

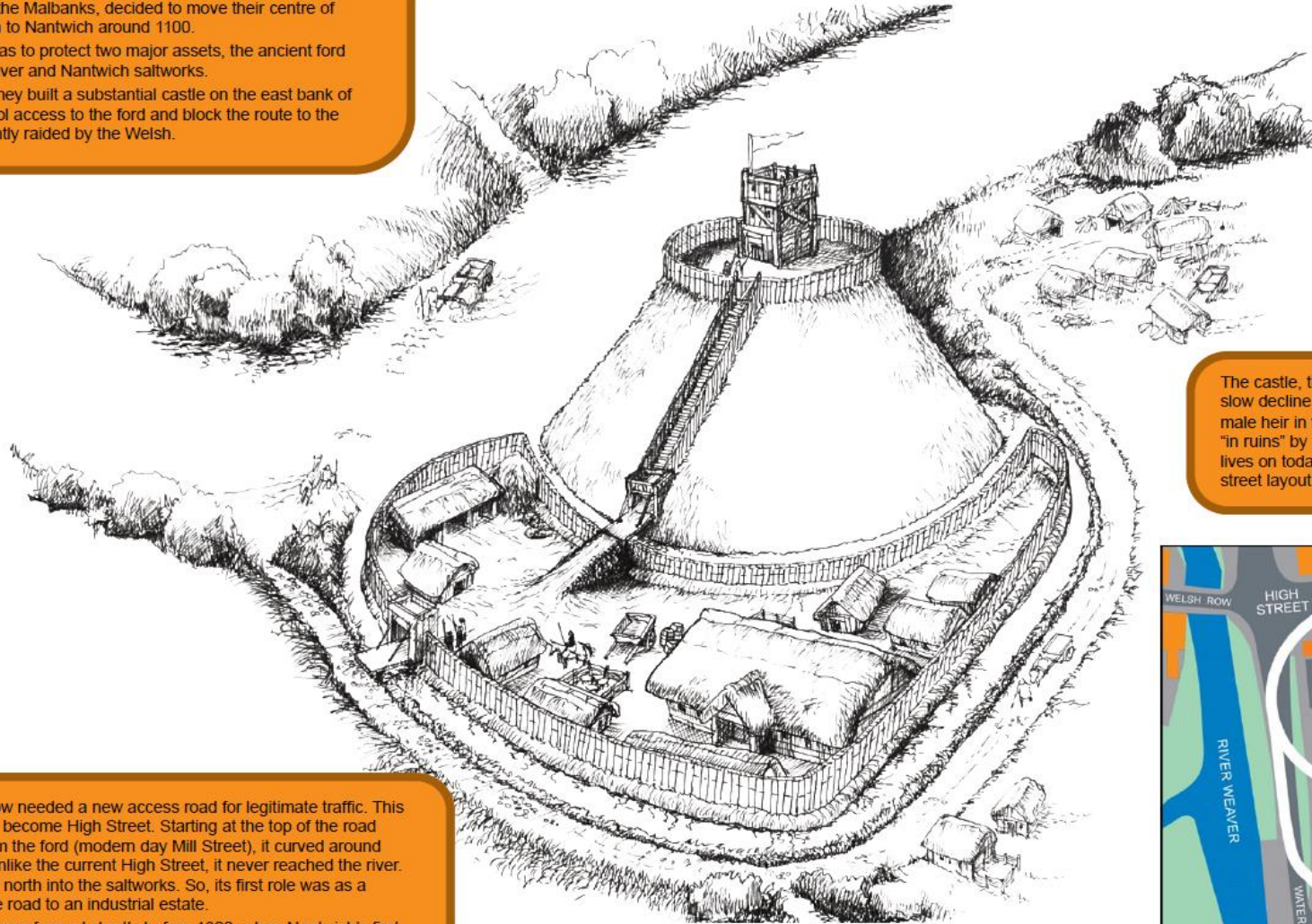
# The Birth of High Street

## Early 1100's

Although there is evidence of human activity in Nantwich from Roman times, the first permanent settlement came when local Norman barons, the Malbanks, decided to move their centre of power from Acton to Nantwich around 1100.

Their main aim was to protect two major assets, the ancient ford crossing the Weaver and Nantwich saltworks.

To achieve this, they built a substantial castle on the east bank of the river, to control access to the ford and block the route to the saltworks frequently raided by the Welsh.



The castle, though, fared less well, suffering a slow decline after the death of the Malbanks' last male heir in the 1170s. It was finally reported as "in ruins" by 1485. However, its ghostly outline lives on today in the shape of the town centre street layout it created.

The saltworks now needed a new access road for legitimate traffic. This would eventually become High Street. Starting at the top of the road which ran up from the ford (modern day Mill Street), it curved around the castle, but, unlike the current High Street, it never reached the river. Instead, it turned north into the saltworks. So, its first role was as a dead-end service road to an industrial estate.

Its purpose was transformed shortly before 1300, when Nantwich's first town bridge was built and High Street was extended to meet it, to provide a key link on the main medieval route from the Midlands to Chester and Ireland.

*Artist's Impression*



*The outline of Nantwich castle superimposed on a modern map.*



PC Store / Leaders



Hays Travel



Romazzino



Hope House



The Union



Crown Hotel



Savers



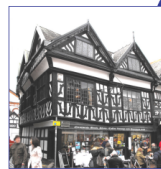
M&Co



Bayfields



St Mary's Church



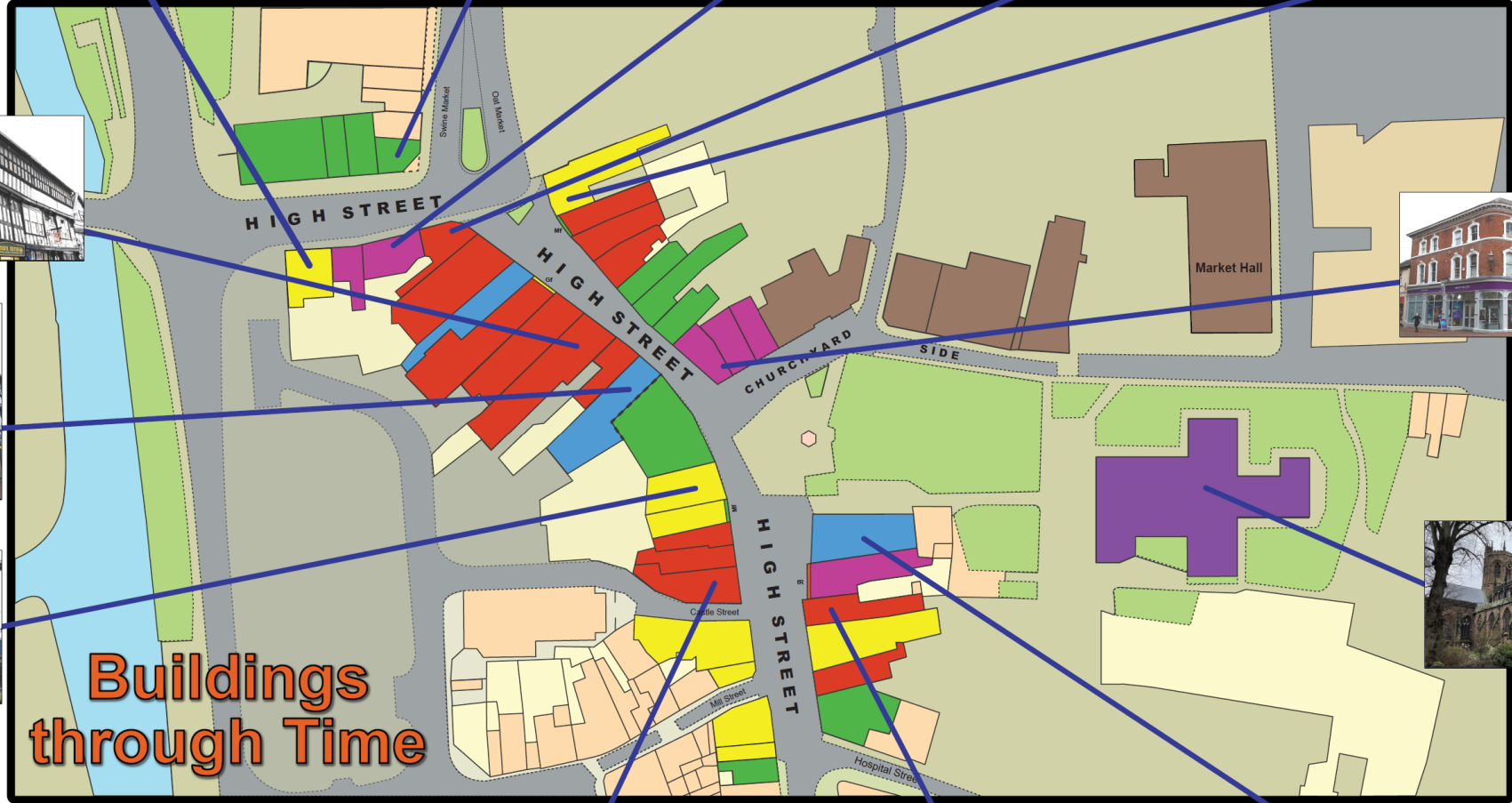
Bookshop (46)



Queen's Aid House



WH Smith



# Buildings through Time

### Key

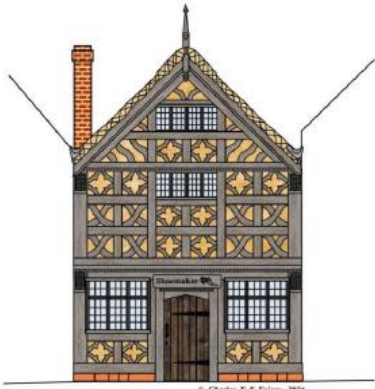
- Tudor / or Jacobean 1584 (post Great Fire)-1714
- Georgian 1714-1837
- Victorian 1837-1901
- Edwardian 1901-1919
- Modern 1919-2024



Mf = Modern Refront  
 Gf = Georgian Refront  
 fR = Facade/Front Rebuilt



# Changing Faces and Architectural Features



Possible Elizabethan (1584) Face



Georgian (Pre 1960s) Face



Today's (2024) Face

## Ovolo Carved Beams

Nearly all of the timber-framed buildings on High Street have floor beams which are ornately carved.

This treatment is known as 'Ovolo Moulding' and is a common feature of late 16th to mid 17th century buildings.

Some of them also have 'Lamb's Tongue' stops where they end at the wall.



## The Changing Faces of the High Street

No. 19 High Street, now known as Specsavers, looks rather modern today. However, it still has an Elizabethan roof structure, and 'Ovolo Moulded' beams with 'Lamb's Tongue' stops to the first floor.

Many of Nantwich's buildings hide earlier architectural styles beneath, or in part, within.

Here too, this building was given a Georgian facelift. The advent of the Industrial Revolution meant that many buildings were given a new facade, or even rebuilt.



46, 44 & 42 High Street (plastered over).



The Crown Inn.



21 & 23 High Street (plastered over).

## Flanking Windows: What are they?

Some of High Street's timber-framed buildings had smaller windows either side of the larger central windows. These are known as 'Flanking Windows', and are a feature of mid 16th to early 17th century houses. Some are plastered over today, but their mullions are still visible on the outside and inside.

Examples can be seen on 46, 44 and 42 (Nantwich Bookshop, Enzo and Cancer Research), the Crown Inn, Regent House (Hope House), and 21 and 23 (Yorkshire Building Society and White Ribbon Boutique).



Regent House (Hope House), at the Junction of High Street with Swine and Oat Market.



## A Range of 1584 Merchant Houses

# Elizabethan Architecture

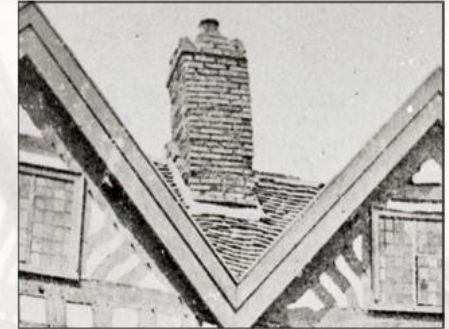


Diagram of the Conjectured Original Front Elevation of 46, 44 & 42 High Street (with Architectural Annotations)



Original rear wing of 46 High Street (now rebuilt in brick) showing the original chimney

(Nantwich Museum Collection)



The mid to late 17th century chimney stack. This caused downward movement over time, due to it resting on the first floor, as well as standing on what was once the Castle's moat. The effects of which can be seen to the timber frame today. The brick lip at the bottom of the chimney, shows that the roof covering was originally thatched.

(Nantwich Museum Collection)

## The Room Layout of 46 High Street

The 1635 Will and Household Inventory of Thomas Church, who built and lived at 46 High Street tells us that the House & Shop had the following rooms:

*In the Hall (with Fireplace)  
[the main living and dining area];*

*In the Buttery [to store dining equipment, beer, wine, etc];*

*Under the stairs at the side of the Hall;*

*In the Kitchen (with Fireplace);*

*In the Dairy House [for keeping dairy produce];*

*NB. The Cage refers to a structure used for punishment near the original Market Hall, which sat to the front of this building.*

*In the (Great) Chamber over the Hall  
[a living room like a 'Solar'];*

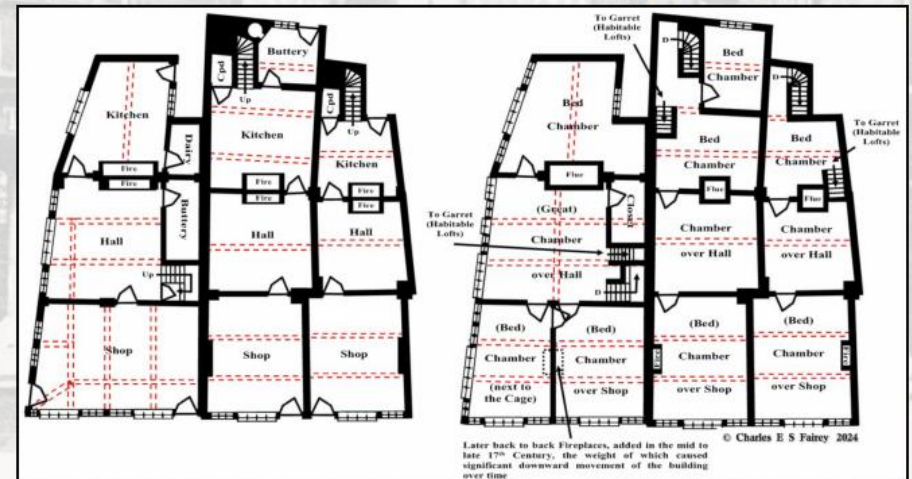
*In the Closet over the Hall;*

*In the Chamber next (to) the Cage (2 beds);*

*In the Chamber over the shop (4 beds);*

*In the Garret (3 beds)*

*[a habitable loft where the servants slept].*



Later back to back Fireplaces, added in the mid to late 17th Century, the weight of which caused significant downward movement of the building over time

© Charles E S Fairey 2024

This list of rooms and the original features still remaining, enable us to re-create the layout of this building, which along with 44 & 42 High Street, are shown to the right.

Original Layout of Ground Floor (Left) and First Floor (Right) of 46, 44 & 42 High Street (Front Elevation at bottom)



# Georgian to Victorian Architecture

## GEORGIAN (1714-1837): 48 High Street

Until the latter part of the 18th century the High Street remained much as it had appeared immediately after the 1583 fire, with timber-framed buildings.

Away from the High Street in the mid-18th century, brick three-storey houses began to appear, but it was not until the end of the century that such building types impacted on the High Street, of which The Union (No. 17) and Ye Olde Vaults (No. 48) public houses are examples.

In the 1780s, Thomas Hall, a wine merchant, had a business here, and so the pub was known as Ye Olde Vaults (from 1914).

- Chimney
- Hipped Roof
- Roof Parapet with Cornice
- Camber Arch with Brick Rubbers / Sanded Bricks (Flat Gauged Arch)
- Flemish Bond Brickwork
- Sliding Sash Windows
- Stone Window Sill
- Entablature
- Timber Fluted Doric Column
- Large Casement Window
- Decorative Timber Bracket
- Stone Plinth



## VICTORIAN (1837-1901): 31 High Street

In the early part of the 19th century Georgian-style premises continued to be built, but more decorative features began to appear on buildings in the Victorian period. After the mid-century Cholera epidemic the Shambles (slaughterhouses) were cleared and the Market Hall was relocated. Further Victorian buildings appeared on the High Street, of which the premises now occupied by Bayfields opticians (No. 31) are a fine example.

It was built in the 1860s but remodelled in 1912.



Stretch & Harlock, before being remodelled in 1912  
(Nantwich Museum Collection)



# Edwardian to Modern Architecture

## EDWARDIAN (1901-1919): 28 High Street

The Edwardian period gave us splendid Baroque revival on non-domestic buildings, with touches of French classic styling. 28 High Street, built around 1900 for the Post Office, has many of these elaborate features, such as Aedicule columns to the window sides on the upper floors and Ionic columns to the ground floor. In the 1950s the building was taken over by the National Provincial Bank, moving from No.32. The facade was retained in the 1970s when the rear of the building was demolished and rebuilt.

Roof Parapet

Cornice

Half Storey 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

String Course  
(Stone Band)

Pediment

Decorative Corbel

Stone Aedicule  
(raised window surround  
and pediment)

Sliding Sash Window

Polychromatic (Many  
Coloured) Brickwork

Cornice

Frieze (and Name)

Architrave

Ionic Column Capital

Stone Column

Ashlar Stone

Column Base

Stone Plinth



## MODERN (1919-Today): 36 High Street



Exterior of Nantwich 36 High Street branch of National Westminster Bank plc, 15 August 1993  
(Reproduced with kind permission of NatWest Group plc (Photograph ref: D7269))

The 1970s saw a major change to the look of the High Street. The buildings occupying 32, 34 and 36 were demolished and the Nantwich branch of NatWest was built, along with a second frontage. The bank opened for business on 8 March 1976, two years after the works commenced.

The new building, although in a conservation area, was radically different to the other town buildings. The concrete columns and narrow windows are in the style of the NatWest Tower in London which also has a Brutalist look.

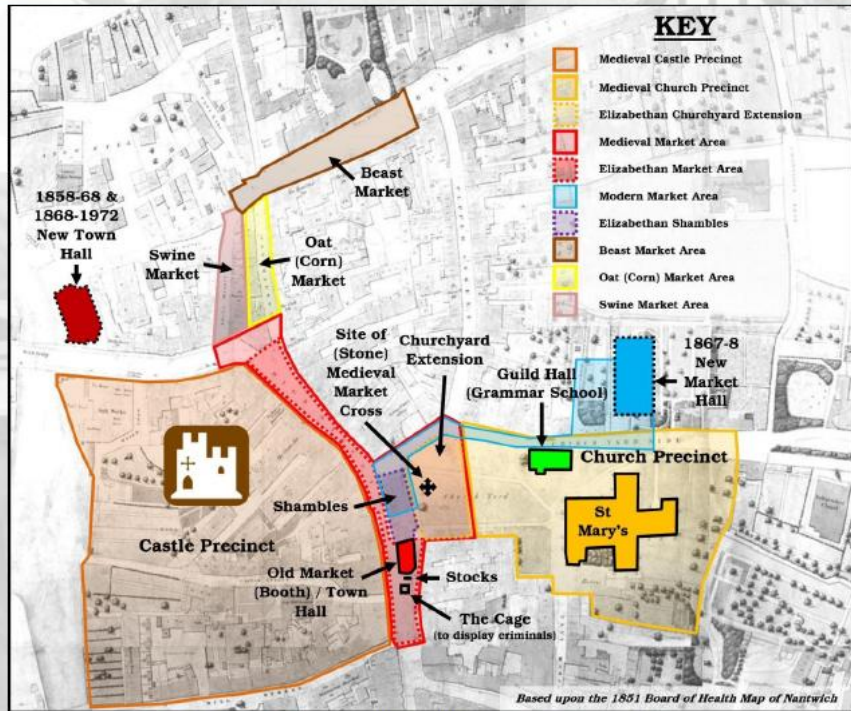
The building now has a cash machine incorporated and three of the ground floor windows are now one large window.



## Markets and Fairs

The town square, originally the market square, has been at the heart of the town since the High Street first developed. In common with many medieval towns, the market square was formed on land situated between the castle and the church.

We don't know the precise area covered by the original market square, but the most likely changes in its layout over the years, and some of its key elements, are shown on the map below.



Map showing the possible development of the market square and surrounding areas over time.

The market square may have centred on a 'great stone cross' but, by as early as 1577, this cross stood in what was presumably an encroaching churchyard.

Records dating back to the 15th century also note the existence in the square of an early market hall (originally called a 'Booth Hall') with courtrooms and a holding cell on the upper floor. Although this was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1583, further market halls stood in the High Street until 1868, when the current market hall on Churchyardside was opened.

The sights, sounds and smells of the market square would have been very different from today. As well as the townsfolk and the merchants with their stalls, we had a 'shambles' - an area containing slaughterhouses and butchers. If you were very lucky, you may have found the odd wrongdoer locked in the stocks awaiting a rotten cabbage, or worse, in the face!

Of course, it would have been even busier on the days of the fair. These would have spread into the churchyard, with exuberant entertainers, performing animals and general revelry.

Today, the town square continues to be a busy place with market stalls, friends meeting for a coffee, live music and a full calendar of town events - but with fewer smells and less blood and guts to dirty our shoes!

# The Town Square the heart of the town

## The Dates of the Fairs

Saturday has been a market day in Nantwich for over 500 years, but the dates of the Fairs have changed over time.



"Nantwich Fair" by Archibald Mackinnon (1850-1935) (Nantwich Museum Collection)

Dates for ye Diary for the  
Year of our Lord:

1501

St. Bartholomew's Day  
Fair

24<sup>th</sup> August, and the  
four days thereafter

...And forget ye not the  
weekly market on every  
Saturday



The Old Market Hall in Shrewsbury. The market halls in Nantwich would have been constructed to a broadly similar design, with an arched market place, and court rooms above.  
(Photo: Ian Short)

Diary Dates

1774 AD

Fairs

2<sup>nd</sup> March - The Spring Fair

4<sup>th</sup> September - The Great Fair

4<sup>th</sup> December - The Dirty Fair

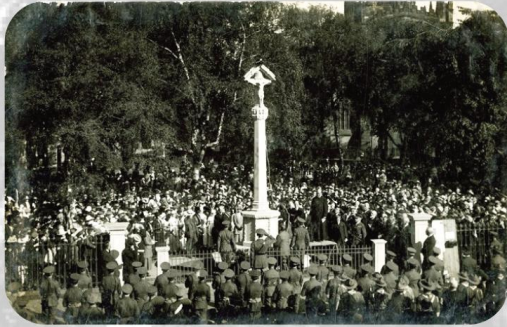
Market

Every Saturday

Unfortunately, we don't know why the December fair was called the "Dirty Fair" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



# Nantwich War Memorial



Postcard view of the 1921 unveiling ceremony

The memorial was unveiled on 25 September 1921, one of many thousands of memorials erected throughout the country to commemorate the losses suffered in the First World War. It takes the form of a Calvary cross in Darley Dale stone and granite; the sculptor was Edward Owen Griffith and the builders were Messrs Harding & Sons. 175 names were inscribed on polished granite plaques.



Advertisement for Harding & Sons (Johnson's Directory 1933)



Aerial view of a Remembrance Sunday service

After the Second World War, 44 more names were added, and in 1969 the memorial was renovated. Every year on Remembrance Sunday, a service takes place to honour the memory of those members of the local community who have fought and died in war.



Wreaths laid on Remembrance Sunday 2023

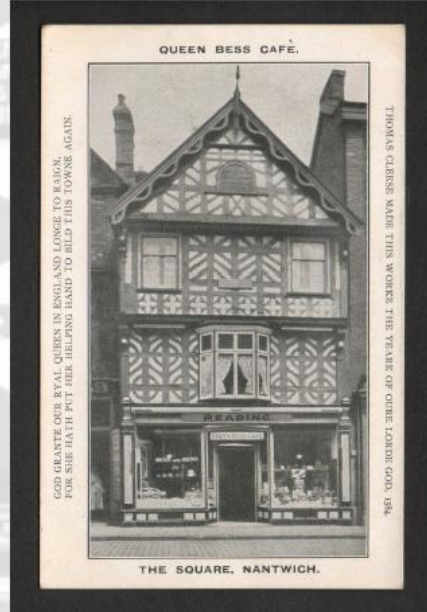


# Queen's Aid House (41 High Street)

a grocer's business with a story

For over 200 years, the property was a grocer's business. One occupant was grocer and tobacconist John Eddowes (1722-1789). In his memoirs, Joseph Priestley, non-conformist minister and school teacher in Nantwich from 1758-1761 (later discoverer of oxygen), records that he lodged with John Eddowes. In 1789 distant relative Eddowes Bowman succeeded John at the shop, retiring in 1812. Other grocers there include William Sandford, Arthur Bentley and Wardle & Hughes.

By the 1930s the Queen's Aid House was a grocer's again (the Star Tea Co.). In the 1980s it was a confectioner and tobacconist and by 2010 a newsagent, followed by a gin and juice bar. Currently it is a shop selling homeware.



QUEEN BESS CAFE.  
GOD GRANTE OUR RYAL QUEEN IN ENGLAND LONGE TO RAIGN FOR SHE HATH PUT HER HELPING HAND TO BILD THIS TOWNE AGAIN.  
THOMAS CLEESE MADE THIS WORKE THE YEARE OF OURS LORDS GOD 1584  
THE SQUARE, NANTWICH.



Inscribed board on the Queen's Aid House.

An inscribed board can be seen on the building today. The original board, blown down in around 1710, was replaced by the current board. The Queen's Aid House narrowly escaped another fire in 1882 when the adjoining business, occupied by draper John Walley, was burnt down.

In the mid-1910s the property became the Queen Bess Café. According to an advertisement of the time "A large selection of High-class Chocolates, Sweets and biscuits by the best makers can always be found there in a fresh condition and at moderate prices for you to choose from."

**R**ESPECTABLE GIRL Wanted for housework and to assist in Cafe.—Reading, Queen Bess Cafe, The Square, Nantwich. c50



Original carving of Queen Elizabeth I from the Queen's Aid House, displayed at the Museum.

**Arthur Bentley**  
(LATE BENTLEY & POOLE).  
WHOLESALE & RETAIL GROCER,  
NANTWICH.

A Trial Order Solicited for:

- IRISH ROLL BACON, . . .
- FINEST . . .
- CHESHIRE . . .
- CHEESE, . . .
- GOLD DUST TEA, . . .
- FOREIGN and BRITISH . . .
- WINES, . . .

1912 Johnson's Directory.

Chester Chronicle 4 July 1925.



The Queen's Aid House was built around 1584 (soon after the 1583 fire of Nantwich), by local craftsman Thomas Cleese. Rebuilding Nantwich after the fire was helped by donations of timber and money from Queen Elizabeth I, and this property is referred to as the Queen's Aid House in recognition of this.



## Introduction

The Great Fire of Nantwich in 1583 destroyed 55 properties in the High Street, leaving only brick chimneys and burnt debris. The town was rebuilt on the same plan and in the same style. Some of these buildings remain, others may have been obscured by cladding with bricks, whilst others have been replaced, some more than once.

# Lost Buildings of High Street



The Town Hall, originally constructed on a site previously occupied by wich (salt-making) houses. In 1945 it was judged unsafe for public use and was demolished in 1972. The shops beyond the Town Hall were demolished in the 1960s.



Numbers 2a-2f were constructed c1876 on earlier wich house sites and were occupied by a variety of shops. Local artist Archie Mackinnon's studio above numbers 2a and 2b overlooked the river. The row was demolished in the 1970s.



On the 'island' site between Swine and Oat Markets facing the High Street stood Carrington's hat shop, which later became Dixon's grocery shop. It was demolished c1965.



The Market Hall was originally a two storey building. In 1759, the upper storey was removed. It was demolished in 1868 creating The Square.



Until the turn of the 19th century 34-36 High Street were occupied by shops. They were demolished c1896 to make way for Parrs Bank, which became the National Westminster Bank in the mid-20th century. The building was demolished in the 1980s.



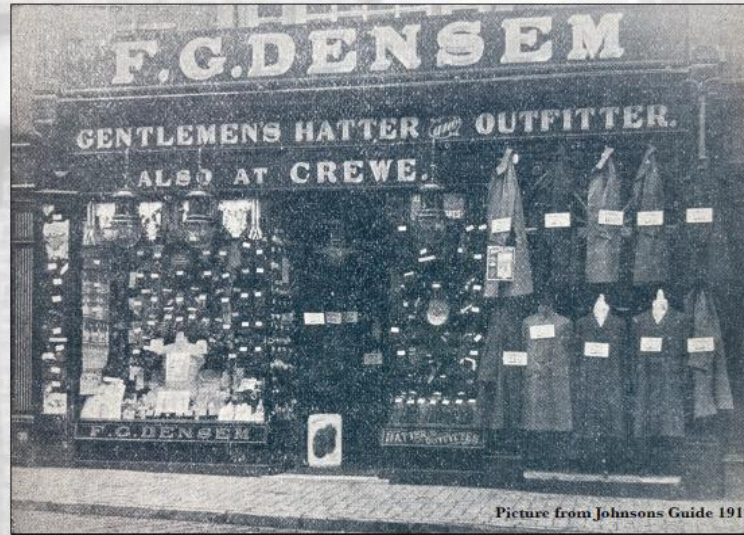
An 'island' site beyond the Market Hall, backing onto the cemetery, involved five shops. They were demolished in 1872, completing The Square.



# Trades & People

From the formative beginnings of the High Street, traders supplied the townspeople with goods which were required daily, such as bread and meat. As the town grew, other trades started to provide a variety of items such as clothes, ironmongery and groceries.

During the 1800s, the High Street had many traders which we no longer see, such as hat makers, shoe manufacturers, saddlers, clock makers and blacksmiths. Many of these are now classed as artisan trades and are located at specialist workshops, often out of town.



Picture from Johnsons Guide 1912

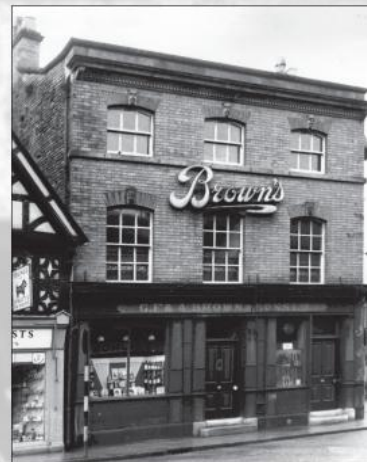


Picture from Johnsons Guide 1913

Both these shop fronts show how businesses would attract customers by displaying goods outside, a much less common practice today.

The early High Street was not just a place where traders came to do business - many people lived and worked from the same properties. On the 1871 census, 275 individuals are registered in High Street in 48 properties. In 2023 that number had dramatically reduced to 11 people living in 8 properties. This shows the change in use of the High Street to a place where people come for their goods and services, instead of living on site.

Over time the High Street has changed but it has always been able to adapt to meet local needs.



The modern High Street still has a mix of shops, but many are now services like computer repair, opticians and coffee shops.

In the 1970s Dorothy Vaughan wrote a poem about the early 20th century High Street.



Ever since the High Street first came about, it has had trade shops which serviced the local area. However, over time those shops and in some cases, the trades themselves have disappeared from our High Street. Here we show a selection of those lost trades. You will see some of these trades mentioned in Dorothy Vaughan's poem about the High Street. (See Separate Poster)

# Lost Trades

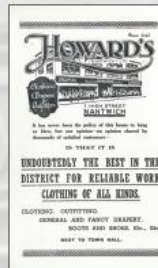
Some family businesses had their own domestic staff to help the family run the home, as many business owners lived and worked on the premises, but these jobs have also disappeared from our High Street.

X In X  
Leading Maker in  
Millinery.  
Mabel Hollins,  
22, High Street,  
Nantwich. X



## Milliners:

Maker or seller of women's hats of all types and for all occasions. Most women wore some kind of hat every day. Straw-hat making was a specialised part of the trade.



## Drapers:

A shop which sold fabric but often had an in-house **clothier/tailor**. A clothier normally sold pre-made items, whereas a tailor made bespoke items or altered pre-made items.

## PERRIN'S STORES

(Late CAWLEY & PERRIN),

Furnishing and Agricultural **IRONMONGERS**,  
TIN-PLATE WORKERS.

**BRAZERS, LOCK AND GUN SMITHS,**  
KITCHEN RANGE EXPERTS.

Electric Bells Fitted and Repaired.

Copper Cooking Utensils Re-lined on the premises.

Chesse Vats Regaired, Re-lined, and Taps Re-ground as new.

Seeds, Oils, Colours, Cartridges, Lamps, and  
Plough Fittings.

7, HIGH STREET, NANTWICH.

## Tinsmiths:

A tinsmith is a worker who makes or repairs items using sheet metal, such as tinplate. Tinsmiths mostly made domestic items such as cutlery, baking tins, mugs and coffee pots.

The tinsmith working for G&W Lea and mentioned in Dorothy Vaughan's poem was probably Thomas Flynn, who later ran his own tinsmithing business in Nantwich.

48 JOHNSON'S ALMANACK.

## A. E. WYCHERLEY,

**SADDLER and . . .  
HARNESS MAKER.**

Special attention given  
to the fit of . . .

**Ladies' and Gents'  
Riding Saddles.**



**HARNESS MADE ON THE PREMISES  
FROM GOOD BARK TAN LEATHER.**



**DRESS BASKETS, KIT BAGS,  
TRUNKS, HAND BAGS, and  
SUIT CASES.**

Repairs to all kinds of leather work.

## Saddlers:

Maker or seller of saddles and other leather items.



## Independent Grocers:

Selling items of food such as flour, sugar, tinned food, loose tea and coffee.



## Bicycle Shops:

Selling and repairing bicycles and associated items.

THE SIGN OF THE COMPETENT CYCLE DEALER

**Our Aim—Your Satisfaction**

**DON'T BUY**  
a cycle before you are sure that  
**THAT CYCLE**  
is of the highest value for your money

Ask any **RALEIGH** rider for his opinion and, if he has bought his machine from us, he will be well satisfied. Our twelve month free service guarantee assures satisfaction.

If you are considering 'motorising' your cycle ask any of our **POWER PAK** customers for their opinion.

EASY 1934& on All Cycles and Power Units. From £1 deposit

## C. MORSE

3, HIGH ST., NANTWICH, Ches.  
Telephone 8553



# Transport and High Street

## How did you arrive at Nantwich Museum today? Did you walk along High Street?

The routes converging on High Street originated from the salt trading for which Nantwich originally became famous. For centuries, most people had to travel on foot, with wealthier people having a horse, or horse drawn cart. It made sense for people to congregate together for ease of doing business, which is how High Street developed.

The advent of stagecoach travel was a revolution which created opportunities for High Street businesses. A stagecoach is so-called because it travelled in 'stages' of around 10-15 miles between changes of horses, and to allow passengers to refresh themselves before travelling onwards. The first stagecoach service is understood to have operated between Edinburgh and Leith in 1610.

The postal service started in 1635, and the increase in mail volume paved the way for post coaches which could carry more mail and provide greater security. The Crown Hotel became a post house.

The Crown Hotel has provided food, accommodation and stabling for centuries, whilst the Union Inn was built in 1792 to take advantage of growing stagecoach travel.



A Royal Mail Coach from around 1815

Image Copyright: Sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk

The opening of the Chester to Nantwich canal, in 1779, briefly provided an alternative means of arriving at Nantwich.

The advent of railway services in the 1830s soon led to the gradual demise of stagecoaches by the mid-19th century. Nantwich joined the railway age in 1858.

The far-sighted and public-spirited businessman, Samuel Jackson, played a leading role in setting up the first local motorised passenger bus company in 1905. These steam-powered buses operated (unreliably) between Nantwich and Crewe.



1905 steam powered bus service in the square

Nantwich Museum Image

## 1930s Traffic



1930s traffic (Image courtesy of John Hickson)

Other motor vehicles followed, and the internal combustion engine ruled the roads. High Street was soon dealing with traffic congestion.

## 1950s/1960s Traffic



Painting by J L Chapman



1960's traffic chaos (Image courtesy of John Hickson)

The Waterlode bypass road, which opened in 2005, allowed High Street to be largely pedestrianised.



# THEN & NOW

CAN YOU MATCH THE OLD AND NEW PHOTOS?



c 1872

**A**



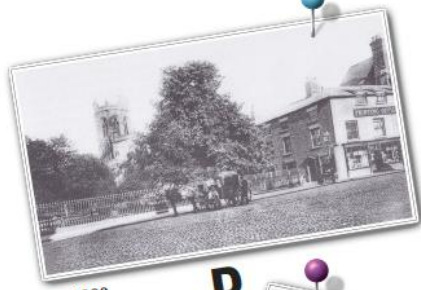
c 1910

**B**



c 1925

**C**



c 1890

**D**



c 1971

**E**



c 1971

**F**



1937

**G**



**2**



**1**



**3**



**4**



**5**



**6**



**7**

Answers: A6: B3: C2: D5: E7: F4: G1