

ALNWICK CIVIC SOCIETY



SURVEY OF LANES

December 1995



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 1.1: THE CENTRE OF ALNWICK, 1624

Source: Map of his estates, prepared for the then "Earl of Northumberland"

1. INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

In 1995 Alnwick District Council was successful in its bid for a Conservation Partnership with Northumberland County Council and English Heritage. The Civic Society was one of a number of bodies invited to participate in the planning and execution of a range of improvement projects, and as one of its contributions to the work of the Team it has made a study of each of the six surviving lanes with public access that link Green Batt to the centre of the town.

Each survey report summarises the history of the development of the lane, notes the names of those currently owning, or living in properties served by the lane, records its present physical state, and presents a list of suggestions for its improvement.

The purpose of the study is to draw attention to the need to make these ancient alleyways attractive and safe for pedestrians and for those who live along them, in a manner that is compatible with the best conservation practices. It is hoped that this will provide a stimulus for the Conservation Partnership to enable the work to be carried out under its supervision and with its financial support.

The work of the study was divided among members of the Society, with one pair allocated to survey each of the six lanes. Each pair worked independently within the guidelines laid down by the Society's Planning sub-Committee and while the resulting texts were edited to ensure some uniformity in presentation, and the suggested improvements have been co-ordinated, the individual flavour of each survey has been preserved.

2. THE HEART OF MEDIEVAL ALNWICK

Figure 1.1 is an extract from a map dated 1624 prepared by Wilkins for the then Earl of Northumberland. It shows the typical style of development of a country town, with the central market place, in the case of Alnwick set in a triangle of roads flanked by a system of burgage strips. Each strip was about 30ft wide, with the plot-holder's house built on the road frontage and with his plot for cultivation and livestock running behind the house as far as the town wall, beyond which was relatively open countryside. The map shows the Castle, which dominated the scene then as it still does, and the main Gates by which access was controlled. The wall itself is not depicted, for some reason, but its course is recorded in many subsequent maps. In the area of concern to this study, it ran along the northern pavement of Green Batt from the Clayport to the Bond Gate.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

Later maps show that by 1774 many of the buildings at the frontages of the burgage strips had been extended southwards, and that by the middle of the nineteenth century almost the whole area was built up, with the greatest concentration of development in the western half. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 are (reduced size) extracts from the astonishingly detailed Ordnance Survey map published in 1866, drawn to the scale of ten feet to one Statute Mile. This even gives the internal layout of the ground floor of each important building, and throws light on the congested style of living of the inhabitants of the many dwellings crammed in to each strip.

Because of the pattern of development, each strip had an individual access lane. At the Market Street frontage, which was full of Inns and Public Houses, this had either to be wide enough for a coach to enter the yard behind through an archway, or, where no coaches were involved, to be just wide enough for a pedestrian. Only St Michael's Lane, Old Chapel Lane and King's Arms Yard gave through routes to Green Batt for coaches and carts.

During the 19th Century the population of Alnwick increased, not only because of larger family sizes but also because of the effect here of the Nation-wide drift of people from the country into the towns. Some of the lanes turned into insanitary slums in which cholera and other diseases flourished, and gradually people moved out of them into the surrounding areas of the expanding town, leaving behind a scene of dereliction which lasted until quite recent times. The photograph of Dodd's Lane, taken in about 1975, show how long this sorry state prevailed before it was re-vitalised.

During the 1960s, the whole of a large area in the centre of the group of burgage plots was the subject of a slum clearance project, resulting in the creation of St Michael's Square, with its municipal housing typical of the period and sadly lacking in any recognition of Alnwick's traditional building style. The clearance extended eastwards where a new Government building was erected and an area behind it was left - in a rough state - for use as a car park. This cut across burgage boundaries into Roxburgh Place, leaving a confusion of access ways and patches of waste ground which remains today.

The Civic Society is clear in its opinion that St Michael's Square is, from a conservation point of view, an unworthy feature in the historic fringe area of the town centre, but it acknowledges that it was built at a time when slum clearance and redevelopment was urgently necessary and when cost limits would not permit the use of high quality materials in the traditional manner. The Society's opinion of the way in which Three Tuns Lane and

Dodd's Lane is less clear-cut. The dereliction has gone, the arrangement of new and restored housing has been very successful, and the mews-like ambiance of the resulting enclave is delightful; however, the quality of the materials used in the floorscape and in the street furniture is not up to the standard of the overall design concept. Lessons can, and should, be learned from this.

4. PRINCIPLES BEHIND CIVIC SOCIETY SUGGESTIONS

Where the lane now has the function of a useful pedestrian link between Green Batt and Market Street/Bondgate Within, the guiding principle for improvement is to make its floor safe and convenient and, by attention to walls and to lighting, to reduce or even eliminate the feeling of menace caused by its narrowness and darkness.

Where the lane serves dwellings or commercial premises, the objective is to create attractive spaces by co-ordinating the floorscape, lighting and street furniture, using good quality materials including local natural stone where possible, and by encouraging property owners to initiate restorations and improvements to their buildings.

In both cases - and some, for instance Corn Exchange Yard and Lane, come into both categories - the aim should be to use consistently the style of the early Victorian period in a modern fashion, retaining the texture of the old while adapting the details for today's requirements.

Acknowledgements

The survey teams, acting under the direction of Mr J C Smith, Chairman of the Society's Planning sub-Committee, were:

Chapel Lane Mr T J Howells and Mr P McIlroy

Dodd's and Three Tuns Lanes Mr R Farnsworth and Mr R Sayer

St Michael's Lane Mr P Deakin and Mr R Connell

Correction House Lane Dr and Mrs J Johnson

Corn Exchange Yard and Lane Mr J C Smith and Mr P Ennor

Pickwick Lane Mr T P E Blatch and Mr J Petrie

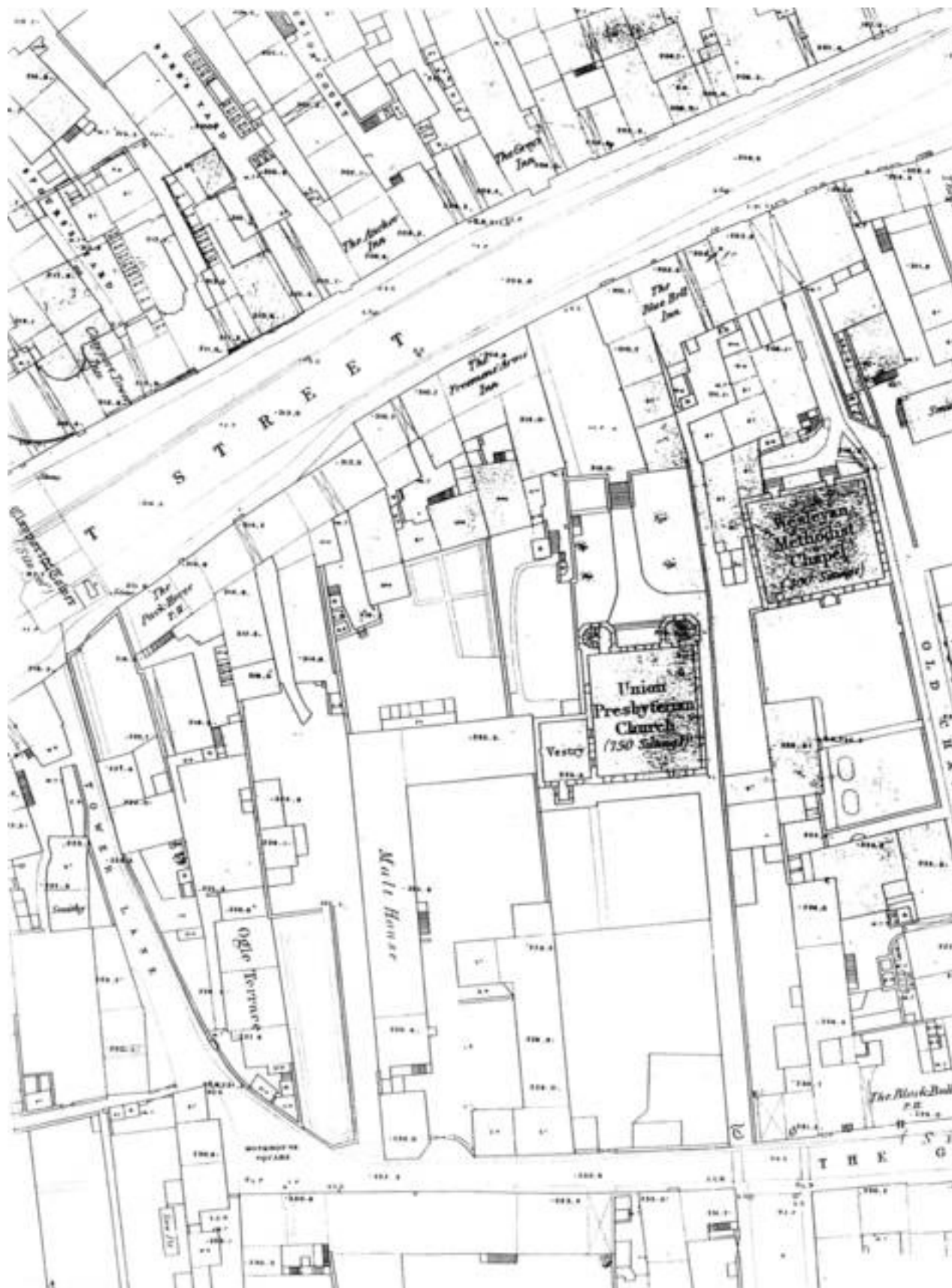
Photographs were taken either by members of the survey teams or by Mr J Housby.

The Report was put together by the Society's Honorary Secretary, Mr McIlroy

Frequent reference was made to several standard works on the history of Alnwick, notably that by Tate in 1866, and to Professor Conzen's Town Planning Study of the town published a hundred years later in 1967. Other sources are noted in the text.



Dodd's Lane, looking North: photograph taken in about 1975





2. Chapel Lane

2. CHAPEL LANE

1. HISTORY

Chapel Lane as it is in 1995 is shown in Figure 2.1, running from Green Batt north to Clayport Street near its transition into Market Street. The map of 1624 (Fig. 1.1) shows the arrangement of Medieval burgage strips enclosing the centre of Alnwick, each with its dwelling house fronting the street; the area which later included Chapel Lane appears blank on the map, probably implying an amalgamation of earlier strips for some agricultural purpose such as common grazing.

By 1774 (see Fig. 2.2) strips have re-appeared on the map, with buildings fronting onto Clayport. The Wesleyan Chapel was built in simple style in 1786 (see Fig. 2.3). Its history includes the following note:

“With the building of the Chapel, the yard had to be cleaned, the passage swept, the hedge or walks clipped and the grass from the walks removed. In June 1790, George Pringle was paid seven shillings and sixpence for seven and a half days work to keep the garden”.

The 1827 map shows the Lane (as Chapel Yard), the Chapel and several other buildings along the west side of the Lane. By 1851 the east side was also built up.

Figure 2.4 is an extract from the Ordnance Survey of 1866, to a scale of ten feet to one Statute Mile, which shows in detail all the buildings along the lane, including floor levels.

Today, the building pattern is much the same as in 1851, although some buildings have been altered or replaced. The Chapel, now known as the Methodist Church, and the Manse were considerably embellished at the centenary of their building (see Fig. 2.3), and the Chapel has been extensively re-roofed and refurbished recently. In about 1970 four new brick houses - nos 7, 9, 11 and 13 - replaced the former stone houses shown on the 1866 map; they have, regrettably, been designed to be completely out of character, whereas the designers of the three new houses in Three Tuns Lane backing onto the east side of Chapel Lane and of the new block of four flats at 16/ 18 Green Batt at the south end, finished only in 1995, have successfully reproduced traditional styles.

2. PRESENT OCCUPIERS

West Side

15A: Mr Lowes, Ms Hankin

15: Mr Hocking, Ms Coote

13: Mr & Mrs Thompson

11: Mr & Mrs Gray

9: Mr Shepherd

7: Ms Smart

5: Mrs Lewis

3: Mr & Mrs Clark

1A: Mr & Mrs Knox

East Side

6: Mr & Mrs Bonella, Mr Dumford

4: Mr Gordon

2: Ms Cockburn

7 Clayport St: Shop (Gemini) and Blue Bell Pub Flats: Mr & Mrs Clarkson, Mr Hindmarsh

(Source: Electoral Register, Oct 1994)

3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

(a) Floorscape

At the junction with Green Batt there is a narrow strip of setts (probably original), but the remainder of the roadway in the straight southern section of the Lane is paved in tarmac, patched and uneven, with concrete kerbs and flags in the sidewalks on each side (photos 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6). A rough, steel bollard at the chicane at the Church entrance prevents through passage of cars (photos 6 and 8).

The eighteenth Century paving of the Chapel Yard has been ruined by insensitive, concrete repairs.

From the bollard northwards the paving is of rough, in situ concrete, patched where services have been repaired; there is no sidewalk and drainage is by two shallow channels formed in the concrete (photos 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16).

Some of the householders have built doorsteps (e.g. No 15/15A - see photo 2, and No 2 - see photo 4) which do not blend with the stonework of the houses. The modern brick dwarf walls outside Nos 7, 9, 11 and 13 are out of keeping with the rest of the Lane.

The general appearance of the floor of the Lane is one of an unco-ordinated mixture of materials and methods, with nothing remaining of the original stone paving.

(b) Walls

Apart from the four modern, brick houses (Nos 7 - 13), which are set well back from the building line, all the houses and the Church are built in local stone, mainly coursed; the garden wall of the Old Manse (Nos 3 and 5) and the wall of the Church entrance yard are embellished with carved stone roundels (photos 5, 10 and 11). The walls of the yards north of No 2 are in random stone. At least two of the buildings in the yards opposite the Church, used for storage and as a workshop, appear to be virtually derelict, and offer a depressing aspect.

The lower three or four courses of the walls of No 15/ 15A have been rendered (photos 1 and 2); there are several examples of crude, cement mortar pointing of walls at low level (e.g. photos 4 and 6) and at upper levels (photos 12 and 13). The yard wall at the chicane opposite the entrance to the Church appears to have been rebuilt since the OS map was prepared; it is leaning, and has partly collapsed due to the growth of a tree (photo 7). Two garden gates opposite No 1A (and believed to belong to the owners of No 1A) are broken and permanently open, resulting in the dumping of rubbish (photos 8 and 9). The gate to the yard immediately north of No 2 consists of a metal frame clad in corrugated iron, which is completely out of character with the rest of Chapel Lane (photos 5 and 6).

The railings of No 1A at the Church entrance are in poor condition (photo 11).

(c) Windows

The windows in the newly-built flats at 16-18 Green Batt are cheap modern imitations of sash windows (photo 2). Elsewhere, some original sash windows remain, but others have been replaced with inappropriate, modern frames and glazing.

(d) Overhead

There are two street lights in the Lane. One is in a modern (electric) reproduction of a gas-lamp on a bracket on No 6 (photo 3); the other is a standard fluorescent street light with an ornamented base outside the church entrance (photo 10). The covered archway at the northern entrance is unlit. The effect at night is rather menacing and unattractive.

The view northwards into the Lane from Green Batt is dominated by a very large timber pole used for the distribution of telephone wires into

several houses.

A domestic TV satellite dish appears prominently on the south-facing wall of No 7 Market Street.

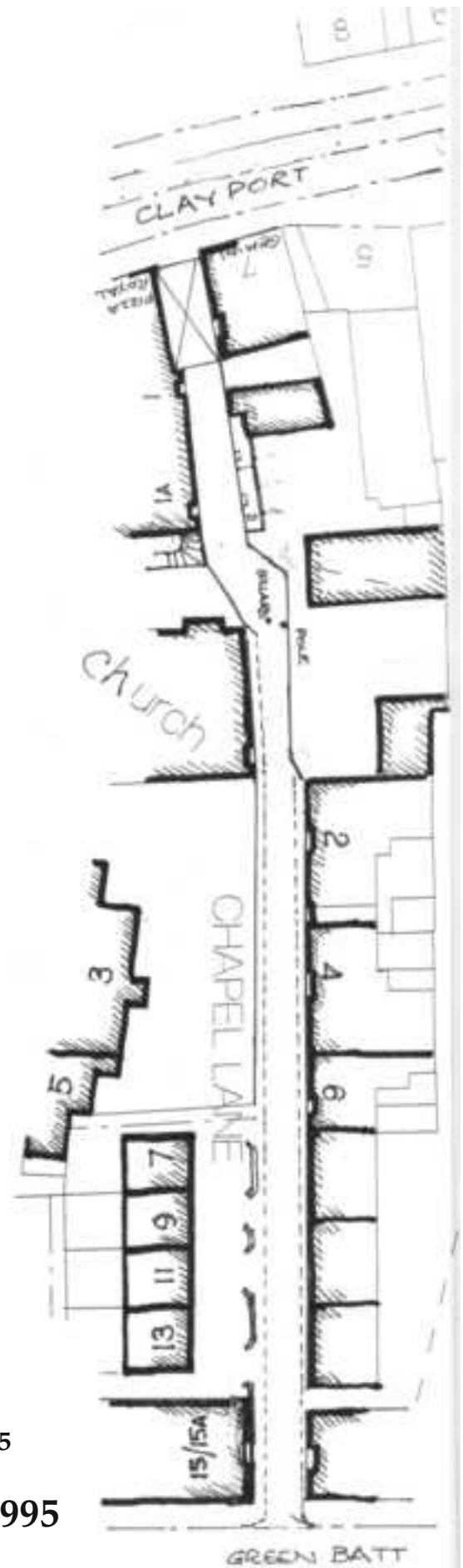
(e) Roofs and Roof Drainage

Those roofs that can be seen from ground level appear to be in reasonable condition - except for the temporary, asbestos (7) roof over the derelict building opposite the Church. In many cases, especially with the new houses, cheap, plastic rainwater goods have been substituted for traditional materials.

4. CIVIC SOCIETY PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHAPEL LANE

Chapel Lane is a well-used pedestrian link from the southern fringe of the town centre to Clayport. It is also a residential street, albeit with limited vehicle access.

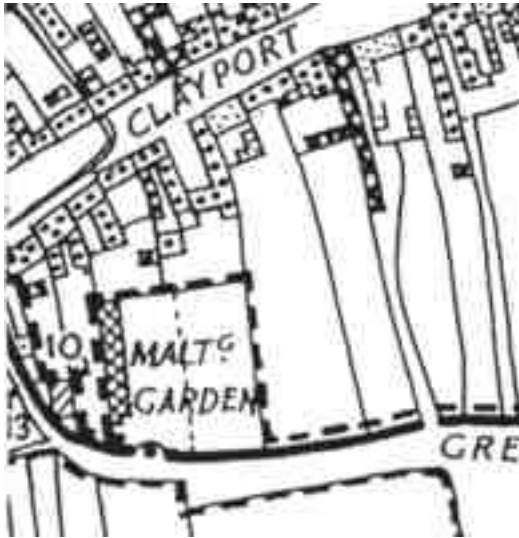
- The most important restoration work to be done in Chapel Lane is the re-paving of the road and sidewalks in stone setts, kerbs and flags throughout the length of the Lane, and the introduction of additional street lighting in a consistent and appropriate style. This should be continued through the archway to Clayport.
- The owners of the yards opposite the Church (believed to be the owners of Nos 5 and 7 Clayport) should be encouraged to demolish or refurbish the derelict buildings. It is understood that Planning Permission has been sought for two pairs of small, stone-faced, semi-detached dwellings and for the re-building of the wall to the lane, but that the owner cannot proceed at present.
- The owners of the wall and small "gardens" opposite the Church should be encouraged to agree terms with the above owner so that he can rebuild the wall and replace the unsuitable garden doors.
- The corrugated iron gate should be replaced with a more appropriate style of security gate.
- The iron railings of No 1A at the Church entrance should be replaced or refurbished.
- The stone paving of the Chapel Yard should be restored.
- The brickwork dwarf walls outside Nos 7-13 should be replaced with stonework.
- Householders should be encouraged to remove rendering and cement mortar pointing from the lower courses of house walls and to repoint with lime mortar.
- The inappropriate doorsteps should be replaced with stone steps.
- The satellite TV dish should be removed or placed in a less obtrusive position.
- The telephone wire distribution system should be modernised and the enormous telegraph pole removed.
- Plastic rainwater goods and uPVC imitation sash windows should be replaced with traditional materials.



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 2.1: CHAPEL LANE IN 1995

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan updated



1774



1827



1851

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Fig. 2.2: CHAPEL LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, 1866



House and Chapel, 1786



House and Chapel, 1886

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Fig. 2.2: CHAPEL LANE

Development of the Methodist Chapel

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, 1866



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 2.1: CHAPEL LANE IN 1866

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, 1866





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3.

Dodd's Lane and Three Tuns Lane

3. DODD'S LANE AND THREE TUNS LANE

1. HISTORY

Three Tuns Lane was apparently well established as a route by 1774 - see Figure 3.2 - the Inn being an important feature of Alnwick in those days. The adjacent Dodd's lane appears on the 1827 map, separated for much of the distance between Market Street and Green Batt by a formal garden. By 1851 Dodd's Lane was interrupted by development into Upper and Lower Dodd's Lane, as is still the case today (see Figure 3.1). The stage of development reached by the mid-1800s is clearly illustrated by the Ordnance Survey plan of 1866, reproduced in Figure 3.3. It is thought that both lanes were allowed gradually to deteriorate into slums. The sad condition of Dodd's Lane as late as 1975 is illustrated in the photograph in the Introduction to this Report.

At about the time of the foundation of the Civic Society (1974), a delegation from the Civic Trust, led by Lady Dartmouth and accompanied by several civic dignitaries was diverted (slightly against its will) by the Society's present Chairman from its walk of inspection along Green Batt into the then-derelict Three Tuns Lane, whereupon the potential for its restoration was first noticed and, later, acted upon by a private developer. The result is a mixture of restored and new buildings, many of which are now in use as privately-owned dwellings in a secluded, mews-like setting, with car-parking for residents in what was the Fontana garden.

2. PRESENT OCCUPIERS

See Figure 1 for locations of numbered properties; house numbers are not easily identified on the ground, and several of the houses are currently used for holiday letting.

Three Tuns Lane

No 1: Mr and Mrs Wilkinson

No 2: Ms E Swan

No 3: Mr N Brannen

No 4: Mr and Mrs Winkler

No 5: Ms M Casey

No 6: Mr D Wright

No 7: Mr and Mrs Nichol

No 9: Mr and Mrs Bates

Dodd's Lane

No 1a: Mr J Patten

No 2: Ms Edmondson and Mr Bolton

No 5a: Mr Tumbull and Mr Thomson

No 5b: Ms Brown and Ms Hilton

No 7: Mr and Mrs Baylis

No 8: Ms Forster and Mr Richardson

No 9: Mr A Dodds

No 10: Ms Oakley

No 11: Ms Walker

No 12: Ms Peart

No 6 Upper Dodd's Lane: Ms Houston; No 7: Mr J Brian

Source: Register of Electors, October 1994

3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Three Tuns Lane

(a) Floorscape

At the Green Batt end, in the lane itself and in the car park, modern concrete block pavements in various colours (grey, red and yellow) are used to differentiate between the passageway and the parking spaces (photos 1 and 2).

An unsightly, in-situ concrete verge adjoining the newly-constructed 18A Green Batt, and its concrete doorstep are out of character (photo 3).

(b) Walls

The newly-constructed building at 16/18 Green Batt has a smooth, ashlar sandstone south-facing elevation, with its east façade in shaped random rubble stonework (photo 4). The north façade has been treated with render and painted white (photo 5).

The new houses on both sides of the lane are of poorer quality random sandstone rubble finish. Many of them have concrete, or cement-faced lintels and sills, together with some "art stone" features (photos 5 and 6).

The Comer House in Green Batt, which takes access from Three Tuns Lane, is of Georgian or early Victorian ashlar sandstone, and shows a fine elevation (photo 7).

The rear elevations of the older houses on the west side (Nos 2, 4 and 6 Chapel Lane) are faced with a mixture of finishes, with random rubble

sandstone now partly pebble-dash rendered and partly cement-rendered in a variety of weatherseal coloured paint finishes, some of which are, it must be said, distinctly unattractive. It is significant that, in tackling their 1995 Civic Society Essay competition question about Alnwick buildings liked and disliked, several 9-to-12-year-old children singled out “The Orange House” (No 2, see photo 8) for adverse comment on account of the colour used.

The rear yards of some of the newer houses are bounded by brick or artificial stone walling.

(c) Windows and Doors

Most of the older houses (photo 7) have sash windows, as do the modern houses on the east side of the lane (photo 6).

The older houses on the west side show a full range of designs and styles of windows in softwood, elderly metal frames and recent uPVC double-glazing. The modern houses on the west side of the lane, and the new flats in 16/ 18 Green Batt have mock sash casement windows (photo 9).

Throughout, doors are generally traditional, panel-type constructions or modern, mock-period style derivatives.

(d) Roofs

On the west side, the houses have slated roofs.

The modern houses on the east side have concrete, interlocking pantile roofs (photo 6).

The roofs of the more northerly, older houses on the west side have a mixture of slate and asbestos tile coverings.

Dodd's Lane

(a) Floorscape

Both Upper (photo 10) and Lower (photo 11) Dodd's Lane are paved with concrete flags, relieved in parts of the upper section with block pavements to create a contrasting feature, enhanced by rustic timber benches.

The floor of the covered alleyway at the Market Street end, and of the areas beside the adjoining houses, is degraded by the presence of elderly in-situ concrete in poor condition (photo 12).

(b) Walls

The houses on the east side of Upper Dodd's Lane are of random rubble sandstone; in some of the newer dwellings, the walls are the outer cavity skins of timber-framed constructions.

The lane wall of No 22 Green Batt has been cement-rendered to a height of one metre (Photo 13). This should, if possible, be restored to its original random rubble stone finish.

The housing in Lower Dodd's lane is on the east side only; all are constructed of random rubble sandstone, with natural stone heads and sills (photo 14, which should be compared with the photograph in the Introduction to this Report, to illustrate the success of the restoration).

There are original, solid, coursed sandstone walls to the period houses on the west side (photo 15), as far north as No 5, all with an ashlar finish and natural sandstone heads and sills.

Within the alleyway to Market Street, the walls on both sides are faced with a mixture of brickwork (photo 12), and are inconsistent with the walls elsewhere in the lane.

Plastic downpipes add to the depressing impression given by this important entrance to the lane.

(c) Windows and Doors

In Upper Dodd's Lane, the west side, period dwellings have modern sash windows which are already suffering from wet-rot and will need repair or replacement before long (photo 15). The modern houses on the west side have good-quality, double-glazed, softwood sash windows.

In Lower Dodd's Lane, the refurbished housing on the east side has modern sash windows of simpler, single-glazed, traditional construction (photo 14).

The bow window in the alleyway (photo 16) is an attractive feature. Its age is not known, but it appears in the 1975 photograph (photo 17), and may well be an original Victorian window.

Doors are generally of traditional panel-style construction, in keeping with the overall character of the lane.

(d) Roofs

All roofs are of natural slate.

General Comments about both Lanes

As stated earlier, the two lanes have been merged recently into, in effect, a single mews-type entity.

(a) Railings, Fences and Gates

There are no railings, fences or gates of any significance in either part of the lane.

Properties front directly onto the central, paved area, except for a few of the older houses which have retained their enclosed yards.

(b) Overhead

The lighting poles and street-light brackets were affixed directly to building façades some eight years ago in an attempt to create a traditional style of lighting by lantern (photo 18). However, it is noticeable that the supports are of lightweight metal which is already corroding in some cases, and will have to be replaced before long.

Apart from one large, unsightly satellite dish on the north side of No 22 Green Batt (photo 19), there are few visible satellite TV dishes or other significant overhead features visible in either lane.

(c) Miscellaneous

One shapely, permanent bollard (photo 20) prevents vehicular access from Green Batt to Upper Dodd's Lane. Individual, demountable, lockable bollards (photo 21) are used to secure parking rights for property-owners in the general car-parking area, which is accessed from Green Batt via Three Tuns Lane.

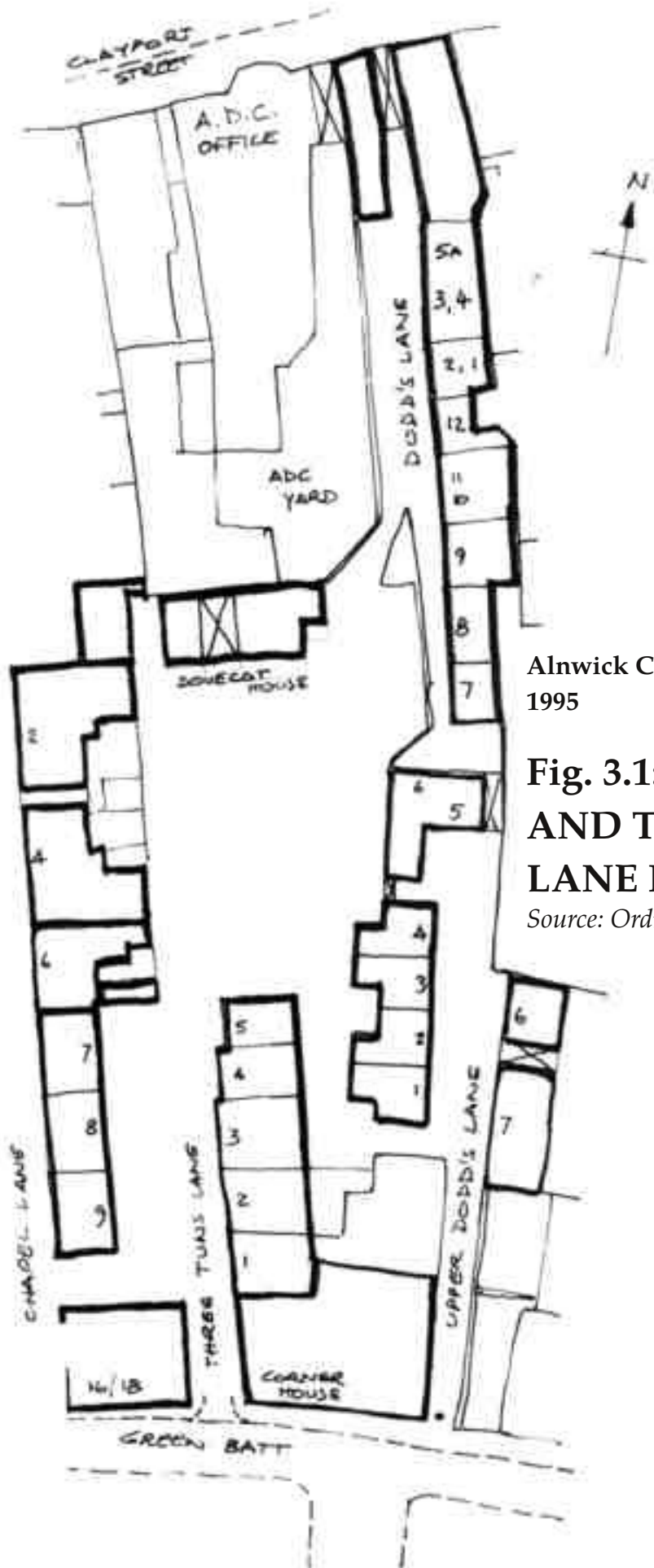
There are no significant advertising signs, illuminated or otherwise, in either lane. In Lower Dodd's Lane, "Wheelie-bins" and dustbins are stored discreetly in recessed cupboards built into stone walls, or in stone-constructed lockers (photo 22) with timber doors. These appear to be in good order, and work well, although they require on-going maintenance by their owners if they are not to deteriorate.

4. CIVIC SOCIETY SUGGESTIONS

The restoration of these two lanes since 1975 has been very successful in many ways; it is certainly a vast improvement, and has brought back to life an area that was nearly derelict. New and old houses blend well, and the ambience of a mews has been achieved.

The only regret of the Civic Society is that more money (private or public) was not available to have ensured the use of natural materials in the flooring, and of better-quality, traditional doors and windows in both new and restored dwellings. It is too late to do anything about this, and the Society's suggestions are for relatively minor items:

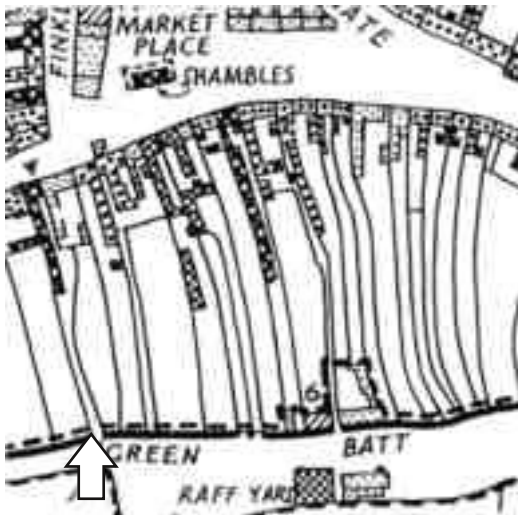
- replacement of street lighting fittings with better quality ones
- improvements to the flooring and lighting in the passageway at Market Street
- removal of the patches of render on the wall of 22 Green Batt, and restoration of the stonework beneath it
- removal of the TV satellite dish and its supporting bracket on 22 Green Batt



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Fig. 3.1: DODD'S LANE AND THREE TUNS LANE IN 1995

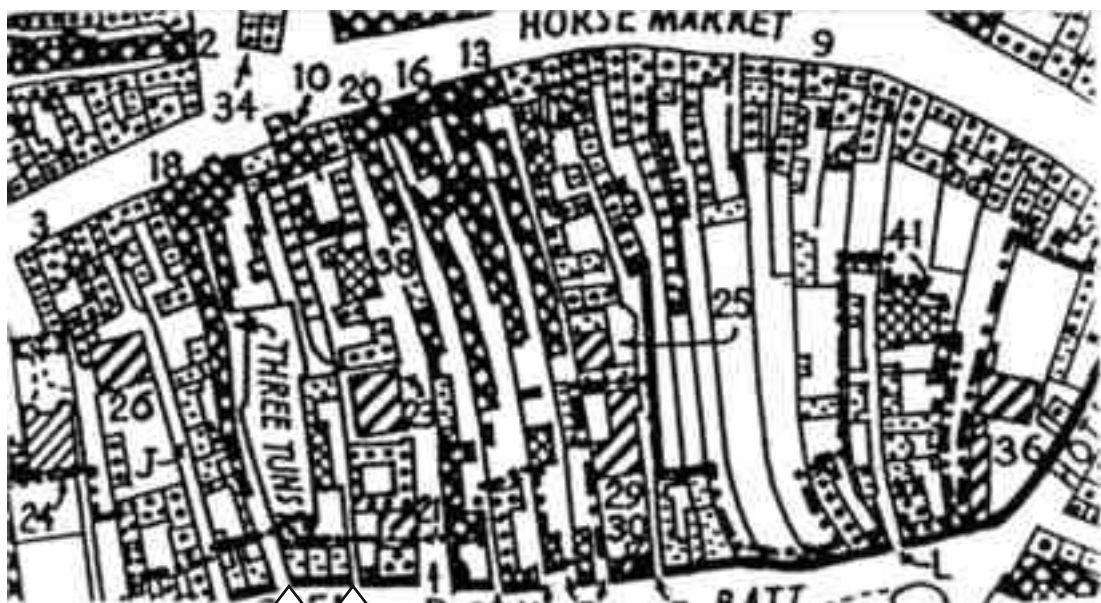
Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, updated



1774



1827



1851

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Fig. 3.2: DODD'S LANE AND THREE TUNS LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Maps reproduced in Conzen's 1969 study of Alnwick



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 3.3: DODD'S LANE AND THREE TUNS LANE

The Lanes in 1866

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, published in 1866



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4. St Michael's Lane

4. St. MICHAEL'S LANE

1. HISTORY

The Lane was originally known as Willow Walk; it is thought to have acquired its present name after 1820, probably because of the presence of St Michael's Pant at its northern end. As shown in Figure 4.2, there is no sign of a complete lane on the 1774 map by Wilkins, but by 1827 it was fully developed, its two most important early buildings being the Bethel Chapel, built in 1804, and the Sion Chapel which was started in 1815. In 1866 (see Figure 4.3) the west side was much as we see it today, but during the present century the road was widened and, since the second world war the east side has been completely re-developed. Figure 4.1 shows the plan of the lane as it is in 1995.

History of the Buildings

Numbers 2 and 4 are terraced buildings, ashlar-faced and slate-roofed, which probably date from the earliest development of the lane. Number 2 was originally a public house called The Phoenix Inn, and had a fine bow window onto the street at ground floor level until it was removed in the 1980s.

Next (Numbers 6 and 8) came a private “gentleman's residence”, which was bought in 1851 for £700 by the Trustee Savings Bank who moved there from their Narrowgate/Fenkle Street premises (now the “Clock Shop”). The Bank spent a further £200 on alterations and improvements and remained there until, after an armed robbery in the 1980s, they moved into what had been the Globe Inn on Market Street.

Number 10, known now as “Laid Back”, was originally a single-storey stable and coach-house with a hayloft above, belonging to the adjoining “gentleman's residence”. Soon after 1851 it had another storey added for living accommodation, while the ground floor became a “whitesmith's” shop dealing with lead and owned by T Weddell; this is the reason for the two front doors. The large hearth and chimney used for the white-smith's trade still exist. Later both floors became a single dwelling, and in 1994/5 the whole building was renovated with the help of grants from English Heritage and the District Council.

Number 12 is a small ashlar-faced house with an additional door leading to a rear yard. Next to it is a warehouse, which was originally the Sion Meeting House. It was described by Davison as “...this elegant and commodious place of worship, belonging to the Protestant Dissenters”. The Sion group seem to have been founded in about 1730 and met in a succession of premises before building this Meeting Place in 1815/16. It

contained "700 sittings" and cost £1,972 to build; in 1866 the interior was re-modelled at a cost of £500, and the map of that year shows that the number of "sittings" was reduced to 600, apparently due to the abandonment of an internal balcony. It ceased to be used for religious purposes in the 1920s.

Numbers 14 and 16 are terraced, ashlar-faced houses linked by an archway leading to a yard and outbuildings at the rear which were used by tradesmen living in one or both of the houses. In the 1970s the yard was used by a painter and decorator. Both houses have traditional doors and over-doors onto the Lane.

The four flats contained in numbers 18 and 20 were created by conversion in the 1980s from the original Bethel Chapel, which was opened by the Rev John Grundell in 1804 as the meeting place of the Methodists of the New Connection, who had separated from the Methodist Church in 1797. In about 1860 they had 60 members and had out-grown the Chapel, so they built themselves a larger one in Bondgate Within.

The corner building, number 22/24, is a large, ashlar-faced shop with flats above. Until the 1970s it was a grocer's shop called Muckles, but after this business ceased to trade the whole building became derelict and was threatened with demolition before being bought and renovated by Mr Ken Kim, a local builder.

Returning to the north end of the Lane, the property backing onto the archway and the next two renovated buildings (originally the White Hart Inn) are now part of, and extensions to the Market Street premises tenanted by Gus Carter, the Bookmaker. The width of the road through the archway defines the original width of the Lane.

Virtually all the buildings on the east side erected between 1774 and 1827 have now disappeared with the development of St Michael's Square in the Post-War programme of replacement of sub-standard dwellings. The Square is a three-sided open area with three-storey apartment buildings and maisonettes. The fourth side of the square was occupied by the utilitarian two-storey premises of the Northumberland Gazette until it was replaced in 1993 by a terrace of yellow / red brick dwellings built in the Georgian style by Nomad Housing.

At the Green Batt end of the Lane, on the east side, is a red-brick corner shop, built in the 1950s. Its security requirements have caused the windows to be blanked out, and this, combined with the use of plastic materials and garish colours in the advertising of the shop and its contents make it an eyesore, completely out of keeping with the remainder of the buildings in the Lane.

2. PRESENT OCCUPIERS

West Side

No 2: Mr J A Curry

No 4: Ms Mary Kenny

No 12: Mr G and Mr GW Groom

No 14: Mr and Mrs M Wray

No 18a: Mr G Ray

No 18b: Ms M-L Barker

No 20a: Ms D Thompson

No 20b: Ms V Ellis

No 22: Ms L Clark

East Side

No 29: Mr D Hughes

No 31: Ms V J Saunders

No 33: Ms V Jackowiac

No 35: Ms Barnett and Mr McFall

No 37: Ms A Appleby

No 39: Mr A Lee

No 41: Mr A Duncan

No 43: Mr A Alderson

No 45: Ms J Angus

No 47: Mr T McFall

(Source: Register of Electors, October 1 994)

3. COMMENTS ON THE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF THE LANE, WITH CIVIC SOCIETY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Reference is made to the accompanying set of numbered photographs.

Photo 1: the attractive arched entry to the lane from Market Street gives an impression of the width of the whole lane in former times. The buildings which flank it and those setts that remain are part of its character, but the view is spoiled by the concrete surface which either replaces or over-spreads the original setts.

The narrow part of the lane within the archway should have its setts restored.

Photo 2: this is a view in the opposite direction. The southern edge of the projecting building on the west side could mark the end of the restored area of setts.

The curved brick wall of the car park on the east side is inappropriate and should be replaced by one in stone.

Photo 3: the rough-surfaced concrete road is unattractive and inappropriate for a lane of this vintage, even though its use has changed over the years. It would look much less harsh if it were replaced or over-topped with a textured surface material such as Breanish gravel rolled into tarmac.

Photo 4: the repair of stone steps at No 2 by coloured concrete, as illustrated, is ugly and out of character. This should be removed and replaced with stone steps.

Photos 5 and 6: the wide strip of tarmac on the west side between the flagged footpath and the road kerb has a practical function in providing unofficial spaces for car-parking, but both it and the parked cars give a poor visual impression. It should be replaced by setts or cobbles, with an avenue of trees to break up its length and soften its appearance.

Photo 7: this shows a section of rendered stone wall and a small edge strip filled with cement mortar. Both details would be improved by carefully removing the cement render / mortar and repairing the underlying stonework properly.

Photos 8 and 9: the area of ugly tarmac and the broken, concrete flagstones add to the degrading aspect of the truly awful shopfront. This would be an ideal place for the use of river-washed cobbles, incorporating

a stone-flagged pathway to the shop door, softened by the planting of one or more trees. The shop-front cries out for the use of a more appropriate method of advertising its goods and a more sympathetic colour scheme.

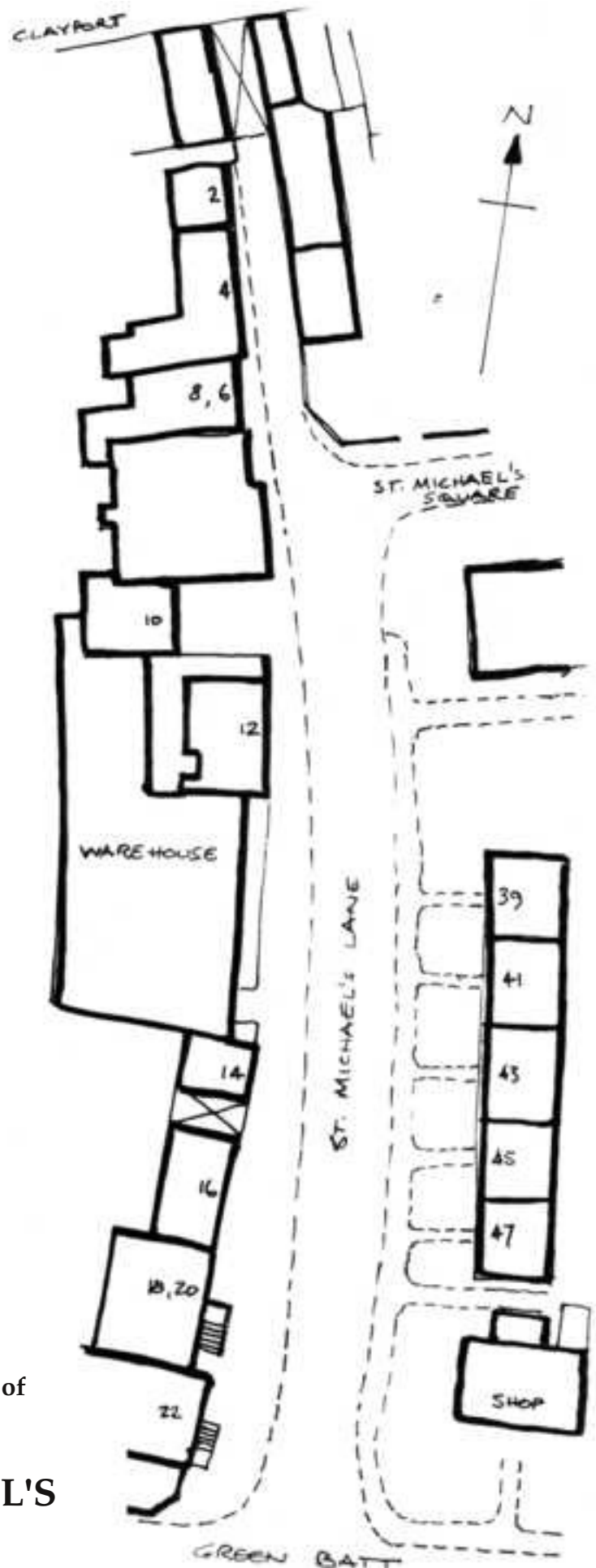
Photo 10: accepting that the new housing and tree planting on the east side of the lane replacing the Northumberland Gazette building is disappointingly trite in design, and that St Michael's Square is of typical post-War urban housing estate design, there is not much that can be done to the buildings to restore the original character of the lane. A high wall with an arched pedestrian entrance is suggested, as illustrated in the sketch below.



Photo 11: this shows a combination of some of the worst features of poor environmental design in a modern development: useless grass, a poor entrance to low-grade municipal housing, and ad hoc parking of private and commercial vehicles. If the wall suggested above were to be built, this would be the first view of the resident or visitor after entering the Square. A separate, professional design exercise is required to tackle this serious problem.

Photo 12: the work to restore "Laid Back" has not been complemented by the restoration of the front garden, which remains an eyesore. This should be done.

Photo 13: this clumsy and ineffective barbed wire construction at No 2 should be replaced by a more effective and better-looking security system.



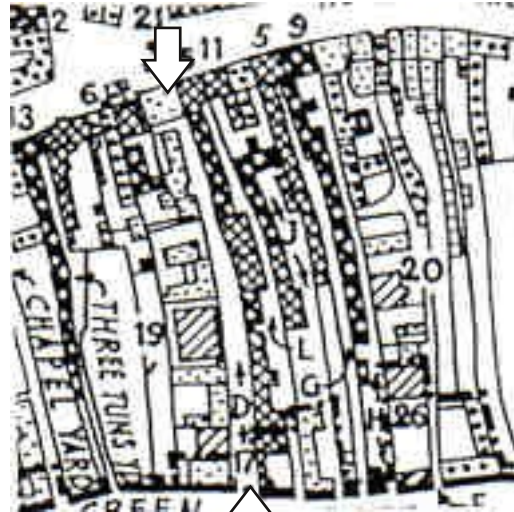
Alnwick Civic Society Survey of
Lanes, 1995

**Fig. 4.1: St MICHAEL'S
LANE IN 1995**

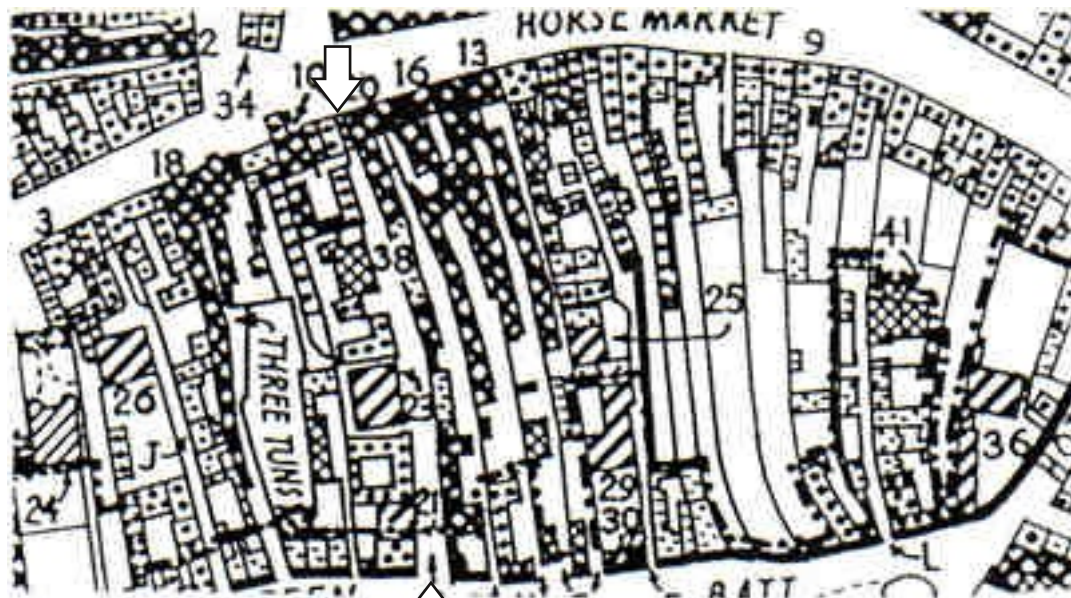
Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, updated



1774



1827



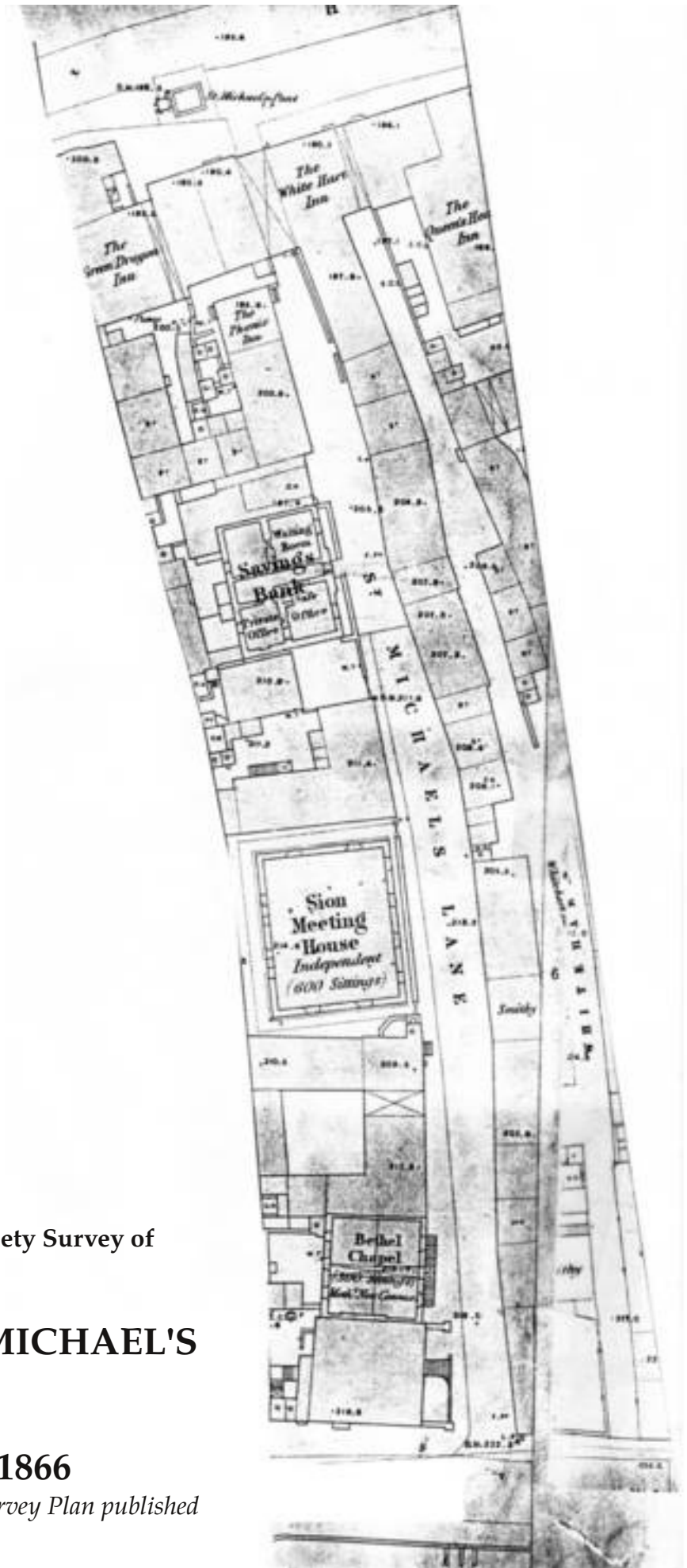
1851

Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 4.2: ST MICHAEL'S LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Maps reproduced in Conzen's 1969 study of Alnwick



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of
Lanes, 1995

Fig. 4.3: ST MICHAEL'S LANE

The Lane in 1866

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan published
in 1866

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5. Correction House Lane

5. CORRECTION HOUSE LANE, ALSO KNOWN AS KITTY LANE

1. HISTORY

The lane, ruminating today with its head end between St Michael's Square and Market Street and the remnant of its tail end from the Square to Green Batt, follows the line of an ancient burgage strip plot with the head end facing the Horse Market. What is now the Copperfield Restaurant would have been a shop with residence above and workshop behind. A four-foot wide archway gave access to the buildings and facilities behind, built within the confines of the narrow strip, e.g. a yard, a pig-sty, a hen run and garth (garden). The Lane originally ended at Green Batt (which would then have been common grazing land), but since 1960 it has been interrupted by the construction of St Michael's Square, as shown in Figure 5.1. It is indicated on maps prior to 1774, and is clearly shown on maps from 1827 and 1851 in Prof Conzen's Alnwick Town Plan Analysis published in 1967. Extracts from these three maps are shown in Figure 5.2.

A Correction House was built near the tail end, extending over two burgage strip widths - about 601E°: - in 1807. There were nine cells, a workroom for picking oakum and other punishment tasks, two yards (one for each sex) and a large court room where the magistrates met every two weeks. The penal complex is shown in some detail in the 1866 OS Map - see Figure 5.3. The alternative name for the Lane, Kitty, was North Country slang for a jail, prison or House of Correction.

On the east side of the tail end a workhouse was built across two burgage strips in 1810, faced with plain ashlar stone, with evidence of an archway where the second burgage strip would have been. A new workhouse replaced it in Wagonway Road in 1841 and is now used as the Council's Rating Office.

In 1856 a more imposing Courthouse was built to replace the Wesleyan Chapel, facing onto Green Batt in front of the Correction House. The local ashlar stone and the treatment of windows and doors suggest a Georgian influence. The Correction Lane Courthouse and Workhouse buildings are now used by Northumberland County Council.

Most of the burgage strips became grossly overcrowded by the end of the 19th Century, because little building had taken place beyond the line of the 15th Century Town Al. This overcrowding resulted in severe slum conditions with inadequate water and sewerage, a situation which still existed in Correction House Lane until as late as 1947. The author of this survey recalls being called at about that time, as a young doctor, to a

home confinement in a very poor house without water or sanitation in Correction House Lane. The worst dwellings were gradually removed from that date until St Michael's Square was developed, leaving only the head end of the Lane and a narrow footpath at the tail end intact.

2. PRESENT OCCUPIERS

(see Figure 5. 1 for reference numbers)

East Side

1. Copperfield Restaurant, with owner's flat above.
2. Windsor Place: occupier in 1994 Mr I C Dodds from Electoral Register).
3. Garages, two within the burgage strip out of a row of five, facing onto St Michael's Square.

West Side

4. Reavell's hardware shop, the frontage covering two burgage strips. On the first floor is a dental surgery (Wilson and Wilkinson), and on the second floor is a flat; both share a doorway in the Lane.
5. Reavell's Shop and warehouse extends to St Michael's Square.

3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

(a) Floorscape

At the head end, the first 13ft, are paved with concrete patterned flags (photo 1). The Lane continues for about 200ft with a heavily-cracked concrete floor which has been worn away in parts to expose flat-topped whinstone cobbles. These can also be seen in the yard of Windsor Place (photo 2), suggesting that they were the original flooring material.

The Lane rises steeply in the mid-section from North to South (photo 3). The sole drainage is, however, an open gutter on the west side to channel rainwater for the last 60ft into Market Street (photo 4).

(b) Walls

At the head end, on the east side within the passageway, the Copperfield Restaurant wall is brick, covered with flaking white paint (photo 1). This is followed by a section faced in cement render and then there is a wall of well-weathered ashlar stone, some 7-10ft high (photo 5). This yard wall is interrupted by the entrance into Windsor Place, and ends by butting up to the recently-built brickwork garages which open onto St Michael's Square.

On the west side, Reavell's shop-front at ground level (photo 6) is faced with horrendous brown tiles, above which is pleasing ashlar, local stone with two narrow, projecting courses. In the Lane passageway, there is one section of painted brickwork, followed by one of exposed brick (photo 7) which is part of a one-storey fill-in against the stone wall of the warehouse.

(c) Overhead

The warehouse has the remains of two timber beams for hoists at eaves level, below which the original openings have been bricked up (see photos 8 and 9, and points B and C in Figure 1). The St Michael's Square end of the head end of the Lane is lit by a single street light (see point E).

Special interest lies in the iron framework of an old gas-light situated at the corner of the south aspect of Reavell's shop at second storey level (photo 10, at point D). This is said to be one of eight such gas-lights installed when gas first became available in the town.

(d) Windows and Doors

On the east side within the passage there are three large windows covered with a rusty security iron mesh (photo 4), and beyond is a door leading into the Restaurant. On the west side, a door in the passage leads up stairs to the dental surgery and flat.

In the south elevation of Reavell's shop are several windows serving the dental surgery and flat above. One of these windows has an interesting carving used now as a lintel (photo 11, point A); this is thought to have originated in Alnwick Abbey. According to Tate, after the Reformation, the King ordered the Abbey buildings to be "cast down", and its stone used for building houses in the town.

In addition to these, there are numerous three-paned, hinged windows with wooden frames on the warehouse wall (photo 8). The most southerly 20ft of the warehouse is set back; here, the lower windows, which are a pair, are protected by vertical iron bars.

Above these at the next level are two three-paned windows, and at the top level are two narrow, horizontal, fixed-pane windows.

(e) Roofs

All seem to be in satisfactory condition with slate roof tiles. All chimney stacks are in well-pointed brickwork. Some vegetation can be seen in roof guttering. Downcomers appeared to be in cast iron, in reasonable condition.

(f) The Tail End

The vestigial Lane divides the ex-Workhouse building from the ex-Courthouse at ground level. The buildings are connected at second floor level by a roofed bridge spanning the Lane (photo 12). Most of the original door and window openings onto the Lane have been infilled with stone to match the weathered walling.

The Lane here is 7ft wide, is surfaced in tarmac and runs for a length of about 80ft between the buildings. At the time of the survey it was closed off for renovation work.

Several protective stone bollards are set against the yard walls.

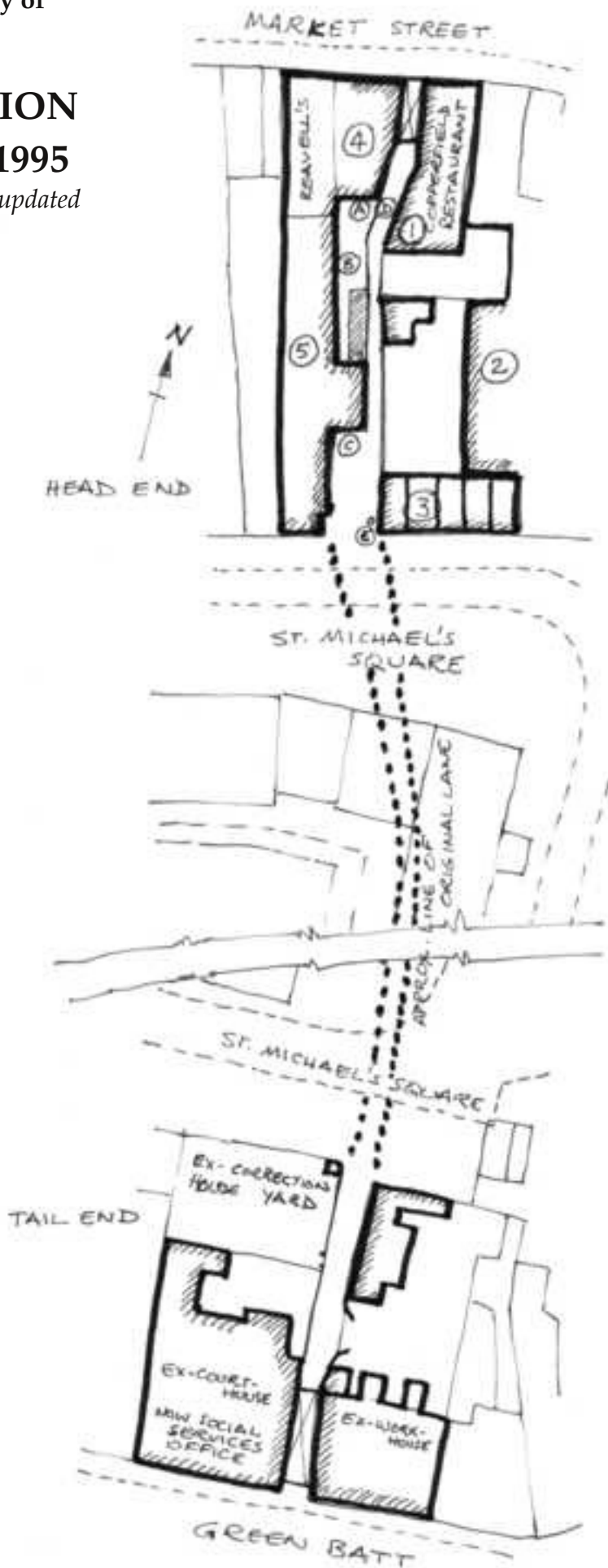
4. CIVIC SOCIETY PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CORRECTION HOUSE LANE

The Head end of the lane is a well-used pedestrian link from St Michael's Square to the town centre, despite its deplorable condition.

- The most important proposal is for the re-surfacing of both ends of the Lane, using cobbles (and/or flags or setts) similar to the exposed original stones. The convenience of the Lane to the able-bodied public would be enhanced with the introduction at the head end of some shallow steps and a handrail to overcome the steepness of part of its length, although provision would also be desirable for wheelchairs and prams.
- Carefully designed, appropriate street lighting would greatly improve conditions in this narrow and rather menacing passage at and after dusk.
- The old stone walls on both sides of the head end require treatment to get rid of paint and render, the stones being re-pointed carefully. Not much can be done to improve the stark brickwork in the more recent walls.
- The forecourt of Windsor Place requires specialist advice on the most appropriate way to improve its appearance.

**Fig. 5.1: CORRECTION
HOUSE LANE IN 1995**

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, updated





1774



1827



1851

Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 5.2: CORRECTION HOUSE LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Maps reproduced in Conzen's 1969 study of Alnwick



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 5.3: CORRECTION HOUSE LANE

The Lane in 1866

Source: Ordnance Survey Plan published in 1866



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6. Corn Exchange Lane

CORN EXCHANGE YARD AND LANE

1. HISTORY

The original medieval burgage plot containing the lane was established by Royal Charter between 1157 and 1185. The 1774 map (see Figure 6.2) shows a wide, undeveloped burgage strip between Green Batt and the Horse Market, and the map for 1827 indicates buildings fronting onto the Horse Market (now Bondgate Within) with the remainder of the strip still not built-up.

Tate's History of Alnwick (Vol 1) (1866) records:

“Around 1850, stimulated by examples in neighbouring towns, a committee formed by tradesmen made progress for the erection of a public building for a Corn Exchange near to the Market Place - but unexpected obstacles checked the design. Another scheme, however, was subsequently carried out by private speculation and a large building was erected for the same object, and was opened as a Corn Exchange on May 17th 1862. Unfortunately the situation is inconvenient being at some distance from the market behind the south row of Bondgate and having principal access through an open yard leading from that street. The building is large and commodious: the great room is 90ft long, 30ft wide and 40ft from floor to apex of roof. On Saturdays this room is opened as a Co Exchange at 11.30am and closed at 1.30pm. At other times the room is used for concerts, entertainments, meetings and other purposes which require more space than afforded by the Town Hall”.

By 1956 the use of the building had changed to that of a cinema. It is now empty and unused, although its present owner is known to have ideas for bringing it back into some form of commercial or entertainment use.

Before 1774 development at the north end of the burgage plot included dwelling houses with shops, with side access to the yard which led from the Horse Market. A narrow building behind the shops and on the west side of the yard is also shown on the 1774 map; during 1995 planning permission was granted for the conversion of this building into three floors of residential flats.

The building of the Corn Exchange in 1862 included the construction of a broad, monumental external stairway giving access to the north entrance of the Exchange and resolving the considerable problem caused by the steep rise in level of the burgage plot. The 1866 Ordnance Survey plan (see Figure 6.3) shows this feature clearly.

A building appears on a later map at the south end of the plot, built at about the turn of the 19th Century to face onto Green Batt. The present-day plan of the plot is shown in Figure 6.1.

2. PRESENT OWNERS OR OCCUPIERS

At the south end of the plot is a Government-owned building facing onto Green Batt.

In mid-plot, the Co Exchange building is owned by Mr Kevin Thompson, a local businessman and entrepreneur.

The yard at the north end serves, on the west side, the tall, narrow building and forecourt known as Corn Exchange Buildings, which is currently being re-developed as residential use. It is thought that the owner is Mr D Ratliff. The yard also serves, on the east side, the proposed District Council's "Drop-in Centre", which was until recently the Hill House Art Gallery.

The archway to Market Street at the north end features a clock canopy. The yard leads to an external stone stairway rising to the level of the Corn Exchange building. The ownership of the canopy and stairway is unknown.

The buildings on each side of the archway are, on the east side, No 39 Bondgate Within, occupied by General Accident, and on the west side, No 40, occupied by Hanny's and by the Halifax Building Society. No 41 is occupied by Mr Ratliff, Dental surgeon, and No 43 by Ray's Menswear. Mr Ratliff owns Nos 40, 41 and 43. No 39 includes the long, narrow garden adjoining the Roxburgh Place car park to the south, and is owned by Mrs Sanderson.

3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

(a) Floorscape

The open area between the north elevation of the Government building on Green Batt and the south elevation of the old Corn Exchange is now linked to the Roxburgh Place Car Park to the east and to St Michael's Square to the west (photo 1). Its surface consists of unmade waste ground, varying in level and recently covered with large coarse gravel. It has recently become an unauthorised roadway from the east end of Green Batt to St Michael's Lane. It is unsatisfactory and dangerous for both vehicles and pedestrians.

A rough pedestrian path (photo 2), about 2m wide, along the east side of the old Corn Exchange is covered with a mixture of mud and loose gravel, overgrown with grass and weeds. The open side of this path defines the eastern boundary of the burgage plot, in the form of a dilapidated, low brick wall which acts as a retaining wall of varying height to the roughly-surfaced (photo 3) Roxburgh Place Car park (which is to be surfaced and landscaped by the District Council in due course - see Figure 6.4).

Approximately 30m of the old brick wall at the north end of the pathway retains an uncared-for garden area of No 39 Bondgate Within, the burgage plot to the east (photo 2).

The surface of the forecourt to the main (north) entrance to the old Corn Exchange, which also gives access to St Michael's Square to the west, is a sad mixture of dilapidated stone slabs and worn tarmac (photo 4). The monumental external staircase (photos 5 and 6) to this forecourt is worn and neglected. Many of the full-length steps are well worn, and some have sheared due to settlement, but the two huge, one-piece stone landings are in remarkably good condition.

At present, due to building works, the yard at the north end is divided by a temporary hoarding. The public footpath to the east is surfaced with poor-quality concrete, broken and patched and presenting a most unsatisfactory spectacle (photo 6). The area to the west of the hoarding is at present a builder's compound (photo 7); much of the original stone paving in this area has been removed, leaving the area unsurfaced. The planning application drawings for the conversion of the Corn Exchange Buildings indicate a scheme of resurfacing and planting this area when it becomes an enclosed, private courtyard for the new flats.

(b) Walls

The east (photo 8) and west (photo 9) elevations of the old Corn Exchange are of random rubble stonework which is in a poor state of repair due to bad pointing and structural movement, with some serious cracking, particularly in the west wall. The good ashlar stonework of the north elevation (photo 10) and the lower quality, coursed stonework in the south elevation (photo 11) are also in a poor state. Boarded-up openings, inefficient guttering and exposed roof timbers have all added to the rapid decay of the building.

The rustic stone flank walls of the external stairway are badly pointed, dirty and generally neglected (photo 12). The handrails are in need of repair.

The stone walls facing the yard of General Accident and the Drop-in Centre (photo 6) have suffered from bad pointing over many years. The

wall of Hanny's is partly rendered, partly original stonework and partly concrete blocks, each part being in need of repair and upgrading.

(c) Windows and Doors

The windows and doors of all the buildings within the plot - apart from the Government office building - are currently boarded up and in need of attention. The remains of the redundant door frames at the entrance to the north courtyard are no longer required.

(cl) Roofs

The roof of the old Co Exchange and the other, visible slate roofs at the northern end of the plot appear to be in reasonable condition.

The flat, felt roof to the blockwork extension at the rear of Hamly's is completely out of keeping with the other buildings facing the yard.

(e) Overhead

There are many, apparently redundant overhead steel tubes acting as electrical conduits for a former external lighting system (photo 13). There is no effective public street lighting in the yard or the footpath.

(f) Unusual Features

The Bondgate/Market Street entrance is marked by an interesting Clock canopy feature (photos 14 and 15). This appears to be in reasonable condition and is worthy of restoration. An arched, plywood panel advertising the Hill House Art Gallery was added to the underside of the canopy, but the lettering has been painted out. The board is no longer required and should be removed.

4. CIVIC SOCIETY PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CORN EXCHANGE YARD AND LANE

The Lane, despite its run-down appearance, serves as an important and well-used pedestrian footpath linking Bondgate Within not only to the car park (which is accessed from Green Batt) but also to the well-populated housing areas south of Prude Street.

With the planned improvements by the District Council to the car park (see Figure 6.4), it is necessary to define the future status of this footpath and to bring it up to a reasonable standard and to make it into an attractive and safe pedestrian passage. In particular, its presence should be made recognisable by creating a souther entrance to it from the Car Park, which would require a minor but important amendment to the Council's proposed surfacing and landscaping design.

On the other hand, the unofficial east-west roadway between the car park and St Michael's Lane south of the old Co Exchange (photo 1) can scarcely be described as desirable, and should be stopped up for vehicles, while maintaining a defined pedestrian link.

While the conversion of Corn Exchange Buildings has already been planned, and work started, there remains doubt about the future of the old Corn Exchange itself. If it is to be renovated and re-used in its present form, then it would be possible now to devise a co-ordinates design for the floorspace of the whole yard and lane. If, however, it is to be demolished and replaced by some other building and use, its stones could be used with advantage both for a new building and, if there is a surplus, for replacing some or all of the existing blockwork, brickwork and rendered walls; and a somewhat different floorscape scheme might emerge.

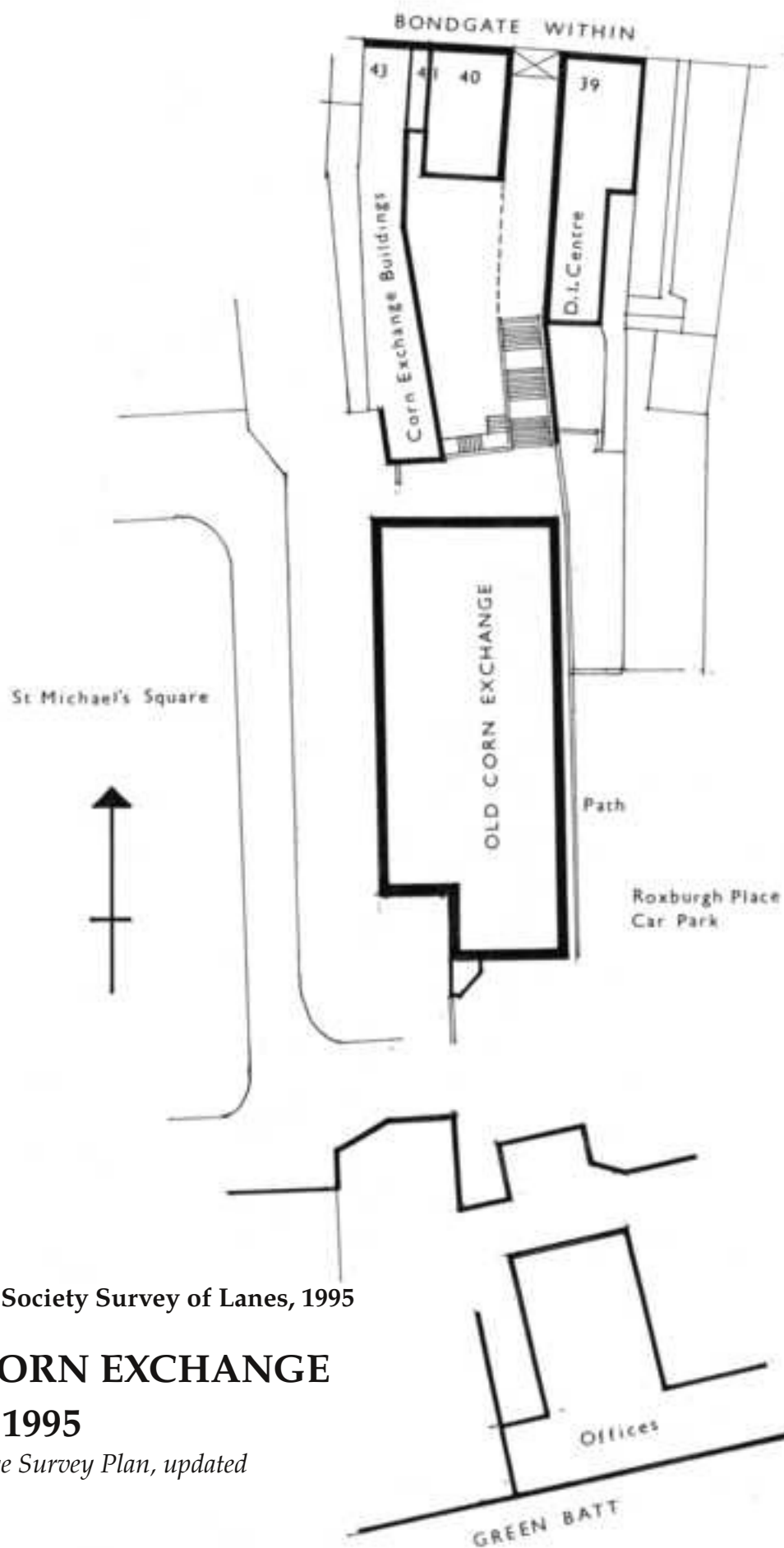
The Civic Society suggests that talks are held with the owners of all the properties bordering the Corn Exchange Yard in an effort to establish their intentions and to secure their co-operation in planning a refurbishment scheme for the Lane. The elements of such a scheme should include the following:

- all public footpaths should be paved with natural, local stone laid to a co-ordinated design;
- the existing redundant overhead electrical conduits should be removed and a scheme of high-quality lighting, including traditional "furniture" introduced;
- the current proposals for the paving of the forecourt of the converted Corn Exchange Buildings should be reviewed, and if possible adjusted

to make them more in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area, as a result of a broader, co-ordinated design approach;

- all stone walls facing the yard, and all walls that relate to the original burgage plot boundaries require remedial work or treatment to meet Conservation Area standards; - generally, all blockwork, brickwork and rendered stonework should be replaced by good quality stonework;
- the overgrown wasteland in the plot to the east side of the old Corn Exchange should be restored as an attractive garden, using low-maintenance, ground-covering shrubs;
- all windows and doors facing onto the yard require renewal to Conservation Area standards;
- a design solution should be sought for the unsightly flat-roofed extension to the rear of Hamley's; and
- the Clock canopy should be refurbished.

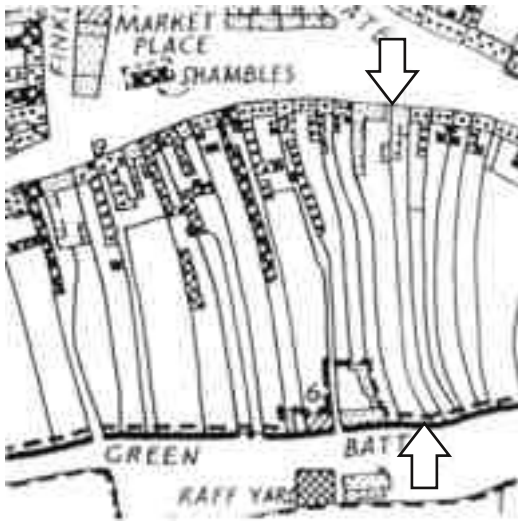
Once these works have been completed, the lane will become one of the most attractive links between Green Batt and the centre of town, instead of the dirty, dangerous and unsavoury alleyway that it is at present, while the occupants and users of the buildings served by the yard will benefit greatly from the improved environment.



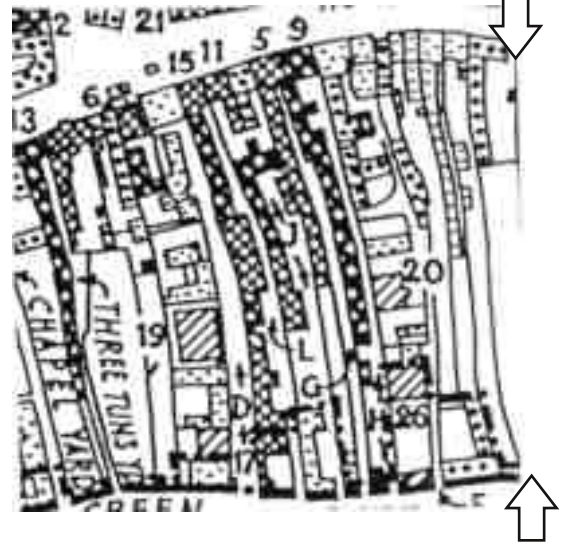
Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 6.1: CORN EXCHANGE LANE IN 1995

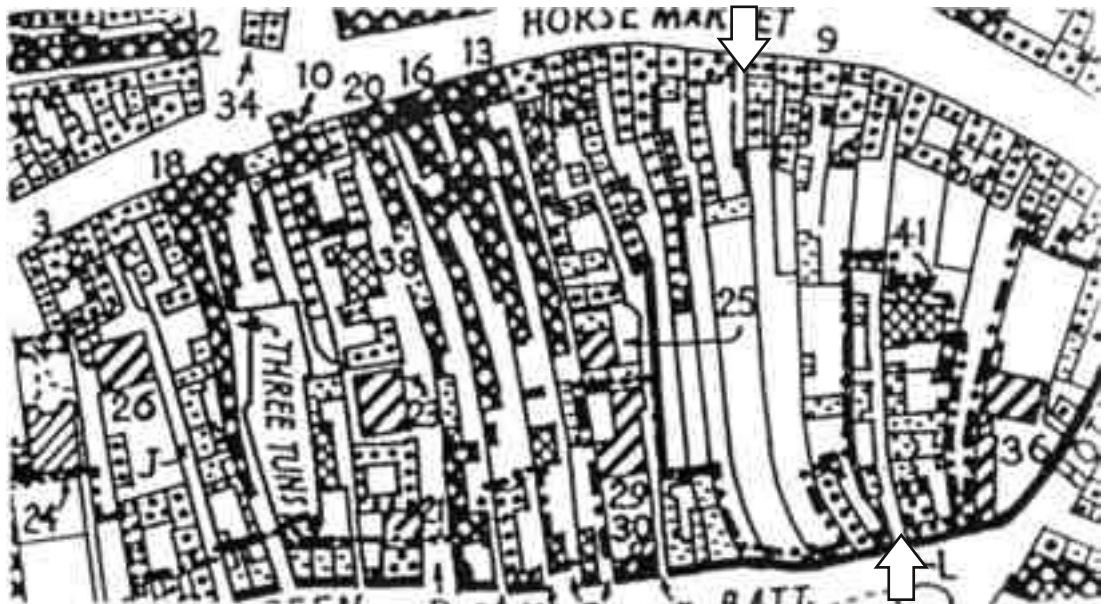
Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, updated



1774



1827



1851

Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 6.2: CORN EXCHANE LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Maps reproduced in Conzen's 1969 study of Alnwick

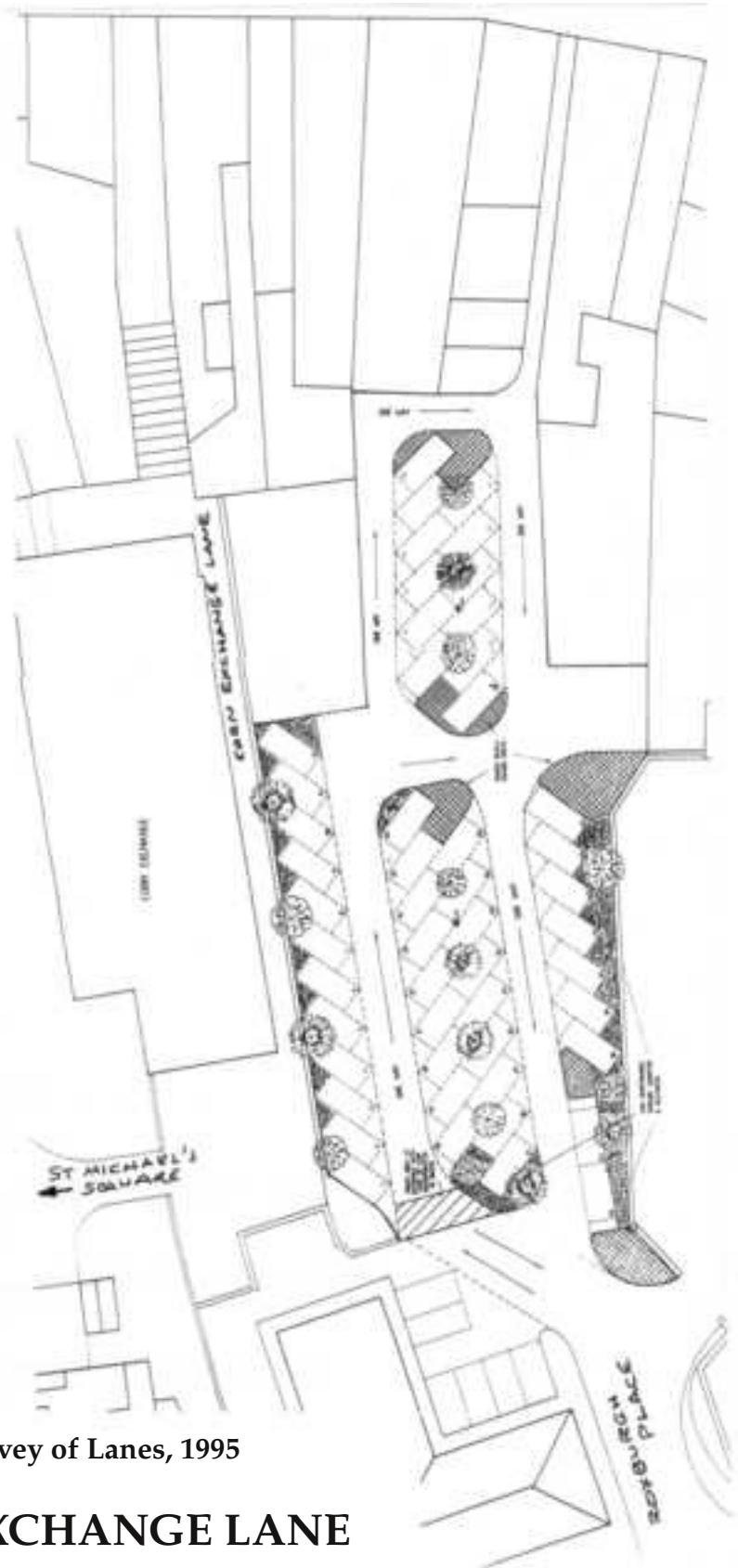
Alnwick Civic Society Survey of
Lanes, 1995

Fig. 6.3: CORN EXCHANE LANE

The Lane in 1866

*Source: Ordnance Survey Plan
published in 1866*





Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 6.3: CORN EXCHANGE LANE

Linkage to Roxburgh Place Car Park

Showing current landscaping
proposals by the District Council

Source: ADC planning application

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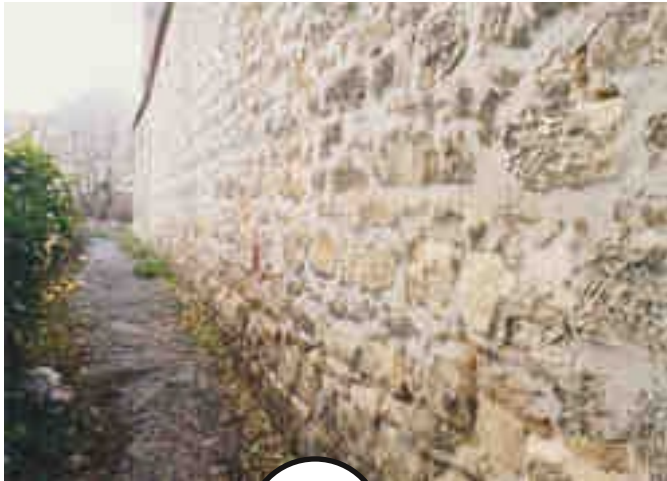
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7. Pickwick Lane

7. PICKWICK LANE

1. HISTORY

The 1774 map (Figure 7.2) shows no evidence of a Pickwick Lane. The burgage strip seems to have been intact at that time, with no development behind the frontage house apart from its small extension southwards. However, by 1827 the lane appears to have been established, running right through to Green Batt, though not in a straight line; it was diverted around three sides of a building, linking with the yard behind the Globe Inn, where a series of e-its of steps must have been used to master the severe (some 30ft) change of level.

Thus it remained, and its details may be seen quite clearly on the detailed 1866 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 7.3), serving as a through route for pedestrians at the back of the buildings along Roxburgh Place. It also served as access to the Piggery. As far as can be seen from the map, it did not give direct access to the Pickwick Brewery, although, presumably, it took its name from the brewery.

Today, only the most northerly section of the lane remains (see Figure 7.1), and even this has been altered to dispense with the diversion, the intervening building having long since disappeared. Roxburgh Place and the buildings fronting onto it have all gone, being replaced by a modern Government Office, by the Depot for Northern Electric and by a builder's yard and a motor workshop. The main feature now is the unsurfaced public car park (photo 1) and Pickwick Lane's present-day function is to provide pedestrian access from the car park to the town.

2. PRESENT OWNERS / OCCUPIERS

The Register of Electors does not list any voter having an address on Pickwick Lane. There does appear to be (little-used) access from the lane to extensions behind Numbers 25 and 29 Bondgate Within. Number 25 is occupied by The Gift Shop, and Number 29 by Christine's House of Flowers.

Ownership of the lane itself has not been established by the survey team.

3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

From top (south) to bottom, the lane is never more than about four feet wide. Photo 1 shows its undistinguished entrance from the car park - the narrow gap in the wall to the left of the garage entrance. The southern section runs between stone walls in reasonably good condition, the lane's floor sloping steeply downwards (photo 2, looking north). The lane's

surface in this section is insitu concrete, laid with ribs to prevent slipping, with a drainage channel on one side.

It then descends a flight of seventeen steps, with a small landing halfway down and with a useful handrail (photos 3 and 4). The steps are in concrete, with tall risers of varying height, the bottom step being several inches higher than the average. At the top, a substantial cast-iron bollard prevents anyone with a pram or wheelchair from attempting to negotiate the steps. The walls each side of the steps above the half-landing are of random rubble stonework in reasonable condition; below that, the wall on the west side is in engineering brick (presumably built to close off the gap left by the demolition of the house that originally occupied this position, around which the lane used to meander), while that on the east side has been heavily rendered and recently painted white. Dampness has caused some of the render to peel off in patches (photo 4) and the white paint is an irresistible temptation to graffiti-writers.

The lane continues to slope downwards to the north from the bottom of the steps, (photo 5), passing between high walls until it reaches the first building, the extension behind the Flower shop, where it enters a section of covered passageway leading into a narrow "well" (photo 6), open to the sky and flanked by the high walls of the adjacent buildings. Beyond this is a further covered section (photo 7) before Pickwick Lane emerges onto the pavement above the Cobbles in Bondgate Within.

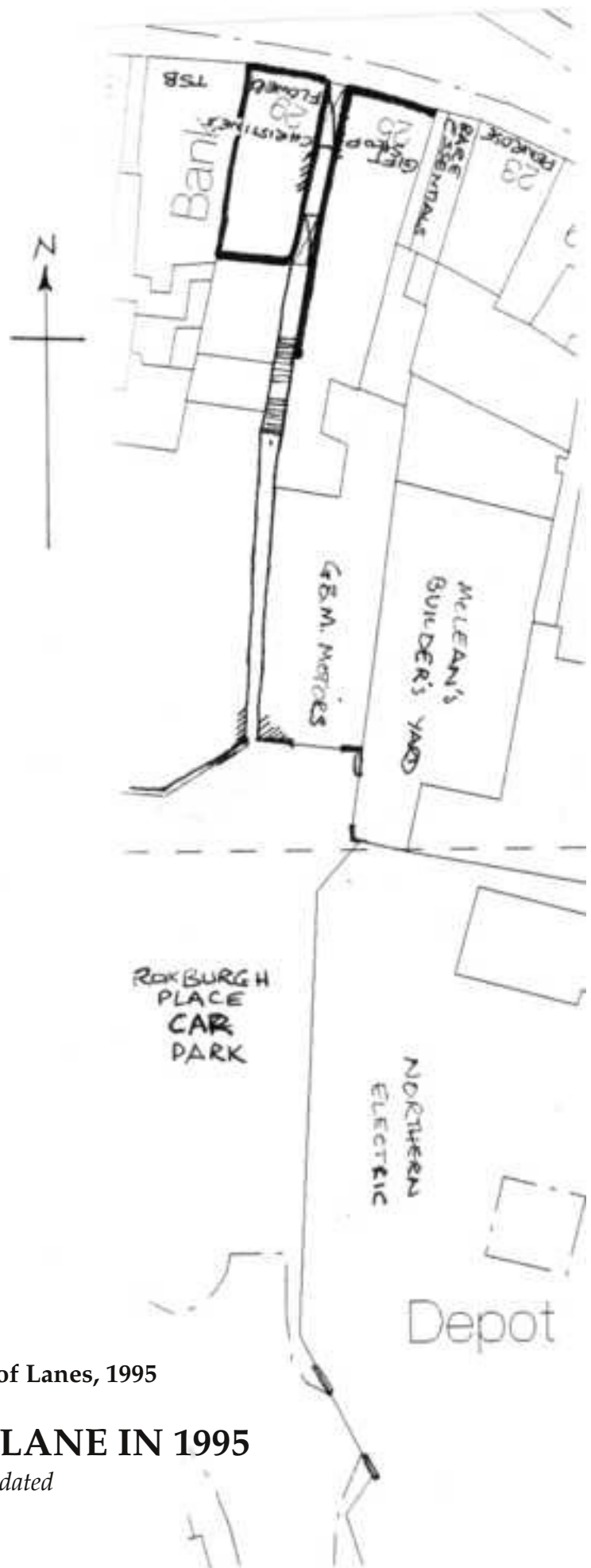
The lane's floor throughout this lower section is of insitu concrete, in very poor condition, and with an open surface-water drainage channel on one side (photos 4- 7).

The overall impression on the pedestrian, even in broad daylight, is one of claustrophobia and menace, made worse by the roughness of the surface, and the steepness of the lane. The total lack of street lighting makes this impression much worse at dusk and later, and it is no wonder that, despite its directness as a pedestrian route between the car park and the shops, it is little used.

4. CIVIC SOCIETY PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PICKWICK LANE

The District Council has given itself planning permission to surface and landscape the Roxburgh Place Car Park (see Figure 7.4), and, while this can and should be accessed from the Corn Exchange Lane and Yard (as suggested in Section 6 of this Report), it would also be sensible to do all that is possible to reduce the adverse factors that make Pickwick Lane so unattractive at present. Suggestions include:

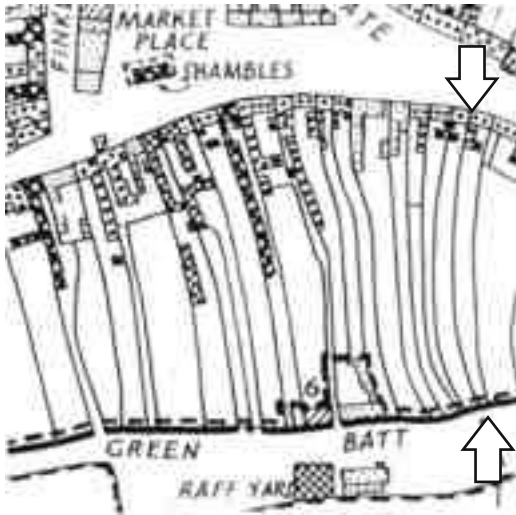
- provision of street lighting in the covered sections and at intervals in the open parts;
- re-building and re-grading the steps, reducing and regularising the height of the risers and lengthening the treads, to make them an easier, and less dangerous proposition for pedestrians of all ages. Changing the gradient of the steps would probably mean replacing the handrail;
- the flooring should be in well-laid stone setts throughout, with provision for surface drainage; because the lane is so narrow, and the high walls so intimidating, these high walls should be made as light as possible by cleaning and, where appropriate, repairing and re-painting the existing rendered surfaces; and
- the proposed pattern of paving of the car park should be amended, perhaps by introducing a fan-shaped area of setts at the southern entrance to the lane. There would also be scope for a feature such as a decorative stone archway to signal the top of the lane, inviting the pedestrian to use it.



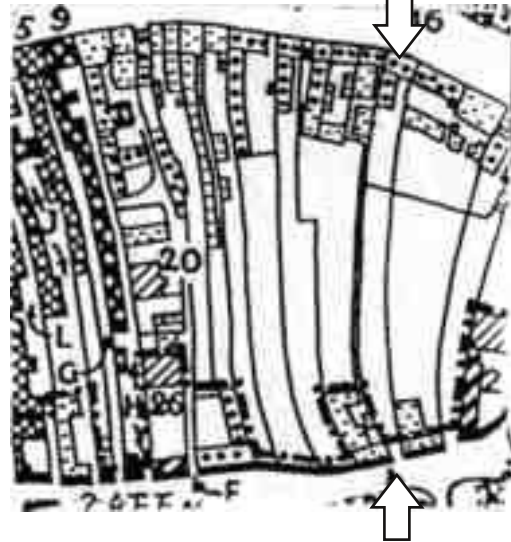
Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 7.1: PICKWICK LANE IN 1995

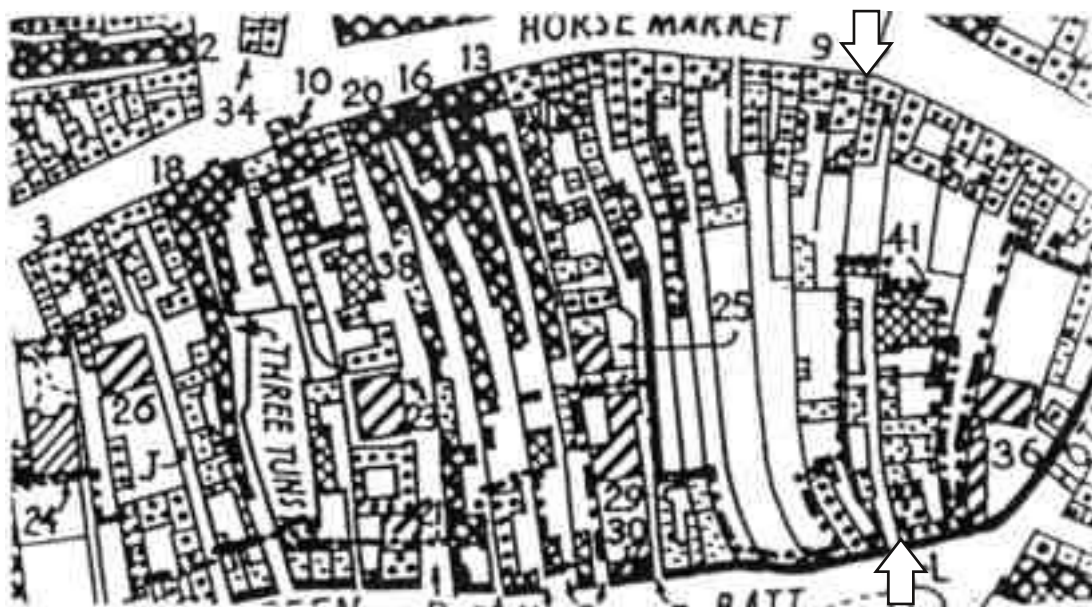
Source: Ordnance Survey Plan, updated



1774



1827



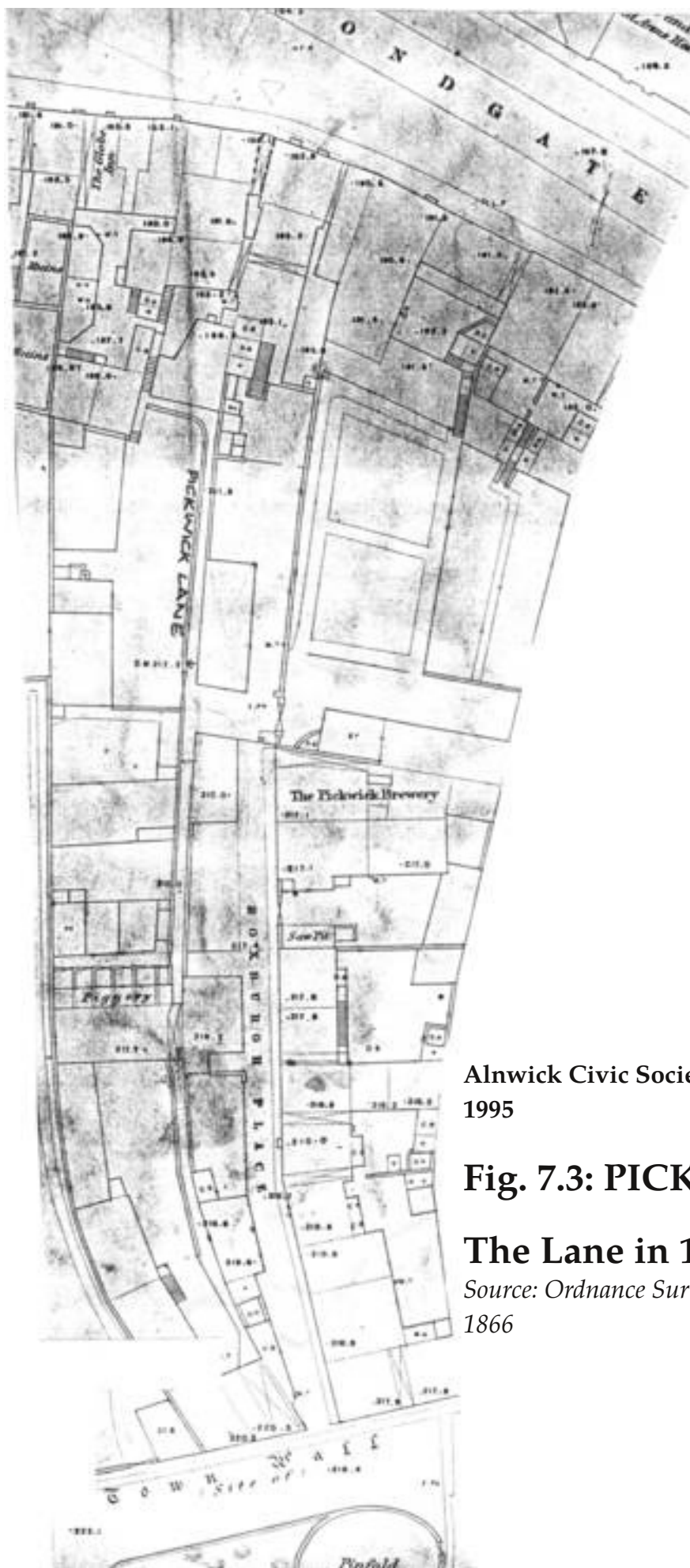
1851

Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 7.2: PICKWICK LANE

Stages of Development, 1774, 1827 and 1851

Source: Ordnance Survey Maps reproduced in Conzen's 1969 study of Alnwick

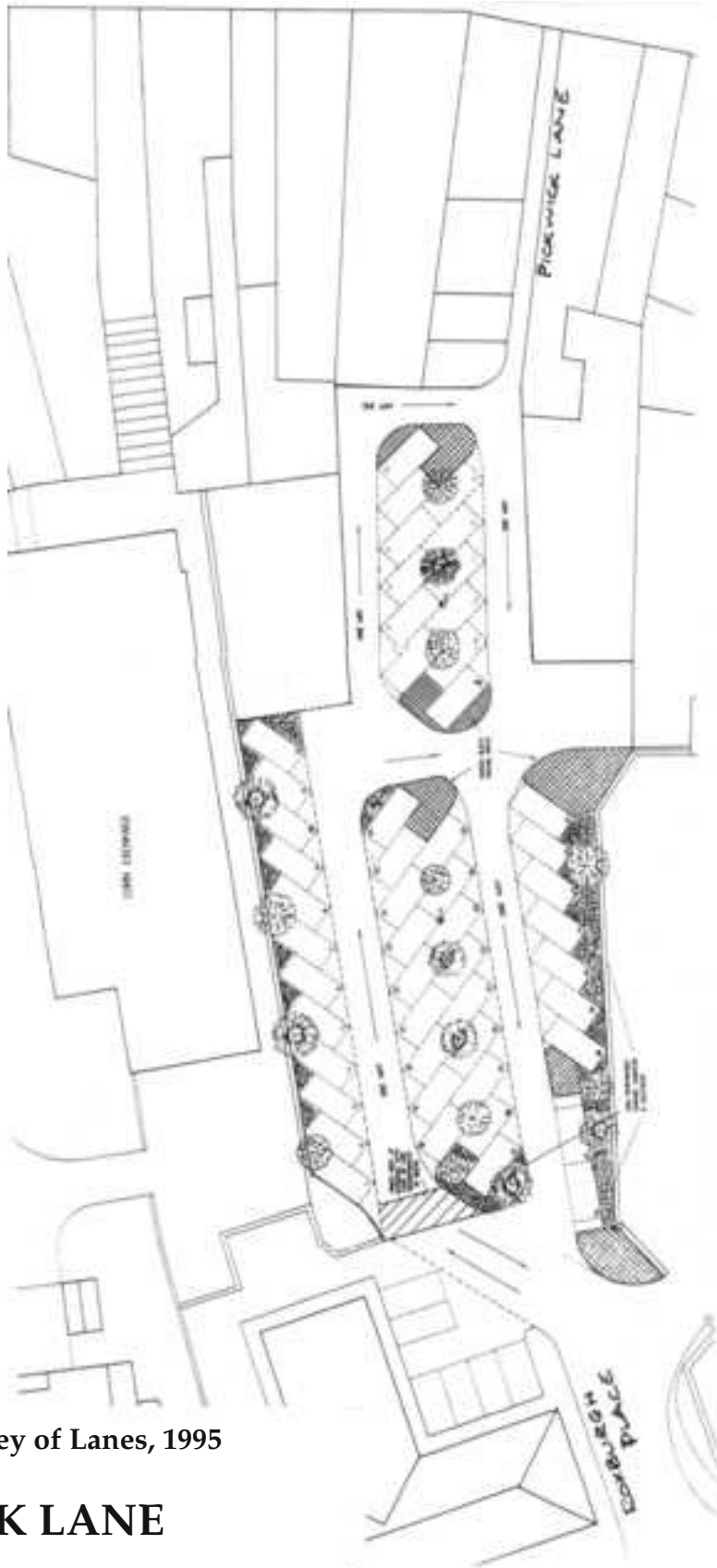


Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes,
1995

Fig. 7.3: PICKWICK LANE

The Lane in 1866

*Source: Ordnance Survey Plan published in
1866*



Alnwick Civic Society Survey of Lanes, 1995

Fig. 7.4: PICKWICK LANE

Linkage to Roxburgh Place Car Park

Showing current landscaping proposals by the
District Council

Source: ADC planning application

1



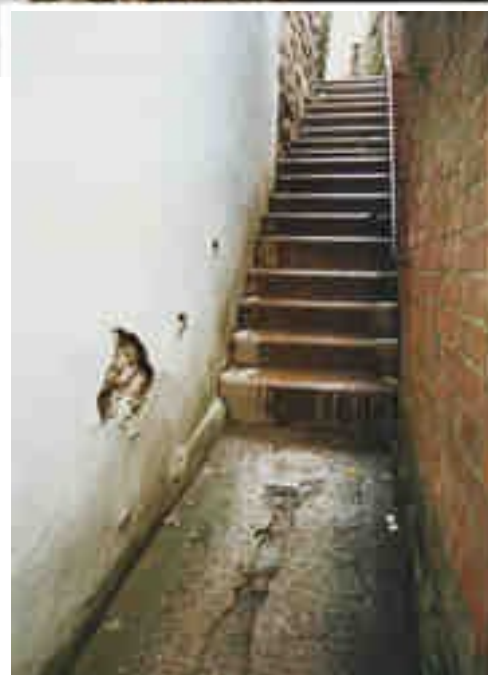
2



3



4



5



6



7





Alnwick Civic Society