

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH LAINE AREA

Brighton was probably founded in the early Saxon period and its name is believed to derive from Brithelm's Tun. By the time of the Domesday Book, it was well established as a fishing village of some 400 people. Archaeological finds in the Old Town include prehistoric features, a Bronze Age Beaker burial, Roman coins, Medieval and Postmediaeval artefacts and building foundations. A Roman presence in the valley bottom along the London to Brighton Road to the east is evidenced by the discovery of a Roman Villa at Springfield Road and Roman Coins at St. Peters Church. At the top end of Church Street a series of previously unknown catacombs and many unrecorded burials were discovered during redevelopment.

As the eastern side of the area is in a valley bottom, it is conceivable that archaeological features may have been covered by hill-wash deposits. However, most of the area has been built over in the last 100 - 200 years and if there were any traces of earlier settlement, they may not have survived, particularly where buildings had deep basements and foundations.

The Laines were the name given to the arable open field's land which surrounded the old fishing town of Brighthelmston. There were five laines, West, North, East, Hilly and Little Laine. The boundaries of the North Laine were Church Street on the south, New England and Viaduct Roads on the North, St Nicholas, Buckingham and Clifton Streets on the West and Victoria Gardens and Ditchling Road on the east sides. London Road cuts through the original North Laine.

Each laine was subdivided into furlongs separated by access paths called leakways. The furlongs were then further subdivided into strips for cultivation known as paul-pieces. These ran along the hillside to reduce erosion by soil slip. By the 1780s, the paul-pieces were owned in units called yardlands. As the area was gradually developed, each builder tended to arrange streets and buildings along paul-pieces, the whole width of the furlong. The east-west roads, Church Street, North Road, Gloucester Road, Trafalgar Street, Cheapside and Ann Street, follow the routes of the leakways, whilst the north-south streets mark out the paul-pieces. Thus the pattern of land-ownership at that time is preserved in the present grid street layout. Consequently, the street pattern of the area is of considerable historic interest and is an important element of the area's distinctive character.

Between 1750 and 1780 most of the development that transformed Brighthelmston into the fashionable seaside resort of Brighton was concentrated within the Old Town. Attempts to build suburbs on the farmland around the town during the 1770s were unsuccessful. North Row was the first urban development within the laines. It was started in 1772, with cottages and a stable where the King and Queen public house now stands in Marlborough Place. However, maps show that of the laines adjacent to the Old Town, the rate of building was slowest in the North Laine. It was not until the 1780s that continuous outward expansion gained momentum. From 1780 most of the fashionable residential development took place along the cliff tops and subsequently along the edge of what is now the Steine and up the Lewes and London Roads. North Laine lacked the advantages of a seaside frontage favoured by fashionable residential development. This and the north-south orientation of its paul-pieces prevented the development of houses with a sea view. Moreover, the small plot divisions and ownership patterns made it unsuitable for development into grand squares and crescents by the big estates.

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The Old Town of Brighton had many walled orchards and market gardens within it behind the frontage buildings. However, as the town grew, these were forced out into the surrounding laines, particularly the North Laine, and this is reflected in the street names of the area, many of which are called "Gardens", such as Kensington Gardens and Queen's Gardens. The North Laine was only built on when land became scarce in the town centre. Until this time the area was still largely open farmland.

Further development within the Old Town meant that small industries and workshops were also forced out of this area into North Laine where land was still relatively cheap and the North Street shops were easily accessible. Early development was stimulated by its location on the north side of North Street, where the town's first coaching inns were located and which was Brighton's most fashionable street from the 1770s to 1820. Small workshops and mews were built in the North Laine to serve the inns and shops of fashionable Brighton. However, this process occurred quite slowly. Right hand side of North Street had been lined with farms with deep plots of land known as crofts at the back, stretching to what is now called Church Street. By the early 1780s the crofts, some of which were used as market and fruit gardens, were being built on to create Bond, King, and Portland Streets, with their pubs, stables, workshops, smithies and small houses.

Church Street is the oldest street in the area and predates its urban development. It was originally a medieval rural track at the rear of the crofts and gardens stretching northwards from North Street and led to St Nicholas Church. It was called North Backside, but was later renamed Spring Walk and did not acquire its present name until 1792. Several old side streets and small courtyards leading off it have since been demolished in slum clearance programmes. The road was extended through to Grand Parade in about 1816 when a road to the north of the Royal Pavilion was closed.

A group of farm buildings stood on the south - east part of what is now the Jubilee Street site, behind where the Waggon and Horses now stands, and a lane led to it from Church Street along the line of where Jubilee Mews was later laid out. About 1800, building started on the north side of Church Street.

New Road was laid out at the command of the Prince Regent in 1805 along the line of Furner's Gardens. The buildings developed along it over the next ten years. The Town Commissioners required him to do this in return for granting permission in 1803 for the stopping up of Great East Street that ran behind his Marine Pavilion, to form the gardens.

Contemporary maps show that by 1830, Gloucester Street, North Road and Trafalgar Street were in existence, but only the block of land between Church Street and North Road was fully developed. Other parts of North Laine were still predominantly orchards and gardens. The area west of Gardner Street was described in the 1840s as the site of some of the worst slums in Brighton.

The growth of North Laine was not a product of fashion, but of utility. Its purpose was to serve the rest of fashionable Brighton with its small industries - foundries, blacksmiths, and other crafts, and provide homes for the workforce of the growing town. The large elegant houses along the Steine and the Cliffs needed armies of staff and servants to maintain them. The tight compact terraces in North Laine housed these people, together with those working in the area's workshops.

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The building of the railway station in 1840 confirmed North Laine as Brighton's major artisan and service area. Small industries and workshops were established such as printers, warehouses and foundries, using the coal and metal brought in by the railway. This in turn encouraged house building in the area for those working on the railway and its allied industries. Queen's Road was constructed in 1845 better to link the new station to 12 the Old Town, bridging over Trafalgar Street, which until then was the link, via what is now London Road.

Many streets within the area had a tight, varied pattern of land use with workshops and warehouses on one side and artisans' cottages on the other. This pattern of development is still visible in the variety of buildings and land uses to be found in North Laine today.

The sequence in which the streets were developed is approximately as follows:- 1745- 1779, Bond St (south), King St, Marlborough Place and Prince's Place; 1780-9: Bond St (north), Jew St, Portland St and Windsor St; 1789-99: Church St (east of Spring Gardens), King St, Spring Gardens; 1800-8: Gloucester Place; 1809-22: Bread St, Gardner St, Jubilee St, Regent St, Frederick Place, Kensington Gardens, New Road, North Road (south side), Orange Row, Pimlico St (no longer exists), Cavendish Place North (no longer exists), Belmont St, York Place, London Road (south of Baker St); 1822- 30: Church St (west of Spring Gardens), Gloucester St, Kensington St, Upper Gardner St, Vine St, Frederick Gardens, Frederick St, Kensington Place (west side), North Road (north side), St George's Place, Pelham St (south), Trafalgar St (north side), Elder Place, London Rd (north of Baker St); 1836-41: Robert St, Tidy St, Kensington Place, (east side), Trafalgar Terrace, Blackman St, Redcross St, Whitecross St; 1842-47: Blenheim Place, Cheltenham Place, Foundry St, Kemp St, Trafalgar St (south side), Gloucester Rd, Queen's Rd, Pelham Square (west side), Queen's Gardens, Ann St, Pelham St (north), St Peter's St, Station St, Trafalgar St (south side), Cheapside, Providence Place; 1848-53: Over St, Sydney St,; 1859-64: Pelham Square (south and east sides), New England St, Elder St (no longer in existence), London St (no longer in existence); 1870-4: North Place, New England Road; 1875-9: Tichbourne St.

At the end of the 18th century, infantry barracks were built at the south end of Church Street and the rear of the King and Queen Inn in Marlborough Place. These later became the headquarters of the 1st Sussex Rifles and the 1st Sussex Artillery Volunteers. The barracks closed in 1870 when the Volunteers moved to new barracks in Church St and Gloucester Road (currently the Royal Mail and "Surrige Dawson" buildings, respectively). The site was acquired by the Corporation for the erection of the North Road Public Baths and a new County Courthouse. The roadway is now called Barrack Yard and a mosaic which originally adorned the interior of one of the barracks buildings still survives in the roadway.

In 1829 one of Brighton's first schools was erected in Church Street, on the corner of Regent Street. The Central National School was designed by Stroud and Mew. It was a three storey building in the Regency gothic style with oriel windows and pinnacles. The school later became the Central Church of England School and eventually the Central Voluntary Primary School and closed in 1971. It was demolished in 1971. Next to it on the corner of Jubilee Street, opposite the end of New Road, stood a smaller Tudor Gothic style building, Nos. 107 - 108, designed to complement the school. It had two shops on the ground floor and the schoolmaster's residence on the second. This building was also demolished in 1971. The Courthouse was built in 1869 in the Tudor Gothic Revival style, in red brick with a slate hipped roof.

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The Waggon and Horses Public House, No. 109 Church Street was built in 1848 by Frederick Mahomed as a gymnasium and became a public house in 1852. No. 115/116, now the Music Library was constructed in about 1925 as an office and showroom for the Brighton and Hove General Gas Company on the site of the Pavilion Baptist Chapel, built in 1825.

North Road was originally a very narrow road known as North Lane. It was first developed in the 1810s on the south side and in the 1820s on the north side. It was doubled in width in 1870. This road was once a much more important shopping street than today and had ten pubs along its length. Brighton's first swimming pool; the North Road Public Baths were built on the site of the old barracks and opened in 1895. It was closed in 1979 and the new Prince Regent Swimming Pool was built on the site. The old Slipper Baths building, however, still stands nearby in Barrack Yard, which is reached through an archway from North Road, above which is still inscribed "Public Baths". The Slipper Baths only closed in 1976 and is now a nursery. North Place was constructed in the 1870s.

The Jubilee Street area, before it was cleared, was a mixture of small houses, workshops, stables and shops. The southern end of the street narrowed to a single lane and an archway at the rear of the Waggon and Horses led into a mews - Jubilee Mews. There was also a public house called The Grown Shades. Sources: "The Development of the North Laine" by Dr. Sue Berry, published by the Lewes Cohen Urban Studies Centre, University of Brighton; The Encyclopaedia of Brighton by Timothy Carder, published by East Sussex County Council Library Service,

1990. THE TOWNSCAPE OF THE NORTH LAINE

Conservation areas are designated for their special architectural or historic interest. It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. The townscape and character of an area is determined by a number of elements including its geography and topography, its street pattern, open spaces, the layout of buildings and their texture and grain, its density and general heights and massing, the architectural styles of its buildings and the materials used.

Topography

The ground in this part of Brighton slopes generally down from west to east towards Valley Gardens and also, on its western edge from north to south towards the sea. Buildings on the western and northern parts tend to be visible in long views, not only within the Conservation Area but also from the adjoining Valley Gardens Conservation Area. The ground slope is particularly noticeable on the east-west cross streets, where the buildings step down the hill like staircases. Their parapet or eaves and roof ridges are staggered. The ground level between the frontages of the Queens Road buildings and their site levels at the rear facing into the North Laine, e.g. in Frederick Place drops quite dramatically and the land is shored up under the pavements with a vaulted brick retaining wall. Therefore, the building heights show a sharp drop down between the edge of the neighbourhood along Queen's Road and the buildings behind. The Street Pattern and Layout of the Buildings

The dominant characteristic of the North Laine is its irregular linear grid street pattern, running north-south, which was based on the original pattern of arable fields. Whilst this street pattern has been disrupted in recent times by several large developments, it nevertheless largely survives. There is only one example of a square - Pelham Square, with its central garden containing many large

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trees, which departs from this pattern. The only other large green open space is the Burial Ground of the Presbyterian Church, now a public park.

The original buildings were gradually laid out in the 19th Century to relatively high site coverages on narrow plots. The houses have very small rear gardens. In the main the 14 building line is hard up against the pavement edge or in some cases behind very small front gardens or basement light wells, such as in Kensington Gardens.

Because the North Laine was developed piecemeal after the main frontages such as the fashionable Old Steine and Valley Gardens frontages, there are places where the plot boundaries layout interlocks like a jigsaw with those of the grander frontages in an interesting way. Important Views

The topography and layout of the area, with its long streets, affords a large number of long views through the Conservation Area, as well as into and out of it. In some cases, important landmark buildings can be seen in these. Those views worthy of special mention include:- Trafalgar St, Gloucester Rd, North Rd, and Church St, which have views right across the North Laine to Valley Gardens and the hillside beyond. The view eastwards along North Road is terminated by the group of trees in and around the Turner Recreation Ground in Sussex St. Bond St, Gardner St and several other streets have vistas of the Listed St Bartholomew's Church, a bold brick building which dominates the skyline. Some of the north-south streets afford glimpses of the green top of Hollingbury Hill Fort, e.g. Bond St. Trafalgar St has glimpses of the tower of St Peter's Church in Valley Gardens. Queen's Road Quadrant has two large trees which are visible up Gloucester Rd, and the Quadrant provides a window into the North Laine from Queen's Rd which reveals the Chapel and the adjacent interesting modern building. Church St has a view into Valley Gardens and of the Dome and Corn Exchange Buildings which are major landmarks. Because of these vistas, tall buildings outside the Conservation Area and even some distance away, can have a major impact on skylines and street scenes which are not always positive (see below). Its Building Forms

The dominant building form is rows of houses or terraces. Some streets, such as Bond Street and Church Street, have a variety of building types and styles while others, such as the east side of Kensington Place, are architecturally uniform formal terraces.

The traditional building heights vary between 2-3 storeys and are much lower than those generally found elsewhere in the historic areas of Brighton. The main roads surrounding the area to the east, south and west have taller buildings in general. Architectural Styles and Materials 3.30 Most of the buildings date from the 19th Century, but there is a scattering of 18th Century buildings, particularly around the edges. The earlier buildings frequently have corniced parapeted facades and round segmental bay windows with sashes sub-divided by glazing bars. These bow windows are tripartite, having a large central sash and a narrow sash on either side. Many windows retain their original handmade glass, which have a sparkle and movement that dead flat modern glass lacks. Ordinary sash windows are generally three panes in width and four panes high.

The later Victorian buildings frequently have overhanging bracketed eaves and canted window bays. Later 19th Century buildings often have sash windows with fewer subdivisions and larger panes. Sadly, many of the buildings have lost their original glazing bars or have had their windows completely altered in an unsympathetic manner. Most doors were originally simple 4-panelled doors with bolection mouldings around the recessed panels, or sometimes plainer ogee mouldings inset.

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Occasionally, on the older 15 buildings, there were six panelled doors. Another variation was the more solid 4-panelled door with flush panels with beaded or reeded edges.

The dominant materials in the North Laine (as in most parts of historic Brighton) are painted stucco (render) walls and slate roofs. Some stucco buildings have simple lining out to imitate stone jointing, whilst others have more bold and ornate ashlar with "vee" or square joints. Originally most were left unpainted, although some were given a colour wash. It is now a long established tradition to paint rendered buildings white or pale pastel colours. There are also a good number of brick and clay tiled buildings and a few pebble fronted buildings and one or two rare mathematical tiled buildings. Brick types were brownish - yellow stocks - often used with red rubbers for dressings, and occasionally soft reds. Gaults or yellow stocks were not used.

Many buildings which are rendered or have brick front facades have rear and party walls of field flints with brick string courses and dressings around windows, doors and on corners. Others are of "bungaroosh," the characteristic Sussex Coast mixture of field flints and "tumbled" or diagonal end-on bricks, in lime mortar.

Sadly, many early pebble and brick buildings have been lost and so it is important to preserve the few surviving examples. Moreover, in recent years many of the hand made plain clay tiled and slate roofs have been re-covered with inappropriate and ugly concrete interlocking tiles or certain types of unconvincing artificial fibre-cement "slates" or resin bonded reconstituted slates which are smooth, metallic looking and have very sharp straight edges. Roof Lines

The roof-lines are another important element of the townscape. The structural forms of roofs in the area are varied. The earliest buildings in the North Laine have simple ridged roofs sloping to the front and rear, or gambrel led roofs - a sort of steeply sloping mansard. Mostly they are plain clay tiled. Their shapes, cladding materials, details such as eaves, parapets, party wall up-stands, chimney stacks and pots all add richness to the sky-line which is important to maintain.

The Georgian/Regency style buildings generally tend to have front parapet walls, often with cornices, and concealed or partly concealed roofs behind. Most of these are "butterfly" valley-roofs, but mansards and even one or two hipped roofs behind parapets can be found. They are generally slate clad, but many Regency buildings have plain clay tiles. The Victorian period buildings and terraces, which predominate, generally have ridged roofs with decorative bracketed eaves and were generally slate covered originally.

THE BUILDINGS' QUALITY AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

There are few architecturally outstanding individual buildings in the North Laine, and few Listed Buildings. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the Conservation Area comprises a district of attractive townscape with a distinctive ambience worthy of preservation. Conservation Areas are designated for their special character and it is not necessary for all or even most of the buildings to be of Listable quality or of the highest architectural or historic interest. It is the quality and character of the townscape as a whole which is important. Nevertheless, this townscape is composed of groups of buildings and the spaces between them, and it is not acceptable to allow the progressive wholesale demolition and redevelopment of the area, as ultimately this would result in the complete transformation of the area and subsequent loss of character, unless the original buildings were

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replaced with exact replicas. The latter would be of dubious value, being little more than a theme park or a stage set, lacking in historical authenticity. Where buildings comprise the essential character of the Conservation Area, they should be refurbished and retained, and only demolished when they are structurally beyond repair. This does not mean that replica rebuilds are always inappropriate, and often this is often the only or best way to preserve the character of the Conservation Area, especially where continuous terraces are involved.