



TEES
ARCHAEOLOGY

THE BUILDINGS OF
STOCKTON-ON-TEES



**The Town of
Stockton-on-Tees
and its
Buildings**

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Tees Archaeology

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Introduction

This booklet outlines the history of Stockton-on-Tees and draws attention to the way buildings that can be seen today illustrate the history of the town and the periods when they were built.

This booklet has been produced as part of the Central Stockton Townscape Heritage Initiative, which is funded by Stockton Borough Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is designed to preserve and improve the historic environment of part of the town. As part of this project local volunteers worked with Tees Archaeology to record and create a 'snapshot in time' of the buildings in the town's historic core. This record includes digital images of all the buildings, whatever their date and importance and a brief written report on each building.

The complete archive of this building recording in Stockton Town Centre is held by Tees Archaeology and Stockton Borough Council library, museum and planning services.

Looking at Buildings

The key to looking at the buildings of Stockton is to look above the shop fronts. When you do you will see a wide variety of building sizes and shapes with windows of different designs and an assortment of decorative styles. These all bear witness to the different periods in the development of the town, from early 18th century townhouses to 19th century terraced housing, late 19th century commercial premises and a range of 20th century structures.

The variety of buildings in Stockton makes it a particularly interesting town. The majority of buildings are built of brick, but if you look closely you will see different sizes, shapes and colours. The earliest brick is small and thin with a lighter or very mottled colour and no two are exactly the same. As time passes bricks become larger and virtually identical.

Windows follow a similar progression 17th and 18th century windows tend to be made of many small panes of glass and as the technology developed larger sheets of glass were used until we get to the huge sheets that are available today.

Always check for old names and dates, although date stones can often be returned to a re-built structure. Look at the drain pipes and gutters and particularly at the hoppers at the top of the drain pipes; you will often see dates or designs on these.

The Development of Stockton

The present historic core of Stockton has three parts: the former site of the castle at the south end of the High Street; the Medieval Borough, extending from the former site of the castle to Dovecot Street and a Medieval Village which was probably sited in the area of the present Parish Church. These three components continue to shape the development of the town.

The Medieval Village of Stockton

The Medieval Village was the oldest part of Stockton. It is recorded in the 'Boldon Book' of 1183 AD and may already have existed for about a century (Austin 1982). As well as the village, the site of an old hall is recorded and this would have belonged to the Bishop of Durham who owned Stockton. The old hall was not in the same position as the later castle.

The Norman Conquest of the North of England was completed about 1100 AD. The Normans then started to re-build the region creating villages and towns. These villages, of which Stockton was one, were built to a plan of two parallel rows of farms with a broad street or green between and the fields laid out around the village.

The village of Stockton was described in 1183 as having eighteen farms, three families with a cottage but little land, a smith and a ferry across the River Tees (Austin 1982, 54-55). The people holding the land were a mix of peasant farmers, tied to the land and to the Bishop, and leaseholders who paid rent but otherwise had fewer obligations.

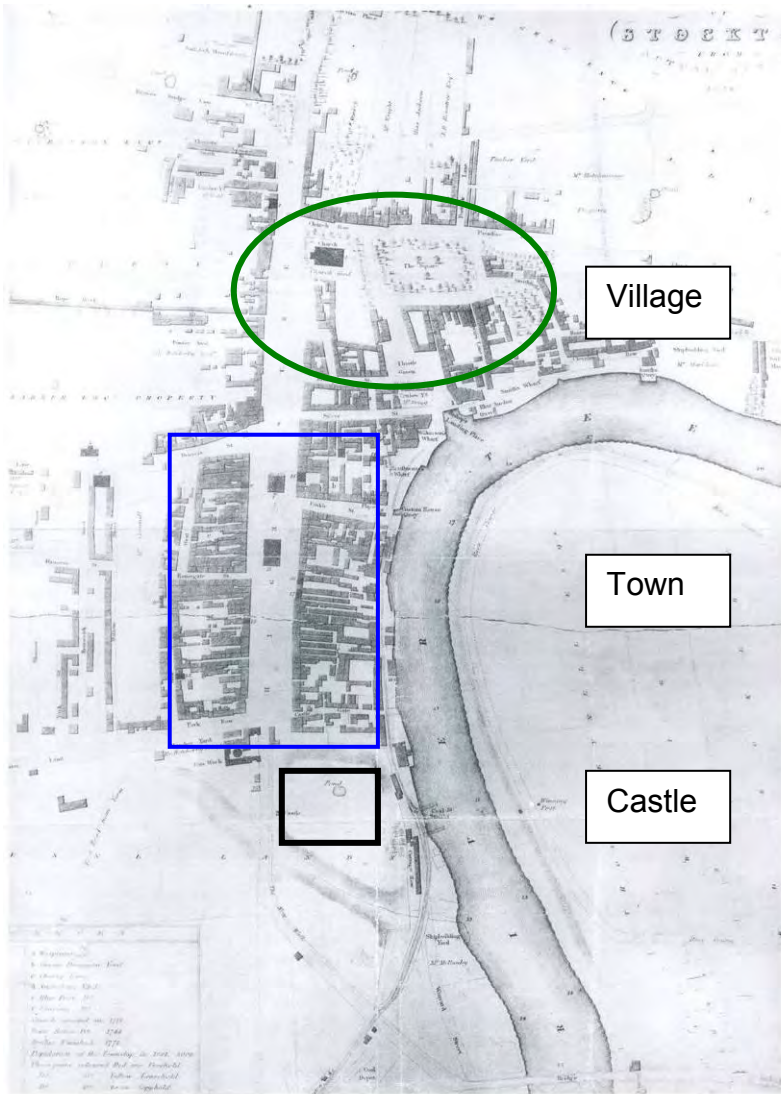


Fig 1: Plan showing the Medieval Village, Town and Castle of Stockton. The underlying map dates from 1826.

The Medieval Town of Stockton

We do not know when exactly the town was established at Stockton, but it was sometime between 1183 when there was only a village and 1283 when the borough was held by the king and burgages are first mentioned (Page 1928, 354).

The plan of the town was the same shape as the village with two rows of properties either side of the broad High Street. The High Street originally extended from Yarm Lane to Dovecot Street, although it is possible that the area from Ramsgate to Dovecot Street was a later extension of the borough as there is an abrupt change in the alignment of the frontage here.

The main reason for founding the medieval town was as a means of generating cash for the Bishop. People paid rents for their properties and were taxed on the goods bought and sold. Medieval nobles wanted to buy fine clothes, wine, weapons and horses and to build better houses and for all of this they needed money.

All the people who lived in the town were tenants of the bishop but a number held burgage properties which meant that they paid rent rather than worked for the lord. A survey of the rents of the town in 1382 recorded 46 burgage tenements (Page 1928, 354).

The Bishop's Hall and Castle

Both an 'Old Hall' and 'Hall' are referred to in 1183 (Austin 1982, 54-55). The 'Old Hall' was probably within the village in the area of the present Parish Church while the 'Hall' that was then in use was probably on the site of the later castle.

Excavations in the 1960s found evidence of high -quality Norman architecture dating from 1150 – 70 AD on the later site of the castle. King John stayed at Stockton in 1200, 1210 and 1212 and on each occasion he would have stayed in the hall (Aberg and Smith 1988).

There was a major re-building of the 'Hall' in 1316 and the moat was probably dug at this time. The site is then described as a castle from this period onwards.

1562 View and Description of the Castle.

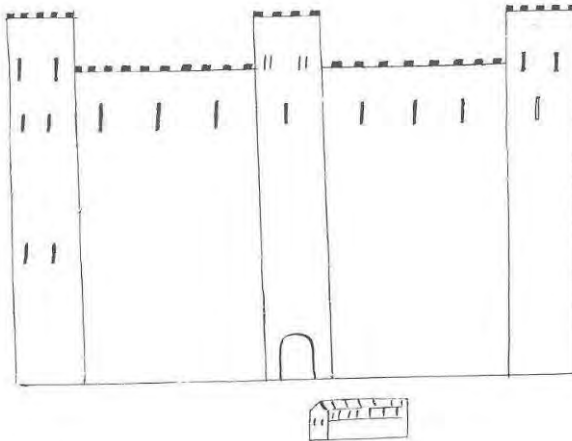


Fig 2: Sketch of the castle in 1647

We are not sure what the castle looked like. However a survey of 1574 describes a complex with apartments built around a courtyard (Sowler 1972, 440 – 444). This was a typical 14th century design; half fortress and half great house (see Figs 2 and 3). A larger version of this can be seen at Bolton Castle in Wensleydale (Fig 3).



Fig 3: Bolton Castle, Wensleydale

During the English Civil Wars of the mid 17th century Stockton Castel castle was held by Scottish forces on behalf of Parliament, but in 1647 the House of Commons gave the order ‘that Stockton Castle be ‘made untenable and the garrison disgarrisoned’ (Sowler 1972, 81).

Medieval Buildings of the Town

As far as we are aware no medieval buildings have survived in Stockton. Comparison to surviving buildings of the 17th century and earlier in North Yorkshire, Yarm, Durham and Newcastle indicates that they would have been timber framed, perhaps with the ground floor in stone.



Fig 4: 17th century building, Whitby

17th and 18th Century Stockton and its Buildings

In the 1660s the town was described as having only houses of thatch and timber and the impression is of a dilapidated medieval town. However from about 1680 to 1710 there was a major rebuilding of the houses of Stockton using brick and tiles and quite probably stone salvaged from the castle as is supposed to be the case in Finkle Street (below).



Fig 5: 17th century stone buildings, Finkle Street – some of the stone may have come from the castle

Stone Buildings

The stone buildings in Finkle Street date from the late 17th century, although the bay windows are a later addition. The buildings are noticeably lower than later

buildings and the top windows (shown on the left of Fig 5) are of a type known as sliding or Yorkshire sash where the window opens by sliding to one side rather than lifting vertically as in the blue and white painted windows of the stone house to the right of the picture.

Today there are few stone buildings in Stockton; the majority are built of brick.

Brick and Tile

Building in brick started in the Tees Valley at the end of the 17th century and was accompanied by a move away from thatch for roofing to pantiles made of clay. The earliest bricks were handmade and were long and narrow and poorly fired giving a mottled appearance. As time passed they became thicker and more regular in shape size and colour.



Fig 6: The top bricks are 18th century and the bottom ones are 19th century patching.

Domestic Buildings

Stockton boomed as a commercial centre in the 18th century and the buildings reflect this boom.

Numbers 28 - 29 Silver Street (Fig 7) are typical small 18th century houses, although now heavily re-built. The novelty of using brick is shown by the decorative stringcourse above the 1st floor windows and at eaves level. In height they copy 17th century designs with the 2nd floor being partly in the roof space and being lit by windows that break the line of the roof.



Fig 7: Early 18th century houses on Silver Street

Number 13 High Street is a similar scale of building. Its first floor windows have vertical sashes and the number of panes typical of 18th century windows in contrast to the windows on Silver Street which are later replacements. At 13 High Street a gabled dormer window lights the roof space and this is a more typical solution to this problem.



Fig 8: Early 18th century house, 13 High Street

Number 153 High Street (below) is particularly interesting. It started out as a relatively simple, but quite large, two storey house of early 18th century date which was heightened by the addition of a third storey. This was probably done at the beginning of the 19th century. While the later windows are slightly more elaborate the main difference is the pattern of brick bonding which changes between the first and second floors.



Fig 9: Number 153 High Street



Fig 10: Number 153 High Street details of windows and bonding – line shows change in brick bond where building was increased in height

In the 18th century wealthy local landowners built town houses in order to take part in the newly flourishing social, commercial and political life of places like Stockton.

Number 148/149 High Street is an example of a classical 18th century town house, with a substantial but severe frontage that would have been offset by a highly decorated interior.

In fact this was the Rectory for the Vicar of the Parish Church at Stockton, one of the most important social positions in the 18th century town.



Fig 11: 18th century Rectory, 148/149 High Street

The two finest surviving 18th century houses in Stockton are 32 Dovecot Street which is only surpassed by 16 Church Row.

32 Dovecot Street has a relatively severe appearance with the symmetry that typified the 18th century. The stone corner stones (quoins), key stones above the window and string course at the eaves provide a degree of decoration and the status of the building is clearly

indicated by the use of bricks laid end on – requiring far more bricks- and the door surround.



Fig 12: 32 Dovecot Street (copyright Peter Moon)

The windows would originally have had more panes and it should be borne in mind that the main social rooms in the house would have been on the first floor, which is why the windows at this level are so large.

In contrast to 32 Dovecot Street, 16 Church Road is highly decorated with an elaborate doorcase and heavily decorated first floor windows, again emphasising the social importance of the first floor.



Fig 13: 16 Church Road

Buildings such as 148/149 High Street, 32 Dovecot Street and 16 Church Road would have housed a number of servants as well as family members. The servants would have been accommodated in rooms in the roof or at the back of the house and would have used a separate side or rear entrance.

Commercial, Social and Religious Buildings

The main reason for the construction of large numbers of brick buildings in Stockton in the early 18th century was the expansion of the commerce of the town. This led to the construction of large warehouses and a complex of these survives at Green Dragon Yard.

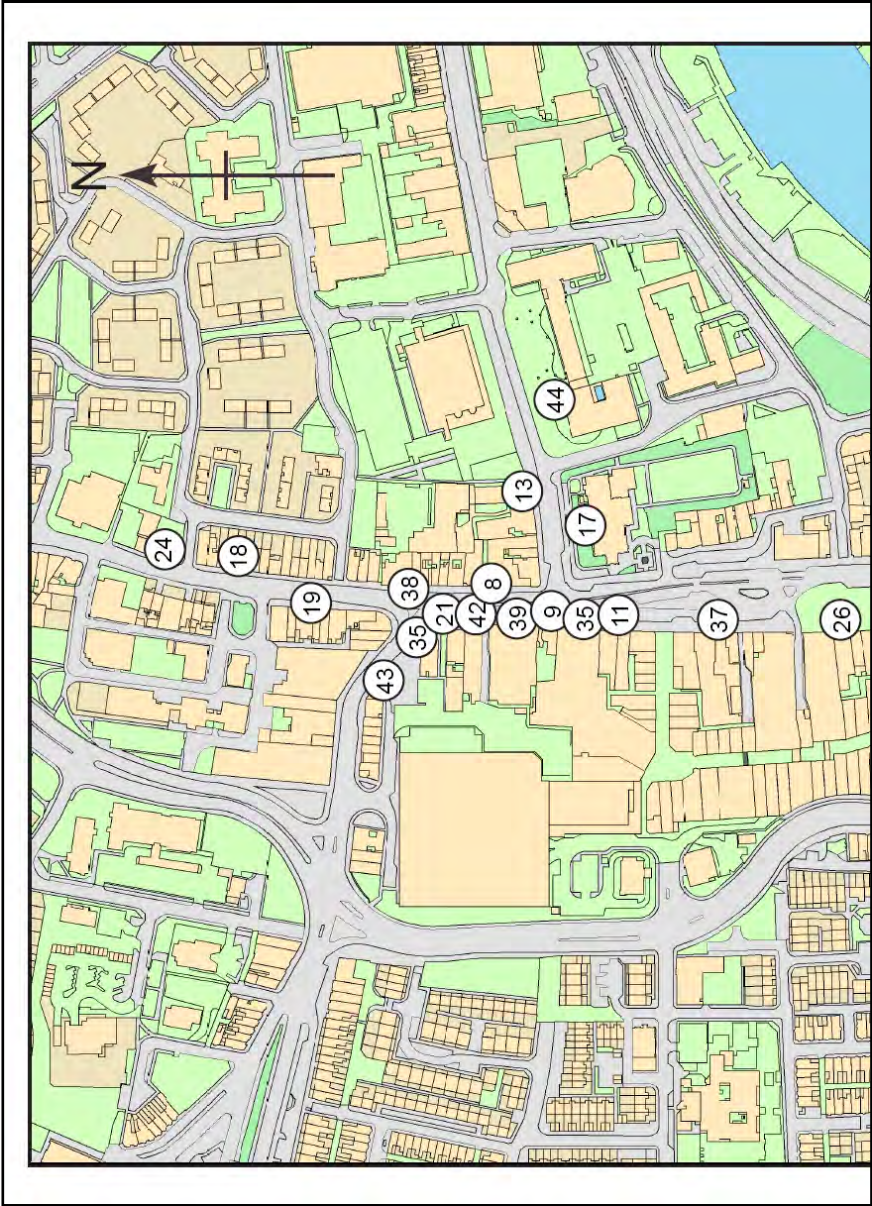


Fig 14: Former Warehouses at Green Dragon Yard

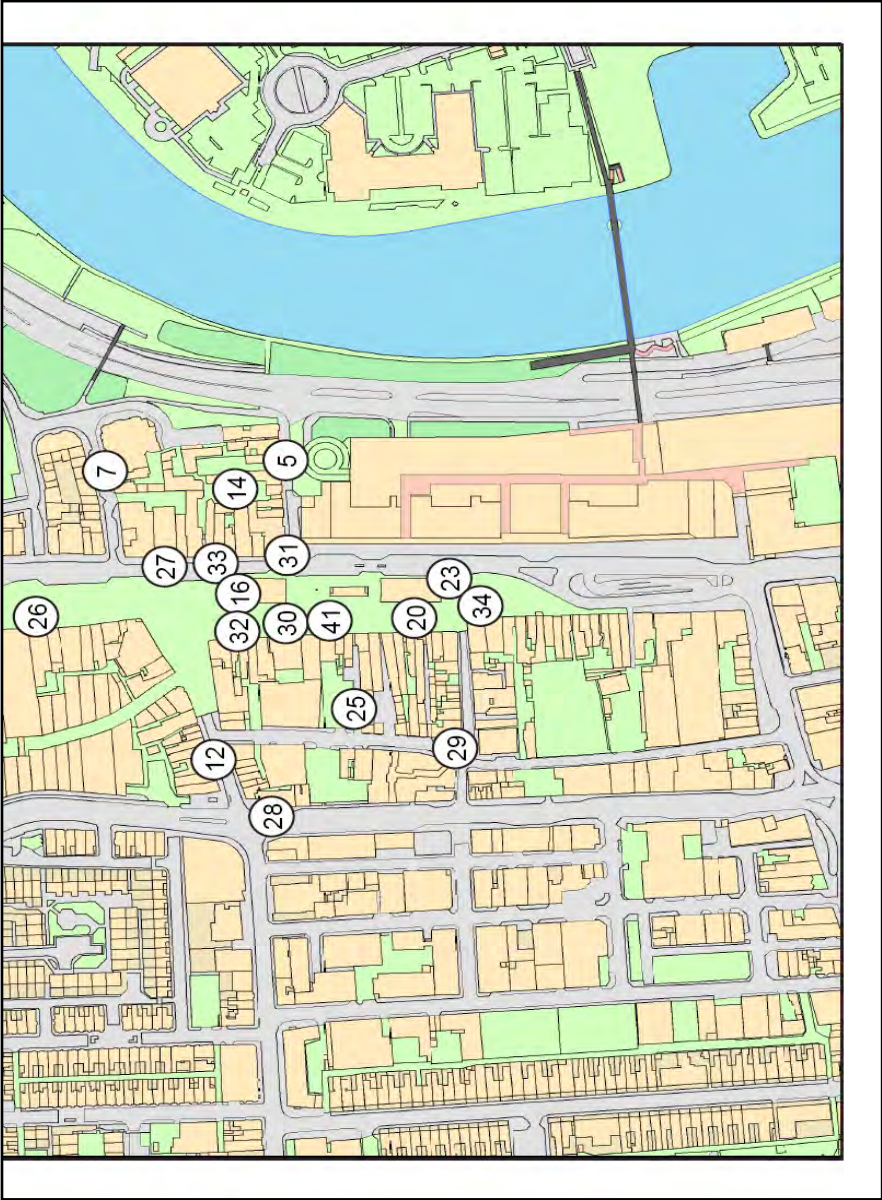


Fig 15: Calvin House, Green Dragon Yard

Figure 15 shows a typical warehouse. The large windows would originally have had shutters rather than glass and



Location Map of Buildings



Numbers refer to the figure number

provided ventilation while the double doors allowed the movement of goods. The central windows above the doors would have been doors and a hoist beam would have been sited above them to allow goods to be hauled up to the 1st and 2nd floors.

In 1725 a letter writer described Stockton:-

'Stockton was a few years ago all thatched houses, now of brick and sashed; making a spacious paved high street, very clean' (Sowler 1972, 112)

The new social and political standing of the town required a building to mark its improved status and in 1735 the Town House (now Town Hall) was built. This was originally open at the base, where there were shops, while the present Council Chamber was used for social gatherings. The building was soon found to be too small and was extended to the south in 1744.



Fig 16: Town House from the south

The 18th century development of Stockton was highlighted by the construction of the parish church in 1712. This comprised only the western part of the current building which was extended in the mid 19th and early 20th centuries.



Fig 17: Stockton Parish Church from the west.

19th Century Stockton and its Buildings

The early 19th century saw a continuation of the 18th century prosperity but as the century passed Stockton became increasingly industrialised with the development of local ironworks and foundries, shipyards and a variety of other industries. This led to an increase in population and more intensive use of properties in the town centre to house the growing population.

Domestic Buildings

The majority of the poorer quality terraced housing was outside of the historic core of the town. Better quality terraced housing was built in the mid 19th century along the east side of Norton Road and this was joined in the second half of the 19th century by terracing on the west side of Norton Road



Fig 18: Mid 19th century terraced housing, east side of Norton Road, compare Fig 19



Fig 19: Late 19th century terrace, Norton Road, compare Fig 18

19th century buildings were more highly decorated externally and different coloured brick was often used to pick out detail or to add decorative bands to buildings. Windows were all vertical sash windows with the top and bottom windows having two panes each rather than the six typical of 18th century windows.

In the main the 18th century houses continued in use and those wealthy enough to build new houses did so at new commuter centres like the nearby village of Norton rather than in the town centre.

There are however one or two examples of good quality 19th century domestic buildings and these include 111 High Street and the much larger 161/162 High Street which is of double pile construction providing double the depth of living space.



Fig 20: 19th century town house, 111 High Street



Fig 21: 19th century double pile building, 161/162 High Street

As well as the introduction of coloured bricks the 19th century saw the transition from the use of pantile to slate for roofing. The slate was quarried in Wales and distributed around the country thanks to the development of both the railway and shipping industries which allowed vast quantities to be moved.

The Victorian builder was fond of details and this even extended to decorative chimney pots!



Fig 22: Chimney pots, 22 Dovecot Street.

Commercial Buildings

From the middle of the 19th century new types of buildings began to appear in Stockton to complement the pre-existing warehouses. These comprised purpose built commercial premises such as banks, shops and public houses as well as new warehouses and evidence of the industrial activity now taking place. These new types of buildings were often highly decorated.

The first of these new buildings was the Shambles, built in 1825 by the town authorities in the centre of the High Street. It replaced similar buildings designed to house butchers' stalls that had previously been scattered

around the market place. Bringing them altogether provided a generally better environment for the town.



Fig 23: The Shambles, built 1825

The actual building represents the end of the 18th century building tradition with echoes of elegance that later 19th century buildings lost.

1825 was also of course the year the Stockton and Darlington railway opened, however this had no obvious impact on the buildings of the town centre. New quays were built at the Riverside to ship coal out and buildings constructed beyond the southern end of the town.

Engineering in the town is represented by the late 19th century 'Clephan North End Steam Building Works', and this highly decorated building imposes itself on Norton Road. This compares to the warehouse in Blue Post Yard, which is more typical of industrial buildings of the town.



Fig 24: Clephan North End
Engineering Works, 54-56
Norton Road



Fig 25: Renovated 19th century
warehouse, Blue Post Yard

Banks were constructed to suggest solidness and stability as well as wealth and often used stone for the frontages, with the rest of the building being brick (Fig 26).



Fig 26: 136 High Street

Commercial properties could be extravagant buildings with the appearance acting as advertising. The expanse of windows on all floors as well as the extravagant use of stone decoration shows that 37 High Street was built as a high quality commercial premise towards the end of the 19th century.



Fig 27: 37 High Street

The block of buildings at 12 Prince Regent Street was built in 1863 and extended in 1877 and has always been used for a variety of commercial purposes.



Fig 28: 12 Prince Regent Street

Purpose built Public Houses are also a feature of late 19th century Stockton, although alcohol consumption - predominantly ale in the medieval period, gin in the 18th century and beer from the 19th century - would always have played a part in the social history of the town.



Fig 29: The Red Lion, Ramsgate

The Red Lion is typical of a 19th century pub with an elaborate exterior. Originally the bar and saloon would have been separate, the former for general use, the latter for the slightly better off.

The Impact of the 20th Century

The 20th century started with a commercial exuberance in Stockton as buildings were constructed with ever more elaborate fronts and the designs of the Art Nouveau movement began to be translated into mass architecture.

This phase of Edwardian extravagance came to a shocking halt with the First World War. After the First World War we see the development of new styles based on Art Deco and a more functional approach to architecture.

There are no dwelling houses of this period in the town centre which had become primarily a commercial and administrative centre with the new social activities of mass entertainment and shopping amply provided for.

In many cases only the fronts of buildings have been changed or re-built and examination of the back and sides demonstrates that what looks like a 20th century building is in fact an 18th or 19th century one with the front wall re-built.

Edwardian Buildings

The frontage of the present NatWest Bank was built in 1910; the style is heavily influenced by classical architecture creating a handsome building.



Fig 30: NatWest Bank, 123/124 High Street

A more restrained display of wealth, clearly derived from Victorian architecture can be seen in the Yorkshire Bank which opened in 1913 as the London Joint Stock Bank.



Fig 31: Yorkshire Bank, 46 High Street

There are good examples of shop fronts of this period. One is the captivating terracotta decoration at 126 High Street with its ship motif. This was built in 1908 by Althams the grocers and tea dealers (A Betteney pers. comm.).



Fig 32: 126 High Street



Fig 33: 41 High Street

41 High Street (above), built in 1902 is perhaps more typical of Edwardian buildings with a well fired brick and a range of detailed features.

One of the most interesting features of the townscape of Stockton is its variety. There are blocks of 18th century buildings mixed with 19th century ones and those that date to the first half of the 20th century.

Perhaps most impressive of the Edwardian commercial buildings is Tees House, 106 High Street.



Fig 34: Tees House, 106 High Street

The present Tees House was built in 1912 and uses both hard fired brick, different colours of brick, decorative gables and stone plaques to ensure that it is noticed and the business of its owners advertised.

Debenhams (Fig 35) was originally built as ‘Robinson’s Coliseum’ and opened in 1901. It was one of the earliest all steel framed buildings in the country and had a built in sprinkler system using water from the tower to the rear of the building.



Fig 35: Debenhams Department Store, 150/151 High Street

The architecture suggests stateliness with plenty of emphasis on large windows to provide the light so that shoppers had a good view of what they were buying. This building is a pointer to the architecture of the 1930s and 50s rather than that of the preceding period.

Public Houses could be as extravagant as some shop fronts and 'The North Eastern' (after the railway company) is a fine example. The bay windows on the first floor are a reminder that bay windows became very popular in the early 19th century in order to let more light into otherwise poorly lit 18th and 19th century buildings.



Fig 36: 'The North Eastern', 163 High Street

1920s -50s

Buildings of the late 1920s through to the 1950s can look very similar with the same materials being used. One characteristic of the period is the use of leaded windows with stained glass and bay or curved windows and this is admirably displayed at 143 High Street (Fig 37), built in 1928.



Fig 37: 143 High Street



Fig 38: 4 High Street

There are few examples in Stockton High Street of the Art Deco style with its characteristics of clean bold lines linked to intricate decoration. Number 4 the High Street (above) does however display some of the elegance that this style can give to buildings.

This type of architecture is often associated with the use of 'new' building materials such as metal windows and concrete with the use of rendering on buildings being a common element.

The most impressive Art Deco building on the High Street is definitely the former Globe Theatre built in 1935.



Fig 39: Former Globe Theatre, 154/157 High Street



This combines both the lines and detailed decoration typical of the Art Deco style and the former use of the building as a cinema as well as a theatre places it firmly in the mainstream of 1930s culture.

Fig 40: Detail of former Globe Theatre, 154/157 High Street

1950s onwards

The architecture of the 1960s and 70s tended to be dominated by the use of concrete. In a few instances interesting effects were created and both 119 High Street and 159/160 High Street are good examples of this.

In both cases modern brick is used alongside metal and glass to frame the area of the windows. The treatment of the windows in 119 High Street is very reminiscent of the Art Deco style, while that of 159/160 High Street (Fig 42) is pure 1960s although the combination of strong lines and strong colours harks back to 1930s architecture.



Fig 41: 119 High Street



Fig 42: 159/160 High Street



Fig 43: 3/9 Bishopton Lane

At 3-9 Bishopton Lane (Fig 43) a combination of brick and sandstone has been used to create a building with an architectural style all of its own.

The most recent architecture of note within the historic core of Stockton is the Municipal Buildings / Library complex and these comprise an interesting group of 1960s buildings which complement each other and contribute to an attractive space behind the church.



Fig 44: Stockton Library and Municipal Buildings

Conclusion

The historic core of Stockton is fascinating for the range of buildings and architectural types that is on display. Looking above the present shop fronts we can see the development of architecture in the region from the 18th century onwards, while the different types of buildings tell us a great deal about the changing way in which people have used and perceived the town centre.

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