended in mid century causing the demolition of a possible medieval house.<sup>400</sup> Further east Billet Street was created between 1839 and 1849 from a sequence of passages necessitating the demolition of several houses to access streets being developed by James Billet of which only Billetfield and Mansfield Road were built.<sup>401</sup> Billet Street was largely cleared in the later 20th century for retail development with vehicular access.<sup>402</sup> Billetfield was developed in the 1860s and 1870s with large houses and a carriage approach to St George's church.<sup>403</sup>

Silver Street was redeveloped with large houses of which 23—9 and Mansfield House all of c. 1800 survive. In 1821 one had four rooms on each floor including a library and first-floor drawing room and a formal rear garden.<sup>404</sup> In c. 1900 Mansfield House had a 33-ft hall, lift, 1st-floor drawing room, eight bedrooms and 3 a. of gardens, destroyed to build Mansfield Road. The house was subdivided, part for a plumber's shop whose 1902 shopfront survives, and its extensive outbuildings into dwellings since demolished.<sup>405</sup> Further terraces were built east of Silver Street in the later 19th century.<sup>406</sup> Alma Street, linking Silver and South Streets was developed on Mansfield House land sold for building in 1855. The Conservative Land Society in 1857 planned a street of 30 large, terraced houses to cost up to £208.<sup>407</sup> The society bought land to be allotted to subscribers to create 40s. freeholders entitled to vote. Subscriptions were presumably insufficient as the land was sold to speculative builders who built several houses on each plot. From the 1860s a public house, workshops, 78 small, terraced houses facing Alma Street and six on Silver Street were built, which caused sarcastic

<sup>399</sup> 57 Geo. III c. lxxvii, schedule; SHC, tithe award, St Mary; A/BMG/5/2.

<sup>400</sup> SHC, A/DAS/2 (12336—8).

<sup>401</sup> Goldsworthy, *Recollections*, 7; SHC, D/SAS/C212/Map148; DD/CHA/22; DD/HS/1/6.

<sup>402</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d (2017/328), box 10.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/2/1/3, pp. 388, 395, 2/1/5, p. 169; 3/1/1 (1862).

<sup>404</sup> Wilts and Swindon History Centre, 2735/1.

<sup>405</sup> SHC, A/BKN/3; DD/VL/1/1; D/B/ta/24/1/30/87—90.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. DD/X/KIT/1; D/B/ta/24/1/6/155, 166.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. DD/X/AUS/17; A/CHM/12.

comment at the time.<sup>408</sup> Further south Gwynne Lane to Mount Street, recorded by 1814 and possibly named after John Fraunceis Gwynne, trustee of the town charity, had scattered cottages of unknown date, the last demolished probably after 1855.<sup>409</sup>

North of Shuttern old cottages were cleared in the 1800s to build The Grove with an oval drawing room, eight bedrooms, substantial underground cellars and 3 a. of ornamental grounds with a summer temple. The stables and coachhouse were south of Shuttern until c. 1840 when they were sold for a coalyard. Later Westbourne Terrace and part of Burton Place were built on the site.<sup>410</sup> The Grove was demolished in the 1850s to build the Shire Hall by which date the site was bounded by densely built cottages on both sides. East of the Grove many 18th and early 19th-century houses were demolished about the same time to build a police station.<sup>411</sup> South-west of Shuttern sergemaker William Giles sold houses, known as Giles College, to Benjamin Hammet for £700 in 1793. They were probably allowed to fall down until Edward Bainbridge MP sold them from the late 1830s to several builders who built Westgate Street, which was to have pavements and a well in the roadway.<sup>412</sup> To the west lay the Shuttern tollhouse and large, thatched Ivy Cottage of unknown date, demolished in the early 20th century.

In the early 19th century houses were built on former roadside waste south of Upper High Street.<sup>413</sup> The Lawn on Mary Street was built on the site of three burgages by William Kinglake who bought the existing houses in 1799.<sup>414</sup> Later he bought and demolished more property to develop his mid 19th-century Vivary Park estate with large, individual terraced

---

<sup>408</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/1/1 (1862), 24/1/2/66, 70, 72, 78, 93—4, 98—9, 104, 114, 141, 146, 149, 172, 191, 214; DD/X/BUSH/23; *Taunton Courier*, 11 Oct. 1865: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

<sup>409</sup> SHC, DD/VL/1/1.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid. DD/PM/22/2; DD/DP/63/4—5; DD/SF/15/2/83; Q/AGW/1/2. Thomas Burton was the developer: Wilton, forthcoming.

<sup>411</sup> SHC, Q/AC/4; DD/X/BWR/1—3.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid. DD/MC/2; DD/CWC.ta/unlisted box 4; A/AKV/1/1—8; DD/KIT/1/13; tithe award St Mary.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/298 (1807); DD/SP/319/345—6, 352.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/68/7.

houses along Upper High and Mount Streets, many with their backs to the road and private gates into the park.<sup>415</sup>

Mount Street was possibly the late 17th-century road to Pool farm in Wilton and until the early 19th century was known as Carpenters Lane or Barrack Street.<sup>416</sup> At its junction with Mary Street was Spring Island comprising large houses, probably late Georgian and subdivided by 1839, with cottages behind. They were all cleared for road widening and the Memorial Schools c. 1885.<sup>417</sup> Cottages west of Mount Street had lime pits and cloth racks in the 1740s but were cleared by William Kinglake by the 1850s.<sup>418</sup> A terrace opposite was demolished by the Heudebourck family for three large houses and a silk factory before 1822.<sup>419</sup> In 1876 they were bought by the Ministry of War for a military hospital but were demolished by 1880 for a new gatehouse complex.<sup>420</sup> Mount Terrace was built shortly before 1824 with double-fronted four bedroomed houses with attics and porticos, fitted out with china closets and tiled grates.<sup>421</sup>

By 1849 the density of the built-up area had increased and development of two-up, two-down terraces and back to backs had spread to side streets and into Bishops Hull and Wilton parishes including Tangier and Burton Place.<sup>422</sup> Working class housing development spread into North Town from the 1850s. In the 1880s Eastbourne and Haydon Roads with their side streets were developed north of East Reach and linked to the Priory estate. In 1883 John Arundel Winter sold Priory Farm with c. 61 a. It was laid out for small, terraced streets either side of Priory Walk and Lane starting with Gyffarde, St Augustine and Winchester Streets, then Stephen and Laburnum Streets in the 1900s despite a covenant of 1826 that the

---

<sup>415</sup> Ibid. DD/AY/8, 15C, 33B.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/46; T/PH/bb/4; T/PH/cwc.ta/1; DD/AY/15B; DD/SP/311.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid. D/N/tau.mst/5/2/1—8, 6/8; D/B/ta/24/1/17/668; T/PH/cwc.ta/1.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/44/9; DD/AY/15C.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/138/1, pp. 35—6.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. A/ASW/1; below, built character.

<sup>421</sup> Wilts and Swindon History Centre, 2735/1.

<sup>422</sup> SHC, DD/CHA/22; DD/CH/83/5, 84/4; D/B/ta/13/1/1, 24/1/2/67; DD/X/CCE/1/4.

land north of King Street would not be built on.<sup>423</sup> In the 1890s Priory Gate properties were demolished to widen Priory Walk as Priory Avenue and large terraced houses were built in 1899—1901, unusually for the area with bathrooms, and one intended to be a shop.<sup>424</sup> In 1923 undeveloped land was sold to the Priory Land Development Company. Cranmer Road was laid out although the houses were mainly built between 1931 and 1934 after the company sold remaining plots to C.W. Stansell.<sup>425</sup> Semi-detached houses along Priory Bridge Road, many since demolished, and Priory Avenue built in the 1920s and 1930s included eight with wooden balconies.<sup>426</sup> In the 1980s Priory Lodge was converted into four flats and six terraced cottages called Prior's Walk were built in the garden.<sup>427</sup>

In the later 19th century new public buildings were erected notably Shire Hall in 1858 with its 1860s busts of local figures, mostly by Edgar Papworth. Tastes had changed and the 1770 Market Hall was regarded as ugly but attempts to replace it were unsuccessful. Regret for the loss of the medieval market cross led to the building in 1867 of the Kinglake memorial designed by C. E. Giles in the form of a drinking fountain under a tall spire with statues round the centre. There were several impressive late Victorian banks around the Parade often heavily ashlarred and balustraded and a highly decorated four-storeyed Lipton's store with columns and balustrades. A four-arch ground-floor arcade with two entrance doors was a popular feature in Fore Street including the lost County Club with an elaborately pillared façade of pink marble under a heavily bracketed cornice.<sup>428</sup> At 1 Fore Street Marshalsea's 1912 car showroom with pilasters dividing large plate glass windows survived as a bank in 2024.<sup>429</sup>

---

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. DD/AY/150; D/DC/tau.d/25/6 (1028); 25/19 (1883—1931); D/B/ta/24/1/16/607; 24/1/18/712; 24/1/19/769, 787, 789; 24/1/24/1623, 1628, 1640, 1643, 1650; 24/1/35/337, 339.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1895); 24/1/24/1625, 24/1/25/1668, 24/1/29/37.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/25/19 (1883—1931); DD/DP, box 126; D/B/ta/24/1/75/1570.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/55/253, 24/1/59/1046, 24/1/64/1194—5, 24/1/91/2029, 24/1/92/2048.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. DD/WBF/2/124; DD/CWC.ta/7/4.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/106/7; DD/X/WEA/2, p. 36; below, built character.

<sup>429</sup> Below, econ. hist.

### The back courts

Reluctance to develop valuable agricultural land may have led to the paucity of development beyond the medieval town area before the 19th century. Instead houses were divided and burgage plots covered with cottages.<sup>430</sup> The 18th-century ‘colleges’ were reputedly built partly to increase votes for landlord MPs like the Hammets who owned *c.* 50 back court houses.<sup>431</sup> Men’s desire to live within the borough to keep their vote encouraged back court building during the 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1831 the borough population density was 5.75 persons per house.<sup>432</sup>

Some of the earliest back courts were converted inn yards including the New Inn north of East Street closed and divided up between 1707 and 1733.<sup>433</sup> Dyers or Dryers Colleges east of North Street, named after Thomas Dryer locksmith, were recorded by 1724.<sup>434</sup> The Town Lands Charity, the Crown and even a nonconformist minister had back cottages by the 1730s.<sup>435</sup> The decline in population in the mid 18th century reduced back court development for a while, some were even demolished but the later 18th-century recovery led to further courts.<sup>436</sup>

Some newly-built houses in East Street in the 1770s had covenants against building on back gardens but they were exceptional.<sup>437</sup> In the 1930s the borough surveyor found a 1777 datestone in a back court, unfortunately he did not say where, and some leaded casements.<sup>438</sup> A divided house in Paul Street had four back tenements by 1789 in two courts

---

<sup>430</sup> SHC, DD/SP/18/10; 74, ff. 221, 678, 718.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. DD/AY/29.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C1540/1/3, pp. 233—6.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/22.

<sup>434</sup> TNA, PROB 11/600/18; SHC, DD/CH/83/5.

<sup>435</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/6/1/1, 4; DD/DP/9/1; TNA, CRES 2/1156; PROB 11/675/391.

<sup>436</sup> SHC, DD/NW/58; D/DC/tau.d/25/14 (1271).

<sup>437</sup> Ibid. DD/X/UP/3.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/36/15—21.

one of which held 13 houses by 1903.<sup>439</sup> In 1802 the Hammets had at least four courts including Hammet Square. Some court houses were thatched well into the 19th century. House building was profitable, weekly rents varied from 2s. for court houses to £1 13s. for a house in Hammet Street.<sup>440</sup> John Lethbridge was prepared to pay £1,200 for two ‘colleges’ and properties in Hunts Court c. 1810, another man paid £1,750 for three courts at the same date and another gave £440 in 1821 for four new houses built on the site of a two-room cottage.<sup>441</sup>

During the 19th century many courts were accessed through a door from the street, often the entry passage of a once fine building.<sup>442</sup> Most back yards and gardens in High Street and many in East Reach were redeveloped with back courts in the early 19th century.<sup>443</sup> One woman had built nine dwellings on the site of one house by 1823, in 1826 her neighbour increased his court of three cottages to eight and in the 1830s a shopkeeper replaced one house with nine dwellings.<sup>444</sup> In 1842 builder George Herniman had just completed 16 houses, many in courts, and was about to demolish an old house near the hospital to build two having already built a court of five houses behind. He built and owned many houses including Somerset Place and had his own brick kiln.<sup>445</sup> King, Queen and Wood Streets were built with back courts. Builder Thomas Moggridge, owned or developed courts and cottage property, many of which the family still owned in 1950.<sup>446</sup>

A 126-ft garden east of High Street was developed between 1788 and 1810 with houses on Pig Market or Rossiter’s Lane to which were added Woodfords Buildings, 12 back

<sup>439</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/25/13 (1366).

<sup>440</sup> Ibid. T/PH/dvs/1; A/DIF/116/223; Wilts and Swindon History Centre, 1075/001/396.

<sup>441</sup> SHC, DD/AY/29; DD/SP/181 (1821).

<sup>442</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/298 (1736).

<sup>443</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/180 (1813).

<sup>444</sup> Ibid. DD/CH/16, 118/2; 138/1, pp. 72—3.

<sup>445</sup> TNA, PROB 11/1966/338; SHC, A/BLQ/78/1—2.

<sup>446</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/25/1680; D/B/ta/24/1/29/2/14, 40; D/B/ta/24/1/52/858/872; DD/IR/T/26/3, p. 18, 68; DD/X/SOM/4; TNA, IR 58/82644/109.

to backs built by William Woodford c. 1840.<sup>447</sup> A nearby garden had six houses built on it between 1775 and 1816.<sup>448</sup> James Poole probably built Fox and Goose or Thunderbolt College, Court 7, before 1755 and bricklayer Richard Collard began Collard's College, Court 8, by 1730. Each had 12 to 14 houses by 1831, some subdivided later.<sup>449</sup> Courts west of High Street were mainly developed in the early 19th century often replacing large houses built in back gardens like Court 18 built between 1808 and 1821.<sup>450</sup> Stable conversions included 'a most wretched hovel & not sufficient property on the premises to pay the rates' in 1821, a Paul Street stableyard replaced between 1827 and 1849 by Mount Cottages and Chapel Terrace and The Plough inn stables, Station Road, converted shortly before 1864.<sup>451</sup> In 1871 workshops and storerooms in Foundry Square and South Street were converted into dwellings.<sup>452</sup>

As soon as the Crescent was finished it acquired back courts known as St Georges Place, Oliver Place and Victoria Place, the first two developed from the 1820s.<sup>453</sup> In 1827 Stower's College, Upper High Street was offered for sale with 10 tenements and room for 12 more but was demolished in the 1850s for a police station.<sup>454</sup> Densely packed courts north and south of Upper High Street and Shuttern included Rice's and Norman's Colleges, condemned in the 1860s but inhabited until the 1930s.<sup>455</sup> By 1837 there were reportedly 50 back courts in the town some belonging to charities.<sup>456</sup> The main phase of town centre court building was apparently before 1849 and probably accounted for many of the over 1,300 houses built between 1811 and 1841. Subdivision increased and in the 1860s some houses

---

<sup>447</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/13/1/1; D/DC/tau,d/25/16 (1278); DD/PM/8/2/50 & 50a.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau,d/25/15 (1539).

<sup>449</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/8/17, 80/1; D/DC/tau,d/25/14 (1692).

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. DD/BR/gd/1—2; D/B/ta/3/1/1; D/DC/tau,d/25/8 (1401).

<sup>451</sup> Ibid. D/P/tau.m/13/10/2; D/DC/tau,d/25/15 (unnumbered); DD/KIT/8/12.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/44; D/B/ta/3/1/1 (1871), 24/1/8/250.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid. DD/BR/me/15.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C2402/23.

<sup>455</sup> TNA, CRES 2/1156; SHC, DD/CHA/22; DD/CH/128/4; D/B/ta/2/1/4 (1865); D/B/ta/13/1/1.

<sup>456</sup> SHC, DD/CH/84/1; DD/HS/2/9.

had rooms without windows.<sup>457</sup> As late as 1885 houses were added to courts but the borough council turned down such an application in 1887.<sup>458</sup>

Before they were assigned numbers in the late 19th century courts were named after their owners, builders or the public house whose yard they occupied.<sup>459</sup> The White Lion north of East Street had its yard and garden covered with tiny dwellings, most built between the 1830s and 1850s when 12 houses in White Lion Court and eight in White Lion Garden were bought to expand a factory.<sup>460</sup> Over 90 named courts were recorded in 1876, including 21 off High Street. Some housed business.<sup>461</sup> As well as having houses in their yards some public houses were sited in courts like the Bell, Saracen's Head and Crown and Mitre.<sup>462</sup>

Courts were built beyond the central area including North Town Crescent 1842—3, and parallel Box Cottages replacing a house and garden on Black Horse Lane.<sup>463</sup> The Whitehall courts were built in the 1860s some by William Holway who later developed Plais Street and part of Rowbarton.<sup>464</sup> By 1910 tiny houses off Silver and South Streets included Cooksley's, Fouracre and Standfast's Buildings, which at least had gardens, and 33 four-roomed dwellings in Cottage and Savery Rows, which looked onto the brickyard, but are the sole survivors of South Street's back rows. However, new houses have been built on back land in the area.<sup>465</sup>

Condemnation and closure of courts began *c.* 1900, in 1901 246 houses were uninhabited, by 1933 598 houses were scheduled for clearance but in 1936 despite some demolition there were 1,076 unfit houses. Princes Street, barely 50 years old, Union Gate and Somerset Place were also condemned and demolished, the last replaced by low-rise flats on

---

<sup>457</sup> *Census*, 1811—61; SHC, DD/CHA/22; D/B/ta/24/1/3/95.

<sup>458</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/19/784; D/DC/tau.d/36/15—21; D/B/ta/4/3/1 (1887); TNA, IR 58/82645—8.

<sup>459</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/13 (1366); 15 [unnumbered]; DD/AY/173; A/EMA/1.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.* DD/BR/hck/1; DD/SP/416.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* DD/TBL/5; A/CMY/455.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/24/1/11/307; 24/1/16/645, 664; 24/1/104/2801; DD/CWC/ta/unlisted; QS/LIC/1/5 (1906—7).

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.* DD/X/MAL/1; D/B/ta/13/1/1; DD/X/TSB/1.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.* D/B/ta/3/1/1 (1863), 24/1/4/115, 24/1/5/135; DD/HS/2/25.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.* DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/14; DD/X/TRE/2; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.18 (1888); TNA, IR 58/82648—9, 82651.

the south and the north side thrown into Victoria Park. Clearances changed the built character of the town and removed a substantial population to the suburbs.<sup>466</sup>

There are a few back court survivors like Victoria Mews, part of the former White Lion Court, and behind a door in St James Street one house from Anstey Place. Most demolished courts reverted to business use or became car parks.<sup>467</sup> New dwellings were prohibited on clearance areas but in the late 20th and early 21st century that was ignored. Florence Road off Kingston Road, Union Gate and Somerset Place have new houses, Pegasus Court was built on the site of Denmark Place and new back courts were built off Albemarle Road and Alma, Duke, Magdalene and Middle Streets, often with poor access, limited light and no outdoor space.<sup>468</sup>

### Suburbs: East Reach

East Reach, Est Rygge in 1489, or Extra Portam, outside the east gate, was probably ‘the suburb’ of 1278 and the 14th-century ‘town outside the gate’, a ribbon development possibly originally housing the poor.<sup>469</sup> Gloverstrete, recorded in 1360—1, was in Extra Portam as were String Lane and String Gate in 1660.<sup>470</sup> By 1566 there were at least 80 cottages, some subdivided, south of East Reach, where three new ‘mansions’ were building, and in Silver and South Streets, including new cottages.<sup>471</sup> Before 1639 new houses were built on an acre of overland in Extra Portam.<sup>472</sup> A three-storey stone house with five-light ground and first-floor windows survived north of East Reach subdivided as Gadds Court and later a garage

<sup>466</sup> *Census*, 1901; SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/1 (1901); 4/2/2 (1903, 1912, 1917); 4/2/3; D/DC/tau.d/36/19—20.

<sup>467</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/36/15—21; D/B/ta/4/2/3.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/2/3; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/23 (11 ).

<sup>469</sup> L. Landon, *Som. Pleas* 1275—9, 146; TNA, CP 40/907 image 1263: [www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40](http://www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40) accessed May 2021; R.E. Glasscock, *Subsidy of 1334* (1975), 265; SHC, A/BFA/3.

<sup>470</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1360—1; DD/SP/338.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/71 [ff. 58—63]; 72, ff. 8, 13.

<sup>472</sup> TNA, PROB 11/179/424.

until demolished to build a petrol station.<sup>473</sup> The site of 11 other houses, six said to be burnt in the Civil War, was not redeveloped until Sydenham Place and adjoining terraces were built in the early 1840s. Other house sites were in industrial use.<sup>474</sup> Large houses at the bottom of East Reach included Belle Vue Terrace by George Herniman soon after 1828, Laurel and East Cottages, both with houses built behind them, and Windsor Terrace. All but the last were destroyed in the 1970s for a new road.<sup>475</sup> Union Gate, Union Place, possibly named for union with Ireland, Victoria Gate, Somerset, later Alfred, Street and Somerset Place were laid out from the early 19th century although some were not completed for another century.<sup>476</sup>

House plots south of East Reach were much narrower than those on the north indicating divided burgages and until the 19th century most were thatched and had gardens later sold for development.<sup>477</sup> Several, since demolished, had mansard roofs, unusual in Taunton and 151 had ‘old beams’ on the first floor until 1929.<sup>478</sup> Following enfranchisement in 1822 of land behind the built-up area, Queen, Trinity, Union, Viney and Victoria Streets were laid out and largely built up by 1849 including three-storeyed Victoria Terraces of c. 1840. The largest terrace was demolished c. 1960 to expand the Van Heusen factory.<sup>479</sup> Yew Tree Terrace and the lost Dart’s Buildings were among the earliest houses on Queen Street.<sup>480</sup> Even later houses in Princes and Lower Queen streets, mostly demolished, were built in vernacular cottage style alongside streets of bay-windowed parlour houses and three-storey houses like Gordon Terrace of c. 1900.<sup>481</sup> Parlour bay windows became standard in most streets from the 1880s. Private working class housing changed little until the 1930s as

---

<sup>473</sup> *Kelly’s Dir. Som.* (1914); *Kelly’s Dir. Taunton* (1929), 26; SHC, A/DAS/2 (12321); T/PH/rea/3/126; D/B/ta/24/1/16/607; A/DIF/44.

<sup>474</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/19 (581); DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 67—8; DD/SP/411 (1819), 416 (1859); DD/SAS/C212/MAP151.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.* DD/CH/83/5, 110/11; DD/SAS/C2401/69; D/B/ta/3/36/1, *passim*; A/DQO/404/8/35, 45.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.* D/DC/tau.d/25/18 (deeds 1830—1913); A/BLQ/78/1—2; D/B/ta/24/1/20/845, 24/1/93/2058.

<sup>477</sup> Goldsworthy, *Recollections*, 3; DD/SP/416.

<sup>478</sup> N. Chipchase, *Taunton Past and Present* (Stroud, 2000), 30, 74; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/71/1461.

<sup>479</sup> SHC, DD/HS/1/1—2, 2/8; DD/CH/138/1, pp. 38—9; DD/DP/178/1; A/DIF/116 (14726).

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.* tithe award St Mary; DD/CHA/22; D/B/ta/13/1/1; 24/1/2/67.

<sup>481</sup> TNA, IR 58/82645—8; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/23/951—3, 24/1/87/1897.

builders continued working to the same designs.<sup>482</sup> In Trinity Street large terraced houses with ashlar or rendered fronts were built c. 1850 opposite the church. Brown-brick cottages in Church and Trinity Streets built from the 1830s were joined by standard bay-window terraces in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>483</sup> Further east Gray's almshouse land sold in 1880, was developed into Gray's Road, Blake Street completed in 1892 and Noble Street in 1894.<sup>484</sup>

### Suburbs: North Town

North Town, recorded by name from 1331, was in existence by the 13th century and later included the large Flook and Yard estates.<sup>485</sup> Bridge Street was often called Norton or North Town Street in the 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>486</sup>

In 1276 Cock or Cocks Street was an area as well as a street.<sup>487</sup> The street was apparently L-shaped with houses adjoining Grassgrove in 1320 and was presumably modern Bridge Street and Station Road. It was also known as Cocks Lane as was the later Back or Rosemary Lane, now Black Horse Lane.<sup>488</sup> The back lane emerged opposite Flook House until it was cut short in 1825—6 when Flook Cottages were built across.<sup>489</sup> Later Rose Cottages were built opposite but both terraces were demolished in the mid 20th century.<sup>490</sup> Also east of Bridge Street, Goodlands Lane, was the road to North Town wharf, re-aligned in the 1840s to give better access to industrial sites.<sup>491</sup> Opposite was the lane to Dyers Green,

---

<sup>482</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/25/1666, 24/1/65/1236, 24/1/69/1372.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/12/449; 24/1/13/464; 24/1/18/744; 24/1/20/817, 820. A few cottages have rubble back walls, reputedly waste from building the church.

<sup>484</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/6/1/6; D/B/ta/24/1/14/543, 24/1/20/806, 4/3/1 (1884).

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/N/65; D/P/tau.ja/23/13; Highclere Ho., box FF/B3, no. 7.

<sup>486</sup> SHC, DD/CH/78/5; DD/CHA/22; DD/CWC.ta/unlisted box 5; DD/TAC/5/5/55.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/TN/59a, 65. Name derivation obscure as the usual meanings seem inappropriate: Smith *Place Name Elements I*, 104.

<sup>488</sup> BL, Add. MS 30289; SHC, SP/2 (Staplegrave 100, 7 Oct 1568), DD/SP/18/79, 83; D/B/ta/24/1/6/161; A/DAS/2 (12396); DD/TAC/6/1/4.

<sup>489</sup> SHC, DD/DP/133; DD/KIT/17/4, 20; A/DAS/2 (12396); tithe award, St James.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid. DD/VL/1/7.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid. tithe award, St James; DD/CWC/ta/unlisted G/2468; DD/CC/21.

still named in the 1860s, now the southern section of Wood Street leading to Tangier Way.<sup>492</sup> Although North Town suffered during the Civil War a possible medieval house with a jettied upper floor and thatched roof survived in Bridge Street in the 1840s, probably the site of the later Telegraph.<sup>493</sup> Houses near Black Horse Lane said to protrude into the street may also have been jettied and were demolished in the late 1840s to widen the road. Other early houses on the corner with Station Road were rebuilt in the 1860s.<sup>494</sup>

Until the mid 19th century the west side of Bridge Street was occupied by Yard House grounds.<sup>495</sup> The George or great steps recorded until 1779 or later indicate the roadway was much lower than adjoining pavements and buildings. The steps and ‘plank’, presumably over the gutter, were the responsibility of St James’ waywardens. The ‘lower steps’ in 1844 possibly accessed Yard House.<sup>496</sup> From the 1850s to 1880s the Yard estate was developed including the Wood Street triangle, with its back courts like Quicke’s Square, Yarde Place, originally Back Lane, and Portland Street.<sup>497</sup> Greenbrook Terrace was started in the early 1870s and Cleveland Street was laid out in 1887, although neither was completed until the 1930s.<sup>498</sup> On Bridge Street large terraced houses were built in the mid 19th century including two in gothic style. Some were demolished in the 1960s for a supermarket and shops, set back to allow future widening of Bridge Street.<sup>499</sup>

Good 19th-century buildings south-east of Bridge Street include the three-storey shop probably built for furnishers Lawrence and Thompson with arched and pillared 1st-floor windows divided by full height pilasters and former Bridge House, now offices, whose large walled garden was built over in the 1900s to provide porticoed premises for Goodlands, coal

<sup>492</sup> Ibid. DD/BK/2/2/1; D/b/ta/24/1/5/116, 24/1/6/174—6.

<sup>493</sup> Drawing by Thomas Ellis Manning in N. Chipchase, *Taunton Remembered*, 30.

<sup>494</sup> SHC, DD/CC/21; DD/TA/5/5/55; *Taunton Courier* 29 March 1837: BNA accessed 23 Nov. 2021; Goldsworthy, *Recollections*, 5.

<sup>495</sup> SHC, tithe award, St James.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/72, 74; DD/BR/py/120; DD/SAS/C112/18/3; DD/TAC/5/5/3.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/13/1/1 (1870—1), 24/1/1/25, 36, 38, 47, 50, 54, 24/1/6/174—6, 24/1/7/212; A/EHX/1.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/2016/48; D/B/ta/4/3/1 (1887); 24/1/21/896—7, 24/1/86/1860.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/37/1, pp. 509, 615; 24/1/1/65, 24/1/3/80.

merchants. Two art deco buildings are the 1937 former Spiller and Webber store on the corner of Goodlands Lane and the 1922 river frontage to former Deller's cafe.<sup>500</sup> A scheme to preserve riverside warehouses was abandoned and they were demolished for flats and supermarket parking in 1993.<sup>501</sup>

The lane with houses west of Bridge St in 1497 may have been Staplegrove Road, which had at least two public houses at the town end in the 17th century.<sup>502</sup> The cottages west of Chip Lane and their gardens, later car parking, were possible encroachments on a wide junction or fair ground. Some 18th and early 19th-century cottages remain but others were replaced by the rebuilt and extended Kings Arms in 1910 and flats in Elm Parade in the later 20th century. Vine Terrace off Chip Lane was built from 1867.<sup>503</sup> There was a scatter of houses beyond including at least one house at Frieze Hill c. 1605 but most date from the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>504</sup> Flook Villa, new in 1811, Flook Terrace and large detached houses further west and north were partly developed by the Hallidays of Yard from the early 19th century.<sup>505</sup> Later houses include Holly Lodge and the Laurels, home of architect Charles Samson who built the block of half-timbered, lattice-windowed offices in the garden extended as a billiard room in 1878—9 and reputedly with glass by Burne Jones.<sup>506</sup> On the south side Sydney Terrace was built c. 1866, Northbrook Lodge, Northfield, Grassendale (1879) and Hamdon Villas, now the Blorengre hotel, had been built by 1880 and cottages near the turning to French Weir were extensively remodelled in the late 19th-century.<sup>507</sup> North of the lane were larger houses; Weir Lodge, Weirfield House, built after 1851 and now

---

<sup>500</sup> Ibid. A/DAS/2/12281, 13264; A/DQO/404/43/7, 9.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid. A/DQO/404/7/1—3; DD/SML/6, pp. 52—3; DD/X/WEA/5; PAM 1188.

<sup>502</sup> BL, Add. Ch. 25901; SHC, DD/BK/2/2/1; DD/SAS/C795/TN/44 (1646); DD/SP/18/41, 43, 46, 334, f. 38d; DD/SP/98 (1652).

<sup>503</sup> SHC, DD/AY/144; D/B/ta/3/37/2, p. 373; 4/2/4 (1955); 24/1/7/197—8.

<sup>504</sup> Harley and Dunning, *Som. Maps*, 1782; SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 95—6.

<sup>505</sup> SHC, DD/SP/319/259; tithe award, St James; D/B/ta/24/1/40/520; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 98.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/13/483; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/11; VCH Office, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 465—6.

<sup>507</sup> SHC, D/T/ta/12, p. 244; D/B/ta/3/1/1 (1870); DD/DP/68/4; A/ADR, vol. 1 (1870s); DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 99; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

demolished, and possible 18th-century, rubble Frieze Hill farmhouse now Weirfield Cottage.<sup>508</sup> French Weir Road or Avenue was developed from the 1880s with houses on the south side and side streets, some reputedly designed by Edwin Thomas. Riverside was not finished until 1910 and Northfield until the 1930s.<sup>509</sup> The north side was completed with semi-detached houses and a medical centre in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>510</sup>

Land either side of Staplegrove Road formed part of the Elms estate, formerly Young's nursery and gardens. In 1860 2 a. was sold to a builder and the rest in 1872.<sup>511</sup> At Frieze Hill Richmond Road, with a gravel quarry not built on until 1980, was laid out in 1875 followed by Woodstock Road, both with large semi-detached buff-brick villas with attics. Later Richmond Road was extended west with modest terraced houses getting smaller in Palmerston Road and Roseberry Terrace beyond the 1890s glove factory, which probably influenced development. Palmerston Road was extended north in the late 20th century including Disraeli Place.<sup>512</sup> On Staplegrove Road beyond the cemetery Fairwater Terrace built from 1879 includes wide gothic-style houses and plainer houses with attic dormers. Prospect Villas of the same date were replaced in the early 20th century by a terrace of three houses over basements and four behind constituting Higher Palmerston Road.<sup>513</sup> Beyond them beside the former canal are two terraces of cottages also built in 1879—80.<sup>514</sup>

North of Staplegrove Road was Fairwater Villa, built in the 1860s for canal superintendent Henry John Smith but destroyed in the mid 20th century for railway sidings, and three early 19th-century houses in large grounds, now built over. The Elms, now

---

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. A/CMY/455; Q/RDe/165/G.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/9; D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1895); D/B/ta/24/1/23/980; 24/1/42/560; 24/1/77/1613, 1625, 24/1/1/2085.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/150/9181.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. DD/AY/331; DD/SAS/C795/TN/167/1.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/10/324, 24/1/25/1676, 24/1/28/1826; DD/WBF/6.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/13/509; DD/SAS/C 795/SX/7.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C 795/SX/7.

subdivided and Ashleigh, a nursing home have been attributed to Richard Carver.<sup>515</sup> The Cottage, later Elmhurst and subdivided, had vaulted basement cellarage, Tudor-style chimneys, elaborate wooden gabled dormers and a large veranda.<sup>516</sup> Although the former nursery was not developed as originally planned, large semi-detached and terraced houses were built from the 1880s to 1900s on Elm, Linden and Birch Groves and the Avenue.<sup>517</sup> From the 1920s many were divided into flats and smaller semi-detached houses were added as Elms Grove.<sup>518</sup> The streets were planted with trees and a tennis garden formed an open square.<sup>519</sup> Staplegrove Road remains one of the town's most attractive streets with a great variety of mature trees.

On lower Kingston, now Station, Road houses were built before 1660 north of the Blackpool on former gravel pits but by 1731 they were ruinous.<sup>520</sup> From the 1850s to 1880s small houses were built along Canal, formerly Firepool, Road.<sup>521</sup> The older cottages, described in 1903 as 'The Old Cockpit', the former farmhouse renamed Rose Cottage, Foster's Cottages and Grassgrove Terrace were demolished in the mid 20th century.<sup>522</sup> South of the Blackpool Barre House was described in 1678 as lately erected. By 1704 adjoining houses included the later Crown and Sceptre, a four-bay, cross-passage, brick house with thatched roof and rendered frontage demolished in 1900.<sup>523</sup> Barre House, last recorded in 1708, was possibly on the site of Georgian Blackpool, later North Town House.<sup>524</sup> It was a three-storey house with attics at right angles to the road in a walled garden. The five-bay

---

<sup>515</sup> Ibid. tithe map St James; DD/FIV/5/368; SWHT, Som. HER 32386; VCH office, Taunton, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 110.

<sup>516</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/20.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. A/DWX/13/4; A/CMY/489; A/DWX/13/4; D/B/ta/3/9/1 (1880), 4/3/2 (1896), 24/1/13/498, 24/1/22/917, 24/1/24/1614, 24/1/28/1823, 1829; DD/DP/204/1.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/59/1070, 24/1/60/1080, 1086, 24/1/64/1204, 24/1/65/1247, 24/1/103/2710.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid. A/BKQ/2.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/TN/131; DD/SP/79 (1660), 18/129.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/1/2, 11, 23, 44; 24/1/3/82; 24/1/4/108—9, 113; 24/1/5/144; 3/1/1 (1862, 1870); A/AOF/1.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid. DD/HS/1/5; DD/DP/69/8; A/DIF/116; D/B/ta/3/25/2, p. 207; 3/25/4, pp. 150, 237—8, 248.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. Q/RLa/191/1 (1676); DD/DP/8/4, 73/5; A/DAS/2 (12386—7); DD/KIT/12/10.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. DD/DP/73/5.

south front had sash widows and an ornamental trellis porch replaced by a veranda before 1879.<sup>525</sup> It was later converted into shops with more built on its garden.<sup>526</sup> Several large houses were replaced by mid-19th century attached villas in walled gardens, one of which survives as shops. Cottages at the south end of the road were replaced at various dates by terraced houses several with decorative brickwork and one of 1887 with elaborate stone decoration destroyed by modern shopfronts.<sup>527</sup>

The west side of the road was largely occupied by the Flook House estate until the mid 19th century probably including Whitehall, a small farm in the 17th and 18th centuries, replaced by a one-sided street of small terraced houses and back courts facing the Grand Western Canal.<sup>528</sup> Three-storey shops and houses were built in Station Road from the 1840s in named terraces, Albemarle Street was half completed by 1880, followed by Belvedere Road in the 1880s.<sup>529</sup> In 1907 the George inn and part of Flook House grounds were bought to widen the road and all the terraced houses gradually lost their front gardens as they became shops during the 20th century.<sup>530</sup>

### Rowbarton

Roughbarton in 1459 and 1526, presumably named from a farm, Rowbarton was largely agricultural until the 19th century.<sup>531</sup> Early roadside development along Greenway Lane and Kingston Road included a thatched smithy, recorded in 1750, replaced by early 20th-century shops and a garage.<sup>532</sup> Cottages at the Greenway junction probably replaced a farmhouse and

---

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. T/PH/rea/2/8; DD/CHA/24.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/101/15/301.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. T/PH/rea/1/104—5; D/B/ta/24/1/21/902.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid. DD/X/HPS/4 (1641/2); DD/SP/79 (1661), 253 (1791); tithe award, St James.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. DD/KIT/8/12; DD/CHA/22; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/4; D/B/ta/24/1/10/228; 24/1/12/410, 415, 450; 24/1/15/552; 24/1/19/785

<sup>530</sup> Ibid. A/DSG/1; A/DIF/44; D/B/ta/28/1810, 1855, 1857; 24/1/31/205, 224, 235; 24/1/36/391; 24/1/37/419, 431; 24/1/39/464, 478; 24/1/41/545; 24/1/42/559, 570; 24/1/43/593.

<sup>531</sup> Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/6; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/91; DD/SP/334, f. 15; DD/HC/2/14/1.

<sup>532</sup> SHC, tithe award, St James; DD/SAS/C/2550/12; A/DAS/2 (12384—5).

behind were Hayman's 11 cottages possibly of 1831, demolished as slums.<sup>533</sup> Further north were long terraces on roadside waste west of Kingston Road including the Cottage Inn, the Halfway House in 1793, as far as Keates Cottages, the end of the built-up area until the mid 20th century. Most were demolished c. 1971 for road widening.<sup>534</sup> Across the road Rowbarton brewery was demolished c. 1980 and with surrounding land developed as Arnold and Rowbarton closes.<sup>535</sup>

Further north Wellsprings House, a former farmhouse, was built of cob c. 1600 and enlarged in the 19th century.<sup>536</sup> Of the hamlet at Hope Corner only late Georgian Hope Corner House survives, much altered, extended and divided into five dwellings called Bishops Mead.<sup>537</sup> Beyond is Okehill, a former farmhouse on land of that name recorded from 1410, rebuilt as a private residence c. 1830. Its large walled garden survives.<sup>538</sup>

Rowbarton grew rapidly after the railway opened. Cherry Grove east of Kingston Road was sold in building lots in 1860 and by 1880 Taunton Terrace and 30 houses called Cherry Grove were complete but Pyrland Terrace was unfinished.<sup>539</sup> Across the road Rowbarton Villas, later clergy houses, replaced six cottages c. 1861 and Rock House built in 1885 was shortly after absorbed into a terrace.<sup>540</sup> Wealthy builder's merchant Thomas Penny (d. 1906), his son Thomas (d. 1944) and William Brice of Bridgwater laid out Grove Terrace c. 1867, followed by many others.<sup>541</sup>

Greenway Lane, later Road, had thatched cottages with leaded windows on the north side, probably a former farmhouse and added cottages, partly demolished in the early 20th

---

<sup>533</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/257 (1831); A/BLQ/26/1—6.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid. DD/FIV/1/15, 53; DD/DP/C1358/38; DD/HCK/6/2/6; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; Q/RLa/19/10; D/P/tau.a/2/9/7.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid. DD/HCK/6/2/6, 8; DD/US/529/10.

<sup>536</sup> PSAS CXXIII (1979), 140. Suffered a severe fire in 2023.

<sup>537</sup> SHC, A/DIF/44.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. T/PH/win 1409—10, DD/MT/1/2; DD/DP/8/1; Q/REI/35/24 (1810—32); DD/DP/9/14, 66/8; tithe award, St James; Pigot *Dir. Som.* (1830); Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>539</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a/2/9/7 (1860); D/T/ta/12, p. 180; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; D/B/ta/24/1/18/711.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 100; D/B/ta/24/1/20/802, 24/1/21/891.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid. D/P/tau.a/18/1/1; D/B/ta/24/1/3/100; 24/1/7/185—6, 203.

century for a garage. The remainder were remodelled as a row of four Gothic cottages and a similar row was built behind. Adjoining Laurel Terrace was built in 1880 and Greenway Terrace in 1879. Many Greenway Road houses have decorative detailing.<sup>542</sup> Further west semi-detached houses including College Road were built in the 1890s.<sup>543</sup> In 1885 Thomas Penny bought the Greenway farm estate and developed terraced Cyril, Frederick, Herbert, Maxwell, Thomas and William Streets named after family members, Asquith, Gladstone, Harcourt, Roseberry, Salisbury, Fowler and Jubilee Streets and further north Clifford Avenue. His son Thomas oversaw completion by several builders, some in Salisbury and Leslie Streets by the Taunton Co-operative Society. Their bay-windowed terraces often had glass-roofed yards but few had bathrooms.<sup>544</sup> Clifford Avenue, Whitmore, Lewis and Turner Roads of mainly semi-detached houses were completed in the 1930s.<sup>545</sup> Frederick Street was later renamed Greenway Avenue and Cyril Street's east end was renamed Rupert Street in the late 20th century when a small housing estate was built on the former Avimo factory site.<sup>546</sup> In 1911 the remainder of Greenway farm was sold for additional development including local authority housing at Leslie Street, later Avenue, c. 1915.<sup>547</sup> Greenway Crescent was developed in the 1930s.<sup>548</sup> Greenway farmhouse and cottage were demolished in the 1960s for 70 houses in small terraces in Spencer Avenue and Winston Close.<sup>549</sup>

Cheddon Road had only two houses in 1839 including Cockleshell, now Shell Cottage, 18th-century or older. Formerly Wedland Cottage it was renamed in 1831 after

---

<sup>542</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/11/386; A/DIF/44.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/25/1657, 1659.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. A/EMA/1; DD/DP/201/2—3; D/B/ta/24/1/21/870, 893; 24/1/23/963, 976, 978, 994; /24/1/22/913, 24/1/24/1603, 1629; 24/1/27/1783; 24/1/41/542; D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1899); D/DC/tau.d unlisted box 17, 1943—5 (obit. July 1944).

<sup>545</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/58/1034, 24/1/61/1160, 24/1/64/1194—5, 24/1/65/1231, 24/1/67/1294, 24/1/71/1412, 24/1/76/1583, 24/1/84/1795, 1797; DD/FIV/10/10.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid. A/DIF/44.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/25/3 (56); D/B/ta/24/1/33/296, 308, 310.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/76/1599; 24/1/83/1764.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid. DD/X/WI/13.

being decorated with shells and became a beerhouse.<sup>550</sup> On the west Edward Jeboult's Sunny Bank of 1861 included Denmark Terrace and nine cottages built to resemble one large house sharing a communal garden. Despite being badly built with the closets off the kitchens or in basements flushing into a stream they survived until 1956 and were replaced in the 1960s with local authority houses and flats. Part of Denmark Terrace remains accessed from a back alley. Oak Cottages of 1864 were demolished c. 1961 but Brook Cottages survive on Enmore Road, Maida Vale in 1902.<sup>551</sup> The southern end of Cheddon Road was developed with large terraced houses and modest side streets including Portman Street and Belgrave Cottages, later Road, from the late 1870s and Peter and George Streets from 1890.<sup>552</sup> In the 1930s semi-detached houses were built in Ethpark Grove off Peter Street.<sup>553</sup>

### Southern suburban development

Although South Street's many back courts and terraces like Hill Place were cleared in the mid 20th century it retains good terraces like the Hernimans' 1840s Hill and Holway Terraces some with hooded doorways and older Camden Place on the west side and the more modest mid 19th-century Albert and Highclere Terraces on the east. The larger Highclere and Southfield, rebuilt as two houses between 1839 and 1845, survive greatly altered.<sup>554</sup> Holway Road was built up mainly in the early 20th century with terraces and semi-detached houses. The larger Holway Hill terraces were built unusually with their backs to the road accessed by a private side street.<sup>555</sup>

<sup>550</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; tithe award, St James; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 104.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid. A/EPF/250/4/1 (1873, p. 17; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; D/P/tau.a/2/9/7; T/PH/rea/1/51, 104—5; 2/90; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3; D/B/ta/24/1/142/8421; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 180.

<sup>552</sup> SHC, DD/HCK/6/2/8; D/B/ta/24/1/12/428, 431; 24/1/13/490; 24/1/15/567, 572, 595; 24/1/17/666; 24/1/21/872; 24/1/28/1824; DD/DP/201/1.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/91/2037—8, 24/1/99/2270.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid. tithe award St Mary; DD/SP/184 (Aug. 1843, 1845); OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.18 (1888); TNA, IR 58/82648.

<sup>555</sup> TNA, IR 58/82655, 82657; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/25/1666, 24/1/65/1236.

In South Road, the extension of Silver Street, few houses beyond the former convent predate 1839 but include rendered Waterslade 24, possibly 18th century or earlier and Waterslade House 28 behind, attributed to Richard Carver.<sup>556</sup> Further south Elmfield Cottage 48 may be late Georgian, Elmfield 54, now part of Richard Huish college, was rebuilt before 1865 in buff and red brick with elaborate stone windows and open porch, and Meadow Bank 78 with fretted gables may be early 19th-century.<sup>557</sup> Possibly dating from the 1840s are 90—2 and 102 in banded stone. Opposite the convent four large houses were built, two before 1839, at Tauntfield, a former brickfield east of the road further developed in 1977—81, and *c.* 1900 Tauntfield Terrace, seven three-storey houses, one with contemporary veranda and stained glass, was added.<sup>558</sup> After the building of Taunton College School, later King's College, Holway Avenue was developed piecemeal from the late 19th to mid 20th century including the decorative King's Terrace of nine houses.<sup>559</sup> Further south large houses in many styles were built from *c.* 1860 to 1881 as Mountlands and by 1910 houses lined South Road almost as far as Shoreditch.<sup>560</sup> Mountway and Freemantle Roads, Tamar Avenue and many houses on Stoke Road date from the 1920s.<sup>561</sup> From the 1930s Fullands Avenue and Road and bungalows south of Stoke Road were laid out on Dowsland farm.<sup>562</sup> Gordon Close was intended to form part of a large 1933 estate on Poole farm but the area was not fully developed until the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>563</sup> The former convent and its grounds were redeveloped for flats and terraced housing from the late 20th century as Annecy Court, St Joseph's Field and Kings Square.<sup>564</sup>

<sup>556</sup> SHC, tithe award, St Mary; VCH Office, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 110.

<sup>557</sup> SHC, T/PH/rea/3/125.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid. tithe award, St Mary; DD/X/SML/8, p. 54; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.23; TNA, IR 58/651.

<sup>559</sup> SHC, tithe award, St Mary; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.23.

<sup>560</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/15/578, 581—2; TNA, IR 58/82652—3.

<sup>561</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/59/1062, 1066—7, 1072, 24/1/60/1075, 1091, 1098—1100, 24/1/61/1117, 1123, 1129, 24/1/63/1177, 24/1/65/1232, 24/1/68/1300, 24/1/70/1401, 1405, 24/1/73/1501.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/81/1719, 24/1/84/1809, 1822.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/85/1828, 1842, 1848, 24/1/144/8553.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. DD/X/WBB/1050.

### The 20th-century town

East of the workhouse Poor Grounds (15 a.) were sold in 1905 and the Eastleigh Road estate of 331 terraced houses was designed by F.W. Roberts. Only the west side was completed before 1910. The rest was used for allotments until developed in the 1930s.<sup>565</sup> Moor farmhouse, possibly retaining part of the 16th century house, was demolished in the 1920s.<sup>566</sup> The yard remained until the 2010s when social housing apartments with residential staff were built there.

By the 1920s the town and its old suburbs were densely built with little open space, which the council tried to incorporate its own large residential developments. Local authority housing began in 1913 in String Lane, renamed Leycroft Road, whose old houses including a thatched farmhouse divided into cottages were condemned and demolished in 1937.<sup>567</sup> By 1918 the council planned more houses and built Addison Grove off Leslie Avenue, in 1921.<sup>568</sup> The northern end of Cheddon Road and side roads like St George's Avenue were developed from the 1920s with small terraces, semi-detached houses and bungalows, but many still without bathrooms. Eastwick Avenue, formerly Shell Lane, was laid out and developed from 1922—3 followed by Colin Road and Avenue in the 1930s.<sup>569</sup> In the centre The Parade became a carpark until planted as a garden surrounded by bus stops in the early 1930s involving the loss of the Kinglake memorial, cabman's shelter and bust of Sir Alexander Acland-Hood M.P. (d. 1911).<sup>570</sup>

Following a 1946 proposal to rebuild, town planning consultant Thomas Sharp published his 1948 plans to replace 'outworn' areas, create new neighbourhoods, remove

<sup>565</sup> Ibid. DD/CWC.ta/unlisted, box 4 (1905); D/B/ta/24/1/96/2150, 24/1/97/2196; TNA, IR 58/82653, 82655—6.

<sup>566</sup> TNA, PROB 11/67/13; SHC, DD/X/BHS/3; DD/SAS/C1540/1/3.

<sup>567</sup> OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.14 (1888); SHC, A/EPF/250/4/3 (1913, f.p.1); D/B/ta/4/2/2 (1912); 4/3/4 (1929); A/DIF/101/1/64; D/DC/tau.d/25/3 (54), 36/18.

<sup>568</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/2 (1918); 4/3/3 (1921).

<sup>569</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/53/909, 24/1/54/918, 927, 24/1/55/940—1, 24/1/56/972, 24/1/57/982, 24/1/62/1152, 24/1/63/1166, 24/1/67/1285, 1290, 24/1/68/1304, 24/1/75/1565, 24/1/90/2002.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/31/1/6, p. 308, 31/1/7, p. 535; D/DC/tau.d/38/41; A/BEN/55; A/BIV/5.

industrial premises to a few areas, widen roads by demolishing buildings in an around the central area including Bath Place and most of Fore Street with its medieval buildings, build a ring road and demolish buildings at the junction of Bridge Street and Station Road for a large roundabout.<sup>571</sup> Fortunately such drastic plans were not entirely implemented but influenced the council to declare nearly 1,000 houses ‘obsolete’ in Canal Road, Portman Street and Cherry Grove, Richmond and Palmerston Roads, Westgate Street, Gloucester, Haydon and Eastbourne Roads, Queen and Viney Streets and even East and South Streets. They survived probably due to the slow building programme, which meant that condemned King and Duke Streets, Union Place, Denmark Place and Popham’s Buildings in Coal Orchard, Whitehall and the courts west of the High Street were still awaiting demolition in 1953.<sup>572</sup>

Prominent among post-war commercial developments was the neo-Georgian row of shops and former public house built in 1949 by Michael Torrens in Corporation Street. Instead of the planned matching extension in 1960 R. Shirley-Smith’s Bridgwater House, originally a car showroom, was added with its tiles of municipal heraldry.<sup>573</sup> There were fewer good industrial buildings but they include the 1950s faience-clad collar factory in Railway Street, now Hi Point offices, and the 1961 golden brick former Van Heusen factory in Viney Street.<sup>574</sup> A commercial plan in 1961 to demolish North Town as far as the railway station for shopping precincts, multi-storey car parks and blocks of flats probably failed for lack of funding.<sup>575</sup>

Attractive 19th-century shop fronts often with first-floor showroom windows, ironwork or urns and decorative ground-floor windows were replaced from the early 20th

---

<sup>571</sup> Ibid. PAM 579, *passim*.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid. C/PL/2/25, pp.10, 31.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/124/5987; Orbach, *S. and W. Som.*, 626.

<sup>574</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/122/5396.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/145/8678, 24/1/147/1962, 24/1/154/9333, 24/1/156/9513.

century with sheet glass.<sup>576</sup> Early shop fronts include 70 Station Road and 4 Fore Street but several older houses with 19th-century shopfronts were replaced by unsympathetic buildings.<sup>577</sup> At 4—6 Eastgate Thorne and Sibley's store with a permanent canopy over the pavement was demolished in the 1930s to build Pearsall's Eastgate House itself replaced in the 1960s by shops topped with crude battlements. Clements and Brown, 47—9 Fore Street of 1904 and later, which also had a glass veranda, was destroyed in 1956. Former Marks and Spencer at 40—44, from 1931, survives.<sup>578</sup> The 1932 Woolworths at 19 and the 1937 art deco Co-operative store at 27—31 with its lantern-lit and glass-screened food hall were destroyed in the later 20th century.<sup>579</sup> In the 1960s even listed buildings were replaced by modern commercial ones, many subsequently demolished. Throughout the central commercial area most ground floors have been gutted. By the early 21st century many shop fronts consisted of large glass windows with no display area. Modern buildings some with blank façades were built north of East Street from the late 20th century. Buildings east of Magdalene Lane and in Church Square were destroyed in the late 1960s for the small Wyvern shopping centre.<sup>580</sup>

The Crescent houses, now in commercial use, have suffered internally.<sup>581</sup> Historic buildings were not recorded before destruction. Those in Mill Lane demolished in the late 1970s, may have been 17th-century.<sup>582</sup> Many of High Street's historic buildings were demolished to create Crown Walk in 1967, a large store, three supermarkets, one still in use, and the Old Market Centre, now Orchard, in 1982.<sup>583</sup> The south-west end was cleared for two large stores and 1985 Mendip House with corner turret.<sup>584</sup> The whole west side of Paul Street

---

<sup>576</sup> Ibid. T/PH/rea/3/19; DD/S/FRI/12, no. 20858 [Fore St]; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289, box 2 [North St]; DD/CH/70/10 (Jeboult billhead); D/B/ta/24/1/87/1911, 24/1/93/2079, 24/1/99/2284; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/9.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. A/EFY/1.

<sup>578</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1937—72; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/28/1859; *Taunton Courier*, 7 Apr. 1956: BNA accessed 18 Aug. 2022; below, built character.

<sup>579</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/78/1632.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid. A/DQO/404/8/22.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid. A/BDR/2/9/1; D/B/ta/24/1/115/4557, 24/1/119/5059, 24/1/122/5489, 24/1/124/5939.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid. DD/WAT/14/1.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid. DD/BR/ss/14—19; A/DIF/116/218, 221; D/B/ta/3/37/3, p. 270; 24/1/186/10245.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid. DD/X/SML/7, pp. 4, 30—1.

was demolished for offices and a car park and most of the east side *c.* 1971 for a retail store.<sup>585</sup> Silver Street suffered from road widening in the 1930s and especially in the early 1980s when all the buildings, including listed ones, on the west side as far south as Mansfield House were demolished for Hurdle Way, a major road junction and car parking. Mansfield Road, developed with large terraced houses from 1900 by the Taunton Co-operative Society, lost its north side in 1983 for the new road and a petrol station.<sup>586</sup> The loss of Taunton's heritage resulted in the creation in 1973 of the Taunton Research and Excavation Committee.<sup>587</sup> Some attempts were made to improve the town centre. In the 1990s black and gold street furniture including planters, bins and pedestrian signposts were installed, commemorative plaques were placed on buildings associated with notable people, a move suggested in 1901, and public sculptures installed.<sup>588</sup>

A move to lock-up premises in the town centre, begun in the late 19th century, accelerated in the 20th with even peripheral streets becoming entirely non-residential. The economic crises of the late 20th and early 21st century saw a partial reversal of that trend with commercial sites being redeveloped for residential use notably the former telephone exchange in the Crescent, government offices in Paul Street, the St James Street swimming pool, former cinemas and public houses. By the early 21st century public concern for the skyline was no longer shared by planners or developers and large blocks of flats and tall lighting pylons dominate views of the town from surrounding areas.

### Former rural hamlets

---

<sup>585</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/37/3, p. 124.

<sup>586</sup> TNA, IR 58/82653; SHC, A/BUG/28/58 (157); D/B/ta/24/1/27/1765—6; DD/X/SML/9, p. 28.

<sup>587</sup> SHC, A/DIF/116/217—18; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3; PAM 248: study of central area, 1970; C/ENAH/7/1.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid. DD/TBL/42/9/7 (*Taunton Mail*, 7 Aug. 1901, p. 4).

Settlements outside the town were well-established by the 13th century. Holway, presumably named from the road, was settled in the Roman period.<sup>589</sup> Most farmsteads have been demolished but Holway Green contains Holway House and other 19th-century houses and converted outbuildings. Holway Farm's c. 1900 farmhouse was converted to shops c. 1977 and the farmyard is a builders yard.<sup>590</sup> Across Chestnut Drive possible 17th-century Lower Holway farmhouse, faced with late Georgian brick but now roughcast, was converted to 1—5 Cedar Close. Haydon, the hedged down, remains rural with a working farm. Among its older houses are 17th-century, triple gabled Haydon House and its contemporary outbuilding, now dwellings, and Haydon Farm, a three-bay cross passage house with two-storey porch and casements. Both have decorative brickwork and sash-windowed extensions, that at Haydon House probably of the 1830s when the house was stuccoed.<sup>591</sup>

Shoreditch straddles the boundary with Orchard Portman, site of Taunton racecourse, and Pitminster parishes and like Haydon is separated from the town by the motorway. It takes its name, recorded by 1317, from a boundary ditch, possibly the 'offa's dyke' recorded in a reputed charter of 854.<sup>592</sup> Otton, now Octon, Lodge was created as the Shoreditch inn by builder Henry Durk c.1850 on the site of the old inn, stables and several cottages burnt down in 1845. Built of coursed stone rubble with Ham stone dressings under a complex slate roof with gabled dormers, porch and mullioned casements, probably to impress potential clients with Durk's skill, it ceased to be an inn in 1857 and was renamed.<sup>593</sup> North of Shoreditch Dowsland, formerly Dustyfulland or Douceland, had a possible medieval cob farmhouse and traditional stone farmyard all destroyed in the later 20th century for housing.<sup>594</sup>

---

<sup>589</sup> Ekwall, *Oxf. Dict. Eng. Pl-Names*, 246—7; H. Hall, *Pipe Roll of Bishopric of Winchester 1208—9*, (1903), 63.

<sup>590</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/2 (19 Dec. 1974); 2/2/5 (2 June 1977).

<sup>591</sup> Ekwall, *Oxf. Dict. Eng. Pl-Names*, 227—8; SHC, tithe award, St Mary; Orbach, *South and West Somerset*, 351.

<sup>592</sup> G.B. Grundy, *Anglo-Saxon Charters of Somerset*, (Taunton, 1927), 27.

<sup>593</sup> SHC, tithe award, St Mary; *Taunton Courier*, 12 Mar. 1845; *Exeter Flying Post*, 15 Jul. 1858; BNA accessed 21 Sep. 2021; SHC, DD/CH/103/5.

<sup>594</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1360—2, DD/SP/178 (1797), 331; DD/VL/1/2; TNA, IR 58/82654 (2305).

Obridge or Tobridge, north of the Tone and recorded in 1208, may be named from a bridge to the mills there.<sup>595</sup> Obridge House is an L-shaped, possible 16th-century brick house with a moulded, framed ceiling. Obridge Farm, now Bridge House, is probably 18th-century. A farmstead opposite was destroyed c. 1960 but a row of cottages survives amid later 20th-century development.<sup>596</sup> West of Obridge Plaistreet was recorded by 1598 and the house by 1757 but it was demolished after the contents were sold in 1833 leaving. A cottage became the Gardeners Arms, rebuilt in 1876 and now a private house.<sup>597</sup> Its replacement, built in 1895, is now a supermarket.<sup>598</sup> Plais Street was developed in 1876—7 with Trafalgar Terrace followed by Glenthorne Road in 1935.<sup>599</sup>

North of Plaistreet on Priorswood Road cottages known by 1652 as Kilkenny were demolished after 1848.<sup>600</sup> Kilkenny Mead opposite and other fields were developed from 1869 with large three-storey terraces but owing to a bankruptcy Kilkenny Avenue was not completed until the 1890s with Priorswood Terrace and Albert Road, now Malvern Terrace, whose east side was not built until the 1930s, then Wellington, later Wellesley, and Nelson Streets.<sup>601</sup> The borough bought Wedlands, begun in the 1900s as a private development of semi-detached houses off Cheddon Road, and built 108 houses in the 1920s most with downstairs bathrooms.<sup>602</sup> In the 1930s semi-detached houses were built along Priorswood Road, the west end known as St Andrew's Road in the 1890s, and off it Lyngford and Obridge Roads and Draycott Avenue.<sup>603</sup>

---

<sup>595</sup> Hall, *Pipe Roll ... 1208—9*, 64

<sup>596</sup> SHC, DD/V/TAB/1/19; DD/DP/C1358/38; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, p. 104; D/B/ta/3/37/3, p. 237, 24/1/141/8392, 24/1/212/12659, 24/1/232/14585, 24/1/[uncat. 15356].

<sup>597</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/74, f. 678; DD/PRY/7; *Taunton Courier*, 11 Sep. 1833; SHC, DD/DP/C1358/38; tithe award, St James; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

<sup>598</sup> Date on building.

<sup>599</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/10/326; D/B/ta/3/2/1 (1877), 4/3/4 (1935); DD/HS/2/25.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/18/23; DD/HC/61/27; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/3; DD/CH/120/1; DD/HS/1/5.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/25/12 (deeds 1860—1948); D/B/ta/3/1/1 (1869), 24/1/24/1597, 24/1/33/271, 24/1/77/1616; DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; DD/HR/5.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1924), 24/1/28/1820, 24/1/45/1912, 24/1/71/1451; D/DC/tau.d/25/12 (deeds 1860—1948).

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. DD/HR/5; D/B/ta/24/1/100/2459, 24/1/101/2502.

In northern St James' parish Lyngford had *c.* six houses and Pyrland five in 1839.<sup>604</sup> Lyngford, Linkeford in the 13th and 15th centuries, probably from the ridge and a ford through the Kingston stream, preserves Regency Lyngford House and late medieval Lyngford Farm, a stone house with spiral staircase, converted to a three room cross–passage house and divided in 1943 into Manor Farm and Tudor cottages with some structural damage.<sup>605</sup> Pyrland, presumably where pears grew, had its own chapel, three farms and cottages.<sup>606</sup> Pyrland Hall Farm, probably Georgian with a possible 17th-century range behind, mid 18th-century Pyrland Hall, now a school, and 17th-century brick Pyrland Farm, enlarged and refronted *c.* 1800, survive on the northern edge of a large housing estate. One of the earliest new roads was Pyrland Avenue of 1929 followed by Wellsprings and Quantock Roads from 1933, Bagborough Road in 1934, Pyrland Acre in 1935 and Weacombe Road in 1935.<sup>607</sup>

### 20th-century residential estates

Local authority estates were built north and east of the town to rehouse people from the slums starting with Wedlands in the 1920s and extending northwards along the east side of Cheddon Road in the 1930s. Further east after most of the Lyngford estate was purchased in 1924 The Priorswood and Lyngford housing estates were developed after the Lyngford estate was purchased in 1924 and Priorswood farm in 1953 and 1956.<sup>608</sup> Leycroft was extended from the 1920s north to Lambrook and east to Halcon including Roman Road in the 1930s and Beadon and Valley Roads in 1938—9, refurbished in the 1980s.<sup>609</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s the Lane estate beyond the Bridgwater Road completed the town's extension over West Monkton

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. tithe award, St James.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/C795/TN/62; *Cal. Pat.* 1408—13, 444; Ekwall, *Oxf. Dict. Eng. Pl-Names*, 309; J. Field, *English Field Names*, 126; TNA, E 179/169/6; *PSAS CXXIII* (1979), 140; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/105/2974, 2980.

<sup>606</sup> Ekwall, *Oxf. Dict. Eng. Pl-Names*, 376; SHC, tithe award, St James.

<sup>607</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/70/1393, 24/1/82/1738, 24/1/91/2012—13, 24/1/91/2034, 24/1/93/2067.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1923—39), 24/1/79/1667, 24/1/103/2697; D/R/ta/24/1/12—13; D/P/tau.ja/22/3/1; D/DC/tau.d/25/12 (1953, 1956).

<sup>609</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/16/5, pp. 1, 9; 4/3/4 (1923—39); 21/2; 24/1/61/1114—15, 24/1/67/1291—2, 24/1/81/1704A; A/DIF/114/8; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/13 (July).

parish south of the river. From the late 20th century the town expanded north to cover the whole parish south of the village.<sup>610</sup>

After the Second World War prefabricated houses were built at Wellsprings, The Triangle and Grange Road, Priorswood, Victory Road at Lyngford, Moorland Place in Halcon, Wordsworth Drive at the bottom of East Reach and Coleridge Crescent, Wordsworth Drive and Shakespeare Avenue in Holway, the last by the Taunton Building Group, a consortium of 14 local builders, in 1946—7.<sup>611</sup> In 1944 the council purchased Moor farm, in 1946 Holway farm, in 1966 additional land at Holway and in 1974 Higher Holway farm (67 a.) for housing.<sup>612</sup> From 1951 St Albans Close, and Dover, Hereford and Ludlow Streets off Dorchester Road linked Priorswood, Lyngford and Pyrland into one large residential area by the 1960s.<sup>613</sup>

After 1973 the public and private Blackbrook estate was developed in the south-east. Lisieux Way linked East Reach via Wordsworth Drive with Blackbrook Way and Chestnut Drive, parallel to the motorway, which connected Ilminster and Bridgwater Roads with Shoreditch Road.<sup>614</sup> Completed by the 1980s, mainly in cul-de-sacs, space was left east of Blackbrook Way for business and leisure.<sup>615</sup> Lisieux Way, Normandy Drive, Calvados Road, Parmin Way and Parmin Close honour Taunton's twin town Lisieux, Calvados, France and the man who promoted a relationship started in 1948 and developed between 1967 and 1982.<sup>616</sup> In the 1980s the Killams estate was begun west of Blackbrook. House building slowed from 3,000 a decade in the 1980s to 1,000 in the 1990s.<sup>617</sup> Hillyfields off Holway

---

<sup>610</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/21/2.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/3/22/10, p. 581; 4/22/1; 21/2; 24/1/106/3060—2, 3147; 24/1/107/3215; 24/1/110/3766; 24/1/14529; C/CPL/2/25, p. 47; A/DTE/1.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/25/17; D/B/ta/24/1/178/10690, 24/1/188/10690; D/DC/tau.d (M/3252), box 1 (1974); A/AJY/2.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/117/4867, 24/1/141. 8368; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/13 (July); 14 (22 Oct.).

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. DD/SP/178 (1797); tithe award, St Mary.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d (M/3252), box 1 (1973—4).

<sup>616</sup> Ibid. M. J. Brasselet and G. E. Winn, *Taunton—Lisieux Twinning*, 1, 8; DD/TCM/19. Lisieux has a Rue de Taunton.

<sup>617</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151; SCC, 'Somerset County Population and Dwelling Estimates 1981—1998' (1999).

Road was developed in the late 20th century in varied vernacular styles in narrow streets by the builders of Poundbury, Dorset but with no community facilities.<sup>618</sup> In the early 21st century houses and apartment blocks were built on brownfield sites like the old railway marshalling yard but most residential development has taken place in former rural parishes around Taunton.

#### BUILT CHARACTER <sup>619</sup>

The earliest medieval building is the castle in Bishops Hull parish where the oldest surviving work is 12th-century including a west wall with Norman pilaster buttresses in Ham stone. The Winchester Annals in 1138 claim that Bishop Henry of Blois built five castles including Taunton, but this may indicate strengthening rather than wholly new. The foundations of an apparently large square keep east of the bishop's hall could date from the period after the 12th century or be later stonework encasing an earlier motte. Most of the surviving work dates from the 13th century and later. A shallow pointed arch of Norman beak-heads and masks, uncovered in the curtain wall east of the gatehouse, visible only from within the late 15th-century first-floor hall and possibly dating from c. 1125—35, may have come from elsewhere possibly from the old minster church, demolished after 1158.<sup>620</sup>

Unlike Wilton the two town churches have no visible material earlier than the 13th century. Of the 14th-century Augustinian Priory church nothing remains standing and little has been excavated. A short part of a gatehouse range, now the Priory Barn, of red sandstone has moulded jambs on one side of the main arch surviving at the southern corners. There are also two reset 13th-century windows and a late medieval doorway. Probably few other medieval buildings were of stone although a 13th-century stone house was excavated in Fore Street. In the late middle ages stone building included the lost market cross and the new

---

<sup>618</sup> Ibid. D/DC/tau.d/2/2/24 (14 Dec. 1995); 2/2/26 (24 June), 27 (27 Apr.).

<sup>619</sup> This section by Julian Orbach.

<sup>620</sup> C. Webster, *Taunton Castle* (Taunton, 2016); passim; Bishops Hull, forthcoming.

towers of the churches of St Mary and St James, that of St Mary probably begun in the 1480s and St James probably early 16th-century. Both were taken down and rebuilt in the 19th century: St Mary's a close replica of 1858—62 and St James's less authentic in 1870—5. At 163 ft high St Mary's is the tallest Somerset church tower with four storeys of tracery and an elaborate crown similar to that of Gloucester Cathedral. It dominated the town before the 20th century.

The town was mainly timber-built but large later medieval houses had stone side and rear walls to incorporate chimneys and presumably reduce fire risk. Photographs and drawings show timber gable fronts remaining in quite large numbers in the 19th century on Fore, High and East Streets and the east side of North Street. Few timber frames survive. The most significant are 13—18 Fore Street, 13—17 forming a row on the south side. The oldest surviving house is probably 15 Fore Street, a timber-framed, three-storey, 14th-century house built for a wealthy merchant family. Probably there were others, now lost. The large open two-bay 25ft by 28ft hall was built from timber felled in 1323—4. It has a massive central base-cruck truss with a king-post, a closed base-cruck each end, and two decoratively cusped intermediate trusses. The deliberately decorative design extends to making pointed arches above the main-truss collar and from the wind-braces. The roof resembles those of Glastonbury Abbey barns at Doultong and Glastonbury and Long Sutton Court House. There are stone side and rear walls and a pointed double-chamfered 14th-century doorway into a side passage to the east. That doorway has a bi-colour head of contrasted stones. The original jettied gabled front is hidden behind a very ornate double-jettied front of 1578, built presumably to create a large shop for the wealthy Trowbridge family of mercers and woollen drapers. To the rear of the premises is a two-storey range with a jointed-cruck roof and 17th-century brickwork, probably built as a separate building and later used as kitchens linked to

the main building by an electricity substation.<sup>621</sup> Adjoining 13—14, much lower, double-gabled with bargeboards, may also be 14th-century. The gables have 17th-century gabled oriel windows. A third, smaller oriel window to the right, against 15, was above a stone porch. Hidden by a stuccoed 18th or 19th-century front, 12 Fore Street was a tall double-jettied early 17th-century house as were 16 and 17 with gabled fronts and the former with a narrow two-room plan and arch-braced collar-truss roof.<sup>622</sup>

Another medieval house is 18 Fore Street whose entry passage now leads to Bath Place, separated from 17 by High Street. The surviving building may have had a single room on the street possibly a shop with solar above, a courtyard, floored in the 14th to 15th century over earlier pits, a vaulted cellar and a further courtyard with kitchen, lost since the late 18th century.<sup>623</sup> Inventories of the 17th century record similar large houses arranged around several courtyards.<sup>624</sup> The house may have been rebuilt *c.* 1500 with entry, surviving with traceried spandrels, and rooms to the south now lost under 69 High Street, giving it a 46-ft frontage. The western back part of the house is of similar date with a first-floor hall open to the roof of raised jointed crucks with moulded arched braces and decorative wind-bracing in three tiers. A much lower rear, detached block also of *c.* 1500 was domestic rather than a kitchen. However, the front block is largely early 17th-century, the date of ornate plasterwork after 1603 when William Leachland from a family of Taunton merchants bought the house from Roger Hill of Poundisford and extended the front for a shop inserting a gallery linking front and back buildings. The plasterwork includes William's initials and the arms of his wife Frances daughter of Henry Cornish godson of Henry VIII.<sup>625</sup> The property was split into two

---

<sup>621</sup> Orbach, *S. and W. Som.*, 624—5; SHC, DD/PM/7/2/23; DD/X/STONE (plans 1948); D/B/ta/24/1/191/10979; DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/27.

<sup>622</sup> R.F. Taylor, '16 Fore Street, Taunton', *PSAS*, CX (1966), 108—10; CXXV (1981), 110; SHC, DD/V/TAB/1/11.

<sup>623</sup> *SDNQ*, XXVIII, 5—6; SHC, DD/DP/93/4.

<sup>624</sup> SHC, DD/SP/1644/65; below, *soc. hist.*

<sup>625</sup> *SDNQ*, XXVIII, 5—6; TNA, C 2/JAS1/W4/40; C 78/46/29; E 133/3/559; SHC, DD/SAS/C112/17; DD/PH/216/98.

narrower burgages in the 17th century, the southern becoming the Ship inn and the entry a public passage allowing development behind. The original burgage plot included Hunts Court extending west of the town rhyne with a ‘banqueting house’. Number 18 was refronted in the mid 18th and again in the mid 19th century with a parapet to conceal the double gabled timber frame. Similarly 19—20, possibly late medieval timber-framed houses, have 19th-century stuccoed fronts.<sup>626</sup> Unfortunately the conversion to modern shops has destroyed the ground floors interiors of those and most older buildings.<sup>627</sup>

Lost late medieval to early 17th-century houses are represented by altered or entirely rebuilt gable fronts surviving on North, East and High Streets and possibly 19 Mary Street. The quality of lost late 15th-century houses is shown by a traceried Gothic fireplace lintel with an unidentified merchant's mark from 56 North Street now in the Museum of Somerset. The 15th—16th-century oak entrance arch of the demolished Spread Eagle, North Street, with traceried spandrels like 18 Fore Street was reused in the 1927 Wyndham Hall west of the Castle. Two demolished inns on the High Street, the Bell and the Three Mariners, had twin-gabled fronts. Surviving single-gabled fronts as on the east side of North Street and at 3 Fore Street are much or entirely rebuilt behind. The preserved gabled front of the former Swan, 63 East Street had discernible early features inside.<sup>628</sup> Houses of some status in that period tended to have decorated plasterwork, in friezes, overmantels and whole ceilings such as the ceiling of four eight-pointed stars at Haydon Farm. The most elaborate surviving plasterwork is in 18 Fore Street of *c.* 1620, the dates 1616 in the yard and 1627 in the plasterwork indicate periods of alteration. The first-floor front room has an enriched curvilinear ribbed ceiling with pendant, over a deep frieze. Over the fireplace, an overmantel shows the Sacrifice of Isaac on a strapwork panel between standing female figures of Hope

---

<sup>626</sup> SHC, C/ENAH/7/4; DD/PRY/1 (1786); A/DAS/2 (12309, 12315, 12325); DD/SAS/C112/17; DD/SAS/C795/TN/37.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid. DD/V/TAB/1/16.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. DD/V/TAB/1/20.

and Justice in Jacobean dress, probably by the same hand as panels in the Luttrell Arms at Dunster, Marshwood Farm, Carhampton, and Binham Farm, Old Cleeve. There is an earlier thin-ribbed ground-floor ceiling of c. 1600.<sup>629</sup>

Remains of 17th-century timber frames are fragmentary now, concealed or obliterated by later rebuilding. There would have been substantial damage in the Civil War sieges but the general disappearance of timber-framed houses has more to do with 18th-century and later replacement. The break between timber-framed and brick-built Taunton is exemplified by Gray's Almshouses, East Street, given a brick front in the later 17th century replacing original timber-framing. The demolished Pope's almshouse nearby may have been similarly treated.<sup>630</sup> The former St Mary's vicarage also has 17th-century brickwork. The best example of later 17th-century brickwork is at Haydon House where the large two-storey outbuilding, possibly a cider house combined with a bakehouse, has brick arches to doors and first-floor openings, the latter set in wall panels. Haydon House itself and Haydon Farmhouse nearby also show some late 17th-century brickwork.<sup>631</sup>

The most significant early 18th-century surviving building is the Unitarian chapel, Mary Street, of 1721. It had Baroque scrolled pediments over the twin doorways but was refronted in 1881. The interior remains as built with two tall Corinthian piers in timber supporting the roof, panelled galleries and carved pulpit.<sup>632</sup> Fairwater, Staplegrove, probably built as a brick villa after 1725, survives greatly altered as part of Taunton school.<sup>633</sup> Silver Street House, with its seven-bay, stuccoed front, the centre pedimented and with a heavily rusticated doorcase as at Fairwater, may be early to mid 18th-century. Smaller houses of that period include 19 Canon Street, red brick, of two-storeys with close-spaced large sash

---

<sup>629</sup> Ibid. DD/SAS/2016/21; J. & J. Penoyre, *Decorative plasterwork in the houses of Somerset 1500-1700*, (Taunton 1993), 44, 81.

<sup>630</sup> Below, soc. hist., almshouses.

<sup>631</sup> SHC, DD/V/TAB/26/3.

<sup>632</sup> Below, rel. hist., nonconf.

<sup>633</sup> Below, soc, hist, educ.; Staplegrove, forthcoming.

windows, and Melville House, Middle Street, with narrow three-storey red brick fronts at right angles and a plain parapet. Both have exposed sash-boxes and gauged brick window heads, Queen Anne or early Georgian features. The Melville House windows are mostly replacements.

A sign of revival after economic decline was new building in the later 18th century including the Market House in 1770—2, a large red brick building with cellars and attics containing offices and a public house. Designed by amateur architect, Coplestone Warre Bampfylde of Hestercombe House, it was originally flanked by open market buildings. It stands facing down North Street on the centre point of the town, the remnant of the Parade. The three-storey, five-bay front has long sash windows marking the first-floor assembly room and small attic windows. Ornament is restricted to an arched doorway in a rusticated surround under a cornice, and the pedimented surround of the window above, with a balustraded apron panel. Painted now, this is probably of Bath stone like the platband over the ground floor and first-floor sill band. The broad ashlar pediment with a clock is an alteration of 1930—1. Previously there was a cornice and parapet, stepped up for the clock. The south front is plain with a pedimented doorway. The flanking market buildings demolished in 1930—1 were, unusually, cruciform, each with three arcaded fronts of 2-3-2 bays, the centres projecting and pedimented, and each with a little lantern over the crossing.<sup>634</sup> As the Market House was finished in 1772, work began on an ambitious general hospital on South Road outside the old town. As designed by James Stowey and Thomas Jones of Exeter it was to comprise four nine-bay 90-ft frontages each of three storeys and attic around a circular light-well only 13 ft in diameter. The north front was to have had entrances at both ground and first floors with an external double stair and portico, and the east and west ranges bowed centrepieces. Only the eastern half was built and was eventually

---

<sup>634</sup> Below, econ. hist. market.

adapted and enlarged from 1807 as a convent and school. It is built of the pinkish brown local bricks that became from this date characteristic of Taunton.<sup>635</sup>

Some building was promoted by Sir Benjamin Hammet including his own Wilton House off Upper High Street, probably of the late 1770s.<sup>636</sup> In 1780 he contracted with Exeter architect Robert Stribling to build five houses on a new street aligned on the tower of St Mary's church. In 1788 Hammet, by then knighted, obtained an Act of Parliament for the new street, which suggests that building had not begun. Ultimately there were 15 houses along the street, of three storeys and mostly of five bays of pinkish brown brick, with pilaster breaks between the houses, an eaves cornice, plain sash windows and Roman Doric open-pedimented doorcases.<sup>637</sup> Among mid-Georgian survivors is the red brick Powlett House, High Street, originally five bays, but the left two rebuilt *c.* 1900.<sup>638</sup> It has a Roman Doric pedimented doorcase that could be of the 1760s, and heavy Ham Hill stone voussoirs over the windows. Open pedimented doorcases appear on some East Reach houses, 12—13, one five-bay, the other three-bay, are of Taunton brick and on 60, three bays, the brick is painted. Middle Street and Canon Street, already noted for earlier 18th-century houses, have late Georgian brick houses including 11 Middle Street, two-storeyed with an open-pedimented columned doorcase like Hammet Street. Canon Street has some three-storey houses including 4—5 in red brick on the west side formally composed, with central doorways, and several more modest on the opposite side, some with the front brickwork painted. Barton House, 18 Canon Street, has shallow iron flower balconies and a pedimented doorcase in the right-hand bay. Mansfield House, Silver Street, of *c.* 1800, has an unusually formal composition of a three-storey front set back in a forecourt between two-storey wings. The main house has arched ground-floor windows, an advanced central bay with a pediment against the parapet

---

<sup>635</sup> Below, *soc. hist.*

<sup>636</sup> Wilton. *forthcoming.*

<sup>637</sup> SHC, DD/DP/97/1.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.* A/CMY/453.

and a long enclosed porch out to the street line, ending in a similarly pedimented doorway. Mary Street House of *c.* 1820, also in brown brick, is wider of five bays with an advanced centre bay, but instead of a parapet, an eaves cornice. There are tripartite sash windows above a large four-columned porch.

The Crescent, not curved, was built as two terraced rows west of High Street, facing the land of the Grove, later demolished to build Shire Hall. Begun in 1808 for William Kinglake of Wilton House, the houses are of brown brick, each of three storeys and two bays, with an arched ground floor window and an arched doorway with fanlight. By 1810 1—11 were completed by builders Samuel and John Gover but 12—22 followed more slowly.<sup>639</sup> The lack of cornices and broad basements echo contemporary London practice. The first-floor windows have curved iron flower balconies. The same builders probably built 40—1 Upper High Street in 1808—12 in matching style, replacing a brewhouse and houses destroyed by fire *c.* 1800.<sup>640</sup> Similarly in brown brick, plainer and probably later, with eaves gutters rather than parapets, is St James's Place, Middle Street, a row of six houses with arched doorways. Two similar houses nearby frame the passage to Wesley's Octagon. Plainer still are brown brick rows at 1—3 East Gate and 45—55 Bridge Street, both with parapets, the Bridge Street row with dividing pilasters to the upper floors.

An elegant pair of early 19th-century commercial buildings are 10—11 Fore Street, three storeys, red brick with first-floor windows recessed in a triple arcade, 10 subsequently stuccoed. To the east Cheapside is a small example of stucco developments after 1815. Built in 1822, five four-storeyed houses are separated by panelled piers, under a cornice and parapet. The ends facing up Fore Street and down East Street are bowed to elegant effect. The nearby three-storey London inn, later County hotel, was faced in stucco shortly afterwards, with similar panelled piers. Another stuccoed front of note is the former Phoenix Hotel, 56

---

<sup>639</sup> SHC, Q/RDd/33.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid. DD/X/KIT/1.

East Street, a four-bay front with pilaster piers to the upper floors, not panelled but with Soaneian incised ornament. These Soaneian pilasters reappear on 39 East Street, the Old Council House, rebuilt in 1823 but possibly refronted later as the detail suggests a date *c.* 1840, with early Victorian ornament to the curved window heads and the cornice. A near semi-circular Regency two-storey wooden bow-window on 35 East Reach, a small three-story stuccoed house in a mixed row of shops, represents a rare survivor, such features mostly swept away for later shopfronts.

Chapels of the later Georgian period included examples of the three main chapel plans: polygonal and both lateral and gable-fronted rectangular forms. The 1776 Octagon Chapel, Middle Street, was designed by James Perrett for John Wesley as a small but elegant example of the plan he favoured after seeing the 1756 Octagon Chapel in Norwich. Only four out of 14 survive including Taunton the last, built of red brick with arched lower windows and circular upper ones lighting a five-sided gallery. In 1797 the Independents or Congregationalists rebuilt their Paul's Meeting of 1672 as a large rectangular red-brick chapel with a five-bay lateral front to Paul Street and a hipped roof. The Quaker meeting-house of 1814 was a much smaller version, faced in brown brick, also hip-roofed with a lateral front. By contrast the Baptists' red brick 1815 chapel in Silver Street was gable-fronted, by William Lewarn of Taunton but a Victorian stuccoed front was added later. In 1822 a Roman Catholic church, designed by an unknown amateur, was built at the south end of The Crescent. Stuccoed and classical, it has a windowless front of Ionic giant pilasters and strong dentilled entablature framing a wide pedimented Ionic doorway. The four-bay south side has large sash windows divided by similar pilasters, which appear inside, linked by gilded festoons. The reredos had coupled Ionic columns reportedly of verde antico marble, but now painted white, framing a painting of Christ as Saviour, reputedly by Murillo, above a mahogany altar. It has

been a Masonic Hall since 1878 but the interior remains intact save for the removal of the altar and the painting.<sup>641</sup>

In 1810—11 the Taunton and Somerset Hospital was built in East Reach, designed by London surveyor, John White, and faced in red brick. It is of three storeys, raised on a high basement and five bays, the central one slightly projected and originally with a simple pedimented entrance with twin pillars at the top of a double stair. The front was unadorned save for ashlar bands one of which survives with the inscription ‘Supported by Voluntary Contribution’. In 1828 and the 1840s Richard Carver designed the overhanging roof, large, stuccoed porch on heavy paired piers and flanking wings. The name of the hospital is carved into the porch replacing the original attic title band destroyed for the new roof.<sup>642</sup> Other major public buildings before 1837 were William Burgess’s new market of 1821—2, which lost its upper detail in 1933 and was demolished in 1963, and the union workhouse, a standard hexagonal plan by Sampson Kempthorne with elevations designed by Richard Carver completed in 1838. Only the three-storey south side survives.<sup>643</sup> Of 4-3-4 bays, faced in Taunton brick, with a projecting gabled centre, it has stucco quoins and stucco window dressings. The sides and rear are of red brick, still apparently a lesser material to the local brick. The Fish Market, later Corn Exchange, on the corner of Fore Street and Castle Bow was built *c.* 1824 with a Greek revival portico preserved in 1853—4 when Richard Carver rebuilt the market but demolished in 1937. In 1830—1 Carver remodelled the former Full Moon Inn by the entrance to Vivary Park as the West Somerset Savings Bank. Probably the oldest surviving bank building in Taunton although now flats it has a stuccoed three-bay front and retains its clock.

Georgian Gothic was used mainly in Bishops Hull and Wilton but Priory Villa, now Priory Lodge, in Priory Avenue is a small Gothic villa, rendered and battlemented with a

---

<sup>641</sup> Below, *rel. hist.*

<sup>642</sup> Below, *soc. hist.*

<sup>643</sup> Below, *econ. hist., market; soc. hist., workhouse.*

stone cornice and pointed sash windows. On Canon Street a substantial stuccoed lodge called Priory Close has pointed windows and stepped battlements. The latter was one of a pair of buildings flanking the entrance to The Priory, a stuccoed villa with giant pilasters to a plain three-bay front, which with the second lodge have been demolished. Richard Carver's Register Office, Lower Middle Street, of 1836—7, presents a stuccoed gable to Middle Street with a late Gothic style doorway between earlier Gothic style lancets. Carver also completed Holy Trinity church in 1842 to a late Georgian preaching-house plan, in white lias stone and worked on St James and St Mary's.<sup>644</sup> The largest Gothic villa is Lyngford House, built in the 1840s for John Roy Allen, barrister, of rubble stone presumably once stuccoed. It has a canted two-storey centrepiece in Bath stone framed between diagonally-set square turrets. The windows are of varied Georgian Gothic types and the octagonal stair hall has a cantilevered late Georgian staircase.

Although St Mary's church tower was rebuilt under George Gilbert Scott and Benjamin Ferrey in 1858—62 as a facsimile the move to more archaeological Gothic in new church buildings was, unusually, led by a nonconformist denomination. The Congregational church, North Street, of 1843 by Samuel Knight Pollard is in early 13th-century style, remarkably medieval within, with stone arcades. Temple Methodist church, Upper High Street was enlarged in 1846 probably by James Wilson of Bath, who reputedly led Wesleyans into the path of the Gothic Revival. The brick, gabled front of nave-and-aisles type with a traceried front window in 14th-century style survived the 1869 rebuilding.<sup>645</sup> Wilson also built what is now Queen's College in Trull in 1846—7, precursor of Victorian Gothic King's College and Taunton School, both begun in 1867.

Among town villas Upton Lodge, 62 East Reach is stuccoed with a single-bay front, deep-eaved, hipped roof, and a pretty iron balcony with a lead ogee roof, probably *c.* 1830. It

---

<sup>644</sup> Below, *rel. hist.*

<sup>645</sup> Revd F. Jobson, *Chapel and School Architecture*, 1850; below, *rel. hist.*, *nonconf.*

is attached to slightly later Windsor Terrace a pair of plain three-storey houses in brown brick to which a third, 65 East Reach, was added facing east. From the 1840s houses were built west of the town along Park Street and Wellington Road into Wilton and Bishops Hull, many in Gothic style using coloured bricks and Bath stone. Red bricks from Bridgwater brought by canal and railway and buff bricks from the new Bishops Hull brickyards ousted brown brick from the 1850s. Housing development slowed in the mid 19th century to accelerate again after 1870 but there were new streets like Alma Street, planned to commemorate the 1854 battle but not built until the 1860s. Most early 19th-century working-class housing has been demolished but later two-storey terraces survive west of Bridge Street and Station Road and either side of East Reach. Thomas Penny and his son developed streets of artisan terraces between Railway Street and Greenway Road between 1869 and the 1890s. Middle-class terraced and semi-detached housing spread along the arterial roads particularly Staplegrove, Trull and South Roads. The preferred material was yellow brick with dressings of red or black but interspersed with red brick houses banded in yellow and black. Off Staplegrove Road the Elm Grove area was built up from 1880 with yellow brick terraces and some semi-detached and single houses. Off Station Road, a row on Belvedere Road has red brick dormers over yellow brick patterned in red. At Billetfield Salisbury House (14), Hughendon House (12), Stafford Villa (10) and Billetfield House (11—13) in decorative red and yellow brick with stone features were built by Henry Davis in 1868, the last with a tall octagonal turret was his own residence.<sup>646</sup>

The major public buildings of the mid 19th century were the rebuilding of Wilton gaol by Richard Carver from the 1840s and the building of Shire Hall. Carver deigned separate Shire Hall and Assize Courts in 1854 but these were set aside for a competition won by W.B. Moffatt, former partner of George Gilbert Scott. Moffatt's late Gothic building of 1855—8

---

<sup>646</sup> SHC, DD/DP/68/4 (1886); Orbach, *South and West Somerset*, 628.

has a near symmetrical entrance front with a huge square first-floor window and contained a double-height entrance hall leading to parallel court rooms, their gables prominent from the back.<sup>647</sup> Church building included the rebuilding of the South Road convent chapel in Gothic style by Charles Hansom of Bristol in 1849—50 adding a chancel with a side chapel over an open undercroft in yellow brick banded in red. Hansom also created the bow-windowed refectory and a new block matching the style of the late Georgian building but in 1859—60 enclosed a burial ground outside the chapel with a Gothic cloister. In 1858—60, a large Gothic Roman Catholic church was built facing down Billet Street designed by Benjamin Bucknall. The 80-ft tower was added in 1875—6 but the planned spire was never built. The church is linked to a contemporary Gothic presbytery in brown brick, contrasting with the purple Monkton sandstone of the church. The Wellington road cemetery, Bishops Hull, was built in 1854—6, to designs by Edward Ashworth of Exeter and St James' cemetery, Staplegrove Road, in 1876—7 designed by John Bevan of Bristol. Only their Gothic lodges survive.

The Italian palazzo mode was popular from the 1840s especially for banks and offices including 2 North Street, part of the Castle Hotel, rebuilt before 1852 with rusticated ground floor, pedimented first-floor windows and bold cornice. It was replaced in 1929. C.E. Giles refronted Stuckey's Bank, 25 Fore Street, in 1852—7 as a five-bay palazzo in Bath stone. Commercial Gothic fronts arrived c. 1860. C.E. Giles may have designed a very Gothic front at 24 Fore Street, demolished to extend Stuckey's Bank in 1906—7. He possibly designed the gabled front of 4 Fore Street showing the rich polychromy of Park Street for the Wiltshire and Dorset Bank in 1864 and the Gothic front of 41—3 Bridge Street in brown brick with Bath stone cusped lancets and an oriel window. Commercial frontages have mostly been lost, especially in banks, including at 40 Fore Street the West of England and South Wales District

---

<sup>647</sup> *The Builder*, 1855, 59, 81, 190; below, local govt.

Bank, 1866—7, a Venetian palazzo by Foster and Wood of Bristol, at 32 Fore Street Fox, Fowler and Co., 1882—3, Anglo-Dutch style in brick and terracotta by Edwin Down and Son of Bridgwater and the Devon and Cornwall Bank at 54—5 North Street, a palazzo front in Ham Hill stone of 1888 by C.H. Samson.<sup>648</sup>

The prominent buildings of the 1860s and 1870s were Gothic. In 1867 C.E. Giles replaced the lost medieval market cross with a new one at the north end of The Parade, demolished in 1934. Two large Gothic boarding schools were started in 1867. Taunton School is a lavish example of collegiate Tudor Gothic by Joseph James at Fairwater, Staplegrove. Taunton College School, South Road, now King's College is more heavily medieval. It was designed by C.E. Giles with plate-traceried windows of 13th—14th-century style. The main range of red Monkton sandstone, 6-1-6 bays, has a central tower with steep pyramidal roof, and a large schoolroom projects at one end. The headmaster's house at the other end was not built until 1927. The rear wings were added in 1899—1927 by Walter Tower but the chapel was never completed as intended.<sup>649</sup> On a much smaller scale was the rebuilt Central School in Church Square of 1866—7 by Benjamin Ferrey in red sandstone. It has plate-traceried windows like those of Giles's King's College but with modest stone polychromy in the window arches.

Ecclesiastical Gothic at this period included the 1871 chapel wing to the Paul Street convent, Bishops Hull, by J. F. Bentley and the rebuilding of St James' tower under J. Houghton Spencer 1870—5 and its chancel by Edmund Ferrey in 1884—5. G. E. Street raised and refitted St Mary's chancel in 1869—70. Benjamin Bucknell's 1875—6 tower at St George's Catholic church, an imposing late medieval tower designed to produce a similar effect at the head of Billet Street as St Mary's in Hammet Street, has a west window with flowing rather than Perpendicular Gothic tracery. St Andrew's near the railway station was

<sup>648</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/1/28, 24/1/22/944; A/CMY/404; *Som. Co. Gaz.* 23 Feb. 1867: BNA accessed 16 Aug. 2022; below, econ. hist., banks.

<sup>649</sup> Below, soc. hist., educ.; Staplegrove. forthcoming; *Illustrated Building News*, 13 Nov. 1874.

built in 1879—81 designed by J. Houghton Spencer of Westleigh stone with a thin tower and slate-clad splay-footed spire. It is externally enveloped by additions in similar style along the south and east of 1892. The interiors, original and added, are of white brick with arches decorated in red and black.<sup>650</sup> The best Victorian almshouses are Huish's, Magdalene Street by C.E. Giles, 1867—8, an asymmetrical composition in purple stone with Ham Hill dressings cranked to the line of the street with cloister-like ground-floor windows.<sup>651</sup>

The Temple Methodist church was rebuilt in 1868—9 by Samuel Shewbrooks preserving the 1846 frontage as the entrance. The new enlarged chapel and schoolroom parallel to the street are Gothic in Taunton brick like the original. The interior tall Gothic columns are cast-iron carrying timber arches. The Baptists, who avoided Gothic, employed J.H. Smith, the borough surveyor in 1870 to give the 1815 Silver Street chapel a stucco front in heavily detailed North Italian Romanesque style. The Baptist chapel in Albemarle Street, 1875, is a plain pedimented brick box. The Paul Street 1797 Congregational chapel was refitted and given new porches in 1877, probably to plans of 1874 by John Foster of Bristol.<sup>652</sup> The Unitarian chapel of 1721 was given a stuccoed front in 1881 by J. Houghton Spencer but architecturally more significant are its Memorial Schools of 1885—6 by Ernest Odgers of Plymouth, a rare example in Taunton of the Queen-Anne style developed from the 1870s. In red brick with curved-headed sash windows, the building is asymmetrically composed with varied gables and a corner tower with a two-stage lantern. The high west window has stained glass by Fouracre and Watson of Plymouth. By contrast, Spencer's Nursing Institute, East Reach of 1887—8 is symmetrically fronted in a Palladian style with enrichments, notable for being almost entirely of pale yellow Bishop's Hull brick.<sup>653</sup> The Jellalabad Barracks were rebuilt in 1879—81 by Major Henry Crozier and Thomas Berry,

---

<sup>650</sup> Below, rel. hist.

<sup>651</sup> Below, soc. hist., almshouses.

<sup>652</sup> Below, rel. hist., nonconf.; *Western Gaz.* 25 Dec. 1874: BNA accessed 12 Aug. 2024.

<sup>653</sup> Below, soc. hist.

army divisional surveyor. The great red brick square keep, with slot windows for musketry and square towers on three of the corners rears up over Mount Street. It opens onto the former parade ground with three-storey barrack ranges, also red brick, with a little Gothic detail, and two-storey subsidiary buildings.<sup>654</sup>

Most late Victorian and Edwardian industrial buildings have been demolished. The best survivor is the 1898—9 red brick works in St Augustine Street built by A.J. Spiller, probably designed by A.B. Cottam, for the Tone Vale Clothing Company. Of three storeys and 12 bays in late Victorian Renaissance style, it has large windows to light each floor, and a gable front with stepped arch-headed top windows.<sup>655</sup> Another is the 1883 former Richmond Road glove factory of eight bays and three storeys over a basement in buff brick with decorative red and buff string courses under wide eaves. One of few surviving brewing industry buildings is the large former maltings on Priory Avenue of 1901 by Bradford and Sons for Hanbury's brewery of red brick, with a steep roof and the malting tower at the east end.<sup>656</sup> Among commercial buildings Chapmans' warehouse on St James's Street of 1882, has a grid front in red brick, the floors divided by moulded brick cornices, the windows by moulded brick piers. Hatcher and Sons former furniture department at 53—5 High Street, 1894 by F.W. Roberts, has a three-storey gabled front, each floor of plate glass set back from a pair of cast-iron columns. The same year Roberts designed 45—6 High Street for a corn merchant in red brick with stone dressings, its elaborate stone doorway to the yard now used as a shop façade.<sup>657</sup>

An era of civic improvement began in 1893 with the cutting of Corporation Street through the west side of Fore Street to run along the south flank of the former 1522 grammar school. The street became a civic centre, the grammar school, converted and enlarged as the

---

<sup>654</sup> Below, soc. hist., military hist.

<sup>655</sup> D. H.A. Gibson, *A Somerset Architects Practice in the 19th and 20th centuries* ( Bridgwater, 2007), 14.

<sup>656</sup> M. Miles, *Perfectly Pure*, (Longfield, 2007), 82; below, econ, hist.

<sup>657</sup> SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/1 (*Taunton Mail* 25 Apr. 1894), p. 4.

Municipal Buildings, and the Technical Institute of 1898 by C.H. Samson are both in Westleigh stone with Ham stone dressings. Across the road the former public library of 1904—5 was a competition victory by Ingleson Charles Goodison of London. The two-storey building has a red sandstone and Ham Hill stone front in an Arts-and-Crafts Tudor style. Next is the classical former College of Art, 1905 by Samson and Cottam in Bath stone on a high basement of rock-faced Westleigh stone. The upper part has giant pilasters and a pediment carved with two artist cherubs amid foliage but the classicism is idiosyncratic in window details, Ionic capitals and column spacing.<sup>658</sup> Samson and Cottam won an 1898 competition for an Anglo-Baroque town hall over a market and a 1907 competition for county offices. Neither was built.<sup>659</sup> Among other improvements were Vivary Park laid out in 1894—5, with highly ornate gates, bandstand and 1907 Queen Victoria memorial fountain with dolphins and cherubs all from Macfarlane's Saracen Foundry, Glasgow.<sup>660</sup> In 1895 a new Tone Bridge was completed, designed by J.H. Smith, with ornamental railings and lamps from the Phoenix Foundry, Derby.<sup>661</sup> A. B. Cottam's 1905 Bishop Fox's school on Staplegrove Road was built of red brick and roughcast with free Georgian features rather than the Gothic thought appropriate for boys.<sup>662</sup>

Commercial rebuilding of the Edwardian period was led by the banks. The c. 1900 Ham Hill stone palazzo front at 7 Fore Street, was probably built for the Wiltshire and Dorset Bank. Stuckey's Bank at 25 Fore Street was extended around the corner of Corporation Street in 1906—7. Architect George Oatley of Bristol copied the details of the 1850s building around a curved corner. Prudential Insurance probably rebuilt 21 Fore Street opposite, stuccoed with an octagonal cupola over the corner doorway. It stands on the opposite corner of Corporation Street. C.H. Brodie architect of The National Provincial bank rebuilt 50—1

---

<sup>658</sup> Below, soc. hist.

<sup>659</sup> SHC, A/CMY/426—7.

<sup>660</sup> Colson Stone Partnership, *Vivary Park Restoration Proposals* (1998); below, soc. hist.

<sup>661</sup> Above, this section, bridges.

<sup>662</sup> Below, soc. hist., educ.

North Street in 1911—12 in a stone-faced Anglo-Baroque style.<sup>663</sup> The former Post Office, North Street of 1910—11 was designed by John Rutherford in Queen-Anne style of red brick and Portland stone. The town council thought the front not grand enough and persuaded the architect to add alternating stone quoins to the brick upper floors.<sup>664</sup>

Taunton's first war memorial was the Burma Memorial, a Portland stone Celtic cross erected in 1889 in memory of soldiers of the Somerset Light Infantry who died in the Burmese campaign of 1885—7, which since 1996 has stood on the Parade roundabout.<sup>665</sup> The 1921—2 war memorial in Vivary Park is a tall four-sided stele inscribed with the names under a Portland stone dome on four columns designed by the borough Surveyor, Ivor Shellard. The King's College 1920 memorial in the form of a late medieval churchyard cross in red sandstone was reputedly designed by Henry Martin Gibbs and Walter Tower.<sup>666</sup>

Post-war local authority housing included concrete dwellings south of Wellington Road and on the Lambrook estate in 1925—6 under Ivor Shellard. A large number of houses were built between the wars in styles typical for the period, two-storey, roughcast or brick houses in rows or pairs. The most formal layout was the Halcon estate, in West Monkton, built up from 1935, centred on the concentric Inner and Outer Circles. The houses are hip-roofed with two-storey canted bays, some gabled. By the end of the 20th century the estate was severely impoverished but a proposed clearance of Moorland, Valley and Beadon Roads, built in 1938—9 was not carried out and a major programme of improvements was implemented.<sup>667</sup> In 1931—3 an unusually formal layout was given to the Leycroft Close almshouses designed by Eric Francis of Stone and Francis, which overlook an ample green and across the road the thatched spital in West Monkton parish, restored by the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen. The Neo-Georgian two-storey, hip-roofed ranges are of mottled red brick

<sup>663</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/37/428, 24/1/42/554; below, econ. hist., banks.

<sup>664</sup> *Taunton Courier* 8 March 1911: BNA, accessed 12 Aug. 2024.

<sup>665</sup> SHC, A/DIF/106/5; DD/X/SHARP.

<sup>666</sup> Below, soc. hist.

<sup>667</sup> [bbc.co.uk/local/somerset/hi/people\\_and\\_places/newsid\\_8834000](https://bbc.co.uk/local/somerset/hi/people_and_places/newsid_8834000).

with deep coved eaves and pedimented doorcases. The principal block has a domed cupola. Traditional styles predominated in private house building, with half-timber and tile-hung gables over roughcast typical but international modern-style houses were built at Wilton and Comeytrove designed by Stone and Francis.<sup>668</sup>

Notable commercial buildings of the inter-war years included Deller's Café, a remodelling of Tone Bridge House, possibly built *c.* 1780, and its wharf buildings. Designed in 1922 by Stone, Lloyd and Bruce, it had a double height interior and slightly Spanish arched balconies, mostly lost to create a shop and nightclub.<sup>669</sup> Corner House, 27—8 North Street, takes the corner to St James's Street in 1920s classical style, corniced, the corner at first-floor level set back in a curve behind an array of carved stone fruit baskets. Motor engineers Charles Allen and Son built premises opposite Deller's, now reduced and called Tonebridge Chambers, in traditional mock timber-frame with a copper-capped lantern.<sup>670</sup> Characteristic buildings of national shop chains designed by company architects include the former Marks and Spencer, 40—4 Fore Street begun in 1931 with the three left-hand bays, in streamlined classical style, extended to five bays in 1934, and in 1946 to ten. The giant pilasters and stylised window aprons are typical of the firm's stores at the time under their architect, Albert Batzer. Equally demonstrating company style is the former Montague Burton shop replacing part of the Castle Hotel as 1—2 North Street built by Reginald Spiller in 1929—30 to the design of company architect Harry Wilson as a big Art Deco classical building in imitation Portland stone, animated with giant arches on the upper floors topped by a pediment with the Burton name.<sup>671</sup> Chapman's rebuilt four bays of their North Street department store in 1938 in a modern style in brown brick, with windows in long pairs set in stone, or imitation stone, frames with Art Deco zig-zag ornament designed by George Baines

---

<sup>668</sup> Trull, Wilton, forthcoming.

<sup>669</sup> SHC, A/DAS/2/12281, 13264; A/DQO/404/43/7, 9; D/B/ta/24/1/53/897.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid. D/B/ta/24/1/62/1210; below, *econ. hist., industry.*

<sup>671</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/67/1295—6; foundation stone.

and Son. It was extended in matching style in 1963—4, probably by the same architects.<sup>672</sup> Streamlined or 'moderne' Art Deco characterises former ironmongers Spiller and Webber at 30—2 Bridge Street. Built in 1937 and rendered white in horizontal bands its windows are in narrow bands with horizontal striation.<sup>673</sup> The other prime example of Art Deco architecture is the former Gaumont cinema, Corporation Street in Bishops Hull brick.<sup>674</sup> Notable examples of new public houses of the 1930s are the former Queen Victoria, 90 East Reach, in an 'old England' style, red brick with a timber-framed jettied gable, and the Princess Royal, 25 Canon Street, in modern Georgian style, brown brick with sash windows under a hipped roof of glazed blue-green pantiles.

County Hall, designed by Vincent Harris, was built for Somerset County Council in 1932—5 by Nichols of Gloucester in a stripped Palladian style reminiscent of Lutyens, a broad nine-bay curve ties together two hip-roofed office wings that splay outward as they run back. The whole building is of a uniform four storeys, in brown brick over a Portland stone dressed ground floor on a concrete frame, with Portland stone for the eaves cornice and for a Palladian pedimented and columned aedicule at second-floor level on the end of each wing. Within repetitive detail, there are subtleties such as the intermittently omitted or shrunken windows of the first floor, the inset jambs of the attic windows and the placing of two massive brick chimneys on the outer ends of the ridge of the curved range. The former galleried entrance hall with marble skirtings and vaulted plaster ceiling lies between two stone staircases with heraldic stained glass windows by George Kruger Gray and carries the names of Somerset worthies on the walls. The first floor formerly housed panelled offices, applewood for the clerk and light oak for the chairman, with quality 1930s furnishings removed in the 1990s.<sup>675</sup>

---

<sup>672</sup> Plaque on building; below, econ. hist., retail.

<sup>673</sup> SHC, D/D/ta/24/1/100/2409.

<sup>674</sup> Bishops Hull, forthcoming.

<sup>675</sup> SHC, DD/X/BNL/10; A/DNM/1; DD/SK/6/9.

Minor public buildings tended to be neo-Georgian. The Telephone repeater station, Hamilton Road, of 1927 by Archibald Bulloch of the Office of Works has a stripped-down simplicity in red brick, the ground floor centre arcaded.<sup>676</sup> The red-brick offices of the Taunton Electric Company, Castle Bow, which replaced the Corn Exchange in 1939, are by Stone and Partners and 1938—41 neo-Georgian Telephone House at 12—16 The Crescent was probably designed by partner Reginald Hewlett in brown brick to match the surrounding houses.<sup>677</sup> The county architect designed school, police and fire service buildings from the 1930s. In *c.* 1943 the new police station was completed, a plain neo-Georgian brown-brick building designed in 1939 by Leonard Mew or Meux who designed the now demolished Kingston Road girls school.<sup>678</sup> In 1930—2 the town council refurbished the Market House replacing the market arcades with plain brick wings designed by H.S.W. Stone. The central clock in a broad ashlar pediment across all five bays was built on the advice of Professor Charles Reilly of the Liverpool School of Architecture.<sup>679</sup>

In four years after 1945 the borough council built 225 temporary bungalows, 200 steel dwellings, 100 Orlit houses and 112 Cornish houses. The British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF) houses were steel-framed, distinctively clad with corrugated sheet steel, and with metal windows. They were designed from a prototype by Frederick Gibberd, architect, and Donovan Lee, engineer and built on the Holway and Wellsprings estates where they survive. Among the concrete houses were the Orlit, Woolaway, Easiform and Cornish. The Orlits, designed by Erwin Katona and built at Holway, had precast concrete frames clad in reinforced concrete two-inch thick slabs fixed with high alumina cement but failed and were demolished in the 1990s. The Cornish Unit houses, designed by A.E. Beresford and R. Tonking, were concrete framed with precast reinforced concrete panels to the ground floor

---

<sup>676</sup> <http://britishpostofficearchitects.weebly.com>.

<sup>677</sup> SHC, D/D/ta/24/1/100/2351; VCH Office, Lillford, 'Biog. Dict. Som. Architects and Surveyors', 271.

<sup>678</sup> SHC, C/PSCS/5/1; Wilton. forthcoming.

<sup>679</sup> Plaque on building; below, econ. hist., market.

and the upper floor within a tile-clad mansard roof. They were built on the Halcon and Wellsprings estates, notably Bagborough Road, where they all remain, many now privately owned and altered. Easiform houses were built on the Priorswood estate where examples can be seen on Blackmoor Road. Woolaway houses, notably at Rochester Road, were replaced in the 2020s. Temporary bungalows included aluminium AIROH (Aircraft Industries Research Organisation House) and Uni-Seco timber-framed units built on the Priorswood estate but soon demolished. The borough council under their architect Clarence Bacon 1946—65 also built flats notably the curved 1949—50 block at Duke Street.<sup>680</sup>

Schools and churches were built to serve the new estates. Somerset County Council architects, under R.O. Harris until 1960, and then Bernard Adams, built several schools including Priorswood Infants in 1948—9 designed by C. W. Ransom, Wellsprings Junior in 1948—50 designed by Leonard Meux, secondary schools at Priorswood 1949—56, Monkton Heathfield 1953 and Ladymead 1958 and Huish Boys' Grammar School 1961—4. All were flat-roofed and most were faced in pale brown brick. The grammar school, now Richard Huish College, was designed by Dennis Tarbert on a grid system around a long two-storey classroom block. All Saints, Halcon, designed by Stone and Partners, was begun in 1952 of red brick, concrete columns and brown concrete Roman tiles. St Peter, Lyngford was built in 1956 by C. S. Williams to designs of Michael Torrens in yellow brick with a ridge spire and cruck-like concrete trusses within. St Teresa's, Priorswood, 1958—60, was designed by Eric Francis and built by Stansells in modern Georgian style in red brick with a tall south-side tapering tower topped by an octagonal timber lantern and openwork metal fleche. The former Open Brethren New Octagon Chapel on East Reach of 1965 by Steel, Coleman and Davis

---

<sup>680</sup> SHC, C/PC/2/25; below, local. govt., housing.

echoes Wesley's Octagon, which they had used since 1840. The crematorium chapel of 1962—3 in Bishops Hull has a glass wall and a stone and glass front.<sup>681</sup>

In 1960, the County Council, held a competition to design additional offices, which was won by Leonard Tatum of Goodwin and Tatum of London. A four-storey quadrangle is given a campus setting, separate from the 1930s County Hall. It frames a lawn and watercourse, the ground floor left open on the east and west sides to allow views through. The quadrangle was built in 1962—4 and an eight-storey block added to the south in 1968—9 by the same architects. The county architects with theatre architect Norman Branson built the Brewhouse Theatre in Coal Orchard in 1976—7. It has a stark brick exterior but incorporates late 18th-century Old Brewery House.<sup>682</sup> In 1972 a new Brutalist Art college was built on Wellington Road.<sup>683</sup>

In the town centre, replacement commercial buildings tended to be utilitarian and short-lived. Most notable is Lloyds Bank at 31—2 Fore Street, 1959—60 by Trehearne and Norman, Preston and Partners of London.<sup>684</sup> The long 11-bay front has upper floors clad in pale grey stone and the third floor is recessed to diminish the bulk. The Hammet Street side is clad in Bath stone and broken into two parts for the same reason but still overwhelms the Georgian street. Opposite is Alliance House, 28—9 Fore Street, of 1967—9 on the site of the market with a three-storey front faced in Bath stone slabs. On the corner of Fore Street, 1 High Street of 1977—9 by Whicheloe and Macfarlane of Bristol echoes without pastiche the timber frames of the adjacent Fore Street fronts and its demolished predecessor.<sup>685</sup> The Old Market, now Orchard, precinct by the Alec French Partnership of Bristol won a Civic Trust Award in 1984 for the way in which it preserved the streetscape with an entry through 5 Fore Street. South of East Street a former garage was more obviously redeveloped as County Walk

---

<sup>681</sup> Below, rel. hist.; Bishops Hull, forthcoming.

<sup>682</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/136/7987; below. soc. hist.

<sup>683</sup> Below, soc. hist.; educ.

<sup>684</sup> Plaque on building.

<sup>685</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/181/10771.

in 1996—7, a tall glass gable replacing a Victorian gabled front, giving access to shops and a supermarket behind. The Regency-style stucco front of the Phoenix Hotel was preserved and three replica Georgian fronts were created east of the glass gable. Further west the 17th-century gable of the Swan was preserved in a modern shopfront. The new work on East Street and up Billet Street is in orange brick with gables and oriels, suggesting the Victorian.

A Victorian aesthetic is found at 1987 Deane House, Station Road, in red brick with yellow trimmings, under hipped roofs, reversing the yellow brick and red trimmings of the houses opposite and the 1992 Magistrates' Courts, in red brick with blue brick trimming and steep gables, was influenced by nearby St John's church and Park Street terraces.<sup>686</sup> Bishop Fox's School, 1993—4 by Gerald Fogwill of the County Architect's department, is also in a Victorian palette, of yellow brick with red trimming, echoing the houses of South Road. St James Court, St James's Street, 1983—5 by the Hubbard Ford Partnership for the YMCA, is another essay in contrasted coloured bricks.

The single office block standing in its own car park arrived in 1960 with Rodwell, later Bedford House, Park Street and Quantock House, Mary Street, long utilitarian blocks of similar height, built in 1964—5 for Ministry of Agriculture officials but since demolished. Michael Paul House, Corporation Street, built in 1980 for the Inland Revenue remains. Such large single-user offices were unusual, more common was the grouping of small blocks in an office park, as at Blackbrook Park, 2000—3 adjacent to the M5 motorway. The offices, in pyramid-roofed blocks, are by Brewer, Smith and Brewer.<sup>687</sup>

Blocks of private residential flats became a feature of the riverside: Hammet's Wharf on the north bank, 2000 by Heighway Field of Exeter, Pegasus Court, 2007—9 overlooking the County Cricket ground by Armstrong Burton Architects, and most prominent, the 2015—22 Riverside development at Coal Orchard by the Bristol office of AHR architects. The last

---

<sup>686</sup> Wilton, forthcoming.

<sup>687</sup> *The Builder and Engineer*, August 2003.

was notable as being initiated by Taunton Deane District Council to achieve public realm improvements along the riverside and link the Brewhouse Theatre to the town centre. The largest development was the former railway sidings and cattle market site at Firepool cleared in 2008 and led by the District Council, with construction under several developers and architects. Stride Treglown of Bristol were responsible for the Firepool Lock housing, 2013—14 and Stephen George and Partners of Leicester 2018 for the proposed shopping area and housing, still not built.<sup>688</sup>

The principal public realm improvements after 2000 were mostly outside the town centre but included the restoration of Taunton Castle as the Museum of Somerset in 2007—13 and the landscaping of Castle Green 2011—12 including a glass footbridge. Also Tangier Bridge, the Somerset Heritage Centre at Langford Mead, Norton Fitzwarren, 2009—10, new buildings for Somerset College and a new library at King's College, 2010—11.<sup>689</sup>

---

<sup>688</sup> [stridetreglown.com/projects/firepool-lock-taunton](http://stridetreglown.com/projects/firepool-lock-taunton); [stephenngerorge.co.uk/firepool-taunton](http://stephenngerorge.co.uk/firepool-taunton).

<sup>689</sup> Below, soc. hist.