

**DERBYSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**ASHBOURNE**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 The assessment report**

This assessment report forms part of the Extensive Urban Survey Programme, an English Heritage funded initiative to assist local planning authorities with the conservation of their urban archaeological resource. Ashbourne is one of a series of small towns and large villages in Derbyshire selected for such assessment.

The report is a desk-based survey, the scope of which includes both above and below ground archaeological remains of all periods, using information from the County Sites and Monuments Record, local histories, early maps and plan form analysis, with the results presented as a series of maps generated by GIS. It forms the foundation for an archaeological management strategy which can be adopted by the local planning authority as supplementary planning guidance.

Ashbourne experienced considerable growth over the course of the 20th century and as a result has extended well beyond its earlier boundaries, particularly to the north-east and to the south. Some of this 20th century settlement has been excluded from the assessment.

**1.2 Overview of the town**

The market town of Ashbourne lies in the southern half of Derbyshire near the county boundary with Staffordshire and close to an important early crossing point on the River Dove. The settlement was the centre of a royal estate in the early medieval period, although by 1086 it was largely waste. By the end of the 12th century it had been re-established as a successful town, with a new planned layout. Burgage plots lined the road from church to manor house, with a large triangular market place opening off the road. Ashbourne's markets and fairs served the Dove valley and adjacent countryside and allowed the exchange of products from the contrasting economic areas to the north and south. Its success also led to the establishment of the village of Compton, offering a rival and unlicensed market on the other side of the Henmore Brook.

The turnpiking of a number of roads in the area in the 18th century allowed Ashbourne to develop further, not only commercially but also as a fashionable residential centre. With the growth of the tourist industry occurring at around the same time, it was a popular resort in the county, due in particular to the attractions of the nearby Dovedale Gorge. Industrial activity was always relatively slight, however, and Ashbourne's commercial and social prominence began to decline with the arrival of the railways although it remained an important local market centre and focus for tourism. Lack of 19th century industrial development has meant that the town has retained not only many of its Georgian, and earlier, buildings, but also its medieval planned layout, with many of the long narrow burgage plots still visible. It is also known for its annual game of Shrovetide football, supposedly a direct descendant of the medieval game of mass football which was introduced to this country in the second half of the 12th century.

**2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOLOGY**

Ashbourne lies near the western end of the valley of Henmore Brook, called Scow Brook nearer its source, 3km away from its junction with the Dove. Ashbourne township itself is situated on a relatively steep slope on the northern side of the brook, with Bellevue Road at around 139m AOD and the northern end of the market place at 132m AOD, falling to around 122m AOD along Church Street. Compton lies to the south of the brook, the main street rising only slightly from 119m to 122m AOD.

It used to suffer frequent flooding prior to the culverting of Henmore Brook to the east of Compton Bridge.

The town lies close to the point where the Pennine foothills fall away into the Midland Plain. To the north of the town, therefore, the underlying solid geology is limestone; however Ashbourne itself is situated on sandstones of the Sherwood group. Soils in the valley are generally fine and sandy, pebbly in part, while on the surrounding hills they consist of gravelly or stoney clay overlying sandstone conglomerate (OS Geol. Map 1980).

### **3. ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT**

Ashbourne was in *Hamenstan* wapentake in 1086, an administrative division which appears to have been split into High Peak and Wirksworth wapentakes by the 13th century. The township consisted entirely of the settled area; its fields and commons were in the township of Offcote & Underwood. Compton, which probably only came into existence in the 13th century, was divided down its main street, the eastern half lying in Sturston township in Appletree wapentake, the western half in Clifton and Compton township. Clifton may also have been in Appletree wapentake originally, but by the 18th century it formed a detached part of Morleyston and Litchurch hundred. Sturston no longer exists, parts having been transferred to Bradley and Offcote & Underwood and the rest to Ashbourne in 1934. Compton similarly has been transferred to Ashbourne, which today lies within Derbyshire Dales district.

### **4. SOURCES**

#### **4.1 Primary sources**

The Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) holds parish records of St Oswald's Church from 1702, with parish registers from 1538 and copies of the parish magazine, as well as records of St John's Church from 1872, glebe terriers from 1682-1762 and various documents relating to the different non-conformist chapels in the town. Other primary documents held there include the records of a number of businesses, utilities and schools, including those relating to the Grammar School from the late 16th century, sale catalogues, 17th and 18th century poll tax and land tax returns and title deeds from the 13th century. As a Crown estate, there are also documents relating to Ashbourne among the Duchy of Lancaster papers in the Public Record Office. Archives relating to the Cokayne family appear to have been dispersed, while the Boothby Archives, mainly of 17th and 18th century date, are in Glamorgan Record Office (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.).

A number of deeds relating to Ashbourne came into the possession of Repton School and have subsequently been published (Cox 1910). The majority of these are of 13th century date, although some are of the 14th and 15th centuries.

#### **4.2 Secondary sources**

The main secondary sources used for this assessment were the publications based on the work of the Ashbourne Local History Group who, over a number of years, carried out extensive research into the Georgian and Victorian periods in Ashbourne, using a very large range of archives (Henstock 1978, 1989, 1991). This included analysing the land tax assessments to discover the names of the owners and occupiers of all the houses in the town between 1780 and 1825, scanning the columns of the weekly Derby Mercury between 1732 and 1825 for Ashbourne references, reading letters and diaries of residents and visitors to Ashbourne of the time, and consulting maps, property deeds, valuations, wills and other archives. A planned third volume in the series *A Georgian Country Town. Ashbourne, 1725-1825*, dealing with industry, communications and other topics not covered in the first two volumes, is unfortunately not yet available (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.).

#### **4.3 Cartographic evidence**

The earliest map of Ashbourne is to be found in the Public Record Office, although a reduced reproduction in black and white has been published (Yates 1960). It was produced for use in a dispute over enclosure of common pasture in 1547, and shows a bird's eye view of the town and adjacent land

looking west from the parish church, with buildings drawn in perspective. It includes several important details, but cannot be regarded as a totally accurate depiction. The earliest complete map which includes property boundaries is a plan of the township, together with relevant parts of the adjoining townships, surveyed and drawn by the pupils of Mr Jones's Academy, Ashbourne, in 1830. Tithe maps and schedules for all the townships are held in the Derbyshire Record Office and date from 1846 (Clifton), 1847 (Offcote and Underwood), 1848 (Sturston) and 1849 (Ashbourne). All are detailed and complete, with the exception of the Sturston map, which does not show individual buildings and their boundaries on the eastern side of Compton Street and the northern side of Sturston Road. The 1st edition 25" OS map of the area was published in 1880.

#### **4.4 Archaeological evidence**

Thirty-three entries are recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record for the settled area, of which the majority (25) are standing buildings or parts of buildings. In addition, two archaeological excavations have taken place, the first in Keeper's Meadow, just to the south of St Oswald's churchyard, prior to the building of a new church hall (Coutts 1989) and the second in Compton, on the site of a new supermarket (Gifford and Partners 1997)

### **5. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

#### **5.1 Prehistoric**

There is no evidence of prehistoric occupation from the settled area of Ashbourne. However, some prehistoric artefacts have been recovered from the surrounding area, which also forms the southern fringes of a landscape particularly rich in prehistoric burial mounds (see figure 1).

Just to the south of Ashbourne was the site of Old Hill round barrow (SMR 314), now destroyed and built over. This may have been the same site as a barrow recorded as SMR 301, but of uncertain location. An axe-hammer of Neolithic or Bronze Age date also comes from this area (SMR 302), as do several gold 'armilla' found in the 1830s close to a brook near Ashbourne (SMR 303). These last findspots are not known and cannot therefore be shown on figure 1.

Somewhat further south of Ashbourne lies a cluster of five Bronze Age round barrows and the site of a sixth. The five surviving barrows are all Scheduled Monuments (SMR 4303 [SM 13326], SMR 4304 [SM 13325], SMR 24001 and SMR 24002 [both SM 13323], SMR 24004 [SM 13324]), while the sixth, which was excavated in 1852, has been destroyed and its location is uncertain (SMR 24003).

To the south-west lies Margery Bower round barrow, assumed to be of Bronze Age date (SMR 25902), while fieldwalking over a nearby 37 acre field produced a wide scatter of flints dating from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age (SMR 4309).

To the north-east, near Mapleton, is the site, now lost, of three Bronze Age barrows which once stood in a line, and which were excavated by Carrington in 1849 (SMR 9501-3)

#### **5.2 Roman**

The only evidence of Roman occupation from the town is the top stone of a bee-hive rotary quern found at Ashbourne Church (SMR 304; see figure 1). To the south-west, however, fieldwalking over a 37 acre field produced some Roman pottery sherds in addition to the flints mentioned above (SMR 4309).

The course of Hereward Street, thought to be a Romano-British road, was said to run from Chesterfield through Matlock, Wirksworth and Ashbourne to Rocester in Staffordshire; however, a reappraisal of the evidence suggests that the line of the road bearing this name, whether Roman or not, lay elsewhere (Henstock 1980).

#### **5.3 Early Medieval**

The only artefactual evidence of early medieval settlement at Ashbourne comes from a portion of

Saxon cross shaft discovered during the restoration of the church in 1877, and now standing in the south aisle (SMR 306; Bulmer 1895). However, it is clear from the Domesday Survey (see below) that Ashbourne had been a royal estate in the early medieval period, with what was probably a church of some size and importance. Henstock (1971) suggests that it almost certainly served as a minster for the surrounding villages, and speculates that its origin may have been as an ecclesiastical centre connected with the Christian reconversion of the Danelaw. Tradition has it that it stands on the site of a pagan holy well, now thought to be concealed beneath the crossing.

Early medieval Ashbourne was one of four great estates, the others being centred on Bakewell, Hope and Wirksworth. Roffe (1986a, 27) suggests that royal interest in this area was clearly ancient, and that the extent of the king's influence, as indicated by these estates, substantially represents the territory of the tribe known as the *Pecsetna*, the dwellers in the Peak, in the late seventh-century Tribal Hidage. Something of the size of the Ashbourne estate is indicated by later ecclesiastical structure. When granted to the bishop of Lincoln in 1093, Ashbourne was the mother church of Bradley, Edlaston, Hulland, Mapleton, Thorpe, Fenny Bentley, Kniveton, Hognaston and Parwich. This area is bisected by Bradbourne, and Roffe (1986b) suggests that Bradbourne may once have been included within the estate, but have been alienated from it sometime before 963.

It has been suggested that Ashbourne lay on a Saxon portway, as the road entering Ashbourne from the south leaves the Derby-Utttoxeter road (also a Saxon portway) at a place called Portway Head, while the road proceeding from Ashbourne to the north-east, towards Wirksworth, passes Breach Farm where there is a Portaway Field (Dodd & Dodd 1980).

## 5.4 Medieval

### 5.4.1 Domesday Book

*In Ashbourne 3c. of land taxable. Land for 3 ploughs. Waste; however, it pays 20s. A priest and a church with 1 c. of land taxable; he has 2 villagers and 2 smallholders who have ½ plough; (he has) 1 plough himself and 1 man who pays 16d. Meadow, 20 acres; woodland pasture 1 league long and ½ league wide.*

*Outliers of this manor, in Mappleton 2 c; Broadlowash 2 c; Thorpe 2 c; (Fenny) Bentley 2c; Offcote 2 c; Hognaston 4 c. Taxable 14 c. of land. Land for as many ploughs. Waste except for 11 villagers and 17 smallholders who have 6½ ploughs. Meadow, 25 acres.*

*These five manors, DARLEY, MATLOCK (Bridge), WIRKSWORTH, ASHBOURNE and PARWICH, with their outliers, paid £32 and 6½ sesters of honey before 1066; now £40 of pure silver. (Domesday Book, Phillimore edition)*

### 5.4.2 Place-name evidence

The earliest place-name evidence for Ashbourne comes from Domesday Book, where it is written as *Esseburne*, based on the Scandinavian *aesc* and *burna*. The place takes its name from the stream on which it stands, ash-tree stream. The modern name for the lower reaches of the stream, ie Henmore Brook, is first recorded in 1653, the earlier name being Scow Brook - *aq' de Esseb' q' vocatur Scolebrok*, 1275 (Cameron 1959). Compton is not mentioned in Domesday Book, and probably only developed in response to Ashbourne's growth. It is first referred to in 1258, when it is written as *Campeden*, meaning either 'valley with an enclosure' or 'valley in which a fight took place', the latter interpretation being that preferred by Cameron (1959).

### 5.4.3 The manor

Ashbourne was part of the ancient demesnes of the Crown at the time of the Domesday Survey until it was granted in or about the year 1203 by King John to William Ferrers, Earl of Derby. It was forfeited in the reign of Henry III, then granted by Edward I to his brother Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, in 1278 (Lysons 1817). It returned to the Crown in 1399 when Henry, Duke of Lancaster, became king, and continued as Crown property until 1633. During this time the manor was frequently leased to the Cokayne family, who resided at Ashbourne Hall (Henstock 1971)

The Domesday entry, quoted above, hints at the possibility that there was also a manor in Ashbourne owned by the Church. Addy (1915), researching 'rectory manors' in Derbyshire, considered that 'in the absence of other evidence' it was not possible to decide whether Ashbourne constituted an example of such a manor. However, an excerpt from the Hundred Rolls, namely The Verdict of Esseburn, 1273, appears to support the existence of a division of land between Crown and Church:

'The King had the rents of the tofts of the Burgh of Esseburn of ancient tenure until the Church of Esseburn aforesaid was endowed with the rents of half the said tofts, from which time there were in the said vill, from the house which was Wm. Spendilove's to the land of Henry de Cruce on one part and from Ballochorn to the said cattle yard of the King - but of what King is unknown - and now there are many tofts in the said vill of Esseburn which then were by agreement (*approvanto*) made in the King's time and County, and by exchange made between Robert former Earl de Ferr and Henry de Esseburn, and the rents of the said tofts now remain in the King's hands' (quoted in Yeatman 1889, 48-49)

Similarly an early deed, undated but definitely pre-1272, records the granting of part of a toft in Ashbourne 'upon the land of *Esseburn* church between the land of Robert at the Cross and the land of Nicholas de Mercinton ...' (Cox 1910, 102).

#### **5.4.4 Communications**

Ashbourne lay on a number of important early routes, in particular that leading to Staffordshire via the Hanging Bridge across the Dove. The earliest reference to this bridge is in 1296 (Cameron 1959). To the north of Ashbourne, Spend Lane is said to be a medieval way which led to Alsop en le Dale (Dodd & Dodd 1980).

Ashbourne lay on a saltway into the southern part of Derbyshire from Alton through Ellastone to Ashbourne, where there is a Salt Alley. It is suggested that a saltway continued from there towards Belper, as there is a Salters Flatt between the two towns (Dodd & Dodd 1980).

The importance of Ashbourne's markets and fairs for livestock led to it being the focus of early drovers' roads. 'Ashbourne Lane' which leads south from Chapel-en-le-Frith is said to have been a drovers' road, providing a route from Cheshire to Ashbourne since, prior to the development of Buxton in the 16th century, Ashbourne was the next market town to the south. Another old north-south route, part of which was formerly known as Ashbourne Lane, is the way passing west of Tideswell through Peak Forest and Wheston, though the whole route that led to Ashbourne is not known (Dodd & Dodd 1980).

#### **5.4.5 The settlement and its environs**

In around 1190 Ashbourne was either founded as a new town or deliberately promoted from a small hamlet or village into a market town with borough status, either directly by the king or by the de Ferrers. The amount contributed by Ashbourne in the Pipe Rolls of 1194 was quite considerable and suggests that it was already reasonably substantial and successful by then (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.).

Although Ashbourne's borough status does not appear to have lasted much beyond the 13th century, it thrived as a market town. In 1313-4 it had 22 market stalls of a permanent nature. The town suffered during the 14th and 15th centuries, however, as did several other Derbyshire towns. Rentals fell considerably during this period, being only half the amount in 1497-8 that they had been in 1313-4, and only beginning to rise by 1539-40. Other references to the town confirm this picture, with four stalls being in disrepair in 1440-1, increased in 1446-7 by the dilapidation of three butchers' shops, various butchers' and fishmongers' stalls and seven stalls belonging to John Cockayne (Blanchard 1967). However, by 1536-7 the market had recovered, and was actually larger than it had been two centuries earlier, with more than 30 stalls.

The map of 1547 can be taken as an illustration of the settlement at the end of the medieval period. It depicts mostly one- or two-storey buildings, with a few larger ones located on the east side of the

market place. Buildings along Church Street, St John's Street and the western side of the market place are shown as alternating between being having their frontages parallel to the street and at right angles to it, although this may simply be a stylised format. A cross is shown in the market place, another at the top of Dig Street and a third in the churchyard. Relatively permanent structures had already been erected on the market place by that time.

In addition to showing the settlement, the 1547 map shows three bridges crossing Henmore Brook, although Compton on the southern side of the water is not shown. Part of the countryside to the east and north-east of the settlement is also depicted, including the 'comonfelde of Asheburne called Neighmere' and a number of enclosures which had once been open arable fields, as indicated by the notes 'rydge and rene' written within them. Disputes over the enclosure of the land were common at this time, the map itself having been drawn up following the enclosure of the broad lane leading to Ashbourne Green and beyond, used by the people of Ashbourne for common grazing.

Modern Townhead lies near this route to Ashbourne Green, and may have medieval origins. The 'head' of the town is referred to both in relation to a medieval hospital (see 5.4.8 below) and in the following extract from the Hundred Rolls:

'They say that the King has in his hands the wapentake of Wirksworth, in the hands of Edmund his brother, together with the vill of Esseburn, as well in demesne, as in rents and free services, together with the advowson of the Church of Esseburn, and has at the head of the said vill one cattle yard and granary and 61a. of arable land and 27a. of meadow, and hitherto they were in the King's hands, but the granary was burnt in the time of war.' (From The Verdict of Esseburn, 1273, quoted in Yeatman 1889, 48-49)

It also appears that at least some of the town was destroyed by fire in 1252 (Sadler 1934), although whether the occasion was the same as the burning of the granary is not known. The reference comes from the Annals of Dunstable Priory, who had interests nearby, but provides no details as to the nature of the destruction (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.).

#### **5.4.6 Markets and fairs**

The earliest references to a market at Ashbourne come from the second half of the 13th century. A deed of 1269 mentions 'the market place of *Esseburn*' while another deed, undated but said to be pre-1272, refers to a clothier's stall (*ludam pannariam*) in the market of *Esseburne* (Cox 1910).

The market was held weekly on a Saturday. Its importance is suggested by the fact that between the years 1200 and 1350 only two other Derbyshire markets were also held on Saturdays, namely Chesterfield and King's Newton. In addition to the weekly market, two fairs were held, each for three days, at the festivals of St Oswald and St John the Baptist (Lysons & Lysons 1817).

It is clear from an inquest of 1275/6 that a rival market had been set up in Compton on the other side of the Henmore Brook which avoided the payment of tolls:

'They say that the Masters of the Hospital of St John of Yeveley have tenants under them on the other part of the water of Esseburn ... who sell bread and ale against the assize ... and the said Masters made for themselves a new sign for sealing gallons and bushel measures ... And the said Masters have one furnace for baking bread for selling to the great damage of the said Burgh of the Lord King of Ashbourn. Also they say that in that part of the said water is a certain village which is called Campedonestrete in the hundred of Apeltre, and it should be as town pastures [or 'a country village' depending on the translation] and the men who dwell in the said village, sell bread and wine against the assize and without warrant, and they put vendible bread in their windows and use the sign of the gallows and bushels for their ale without authority, to the great damage of the said king...' (Yeatman 1889, 62).

In addition to the tolls collected on the markets and fairs, plus additional stallage payments, there were tolls levied when crossing the Dove, and a toll called *brasinagium*, collected on brewing houses. A toll was also levied on cheese, hens and eggs, but the changing composition of medieval trade destroyed its

value (Blanchard 1967).

#### **5.4.7 Religious buildings**

##### *The Parish Church of St Oswald*

The earliest reference to a church at Ashbourne comes from Domesday Book. Shortly after this, in 1093, William Rufus gave Ashbourne church to the Cathedral Church of St Mary of Lincoln. The advowson was claimed by the Crown in 1260 but restored to Lincoln in 1277, with whom it remained until the 19th century. The Cokaynes, lessees of the manor under the Crown, also leased the advowson from the Dean of Lincoln for many years (Cox 1877).

Two chantries were founded at Ashbourne, one in 1392, the other in 1483; however, both appear to have been located within the church rather than being free-standing chapels (Cox 1877).

##### *Chapel of St Mary*

Given its distance from the parish church, it is not surprising that Ashbourne Hall had a private chapel, dedicated to St Mary, which stood near the Hall gates. It was certainly in existence by 1477, but later became secularised (Cox 1877).

#### **5.4.8 St John's Hospital**

It is apparent from a reference in the Hundred Rolls that there was a hospital at Ashbourne by 1273, although exactly where this was is not known:

They say that a certain plot of land with garden and croft and other appurtenances was given in free alms to the Sick Hospital (*Hospital egrotos*) at the head of the town of Ashbourn, named after St John the Baptist, and for sustaining that charity was given the toll of Bushels (*toln bussell*) of Esseburn ... afterwards came Robert de Ferrars, who now is, and by force and in the time of war took the said tenement and gave it to the Prior of St Thomas by Stafford, which same Prior enfeoffed Rich. Hery of the same for 10s per annum (Yeatman 1889, 50).

#### **5.4.9 Education**

A document which follows the charter for Ashbourne Grammar School, founded 1585 (see section 5.5.8 below), refers to a capital messuage lately erected for a schoolhouse, called the New School house. This could be taken to indicate that there had been an old schoolhouse, probably a chantry school of pre-Reformation date, with the new school being an enlarged and then re-endowed edition of the earlier one. Beyond this reference, however, nothing appears to be known about it, including its location (Leach 1907).

#### **5.4.10 Trade and industry**

Medieval deeds and other documents indicate a range of trades being carried out in Ashbourne, as might be expected in a successful market town. These include carpenter, mercer, turner, tailor, tanner, chaloner, miller and merchant. There was a bakehouse in the town centre and another across the bridge in Compton (Cox 1910) as well as a malt mill near Ashbourne (Blanchard 1967). Lead merchants were to be found in the town, with an important royal enquiry into the customs of the lead mines being held at Ashbourne in 1288 (Henstock 1971). There was also some involvement in the grain trade, although this appears to have been confined to the county, rather than concerned with export (Blanchard 1967).

##### *Tanning and leather working*

Tanning was an important local industry, together with its associated trades, tanners being mentioned in 13th century deeds. Cobblers and butchers stalls formed an important part of the market, and Blanchard (1967, 398) calculated that leather workers comprised at least a tenth of the working force.

##### *Textiles*

Two of the three richest men in Ashbourne in 1327 were involved in the wool trade, apparently working as middlemen, while a century and a half later the aulnage accounts of Edward IV's reign have their entries arranged under four main headings - Derby, Chesterfield, Repton and Ashbourne - suggesting that the latter was an important centre of production (Blanchard 1967). Fulling mills for cloth making are known to have existed at nearby Mappleton and at Hartington. There may also have been a mill in or near Ashbourne itself (Henstock 1971).

### *Metal-working*

Documentary references suggest there may have been a cutlery industry in Ashbourne in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, possibly using the iron and steel known to have been produced near Hulland by the 14th century. There are references to Adam le Cotiler in a 13th century deed (Cox 1910) and to Thomas le Cotiler in c. 1290 (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.), while in 1334 blister steel for swords and tools is itemised in the inventory of the Privy Wardrobe of the Tower of London: 'XX parvos cultellors de Assheborne' (Hart 1981).

## **5.5 Post-medieval (16th - 18th century)**

### **5.5.1 *The manor***

In 1633 the manor was granted by King Charles to William Scriven and Philip Eden, who conveyed it to Sir John Coke, one of the Kings secretaries of state. It passed from Coke's son by sale to Sir William Boothby, and continued in the Boothby family until the 19th century (Lysons & Lysons 1817).

### **5.5.2 *Communications***

With the success of its markets and fairs, routes leading to Ashbourne were heavily used. An addendum to the fifth edition of *The Compleat Angler* in 1676 records a ride from Derby through Ashbourne to Beresford Dale, the route being described as 'a large measure of foul way'. The angler pointed out that this proved how much the road was used 'which is also very observable by the fulness of its road and the loaden horses you meet everywhere upon the way'. This degree of use also led to other hazards, the road between Ashbourne and Leek supposedly having been subject to plundering of wagons and coaches by Royalist soldiers during the Civil War (Dodd & Dodd 1980).

Communications improved with the turnpiking of the roads into Ashbourne in the 18th century. The first of these was in 1738, when an Act of Parliament sanctioned the turnpiking of the road from Derby through Ashbourne to Hurdlow. This was probably the route taken by the Jacobites on their way to Derby and defeat in 1745 (Henstock 1995). In 1759 the road linking Ashbourne and Alfreton via Wirksworth was turnpiked, as was that between Ashbourne and Belper in 1764 (Radley & Penny 1972). The new Mayfield Road linking Ashbourne and Hanging Bridge was cut in 1763-4, while the old steep turnpike road from Derby down into Ashbourne via Spital Hill was superseded in 1783 by the cutting of a new road with a more gradual descent. The main road leading north towards Newhaven and Hurdlow from Ashbourne appears to have followed two different courses prior to authorisation of the Fenny Bentley diversion in 1777.

Following these improvements, the town became an important staging point on the coach route from London and Derby to Manchester and the expanding industrial region of north-west England, with daily mail-coaches and numerous passenger and goods carrier services.

### **5.5.3 *The settlement and its environs***

As mentioned above, the 1547 map provides a picture of the town at the beginning of this period. While much of what is depicted is almost certainly medieval in origin, one feature new to the town was the park opposite the manor hall, the palings of which are clearly visible on the map. This was one of the parks created by Thomas Cokayne in the early 16th century for hunting, as indicated by his memorial, which includes the line *Three Parkes empaled eke wherein to chase his deere ....* His other local park was situated just outside Ashbourne to the south-west, towards Clifton, which contained a hunting lodge, now the site of Lodge Farm (Henstock 1971).



Ashbourne's open fields, part of which were depicted on the 1547 map to the north-east of the town, in Offcote and Underwood township, were enclosed in 1622 (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.). However it appears that the lane leading towards Ashbourne Green, the dispute over the enclosure of which had led to the making of the map, remained common grazing land, and still forms a distinctive feature in the landscape today.

The town continued to thrive in the post-medieval period and in 1715 it was described as

an extraordinary good market town and much improved in buildings, which makes it well inhabited by gentry as well as good trades (William Woolley, quoted in Henstock 1989)

This improvement continued throughout the 18th century, with a series of extremely large town houses being erected, mostly in Church Street and many with adjacent coach-houses. Those that were not rebuilt were frequently refronted. Ashbourne Hall was also rebuilt at this time, the park was enlarged and the road running past the house stopped up. The town developed into a fashionable social centre, visited by Dr Samuel Johnson and James Boswell among others, with numerous assemblies, grand dinners, card parties and theatrical performances (Henstock 1971). Prior to 1771 there was a bowling green near Town Head, but by 1776-7 this had moved to the top of Buxton Road hill. There were two cockpits, one at the Blackmoor's Head in St John's Street and another in Church Street, while theatrical performances were held in a building to the rear of nos. 23 and 25 Dig Street (Henstock 1989).

#### **5.5.4 Population**

The diocesan census of 1563 provided a figure of 238 households in the parish of Ashbourne at that time, with a population of perhaps 1070 to 1200. For the town itself, a figure of between 600 and 650 individuals has been estimated, making the assumption that the proportion of the population living in the town was the same as it was in 1801 (Riden 1978).

Edwards (1982) attempted to calculate the population of the town in the 1670s using a combination of the 1664 hearth-tax entries and the Compton census of 1676, but found that for Ashbourne the figures derived from the two sources appeared to be incompatible and that therefore no estimate was possible. However, on the basis of the hearth-tax entries alone, Henstock (1971) calculated the population of the town to be about 1200. Assuming the figures to be approximately correct, this suggests a doubling of the population over the course of a hundred years.

#### **5.5.5 Markets and fairs**

While the weekly market continued on a Saturday, the number of fairs had increased by the 17th century from two to the five enumerated in a charter of Charles I (Lysons & Lysons 1817). By 1792, seven fairs were held annually between February and November (Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls 1889).

#### **5.5.6 Religious buildings**

There was a Presbyterian chapel near the bridge in Compton during part of the 18th century, although it had gone out of use by the end of this period (Welch 1998).

#### **5.5.7 Almshouses**

Several almshouses were established in Ashbourne during the post-medieval period, all of which are still in existence.

##### *Owfield's Almshouses*

In 1610 Roger Owfield, a London fish-monger of Ashbourne origin, gave money towards the building of eight almshouses on Church Street. Twenty years later Thomas Owfield gave a sum of money to complete them and to purchase land for their endowment (Lysons & Lysons 1817).

### *Pegge's Almshouses*

These almshouses were founded by Christopher Pegge in 1669 for six poor widows and were erected next to those of Roger Owfield.

### *Spalden's Almshouses*

These were founded under the will of Nicholas Spalden in 1710, and were built in 1723-4 around three sides of a court just to the south of the church.

### *Clergymen's Widows' Almshouses*

These were also founded in 1710 under the will of Nicholas Spalden, who wanted 'four neat and pretty houses for entertaining the widows of four clergymen of the Church of England'. There were erected in 1753 on Church Street.

## **5.5.8 Education**

### *The Grammar School*

Ashbourne Grammar School was the outcome of a united effort by wealthy Ashbourne residents and 'divers well-disposed citizens of London ... being borne in or near Ashbourne in the Peak ...' who petitioned Queen Elizabeth I to found a grammar school in the town, with the result that in 1585 work began on the building at the western end of the town, close to the church.

### *Spalden's School*

Nicholas Spalden, in his will of 1710, provided for the building and endowing of two schools in Church Street, one each for 30 boys and 30 girls, the former to be taught until able to go to the grammar school, the girls to be taught sewing, knitting and reading until they were 12 years of age (Lysons & Lysons 1817).

## **5.5.9 Trade and industry**

By the 18th century, a range of tradesmen were working in the town; these included tanners, dyers, curriers, saddlers, skinners, butchers, wheelwrights, coopers, rope-makers, clock makers, and brass and iron founders. The main concentration of industrial premises was in Compton, although many small-scale industries were also carried out in Ashbourne, often in workshops and yards to the rear of the main streets (Henstock 1971). Some trades deserve particular mention:

### *Clock making*

A firm of clock-makers were established in Ashbourne in 1740, probably the first of approximately 20 clock makers in the town during the 18th and 19th centuries.

### *Malting*

With the improvement of the roads in the Ashbourne area, the town became an important coaching town and tourist resort. A large number of inns and public houses served visitors; 41 were recorded in 1780, the locations of all of which are known (Henstock 1991). There was a particular concentration on the south side of lower St John's Street, where in one block of ten adjoining properties, eight were inns or pubs. Consequently malting was an important local industry, with a number of malthouses in existence in the 18th century, and probably earlier.

### *Butter and cheese-making*

With increasing regional agricultural specialisation in the post-medieval period, butter and more especially cheese became important products, made in the area and traded at Ashbourne. Cheese fairs were held at the beginning of March, in September and in November. Depositions made in 1742 relate to the theft of quantities of butter at Ashbourne, and indicate that it was being sent in 24lb pots to

London (Cox 1890). In 1748 Ashbourne was described as

‘... a small town ... and in a rich soil, tho it enjoys little or no trade, except in cheese, which is sent from here in great quantities ...’ (Universal Magazine 1748, quoted in Henstock 1969)

### *Textiles*

In the late 18th century three cotton-spinning mills were built in the immediate vicinity of Ashbourne (two near Hanging Bridge on the River Dove and one about three miles north of the town on the Bradbourne Brook at Woodeaves), although it appears that few employees came from Ashbourne.

### *Brick and tile-making*

The majority of the bricks required for building work in the town during the 18th century would have been made locally. The earliest reference to an Ashbourne brick-maker is in 1688, with another referred to in 1721. Kiln sites in the neighbourhood are indicated by field names such as Brick Kiln Close, of which there are several examples. Brick-making would generally have been a part-time occupation, operating during the summer, and therefore was generally combined with other trades such as publican or maltster, as may have been the case with a public house called the Brick and Tile (Mould) in Dig Street in the second half of the 18th century. Local kilns also produced plain red roofing tiles towards the end of the 18th century (Henstock 1991).

## **5.6 19th century**

### **5.6.1 Communications**

#### *Roads*

During the first half of the 19th century, Ashbourne continued to be an important coaching town on the London to Manchester road, some coaches continuing from Ashbourne to Manchester via Buxton and some via Leek. Coaches also connected the town with Birmingham and Sheffield. Daily goods wagons (Pickfords) also operated between London and Manchester via Ashbourne.

#### *Railways*

The main-line routes by-passed Ashbourne; however, a branch line of the North Staffordshire Railway from Uttoxeter and Rocester was constructed and opened in 1852. In 1899 the line was extended northwards to Buxton. This involved tunnelling under Church Street, with a tunnel 384 yards long being constructed (Winstone 1996).

### **5.6.2 The settlement and its environs**

Ashbourne continued to thrive in the early 19th century, its buildings and setting eliciting admiration from a number of sources, for example, ‘... the whole grouping conveys a pleasing idea of security and social happiness’ (Glover’s *History of Derbyshire* 1829). However, the decline of the coaching era in the 1840s in the face of competition from the railways brought something of a decline in Ashbourne’s commercial and social importance, although the railway did help to bring in more tourists.

The 19th century saw a range of new public services and buildings being provided for the town. There was already a House of Correction and a workhouse in Ashbourne by 1829, and probably had been for a while before that. However in 1844 a new police station and lock-up were built, followed in 1846 by the construction of the Union Workhouse. A News and Reading Room and a Literary Institute were established in 1838 (White’s Directory 1857). In 1861 a new Town Hall was erected on the east side of the market place.

A decision was made to set up a gas works in 1839, and a site was chosen on Mayfield Road. This had doubled in size by the end of the 19th century. Also just before the end of the century a piped water supply was provided, following an outbreak of cholera in a yard off Dig Street in 1893.

### **5.6.3 Population**

The 10-yearly census, which commenced in 1801, provides the following figures for the township of Ashbourne:

Year	Population
1801	2006
1811	2112
1821	2188
1831	2246
1841	2158
1851	2154
1861	2120
1871	2083
1881	2095
1891	1995
1901	1795

These figures show steady increase until the 1830s, and then a slow decline. However, it must be remembered that they exclude Compton, which was essentially a suburb of Ashbourne. Accurate figures are difficult to obtain, as Compton was split down the main street, the western side being in Clifton township and the eastern side in Sturston township. One approximate estimate is a total urban population of about 2500 in 1801, increasing by some 27% to about 3160 in 1831 then remaining more or less static until 1861 (Henstock 1991).

### **5.6.4 Markets and fairs**

The number of fairs continued to increase in the first half of the 19th century. Lysons & Lysons (1817) list eight fairs, detailing their particular specialities:

‘May 21, July 5, Aug 16, Oct 20, Nov 29, first Tuesday after Jan 1, Feb 13, and April 3 for horses, horned cattle and sheep. Feb 13 and Oct 29 are noted horse fairs. The Feb fair begins two days before that date and the Oct fair three days before, for the sale of horses. The fairs of April 3 and May 21 are noted for the sale of milch cows. The August and November fairs chiefly for the sale of fat cattle. Wool is sold at the July fair, but it is the smallest in the year’.

By 1846 there were 12 fairs (Bagshaw’s Directory); however, this number appears to have declined, with the Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls only listing 5 fairs in 1888. This was probably due at least in part to a single individual, Francis Wright, who stopped several fairs and moved the cattle market.

### **5.6.5 Religious buildings**

Over the course of the 19th century, a number of non-conformist congregations became established in Ashbourne, in some cases only temporarily, with chapels being built both there and in Compton. These included both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists. In addition, a Roman Catholic church was built and there was additional provision for the Anglicans. Initially a small Anglican chapel was established to serve the poorer people of the town who were unable to attend St Oswald’s due to the existence of so many expensive private pews. This was only open for a relatively short time, however. In 1870, St John’s Church was built, following a disagreement with the vicar of St Oswald’s.

### **5.6.6 Almshouses**

Following the tradition for almshouses at Ashbourne, John Cooper founded and endowed an almshouse for six poor aged women at Compton.

### **5.6.7 Education**

A National School for boys was built opposite the church in the 1820s with a separate building erected for girls in 1876 and a new infants' school in 1893 (Bulmer 1895).

The two post-medieval schools continued into the 19th century, although both experienced difficulties, probably at least in part the result of the opening of the National School. The grammar school had already been described as being in a 'deserted and neglected state' in 1794 and in 1827 the whole school only consisted of 15 boys. It was closed for some years in the later 19th century, but reopened in 1880. Spalden's schools also had no more than 10 or 12 children in each by 1827. They closed in 1876, the schoolmaster having deserted his office and sailed for America in 1871 (Henstock 1985).

### **5.6.8 Trade and industry**

Nineteenth century directories stress the importance of Ashbourne's markets and fairs to its prosperity. These were accompanied by the continuation of many of the trades and small-scale industries which had been present in the preceding century, including tanning, malting and clock-making, as well as cheese-making in the surrounding district. There was a tanyard in Compton in 1849, while by the mid-19th century there were seven malthouses in Ashbourne. A brewery was in operation to the west of Compton by 1881 and was converted into use as a cheese factory by the end of the 19th century. Tourism continued to be of some importance to the town. There was also a degree of involvement in the textile industry. For example, Glover's *History of Derbyshire* of 1829 noted that many women in Ashbourne were employed in figuring lace and that a few worked at the Hanging Bridge cotton mills.

Shortly after 1850 the manufacture of corsets began in a house on Derby Road. It moved to larger premises in 1860 and a new factory was built in Compton Street in 1864. It had 500 employees by 1898, having been extended by that time (Smith 1965).

## **5.7 20th century**

The apparent stagnation or decline in Ashbourne's population has reversed over the course of the 20th century. Prior to 1914 the corset factory was enlarged and Nestlé opened a large condensery to process local milk, both concerns providing increased employment opportunities (Shaw 1985). Ashbourne Trading Estate later developed to the south-east of the town on the site of a former airfield, and the Nestlé factory took over the bottling of Ashbourne Water.

In 1907 the decision was made to build a new Grammar School on a site of nearly 9 acres off the Green Road. This was opened in 1909. The grounds of Ashbourne Hall were sold and began to be developed for housing in 1922. Further development took place after 1945, with the construction of the council Park Estate, followed by extensive private building (Henstock 1971). A new road, Cokayne Avenue, was opened, forming a continuation of St John's Street and thus following approximately the route of the old medieval road towards Ashbourne Green which had been closed in the 1780s. Despite the expansion of the town, the core has remained relatively unaltered, with much of the new development, particularly in the form of supermarkets, taking place in or near Compton.

## **6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASHBOURNE**

The town has been divided into plan elements, or components, based on map evidence and documentary sources. No early medieval elements could be recognised in the town plan; consequently the first components relate to the medieval town, although earlier settlement is known to have existed. These plan elements are tentative only, and need to be confirmed by further work. Subsequent major changes are briefly summarised, together with the degree of survival of early features to the present day.

### **6.1 Medieval components**

Nineteen components have been tentatively identified for the medieval period, as shown on figure 2. Identification has been based mainly on documentary references and on plan form analysis of historic maps.

## **Component 1**    *Church and cemetery* (SMR 305-307)

The church consists of nave and south aisle, crossing with crossing tower and spire, transepts with eastern aisles as wide as the transept and a long chancel. The eastern end of the chancel is deflected to the north, so that the whole building, although cruciform, is not perfectly symmetrical. The chancel is the earliest visible part of the church, probably completed before the dedication of the building to St Oswald in 1241. The tower and spire are *c.* 1330, the spire having been rebuilt several times. Perpendicular additions and alterations occurred around 1520. In 1644 the church was fired on by Parliamentarians, with the marks still being visible in the west wall. Restoration took place in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Material from the Chapel of St Mary at Clifton, which was demolished in 1750, is said to have been used in repairs to the chancel (Cox 1877). A brass plate inside the church records its dedication to St Oswald in 1241. The building also contains a number of medieval and post-medieval funerary monuments of the Cokayne, Boothby and Bradbourne families.

Various reports refer to water flowing beneath the church (e.g. Hollick, n.d.), while according to Shaw (n.d.) there is a 30ft well under the church tower. Tradition has it that the site was of pre-Christian religious significance, although there is no evidence of this at present. The church is clearly not built upon solid ground, however, and as a result has experienced considerable problems, particularly the tower and spire, as noted above. The parish magazine of 1914 reported on work carried out in 1913 to underpin the buttress supporting the arcaded dividing wall of the south transept. It was found that there was a 14th century buttress of smaller size encased within the 17th century buttress. Excavations took place around the buttress to get down to solid gravel. The subsoil was found to be full of bones

‘and it was found from this, and subsequent digging, that this portion of the building was on the site of an ancient graveyard. Portions of walling also, some with plaster still adhering, indicated something in the nature of an ancient crypt’ (Ashbourne Parish Magazine, March 1914, DRO D768 Z/APZ 16).

The ‘solid gravel’ was believed from a previous trial hole some yards away to exist at a depth of 17ft, although at that depth there was no sign of the gravel. A boring rod appeared to find firm ground at a further 7ft below, but when withdrawn ‘water broke up in great volume and filled the pit to within 6ft of the surface’. A decision was made to construct a block of concrete under the buttress. When the soil immediately under the buttress was removed, the heads of 15 piles were revealed which ‘had mouldings which proved to correspond with those on the remaining Chancel purlins’. These were left in place and the intervals between them were grouted with cement concrete. Similar work was done to other buttresses also.

The extent of the churchyard in the medieval period is not known. This component is based on the extent shown on the 1830 map of the town, before the cemetery was extended. Traditionally that part of the churchyard lying south-east of the chancel is said to have been used for plague burials in 1594 and 1605-6, with the spot never having been re-opened for further burials (Hollick 1959). The main churchyard gates were taken down and rebuilt a few feet from their original site in the course of road widening in 1958 (Hollick 1959). The 1547 plan shows a cross to the east of the church, although whether this indicates that a churchyard cross was present at that time, or whether it simply symbolises the cemetery is not known. The plan also shows a lych gate along the eastern boundary and a number of buildings forming the southern boundary. These may later have been excluded when the cemetery was walled along its southern side, in which case they would be located in component 2.

The top stone of a bee-hive rotary quern of probable Roman date is recorded as having been found at the church (SMR 304).

## **Component 2**    *The Vicarage*

In 1290 it was decided that the vicar and his successors should have a site for a vicarage house at a place

‘bounded on the one side by the road leading from the churchyard to the bridge and extending on the other side from the wall of the churchyard and the rector’s fishpond up to the conduit of the ‘Scolbrook’ (Cox 1877).

This suggests the presence of a fishpond somewhere in this area. In 1698 a terrier of glebe lands recorded the vicarage as

‘consisting of three bays of building, and one by the barn of about two bays of building near the School-brook, and another barn and stable about the same bigness adjoining to the churchyard pales...’ (Cox 1877).

Some of these may be the buildings shown at the south-eastern end of the churchyard on the 1547 plan. A new vicarage was built in 1722, presumably on or near the site of the earlier one. It is shown on the maps of 1830 and 1849, by which time the outbuildings had been demolished. The tithe map records a rope walk to the west of the vicarage in 1849. The 1722 vicarage was itself demolished in 1854, when it was replaced by a new building on a different site (component 29).

Spalden’s Almshouses (SMR 322) also lie within this component. They were founded under the will of Nicholas Spalden in 1710, and were built in 1723-4 around three sides of a court just to the south-east of the church. They follow the traditions of the older almshouses with their mullioned windows, but are built of brick.

Archaeological excavations took place in this area in 1989 prior to the construction of a new church hall, replacing the earlier hall which lay further south. Three trenches were dug, one (trench A) hoping to find the southern corner of the 1722 vicarage, a second (trench B) 20m downhill in what would have been the vicarage garden and a third (trench C) within the vicarage building. Trenches A and C produced a range of post-medieval finds, including bone, pottery, brick, clay pipe fragments, building rubble and glazed tile. Two possible demolition sequences were identified, below the lower of which a cobbled surface was found in both trenches. The cobbles were bedded in sand and may have been medieval. Unfortunately, the report does not state the depth at which these were uncovered. Excavations did not continue below the cobbled area. Much of the bone recovered from these two trenches was human, generally disarticulated. It was suggested that it had been thrown over the cemetery wall along with excess soil when deep graves were dug to the south of the church in the late 19th century. Material from trench B included animal bone, pottery, oyster shells and clay pipe fragments. Part of a brick-lined drain was uncovered; the bricks were found to be misshapen wasters (Coutts 1989).

### **Component 3    *Manor House***

It is not known when the first manor house was built at Ashbourne (the manor was leased from the crown), but the Cockayne family who had the hall at a later date were already in Ashbourne in the mid 12th century. The plan of 1547 shows it to have stood in the southern half of this component, probably on the same site as the later building. The plan implies that it was a timber framed building approached from the road by a turreted gatehouse, apparently of brick (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.). The Hearth Tax returns of 1670 record it as having 21 hearths. It was probably partially rebuilt in *c.* 1690-1700 and rebuilt again in 1780 by Sir Brooke Boothby in a relatively plain style (Henstock 1991). The medieval hall had a private chapel, dedicated to St Mary, which stood near the gates. It was certainly in existence by 1477, but later became secularised. It was used as a malthouse for a number of years, and was finally demolished in *c.* 1785 (Cox 1877). The hall itself became a hotel in 1900, although this did not survive for many years. Part of it is currently in use as Ashbourne Public Library, its surrounding grounds having been developed for housing.

### **Component 4    *Ashbourne Market Place***

The large triangular market place was almost certainly laid out as part of the planned town. By 1547 semi-permanent structures had already been built over the southern half, suggesting that this was the site of the original medieval market stalls. Much of the rest of the area would have been reserved for livestock. The swine market was near the point where the Market Place today becomes Buxton Road and the horse market was further down the slope (Henstock 1971). The block of encroachments was known as the Middle Cale and now divides the original medieval space into three areas, the present market place, Victoria Square, still known locally as The Butchery, and lower St John’s Street (Henstock 1971). It is known from other sources that the medieval Shambles at Ashbourne comprised stalls with a chamber above, constructed of oak cruck frames. The walls were of wattle and daub lined with oak boards, while the roof was covered with wooden shingles (Blanchard 1967). By 1536 a moot

hall stood somewhere in the centre of the market place (Henstock 1971).

The 1547 plan depicts a market cross towards the northern end of the market area. Assuming its position to be correctly shown on the plan, the cross appears to have been relocated at some point during the post-medieval period to a point near where the eastern apex of the market place joined St John's Street. At that time it was probably a roofed structure, since a shop was attached to it by the late 18th century (Henstock 1991). The last reference to it, and to a free-standing Market House which stood nearby, is in c. 1790, when both appear to have been demolished for road improvements (Henstock 1991).

The Wright Memorial was erected in the market place in 1874. A bull ring was once sited near it.

#### **Component 5    *Dig Street cross***

A cross, assumed to be of medieval origin, is marked on the 1547 map at the junction of Dig Street, Church Street and St John Street. It had gone by 1830.

#### **Component 6    *Compton Market Place***

The broad space at the northern end of Compton Street is thought to be the site of the unofficial markets held in Compton by the later 13th century.

#### **Components 7, 8 & 9    *Bridges***

There is a reference in 1361 to *Bettebrugge*, which may be Back Bridge (component 7), the easternmost of the three bridges crossing the Henmoor Brook on the southern side of Ashbourne. Compton Bridge (component 8) is mentioned in 1637, although the road leading to it, Dig Street, has an earlier reference, originally being *Lovedich* in 1276. A bridge is mentioned on or near the site of the School Bridge (component 9) in 1290, in relation to the vicarage. There is a further reference to it in the Derbyshire Sessions in 1698 when it was decided that

‘a new foot-bridge of timber be built. Mr William James to have to his own use stone already laid down and the materials of the old bridge’ (Jervoise 1932, 19).

#### **Component 10    *Church Bank***

Although this is a relatively steep bank, its proximity to the church suggests that it may have formed part of the original settlement, perhaps before the new town was laid out further east. It appears to contain some earthworks, one of which may be a hollow way. By 1830 a National School for boys had been built just to the north-east of the church. A building had also been constructed on Dark Lane, perhaps originally as an encroachment. A separate school building for girls was erected on the main road in 1876 and a new infants school was added in 1893 (Bulmer's Directory 1895).

#### **Component 11    *Settlement along the north side of Church Street.***

A block of long narrow burgage plots, with boundaries running up to a higher back lane (now Bellevue Road). The Grammar School (SMR 311) was constructed near the western end of this component in 1585. A cobbled pavement was laid outside in 1607, when the building was completed, the cobbles having been gathered by the pupils from the bed of the river Dove near Hanging Bridge (Henstock 1985). The building consisted of a central schoolroom, above which were dormitories and attics, flanked at each end by a schoolmaster's residence. It has now been converted into three dwellings.

Church Street became a fashionable gentry area in the 18th century, lined with Georgian town houses which had gardens to the rear. Many of these town houses survive, and are listed buildings, for example the Grey House (SMR 342), a large building of ashlar built in the 1760s, the Ivies, a large late 18th century brick town house, Vine House, also an 18th century town house but with a possible 17th century stone mullioned window partly hidden in the basement. However, by 1830 some plots were beginning to be more densely occupied. In some cases it was through the construction of buildings along the back lane. In others, a row of cottages or outbuildings would be built at right angles to Church Street, forming yards to the rear. Buildings present in 1849 included a bakehouse and two



malthouses, as well as a lock-up with 4 cells, built on the back lane in 1844. One malthouse, of late 18th century date, survives to the rear of 23 Church Street. The area was partly bisected by a railway tunnel in 1899 which passed below Church Street and then entered a longer tunnel to the north. Many of the long narrow plots survive in this component, as do some of the cottages and outbuildings in yards.

### **Component 12 *Settlement along the south side of Church Street***

A block of long narrow burgage plots with boundaries running back down to Henmore Brook. At the eastern end, a block of shorter plots line Dig Street. The early course of the brook towards the western end of this block is uncertain, as an ornamental pond had been created in the 18th century to the rear of The Mansion, which almost certainly diverted the water from its original course. It is possible that tanning and/or dyeing was carried out along part of the brook in the medieval or the post-medieval period. At the very end of the 19th century the block was bisected by Station Road and a railway tunnel. To the west of Station Road are Owfield's and Pegge's 17th century almshouses (SMR 320, SMR 321). The former consists of a low range of stone buildings along the street frontage. They were founded in 1610 and completed in 1630. An upper storey was added in similar style in 1848. The latter were built in 1669 next to Owfield's almshouses, but at right-angles to the street, and are also of stone. Further west, towards the church, is the Mansion (SMR 318), built in the 1680s, although its street frontage was completely altered in the late 18th century. The gardens were praised by Boswell. All that now remains is a handsome Roman Doric temple and, on the left of the street facade, a red brick screen wall of 7 blind arches against which the Orangery formerly leaned ( SMR 319).

To the east of Station Road is the Methodist Church of 1880, described by Pevsner (1978) as 'a pretentious building'. The site between the church and the road would once have been occupied by the two schools endowed by Nicholas Spalden in 1710. These were closed in 1876. Further east stand the Clergymen's Widows' Almshouses (SMR 323), built in 1753. They had also been founded in 1710 as set out in the will of Nicholas Spalden, who wanted 'four neat and pretty houses for entertaining the widows of four clergymen of the Church of England'. Although by the early 19th century much of this component consisted of earlier, Georgian, town houses, having been one of the fashionable gentry areas, the eastern end near the market place and along Dig Street became densely occupied, with cottages and workshops being built at right angles to the main frontages. Buildings present here in 1849 included several malthouses. A late 18th century fishing tackle maker's workshop still survives to the rear of Dig Street, adjacent to Henmore Brook, currently in use as a bar and bistro (Fowkes 1997).

### **Component 13 *Settlement along the west side of the market place***

A triangular block of narrow burgage plots of varying lengths fronting one side of the market place with boundaries running up to a back lane, now Union Street. The map of 1830 shows that, while this area had become fairly densely occupied by that time, there were still a number of open areas with gardens. However, the majority of these had been built over by the end of the century. Numerous narrow alleys lead through from the market frontage to the yards and courts to the rear. Parts of some of these yards survive, as do a number of 18th century and earlier buildings along the market frontage.

A Baptist Chapel stood in this area in the early 19th century. Baptist Chapels often have their own burial grounds, but it is not known whether this was the case here. The chapel was sold in 1840 to become the premises of the Literary Institute. Six years later it was converted into an Anglican Chapel, St Mary's, to serve the poorer people of the town who were unable to attend St Oswald's due to the existence of so many expensive private pews. It was only open for a relatively short time, however. The building was demolished in the 20th century and its site now lies below the southern end of Shakespeare Court.

### **Component 14 *Settlement along the south side of St John's Street***

A block of long narrow burgage plots with boundaries running back to the Henmore Brook, the course of which had clearly been straightened by 1830 when the first detailed map was made. Medieval industries such as tanning and dyeing may have been located along the brook. St John's House of c. 1766 (54 St John's Street) appears to have replaced an industrial dyehouse (Henstock 1991). Buildings also include the Green Man Hotel (SMR 338), built as an inn with a coach entrance to the covered

court and a 'gallows' sign reaching across the street. There was a particular concentration of inns and public houses in the eastern half of this component, fronting a part of the market place. Plots in this area became increasingly built up over the course of the 19th century, with buildings in yards extending back to the brook. The course of the brook itself may have been straightened at some point prior to the earliest detailed map of 1830. It was diverted further south in the 20th century to ease problems with flooding. Many Georgian and some earlier buildings survive in this area, including parts of a couple of yards.

#### **Component 15 *Settlement along the east side of the market place***

A rectangular block of burgage plots fronting the market place and St John's Street to the south. The buildings depicted on the 1547 plan are noticeably larger along this eastern side of the market place than elsewhere in the town. Development along King Street (previously Mutton Lane) to the north may be a later addition to the plan, possibly originating as encroachments along the roadside. Plots fronting market place in particular became densely occupied during the 19th century, with rows of buildings in yards to the rear. Some development took place at the northern end of Hall Lane in the 19th century. Buildings at the corner of King Street and Hall Lane included a smithy and malthouses in 1849 and a fire engine station had been built further south on Hall Lane by the end of the century. A number of 18th century and earlier buildings survive in this area, as do a couple of yards extending back at the rear.

#### **Component 16 *Settlement along the south-eastern side of Buxton Road***

Buildings are shown along this frontage on the 1547 plan and are assumed to have had medieval origins. However, there is no evidence for burgage plots in this area and the buildings may represent the result of encroachments, either at the roadside, onto a peripheral green or onto the site of a secondary market place, possibly the swine market. A cottage which was revealed to have two cruck frames when it was demolished in 1962 is thought to have stood in this area.

#### **Component 17 *Settlement along the south-western side of Buxton Road***

A block of long plots of varying width fronting Buxton Road and Union Street, with boundaries running back up a relatively steep slope to North Avenue. Buildings were present by 1547, as shown on the plan of that date, and settlement in this area is assumed to be medieval in origin. However, the plots do not show the regularity of burgage plots and may have been taken in from the open fields or pasture during a period of expansion. The component includes the site of a malthouse on Union Street (SMR 312), a smithy on Buxton Road as shown on late 19th century maps, and a bowling green at the northern end of the area, present in 1830. Although the bowling green no longer survives, it is remembered in the name of the nearby public house which has been included in this component, although it may have originated as an encroachment at the road junction. There was a windmill at or near the bowling green in the 1790s (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.). A couple of buildings had been constructed along North Avenue by 1849, with development continuing in the second half of the century to include two large Victorian buildings set in extensive gardens. At the southern end of the component, Dove House (SMR 341) was constructed in the early 18th century on the edge of a peripheral green.

#### **Component 18 *Townhead***

There was a hospital dedicated to St John the Baptist at Ashbourne by 1273 (SMR 316), described as being 'at the head of the town' and associated with Richard Hervy at one point. Although the actual site of the hospital is not known, it may have been somewhere in this area, known as Townhead and where there was a building called Harvey Cottage by the 19th century (SMR 315). That it lay in this direction is supported by the name of St John's Street, which led out of Ashbourne towards Townhead. There is also a reference of the same date which describes a 'cattle yard and granary' belonging to the king at the head of the town, although the granary had been burnt (see section 5.4.5). These may also have been in this component. Much of the area was developed for housing in the 20th century.

#### **Component 19 *Settlement along the western side of Compton Street***

A block of relatively regular plots which may have originally run back to a common boundary,

although if so, it had become fragmented by the early 19th century. Compton House was built at the northern end of the component in the 1770s, presumably replacing an earlier building or buildings. The tithe schedule describes land to the rear of the house as 'part of fishpond embankments and watercourse'. Immediately to the south, buildings in 1846 included malt offices and a tanyard, some of which may have lain further west (see component 38). Buildings further south included two public houses, two inns, several shops and stables as well as a number of houses. Several plots had become built up to the rear of the street frontage - for example, one plot had two houses and shops at the front, with eleven further houses, stables and gighouse to the rear.

At the southern end, a factory for the manufacture of corsets was established in 1864. It was extended in 1898, 1900 and 1912 so that by 1954 it covered an area of 110,000 sq. ft. In c. 1895 a complete box-making and printing plant had been installed and in 1900, machinery for making busks (Smith 1965). It had been demolished by the mid 1990s and the site redeveloped.

The main survival in this area is Compton House, presently in use as a bank, with private gardens to the rear. Further south, some 19th century or earlier buildings survive along the street frontage, and there are also a couple of isolated survivals from earlier yards.

A watching brief was carried out in 1997 in the southern half of this component prior to the construction of a supermarket. Much of the area examined was found to contain basements filled with modern rubble. However in one uncellared area, post-medieval features were encountered cut into the natural subsoil at a depth of 900mm (Gifford and Partners 1997).

#### **Component 20 *Settlement along the eastern side of Compton Street***

A block of relatively regular plots running back to a common rear boundary. This side of Compton Street lay in Sturston township and as late as 1851 contained a high proportion of lodging houses and Irish immigrants where there were hardly any on the opposite side of the street (Henstock 1991).

A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was built in this area in 1822, but went out of use in 1891. The building was converted for use as a joiner's shop but was later demolished. By 1880 there was an infants' school, but this had gone by the end of the 19th century.

Much of this component was redeveloped in the 20th century, and only a couple of 19th century or earlier buildings appear to survive.

### **6.2 Post-medieval components**

Seven components have been tentatively identified for the post-medieval period, based on map evidence and information from secondary sources. The components are shown on figure 3.

#### **Component 21 *Development at Dove House Green***

Squatter settlement on Dove House Green may already have been underway in the 17th century (Henstock 1991). The 1830 map shows the eastern side of the green to be lined with buildings. At the south-western corner is a rectangular structure, probably a pinfold. This is not shown on the 1881 OS map, so had presumably been demolished by then. Many of the earlier buildings along the eastern side of the green have also been demolished.

#### **Component 22 *Development along the north side of King Street***

Squatter settlement along the north side of King Street (previously Mutton Lane) may already have been underway in the 17th century (Henstock 1991). A number of buildings are shown along the road on the 1830 map, some of which had been demolished by 1881 and replaced by a row of terraced houses by the end of the century - this row still survives.

#### **Components 23 & 24 *Ashbourne Hall Park, stables and kitchen garden***

Ashbourne Hall Park was created in the early 16th century as a small hunting park, the park pale being shown on the map of 1547. It was later developed as an ornamental park, probably in the late 17th

century. To the south of the river in 1713 there was a pool or mott called Cherry Mott, indicating an ornamental moat which may have been created as part of a 17th century garden scheme, while in around 1715 the Hall was described as having ‘a pretty paddock stocked with deer and good fishponds adjoining’ (Henstock 1991). The park was enlarged in the 1780s and the road running past the house was stopped up, so that house and park were no longer separate. Any cottages which may have been scattered along the road at that time were presumably moved. The stable block, some distance to the north-east, was probably built at the same time. Later maps suggest a kitchen garden lay next to the stables, with a pond at its southern end (component 24). Just beyond the southern boundary of the park a couple of buildings are shown on 19th century maps lying at the edge of what is now Belper Road. These probably originated as roadside encroachments.

The grounds of Ashbourne Hall were sold in the early 20th century and the first council houses built on part of the park in 1922. The large council Park Estate was built after the 1939-45 War (Henstock 1971). Some of the area has remained as a park, however, now open to the public. A new road has replaced that closed in the 1780s, albeit on a slightly different line. The stables and adjoining buildings still survive as ‘Cokayne Mews’, having been converted to dwellings. Although a school has been built on the site of the old kitchen garden, part of the brick wall which once surrounded it appears to have survived.

### **Component 25 ‘Can Alley’**

A row of eight terraced cottages, known as Can Alley, was built in 1797 at right angles to Clifton Lane in an empty field (Henstock 1991). A terrace of 11 houses known as Birch’s Terrace is shown on modern maps. It is not known whether these are the same as, or incorporate any of, the earlier buildings. There is a photograph of an old thatched cottage, now demolished, at the bottom of Birch’s Terrace (Porter 1999).

### **Component 26 *Development along Old Hill***

Some settlement is likely to have occurred at the road junction in the post-medieval period, if not before. This then began to extend up the hill to the south of Compton, possibly originating as roadside squatter settlement along what was the road to Derby before the present Derby Road was made in c. 1780.

### **Component 27 *Development along Sturston Road***

Some settlement is likely to have occurred at the road junction in the post-medieval period, if not before. This then began to extend eastwards along the road to Sturston, possibly originating as roadside squatter settlement.

## **6.3 19th century components**

Seventeen components have been identified for the 19th century, as shown on figure 4.

### **Component 28 *Development along Mayfield Road***

By the end of the 19th century, development was beginning to extend westwards along Mayfield Road. It mainly consisted of terraced housing, which still survives, but also included the gas works, established in 1839. The works were enlarged in 1852 and had doubled in area by 1900. All that now remains is a two-storey brick office block built in 1907 (Fowkes 1997). The site is now occupied by part of the Henmore Industrial Estate.

### **Component 29 *Development at the south-western end of Dark Lane***

Buildings in this area by the end of the 19th century included Ashbourne Union Workhouse of 1846, now the site of St Oswald’s Hospital, as well as several residences, including the vicarage, built in the 1850s to replace the earlier building next to the church. There was also a windmill, Ashley Mill, in the north-western part of this component. It was a brick tower mill, built in 1838 (SMR 309), although it does not appear to be recorded on the Offcote Tithe Map of 1847. It may have been used for colour grinding at some time in its history (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.). A post-medieval lead seal was

found near St. Oswald's Hospital in June 1963, about 0.6m below the surface (SMR 331).

### **Component 30 *Churchyard***

The churchyard was extended in 1840.

### **Component 31 *Railway*** (SMR 335)

A branch line of the North Staffordshire Railway from Uttoxeter and Rocester was constructed and opened in 1852. In 1899 the line was extended northwards to Buxton. This involved tunnelling under Church Street and the ridge to the north of the town, with a tunnel 384 yards long being constructed (Winstone 1996). The Ashbourne-Hartington section of the line was closed in 1963 and the rails were later lifted. The only surviving railway building is a single-storey goods shed with two canopied loading/unloading bay doorways, currently occupied by Peak Textiles (Fowkes 1997). It has been proposed in the Local Plan to extend a cycle route through the disused railway tunnel, so linking the Tissington Trail with the centre of Ashbourne.

### **Component 32 *Development along the western side of Clifton Road***

The only buildings in this area in 1880 were those of a brewery. By the end of the century, further buildings had been constructed along the road and the brewery buildings had been converted into a cheese factory. The buildings have now been incorporated into the much larger Nestlé works which was first established on the site in 1912.

### **Component 33 *Development along the southern side of Station Street and Clifton Road***

A few isolated buildings are shown along the roadside on the 1830 map, possibly encroachments of unknown date. A variety of development had taken place in this area by the end of the 19th century, including several rows of terraced housing, a foundry, a nursery and Highfield, a large detached house currently in use as a nursing and residential home. The nursery may have been 'Godwin's Rosarium', described in White's Directory of 1857 as 'adjoining the railway station'. It was open to the public and offered fine views of Ashbourne, as well as an extensive collection of roses, trees and shrubs. Many of the 19th century buildings survive in this area, including a clockmaker's workshop on North Leys Lane (Fowkes 1997).

### **Components 34 and 35 *Development along the northern side of Station Street and along South Street***

Most of the development in this area took place after 1880, although a couple of small buildings are shown on the 1830 map by the roadside to the west of where South Street was later built. These may have been encroachments with post-medieval origins. A Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in 1895 on the north side of Station Street, and a Mission Hall was present on the west side of South Street by the end of the century. The latter building survives as an Elim Pentecostal church, although the former was demolished in the 1970s.

### **Component 36 *Development at the north-western end of Derby Road***

Derby Road was laid out in the mid 1780s, therefore it is possible that some development pre-dates 1800. Buildings in this area by 1900 included a saw mill, Sion Chapel, a Congregational chapel built in 1801 and remodelled and enlarged in 1868 (Bulmer's Directory 1895), and a Sunday School. Almshouses for six 'poor aged women' were founded and endowed by John Cooper in 1800; they were built next to the chapel. Chapel, school and almshouses all survive. At the eastern end of this area are two early 19th century buildings traditionally said to have been used as a prison for 200-300 officers of the Napoleonic Army captured in c. 1803.

### **Component 37 *Development to the east of component 20***

This area had been fenced off by 1830. By the end of the century, several buildings had been constructed at its southern end.

### **Component 38** *Development to the west of component 19*

The 1830 map shows a small stream, leat or ditch running along the southern edge of this area, although the fact that it includes what appears to be a small meander argues against it being a ditch. Possibly it represents the remnants of a silted pond or was associated with the tanyard recorded in 1846 at the south-east end of this area, or within component 19. It may be the 'part of fishpond embankments and watercourse' described in the tithe schedule. There was a saw mill by the later 19th century in buildings which may previously have been part of the tan yard or of the malt offices recorded in this area on the tithe map of 1846. The site of the buildings now lies below a road and bus station. The area to the south of the brook is a picnic ground.

### **Component 39** *Development along the western side of Park Road*

A rectangular pond or pool surrounded by a garden is shown in this area on the 1830 map. It is not clear from the map to which property it belonged or what it was. Sturston Tithe Map of 1848 lists it simply as 'garden and buildings'. The field to the south was Moat Close in 1848, but whether the feature shown in 1830 is the 'Cherry Mott' referred to in 1713 (see component 23) is unknown. Part of the pond, much reduced in size, may have survived until at least the end of the 19th century, by which time a number of buildings had been constructed along Park Road (previously Sandy Lane). One of these may have been a Bath House, built just after the Public Health Act of 1858 (Porter 2000). Twentieth century infill of the area has taken place.

### **Component 40** *Development along the north-eastern side of Belle Vue Road*

A house on Belle Vue Road was first acquired for use as a Roman Catholic chapel in 1846. However, in 1887 this was superseded by All Saints Church on the same road. There was also a Primitive Methodist Chapel erected in 1846 but apparently no longer present by 1900. The railway tunnel of 1899 passes beneath this area.

### **Component 41** *Railway*

Approximate line of the railway tunnel which was constructed below Church Street in 1899.

### **Component 42** *Development at the junction of North Avenue, Buxton Road and Windmill Lane*

Several buildings had been constructed at this junction by 1880.

### **Component 43** *Development along Buxton Road*

St John's Church was built at the southern end of this area in 1870. It was originally a Free Church of England congregation, built by Francis Wright following a disagreement with the vicar of St Oswald's. Now an extra-parochial peculiar, it was described by Pevsner (1978) as 'A hard rock-faced *Rundbogenstil* church'. Also in the southern half of this component was part of a ropewalk and associated buildings in 1849.

The component also includes the site of the cattle market which had been moved here by the 1880s and which continued to be held until the late 1990s.

### **Component 44** *Development along Wirksworth Road*

The first houses were being built along this road at the end of the 19th century.

## **6.4** **20th century development**

Twentieth century development is represented by a single un-numbered component.

## **6.5** **Discussion**

Although prehistoric and Roman material has been recovered from the area, current evidence suggests that Ashbourne's origins are likely to be found in the early medieval period, during which time an

important settlement appears to have developed (see section 5.3), the centre of one of four great royal estates in the area. However, at present it is impossible to say exactly where this settlement was or whether it in any way influenced the layout of the medieval town. Churches often represent the earliest nucleus of a settlement, although the location of Ashbourne Church, barely above the floodplain of Henmore Brook, is a little surprising. Its position may have something to do with the reports both of a well and of water flowing beneath the building (see component 1). It is not unusual to find wells in churchyards and there are now thought to be more spring-sited churches in England than was formerly realised (Morris 1989). This is not necessarily because of the possible pagan significance of the site, but could equally be due to the importance of water in Christian teaching, particularly in association with baptism. It has also been suggested that the church had the status of a minster; if so, then it may have been detached from the royal estate centre, as has been noted at other towns. Documentary references which hint at the existence of two separate manors or estates at Ashbourne could support this interpretation.

The plan form of the medieval town suggests that it was a deliberate creation, probably at the end of the 12th century, either by the king or the lord in order to profit from the revenues of a successful market and borough. Its location was ideal for this, following the trend seen at many other market towns in Derbyshire in being sited close to the county boundary and at the junction of two or more areas with a marked contrast in their physical environment and hence in their economic activity. It also lay on the great medieval road from London, Leicester and Derby to the north-west, close to an important early crossing point on the River Dove. The township was carved out of Offcote & Underwood, within which Ashbourne's fields and commons lay. The new town as laid out essentially consisted of one long main street, running parallel to Henmore Brook, with the church at one end, the manor hall at the other, and a large triangular sloping market place opening off it to the north. The western end of the main street was already known as Church Street, *Le Kyrkestrete*, by 1349 and the eastern end as St John's Street, *wico Sancti Johannis*, by 1348 (Cameron 1959). A number of long narrow burgage plots were laid out on either side of the main street and around the market place. Those on the north side of Church Street (components 11, 13 and possibly 10) ran up the hillside to Back Lane, the eastern end of which was known as Gaudy Lane by 1630 (now Union Street). This is shown on the 1547 map running into the northern apex of the market place, at the junction with two other roads, one leading north towards Buxton, known as Low Top Lane by 1637, and one leading north-east, known as Mutton Lane, *Moton lane*, by 1229 (now King Street). Burgage plots lined the southern side of Church Street and its continuation, St John's Street, running back down to the stream (components 12 and 14). Burgage plots also lined the eastern side of the large triangular marketplace (component 15), separated by a back lane (Hall Lane) from Ashbourne Hall. Development along Buxton Road to the north of the market place (components 16 and 17) may have been a later addition to the original plan, component 16 possibly originating as encroachments onto a secondary market place, the Swine Market (Henstock 1991), component 17 possibly representing settlement at one end of strips enclosed from open fields.

Three roads led across the valley bottom, crossing Henmore Brook by bridges (Components 7, 8 & 9) which were built of stone by the 18th century, if not before. Compton Bridge is mentioned in 1637, although the road leading to it, Dig Street, has an earlier reference, originally being *Lovedich* in 1276. It had become Digstreet by 1630 (Cameron 1959) and is thought to have derived its name from a medieval or possibly earlier ditch, the function of which is not known. Compton itself appears to have developed as a double row village shortly after the re-founding of Ashbourne. It became established along the Derby road as it approached the town from the south. The road broadened as it approached the bridge, probably to accommodate the unofficial markets known to have been held there. Buildings were erected along either side of this street in apparently regular blocks (components 19 & 20) across the valley bottom, with a tendency to flooding, as far as the crossroads to Clifton and Sturston.

In common with other Derbyshire market towns such as Wirksworth and Bakewell, evidence suggests that Ashbourne suffered a decline in the later 14th and 15th centuries, only beginning to recover in the first half of the 16th century. By this time, infilling and encroachment on the market place was clearly already well underway, although the plan of 1547 suggests that there were still some gaps along the street frontages at that time (Henstock 1971).

Such limited information as is available from population figures suggests that the number of inhabitants of the town may have doubled between the mid-16th and the mid-17th centuries. While it was likely that much of this population expansion could have been accommodated within the existing

bounds of the town, there is evidence for encroachment on land at the periphery by the 17th century. Two areas of waste in particular had begun to be colonised with squatters' cottages by that time. These were the east side of Dove House Green (component 21) and the north side of Mutton Lane (now King Street; component 22). South of the river, there was also some ribbon development along the several roads leading away from the southern end of Compton (Henstock 1991; components 26 and 27).

The turnpiking of a number of roads in the area over the course of the 18th century encouraged further development, allowing the town to grow not only commercially but also as a fashionable residential and tourist centre, thanks in particular to its proximity to the romantic scenery of Dovedale gorge. As population continued to rise, street frontages became full and new buildings had to be constructed to the rear of existing properties, in yards and courts accessed by alleys. By 1825 the bulk of the population was housed in small two-storey brick cottages, either in terraces along the yards or in small clusters in specific areas. A third of the poorest cottages at that time were in Compton where housing development still took place in narrow yards, even though there was no real shortage of land, only a few large properties fronting the street and little competition for sites with either a commercial or social position. This was most probably the result of speculative owners wishing to develop small plots with the maximum number of houses. Most of the population increase between 1801 and 1831 occurred in Clifton and Sturston townships, on the southern side of Henmore Brook. Ashbourne itself increased by only 12% in this period, compared with Clifton (on the western side of Compton Street) at 34% and Sturston (on the eastern side) at 60%, the latter experiencing a 30% increase in the number of houses in the single decade from 1811 to 1821. Henstock (1991) suggests this difference may possibly have been connected with less successful Poor Law overseers, noting that as late as 1851 the Sturston side of Compton Street contained a high proportion of lodging houses and Irish immigrants, yet there were hardly any on the opposite side of the street. Ashbourne itself had presumably become saturated by this time.

During the second half of the 19th century the town finally began to expand beyond its medieval limits, with new housing being erected on the outskirts. Large Victorian villas were built along North Avenue (the northern side of component 17), with smaller terraced houses along the approach roads, particularly the Mayfield Road (components 31). In Compton, the arrival of the railway stimulated development along Clifton Road and Station Street (components 35-37). At the same time, the first large scale factory was established, supplementing the earlier smaller scale trades and crafts that were generally carried out in back yard workshops.

The early part of the 20th century saw the clearance of many of the crowded yards behind the street frontages accompanied by the beginnings of expansion eastwards, particularly following the selling off in lots of Ashbourne Hall Park. This expansion continued throughout the century, mainly taking place to the north-east of Ashbourne and to the south and east of Compton. While Ashbourne's historic core has remained relatively untouched, at least in terms of the street frontages, that of Compton has seen a greater degree of redevelopment.

## **7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES**

### **7.1 Research questions**

Although it appears that Ashbourne's origins are to be found in the early medieval period, nothing is currently known about the location of the pre-conquest settlement, its status, extent and relationship to the church.

Similarly, a number of questions remain to be answered regarding the medieval town. These include the following:

- the extent to which Ashbourne was indeed 'waste' in 1086;
- the early origins and status of the church;
- the date at which the town in its present form, with burgage plots, large market place etc., was laid out. Was it founded as a new town or was there already a thriving village which was remodelled? What was the impact of its success on the surrounding settlements? Why did the borough status not



survive?

- assuming that there were two estates, ecclesiastical and royal, were they originally spatially distinct? Did the ditch referred to in the medieval name of Dig Street represent a division within the town?

- where within the town was the fire of 1252 and how much damage did it do?

- what was the relationship between Ashbourne and the surrounding villages, and the extent of Ashbourne's influence as a town?

- can the picture of declining population and abandoned buildings indicated by the documentary evidence in the later 14th and the 15th centuries be substantiated archaeologically? What was its impact and duration?

- when did encroachment onto the market place begin?

- the date at which Compton was established, whether the two sides of the street, in different townships, were laid out at the same time - indeed, whether it was deliberately laid out at all or was rather the result of organic growth along the road;

- the medieval course of the stream along the southern side of Ashbourne, the presence of any mills along the stretch within the assessment area, for example a corn mill or fulling mill. Also, the location of other industries using water, such as tanning and dyeing, in the medieval period;

- the importance, location and organisation of the cutlery industry which appears to have existed in the town in the late 13th and early 14th century.

- the existence of the hospital at Town Head needs to be confirmed and its precise location established, as well as its period of use.

When did squatter settlement commence around the margins of Ashbourne and Compton?

How wide a market was served by the medieval and post-medieval craftsmen and how were their crafts organised? To what extent has there been survival of the small-scale industrial buildings which formed a part of the wide range of trades being carried out in post-medieval and 19th century Ashbourne?

How many timber-framed buildings have survived in Ashbourne, and can they be more accurately dated?

## **7.2 Archaeological potential**

### **7.2.1 Existing protection**

#### *Conservation areas*

The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* required all Local Planning Authorities to determine which parts of their areas were of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas, in order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. It is also their duty to review them from time to time, and to determine whether any further parts of their areas should also be designated as conservation areas.

Ashbourne Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and was extended in 1972 to cover the area shown on figure 6.

#### *Listed buildings*

A listed building is one recognised by the government as being of special architectural or historic interest, as specified by the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. Listing is made at three levels of importance, Grade II, Grade II\* and the most important, Grade I, and listed building consent is required, in addition to normal planning consent, before any alterations, extensions

or demolitions can be made to a listed structure which might affect its character.

There are 160 listed buildings in the built-up area of Ashbourne under consideration in this assessment. Of these, three are Grade I, namely St Oswald's church, The Mansion and the Old Grammar School, and nine are Grade II\*. The remainder are Grade II, and all can be broken down according to their earliest structural phase, as recorded in the listed building description, as follows:

Earliest structural phase	<b>C16 or earlier</b>	<b>C17</b>	<b>C18</b>	<b>C19</b>	<b>C20</b>	<b>Undated</b>
Number of structures	3	16	99	35	3	4

The majority of listed buildings are shown on figure 6, with the exception of structures such as boundary walls and telephone kiosks. It should be noted that in some cases the listed building description only gives a date for the facade, and it is quite possible that some buildings are earlier than they appear.

Planning Policy Guidance 15 allows the creation and maintenance of a list of buildings of local historic/architectural interest, although this does not confer a statutory obligation. There is no local list for Ashbourne at present.

### 7.2.2 *Above ground remains*

The street plan is often one of the most durable features of a settlement and this is true of Ashbourne, where the main elements of the town's historic street pattern are still clearly visible today, little altered from that shown on the plan of 1547. Some change did occur in the late 18th century, with the diversion of the road running to the south of the Hall; however, the opening of Cokayne Avenue partly restored the original line. The main intrusion into the plan is Station Road which runs south from Church Street. The market place has survived as a shopping focus within the town. There has also been reasonable survival of the long narrow burgage plots, although those on the southern side of St John's Street no longer run back to the stream, as this has been diverted. Beyond the core of the medieval town, the pattern of earlier field boundaries can occasionally be detected in the lines of the streets and back garden walls of later development, for example along the northern side of Northcliffe Road or the western side of South Street in Compton.

Within the town there is a variety of building materials. The traditional building material in the Ashbourne area was timber, frames being infilled with clay or mud and roofed with thatch. Although tiles have replaced the thatch, some timber-framed structures have survived, in some cases concealed by later facades. While several such examples are known, it is possible that others survive also, as yet unrecognised. From the end of the 17th century and over the course of the 18th, brick gradually replaced timber framing. Probably the earliest brick building was The Mansion, opposite the Grammar School, built in the 1680s (although its facade was later altered). It has been suggested, however, that the gatehouse to Ashbourne Hall, shown on the plan of 1547, may have been built of brick (Adrian Henstock pers. comm.). There is also some use of sandstone from the Staffordshire side of the River Dove, as seen in the Grammar School and the 17th century almshouses, as well as occasionally on some 18th century town houses. Evidence from standing buildings points to a considerable degree of rebuilding or refronting in the 18th century. The number of such 18th century (and earlier) survivals has resulted in the description of Church Street as

‘one of the finest streets of Derbyshire. It has a large variety of excellent houses and whole stretches without anything that could jar’ (Pevsner 1978, 63).

Variety at Ashbourne can not only be applied to building materials and ‘excellent houses’, but also to types of building. Domestic buildings range from large Georgian town houses through medium-sized late 19th century workers’ terraces to occasional small cottages surviving in ‘yards’. The almshouses also form an important feature of the town. Other buildings include coach-houses (now converted), schools and several Victorian churches and chapels. Ashbourne's success was never based on large-scale industry, and it is not clear to what extent the standing remains of smaller-scale trades carried out in the town, such as malting, might have survived.

The medieval church and the churchyard are also an important part of the above ground features of

Ashbourne. The fabric of the church holds information relating to the different phases of its construction, while the gravestones in the churchyard, dating from the 17th century, provide information about Ashbourne's past population as well as evidence, from their material and decorative style, of changes in fashion or custom.

### 7.2.3 *Below ground remains*

Only a very limited amount of archaeological work has been carried out in Ashbourne, which makes it difficult to estimate the overall potential for survival of below ground remains.

Although the street pattern is believed to have remained virtually unchanged since the medieval period, activities such as road surfacing and the insertion of services are likely to have caused damage to archaeological deposits relating to earlier street frontages. Nevertheless where road have been widened, such as appears to be the case at the south-eastern end of Compton Street, there is the potential for survival of remains below the existing surface of the road or pavement. Damage may also have been done during the construction of the railway tunnel below Church Street.

The market area would have been one of the more intensively occupied parts of the town. Plots in this area could contain sequences of commercial buildings along the market frontage, with outhouses, workshops and rubbish pits to the rear. The open area of the Market Place itself may preserve below its surface the remains of earlier, now demolished, encroachments, as well as of the free-standing island building of the market house and the market cross demolished after 1790.

The degree to which earlier material may be preserved will depend to some extent on the presence of cellars in later buildings. It seems likely that many of the buildings along the street frontages will be cellared. Certainly some of the Georgian town houses are known to have basements, although these may themselves be of archaeological interest. For example, the basement of the 18th century Vine House on Church Street is built of stone and contains a Tudor mullioned window. Basements were also found along the street frontage in Compton Street during a watching brief in 1997. However, a number of the large Georgian town houses had coach houses built next to them. Where these are still in existence today, they may not be cellared, and therefore preserve earlier features below them. In a couple of other cases, neighbouring houses were demolished by the 18th century owners of town houses to improve their gardens and grounds, while the fashion for Georgian houses to be built parallel to the street often resulted in the demolition of earlier buildings which may have been erected gable end on to the frontage; archaeological deposits relating to these earlier buildings may still survive.

The churchyard is an important area of potential, preserving the remains of some of Ashbourne's past population, probably including those who died in an outbreak of plague. The ground around and below the church is of particular importance in potentially containing the remains of the earlier church said to have been found in 1913, and of a well which may have been of pre-Christian religious significance. In addition, the excavation of a couple of trenches in the field to the south of the church in 1989 indicated that there was considerable potential for the survival of buildings associated with the medieval and post-medieval vicarage (see component 2).

Another area of potential is that alongside Henmore Brook, where the remains of medieval and post-medieval industries which required water, such as tanning and dyeing, may be preserved, possibly accompanied by the survival of waterlogged remains and some potential for environmental work. This potential may be greater where the brook runs to the rear of Church Street properties, as its course to the rear of St John's Street properties has been altered in order to avoid the earlier 'dog-leg' at the bridge and eliminate the problem of flooding. There may also be some potential along the southern side of the brook, on the western side of Compton.

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