

SOME NOTES ON THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF ABINGDON, BERKSHIRE

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NOTHING is known of the town which is said to have existed before the building of the 7th-century abbey in Abingdon. If it existed it must almost certainly have been destroyed by the Danes in the 9th century. Nor do we know anything about the town at the refounding of the abbey in the mid-10th century. What we can conjecture, from its present layout, is that the town and its market grew up as a dependency of the abbey, trade being the reason for its growth. The Domesday entry speaks of "ten traders dwelling in front of the door of the church and paying 40 pence." During the next four centuries there was continuous strife between the town and the abbey and by the 15th century Abingdon had become a centre of antimonasticism. The townspeople then realised that the trade would be much increased if it, like Wallingford, lay on the westward route from London; thus the two bridges and a causeway were built at Burford (=Boroughford) and Culham in 1416. When the abbey was dissolved in 1538 the King as lord of Abingdon put in John Wellesbourne as keeper and bailiff which appears to have been satisfactory to the inhabitants; however, the loss of the monastic community seriously affected the markets held in the town. It was at this stage that Sir John Mason, an Abingdonian by birth and Clerk to the Privy Council, obtained the two Charters of 1553 and 1556. The new Corporation, however, did not unite the functions of the existing Gild of the Holy Cross, or Christ's Hospital, and of the abbey and the two have existed side by side to the present day.

The market place (=The Bury), approximately square in shape, developed in front of the abbey gates and from this square streets led to other parts of the town. Nearly all the names of these streets can be traced back to the 14th century.

The following notes¹ comprise descriptions of the architecture of the buildings arranged chronologically preceded by a general summary. It is not proposed to deal with the churches or the gateway and other remains of the Abbey buildings.

General Summary. There does not appear to be any domestic building or dwelling-house in Abingdon which may reasonably be dated before 1425.

No. 3, Stert Street and the Northcourt tithe barn are medieval in origin.

The Long Alley Almshouses are mid-15th century in date. Of late 15th century are 26 East St. Helen's and 31-33 Stert Street; also possibly 32 and 34 East St. Helen's and the houses on the east side of the Market Place (which, however, were refronted

¹ My grateful thanks are due to Mr. W. A. Pantin, F.B.A., F.S.A., and to Mr. H. M. Colvin, M.A., Hon. A.R.I.B.A., for helpful comment and advice so willingly given; and to Mr. David Sturdy, B.A., who readily put at my disposal details concerning the

dating of some of the earlier houses and to members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society for the plans; and to Mr. Neil Paterson for the record of 28 East St. Helen's. The photographs are by the author.

in the 18th century). The Guildhall on the ground floor is partly of 15th century date, the east end of which is on the site of the chapel of St. John's Hospital.

The "free grammar Schole" founded by John Royse was also built on part of the site of St. John's Hospital in 1563 and restored in 1911. Of the 16th century are 28 East St. Helen's (c. 1570), The Gables in Bath Street and 19 and 21 Stert Street (c. 1525).

There are some twenty-five houses of 17th century date and about twenty-five of 17th century origin which have been refronted or re-modelled in the 18th century. The outstanding late 17th century buildings are the County Hall and possibly 29 The Abbey, known as "The Old Cottage", also of this date.

Some twelve houses may reasonably be dated at ten years either side of 1700 but by far the most of the houses of any architectural merit will be found to be of 18th century date, a dozen early in the century, twenty-five of mid-century and ten or so late in the century.

There are five examples of early 19th century and some ten of 19th century date which are worthy of mention. Compared with some other towns not many date stones on houses survive: ten are dated between 1678 and 1805.

Of the bridges, Abingdon or Burford Bridge is 15th century having been altered however in 1790 and 1830 and the south (or Oxfordshire) part largely rebuilt in 1927.¹ Ock Bridge, on the west of the town, was originally built of rubble with seven arches and has been widened on the west; one arch contains the original ribs.

MEDIEVAL

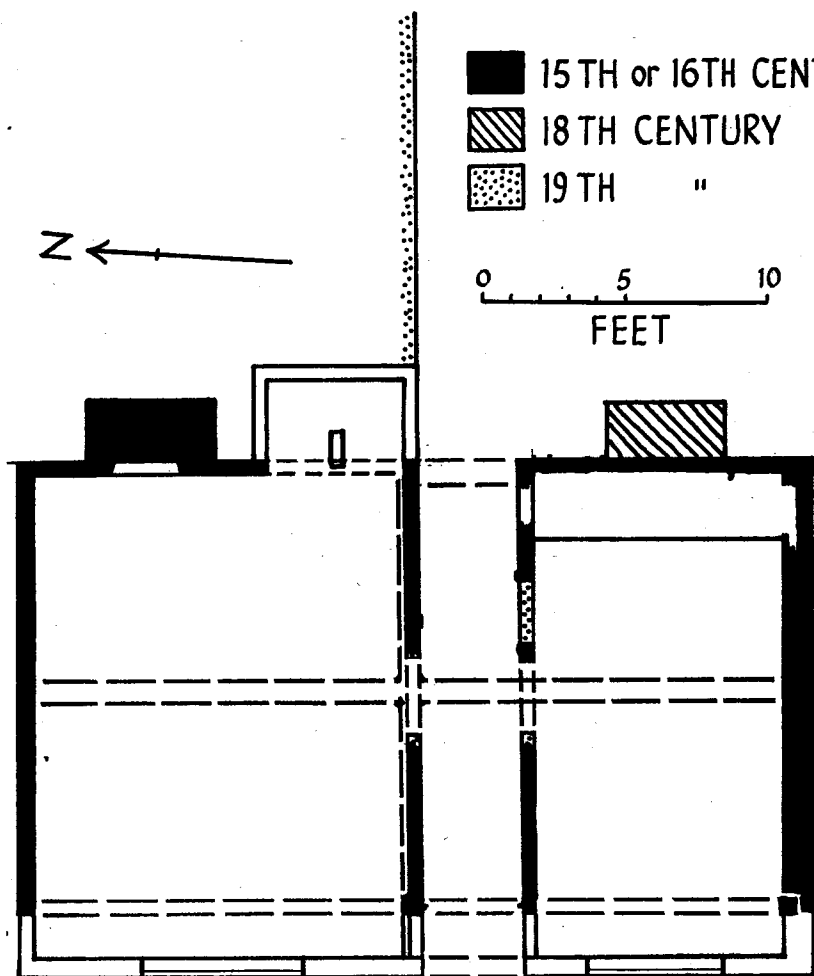
1. 3 *Stert Street*, judging from the stone doorway (possibly brought from some Abbey building) in the west front on the street and from external details at the back, would seem to be of a late medieval date (Plan A & Plate Ia). There are two rooms on the ground floor of each side of a through passage-way, which runs east and west. Of two storeys with attics the west front has been heightened by the addition of two large gables in the late 16th or early 17th century and has a slight overhang above the ground floor; parts of the bargeboards appear to be original. The front has been stuccoed and re-windowed with sashes and casements. The northern gable on the front of the house is seen in H. O. O'Neill's water-colour drawing, 1803, of St. Nicholas's church.² At the back on the north end is a contemporary projecting stone stack; the stack on the south seems to have been rebuilt in the 18th century in brick. Internally there are no features of note.

2. *Northcourt Tithe Barn* (N.B.R.)³ was built by the Abbey of rubble with ashlar quoins and has deep interior splay to the windows. The west wall is buttressed and there is a stone gabled porch at the north end with a chamfered segmental-headed doorway. The tiled roof has been mainly renewed and is supported by six bays of an arch-braced tie-beam roof of possibly 16th century construction.

¹ *Oxoniensia* II (1937), 134-140.

² Reproduced in *Oxf. Hist. Soc.* 99 (1935), frontis-piece.

³ (N.B.R.)=Photographs deposited in the National Building Record.



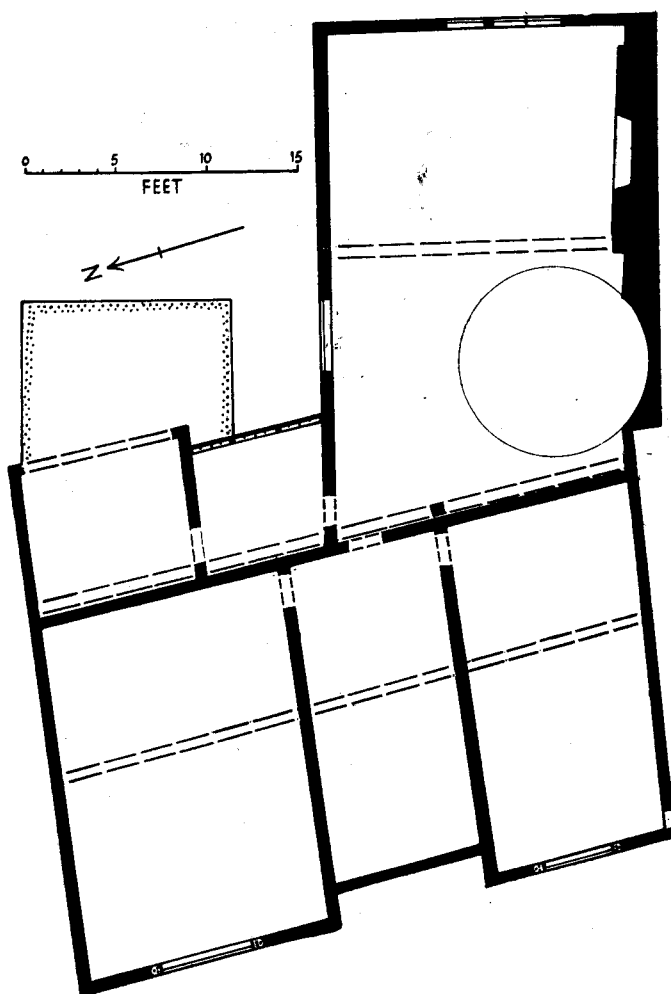
Plan A. 3 Stert Street. Ground floor

FIFTEENTH CENTURY

3. The ground floor of the *Guildhall* (N.B.R.) about 60 feet long and now the court house, was converted from the chapel of St. John's Hospital. Internally the original walls and doorway are visible in part at the east end and three original gothic-traceried windows with square heads have been retained in the north wall which has been refaced; the original windows on the south have been restored.

4. *The Long Alley Almshouses* (N.B.R.) were built by the Fraternity of the Holy Cross in 1446¹ in stone in one storey. The northern part seems to have been altered in the 16th century when the oak mullioned windows of the cloister were made. The three outside porches were added in 1605, the pictures in the pediments being

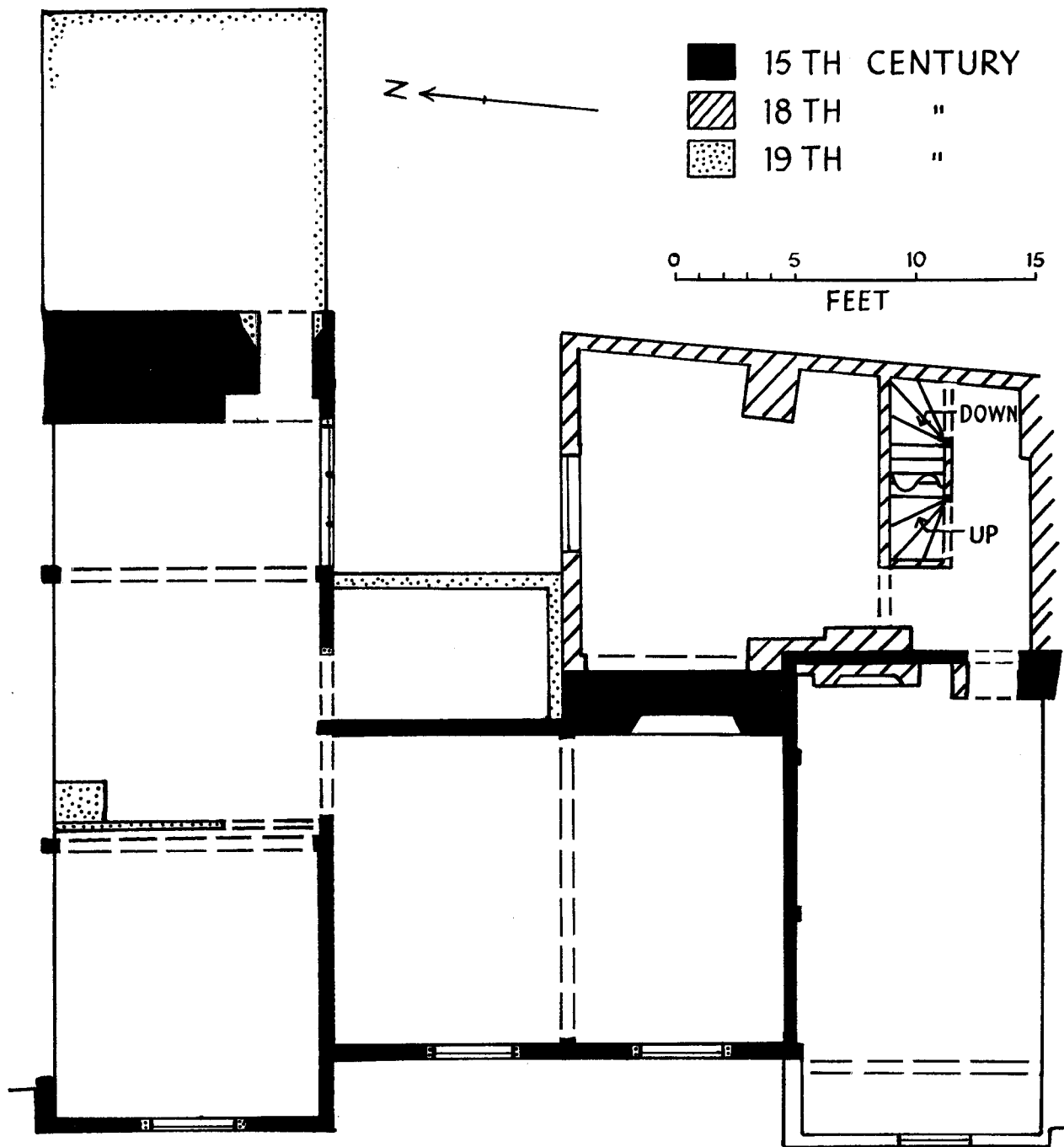
¹ A. E. Preston, *Christ's Hospital, Abingdon* (1930), 15, 30, 80.



Plan B. 26 East St. Helen's. First floor

painted by Sampson Strong. The stone bay window of the hall by Lawrence Smyth and its interior panelling by Henry Beckett were also made at this date. The lantern was renewed in 1707 and again later.

5. *26 East St. Helen's* (Plan B, Plate Ib) was built late in the 15th century. This is a notable house retaining features of great interest. It is two-storied timber-framed with an overhang and two gables on the front, a later coachway through and a projecting wing at the back of two storeys and an attic (Plan B). Here in the interior south wall on the ground and first floor are two fine stone fire-places, the best first-floor one (Plate IIa) having a traceried arcade of eleven panels forming the lintel. Flanking the staircase is some early painted wall decoration which Mr. Clive Rouse dates 1525-50



Plan C. 31-3 Stert Street. First floor

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(Plate IIb). The side windows of the gabled dormers on the front have fine wood traceried heads (Plate IIIa) and there is another, three-light window in the first floor looking eastwards with similar tracery.

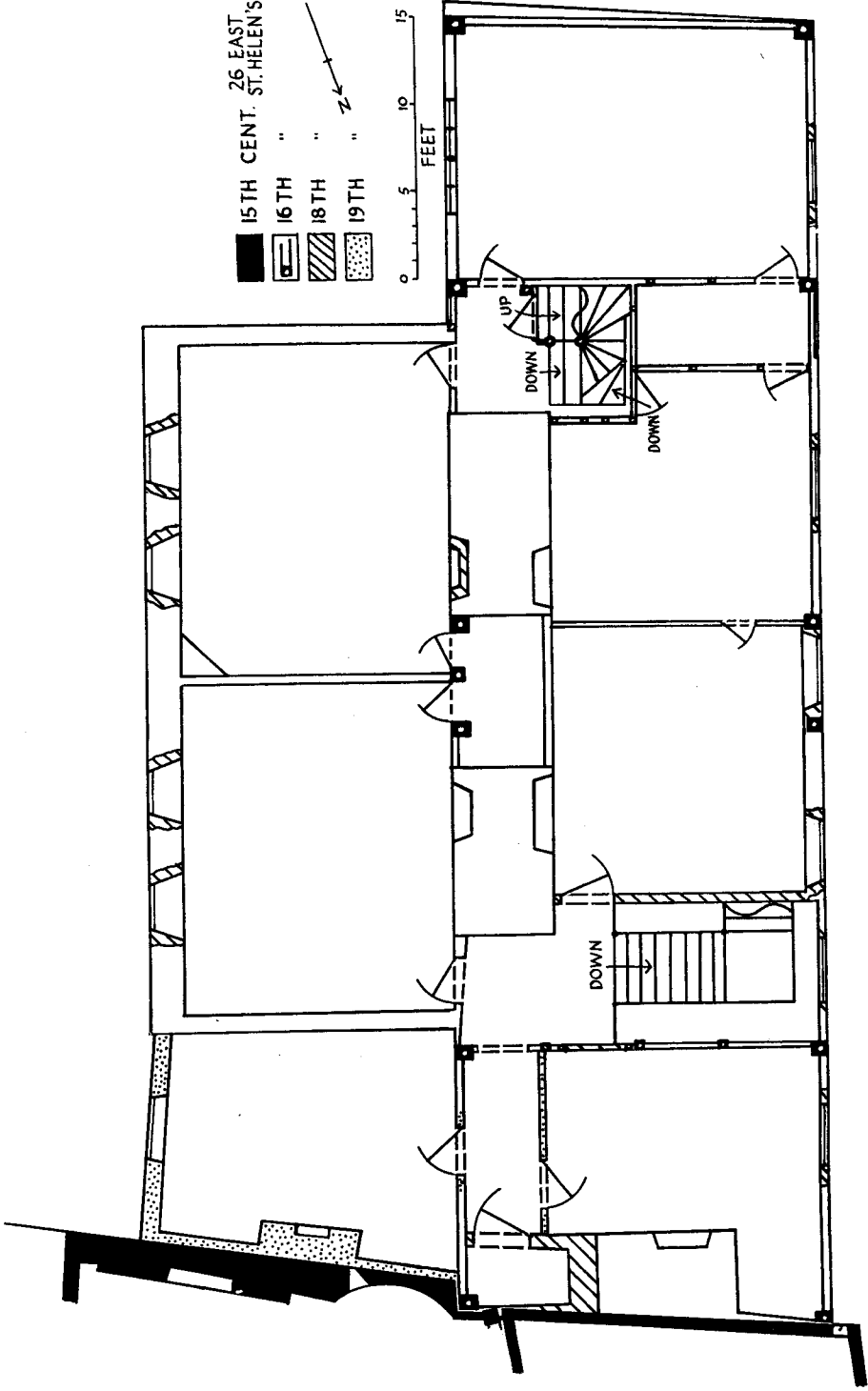
6. 31-33 *Stert Street*. From the Plan (Plan C) and the record made by Mr. D. Sturdy, it is apparent that this house was built in the last half of the 15th century (1480-1500). Its plastered timber-framed front of two lateral gables with a recessed central range parallel to the road is of two storeys. Internally all the features are covered with plaster except the brackets at the ends of the beams as in 26 St. Helen's. There is no access to the roof the timbers of which are ceiled by plaster.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY

7. 28 *East St. Helen's*. (Plan D, Plate Ib). The following is based on a record and survey made by Mr. Neil Paterson, B.A., of the Oxford University Archaeological Society. Plan D is of the first floor.

This is a stone-based timber-framed house dating from about 1570 and consists of two storeys with attics and cellars. It was altered and partly refitted in about 1600 and remodelled in certain details in the 18th century. The *west elevation* facing the street gives no indication of the existence of an attic since (Plate Ib) the gables which originally lit it were removed in the 18th century. The elegant 18th century wooden doorframe, flanked by three sash windows, has fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals and a curved pediment. South of this doorway there remain two 16th century wood mullioned windows of Cotswold type (similar windows are found in the Kitchen on the east). At the south end of the front is a passage way leading through to the back of the house. On the first floor are seven sash windows in plain reveals. The *east elevation* (N.B.R.) has four gables, one on either side of and set back from the central part of the house which has two gables. In the space formed by the garden wall to the north and the northern central gable is an 18th century two-storeyed brick addition with a hipped tile roof. Most of the windows in this elevation were inserted in the 18th century.

Interior. The cellars are fairly extensive but have no features of note. The entrance hall has on the east side late 16th or early 17th century panelling and a 16th century stone fireplace with a moulded four-centred head. The 18th century staircase on the west leads to the first floor. On the north of the through passageway the original 16th century staircase is enclosed in a timber-framed partition. On the north of the hall fireplace is an early 18th century segmental-arched doorway leading to the east room. The present dining room (N.B.R.) on the northwest of the hall has panelling and a china niche of about 1700. The first floor retains the original timber-framed partitions and some 16th-17th century panelling similar to that in the hall. In each of the central rooms on the west is a stone fireplace of c. 1600 on a smaller scale but similar to that in the hall; above them are contemporary carved overmantels (Plate IIIb). In one room on the east is similar (but white-painted) panelling with two-arched overmantel over a renewed stone fireplace. Of interest is the fact that the attics have fireplaces and this may indicate that the house once served as an inn. The roof



Plan D. 28 East St. Helen's. First floor

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timbers (Plate IVa) are of interest and appear to be of the original early construction of a semi-cruck type. The roof is tiled.

8. *The Grammar School* (N.B.R.), founded by John Roysse in 1563, was built on the site of St. John's Hospital. It consists of a long-room, timber-framed, of 16th century with a gallery and panelling of c. 1700. The ceiling is modern and the whole was repaired by Alderman A. E. Preston in 1911.

9. *The Gables, Bath Street* (N.B.R.) has the long axis parallel to the road with walls (now rendered) 2 ft. 3 ins. thick; it is probably mid-16th century in origin with three gables. The stone chimney-stack was inserted in the 17th century. The windows are modern. Additions were made in about 1800 at the back by the Saxton family. Inside there are some 17th century ceiling beams and some white-painted panelling of about 1800. Sir Charles Saxton, 2nd Bt., was Recorder in 1805-19, Sheriff of Berkshire in 1824, and died here in 1838;¹ he gave to the Corporation the Gainsborough portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte.

10. *19 and 21 Stert Street* (N.B.R.). A timber-framed building of "the first quarter of the 16th century."² No. 21 was destroyed in 1957. No. 19 and the north part of No. 21 (*olim* The Bear Inn) had gables towards the street and were joined by the south part of No. 21, the roof of which ran parallel to the street from north to south".³

11. *Conduit in Albert Park*. A 16th century one-storeyed hexagonal conduit house with a conical stone slate roof and a gabled doorway. Stored inside are two contemporary stone slabs which originally formed an artificial channel to the conduit.⁴

SIXTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (c. 1600)

The following seem to have been built about 1600:

1, Blue Boar Inn (N.B.R.), 21 (N.B.R.), 47, Horse & Jockey Inn, *Bath Street*.

32 *Broad Street* (Plate IVb).

32-34, "Helensbourne" (Plate Va), and 24 *East St. Helen's*.

143 *Ock Street*.

4 & 5 *The Square*.

46 *Stert Street*.

All of these are timber-framed with one or more pronounced gables, the exteriors being rendered. Most have been rewindowed in the 18th century or 19th century.

12. 32 *Broad Street* (Plate IVb) has two large gables and retains some later windows in the first floor and in the ground floor a shop front has been inserted.

13. *The Horse & Jockey Inn* in *Bath Street* has the ancient stone chimney stack on the south remaining.

¹ His mural monument is in St. Helen's church.

² *Berks. Arch. Journ.* LVI (1958), 60.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XLV (1941), 37-44.

14. 32-34 *East St. Helen's* (Plate Va) is an interesting house partly closing the view down the street towards St. Helen's Church. Note the bracketted overhang and the proportions and arrangement of the large gable.

15. 24 *East St. Helen's* (Plate VIIIb) is probably of early 17th century date. It is a timber-framed building with two well-proportioned gables and an overhang; the windows are modern.

16. 143 *Ock Street* (olim "Happy Dick") is probably a late 16th century or early 17th century house with an overhang and a projecting gable end on the east end. Now two-storeyed roughcast brick and timber-framed on a rubble base with a large gabled dormer in a tiled roof; the west end-stack has been rebuilt in brick. There have been some alterations including re-windowing and there is a brick addition at the back.

17. 46 *Stert Street* (Beehive Inn, N.B.R.) is probably late 16th century but conceivably earlier. It is timber-framed and has an overhang.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The following were built in the 17th century.

6 and 6a *The Abbey* (N.B.R.)

11, 13, 15 (The Seven Stars Inn) *Bridge Street*.

8, 21, 25 *Broad Street*.

36-38, 50, 19, 25a, 51-55 *East St. Helen's*.

*Lion Hotel, High Street*¹ (See 66 below).

County Hall, Market Place.

12 *Ock Street*.

25 & 27, 26, 34, 36 *Stert Street*.

17, 19 & 21, 39-45, 48-50 (N.B.R.) *West St. Helen's*.

Northcourt. Joy Mount House. Northcourt farmhouse.

It may be said generally that the 17th century saw the transition from the large gable or series of gables on the house elevation through a diminution in the size and number of the gables towards a single pitched or sometimes hipped, roof parallel with the long axis of the building in which are inserted dormer windows. The overhang sometimes remains, an indication of an earlier dating. The chimney-stack becomes centrally placed, the house being, as it were, built round the stack and the projecting stacks on the gable ends of the house gradually disappear. Brick was often used, replacing the earlier entire timber-framed construction or a timber-framed upper storey on a stone base. Among those which show the introduction of the dormer window are:—

18. 21-25 *Broad Street* and

19. 36-38 *East St. Helen's* both on a rubble base with modern windows inserted.

¹ Information from D. Sturdy.

20. 25A *East St. Helen's* retains the typical late 17th century windows.
21. 26 *Stert Street* has later windows inserted.
22. 34 & 36 *Stert Street* shows the introduction of the dormer window but have modern brick refrontings.
23. 29-31 *Stert Street* may possibly date from the late 15th century; further investigation is necessary here.

In about the second half of the century the typical mullioned and transomed window frame appears, the transom being placed at one third of the length of the mullion from the top. Wrought-iron window catches become ornamental in design.

24. *The County Hall* is the outstanding building of fine design. It was begun in 1678 by Christopher Kempster, one of Wren's masons and a Burford man then aged 50. He built it in Burford and Headington stone. The actual designer is not known; attribution to Wren is based partly on the quality of the building and partly on a resemblance to the pavilions of the College of Four Nations in Paris which Wren had seen some 16 years before the building in Abingdon started. Kempster's claim as the architect cannot be proved for no mention is made in his bill of payments to him for a design; the Chamberlain's accounts throw no light on the matter. As Mr. R. Gilyard-Beer says, "Whoever designed the Hall, it remains a notable example of the provincial classical architecture of its day". The building was refaced in Clipsham stone by the Ministry of Works in 1952-56 and was re-opened by Queen Elizabeth II in November 1958.¹

SEVENTEENTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (c. 1700)

The following seem to have been built at this period:

- 29 *The Abbey* (The Old Cottage).
 7 *Broad Street*.
 52 *East St. Helen's*.
 91-93, 105-9, 125-9: 44, 46, 180-2 *Ock Street*.
 40 *Stert Street*.
 44-46 *Vineyard* (N.B.R.) Plan E.

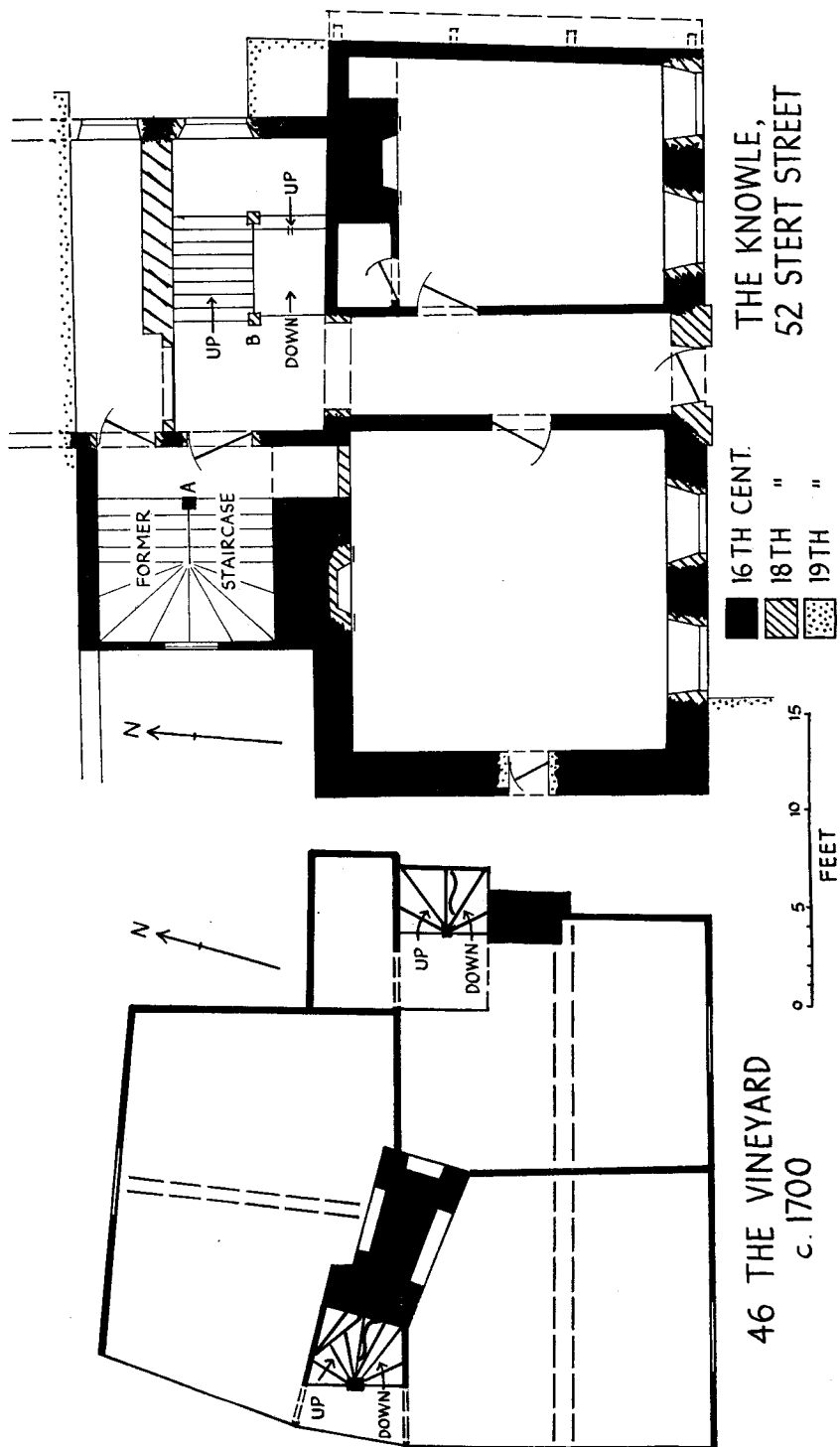
25. 29 *The Abbey* is built of roughcast brick on a rubble base and has a reset date-stone 1698, and was possibly originally built in the late 17th century.

26. 7 *Broad Street* is a timber-framed house with a brick and stuccoed front.

27. 52 *East St. Helen's* is of brick in timber-framing.

28. 91-3 *Ock Street* (Warwick House, Plate Vb) is of two storeys of whitewashed rubble with three gabled attic dormers in a tiled mansard roof. Timber-framing shows

¹ For history, description and plans, see *The County Hall, Abingdon, Berkshire*, by R. Gilyard-Beer (Min. of Works, 1956).



Plan E. First floor

Plan F. Ground floor

at the back with some brick extensions. There is a central and one end chimney-stack, both rebuilt in brick; the windows are modern casements in 18th century frames with arched heads.

29. 105-9 *Ock Street* form a good range of late 17th century timber-framed rough-cast cottages with a stuccoed base.

30. 125-9 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) are one build of about 1700 with a plastered front of two storeys and attics in three large gables; some of the windows are ancient.

31. 44 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) is built of red brick on a stuccoed base. There remains one attic dormer and an original wood-framed two-light transomed window in the first floor.

32. 46 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) is of variegated brick with a dentilled cornice and one attic dormer. In the first floor are original two- and four-light transomed windows.

33. 180-2 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) are in one timber-framed build with a stucco and roughcast front in which is one large gable, an attic dormer and sash windows; there is a brick chimney-stack at the west end.

34. 40 *Stert Street* is probably 17th to 18th century in origin with one gable; the front is roughcast and has 18th century windows.

35. 44-46 *Vineyard* (N.B.R.) was one build of c. 1700 having a plastered timber-framed front on a brick base with two gables on the front and one at the back (Plan E). There was a rubble central stack with featureless timbers over the fireplaces which had brick jambs: the ceiling beams had plain chamfers.¹

EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The following were, in all probability, built during the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

26 & 28, 45 (Stratton House) *Bath Street* (Plate VIa).

19 *Broad Street*.

30, 57 *East St. Helen's*.

1a, 3 (N.B.R.) *High Street*.

4, 14 *Market Place*.

26, 26a, 28 and Tomkins Almshouses, *Ock Street* (N.B.R.)

Twitty's Almshouses, *Brick Alley Almshouses in West St. Helen's* (Plate VIIIa).

36. 26 & 28 *Bath Street* is in brick (N.B.R.) There are two dormers at the back.

37. 45 *Bath Street* Stratton House (Plate VIa) was built by Benjamin Tomkins (d. 1733). On two panels on the front are the initials T:B.S and the date 1722. The house was originally built of good brickwork with rusticated quoins in five bays with

¹ Record and plan made by D. Sturdy.

a centrepiece of a Doric doorcase and a window breaking slightly forward; the sash window-frames have arched keystone heads of moulded brick; there is a cornice and parapet behind which are three gabled dormers in a tiled roof. The interior has an original staircase and panelling. The north part of the house (on the right hand: now Stratton Lodge) was altered and heightened about 1800 of which date are the interior fittings on the ground floor but the first floor retains some 1722 (? reset) panelling.

38. 19 *Broad Street* has been altered and rewindowed and partly rebuilt with the addition of two gables. It has a steep-pitched roof.

39. 30 *East St. Helen's* is a good house with a front of brick with sash windows but retains an earlier style with two gables. The doorway with its Corinthian capped pilasters and curved pediment is notable. There is earlier work at the back of 15th century date and it is probable that there was a rebuilding of the front in the early 18th century on to the original core.

40. 57 *East St. Helen's* (Plate VIb). On a date panel is R:R.E. 1732. The somewhat overloaded variegated brick front has pilasters, a coved cornice and a pedimented doorway. There are three gabled dormers in a steep-pitched roof and the windows in the first floor are original and have curved architraves with masked keystones. The steep-pitched roof may well indicate that it is a refronting of an older house; the roof timbers have not been examined. It is possible that the front was designed by the one who built the houses for the Tomkins family mentioned elsewhere (37, 42 and 43). Mr. Arthur Oswald is right in his comment on this house¹ when he says 'it is a comparatively small house . . . into which the architect has tried to introduce too many features, and the difference between his treatment and the later refined manner of Twickenham House (47) has no mannerism about it'.

41. 4 and 14 *Market Place* both show good brickwork with original windows and good details. There is a curved central gable to No. 4 (N.B.R.) and the quoins of No. 14 are of moulded brick.

42. *Tomkins Almshouses*, Ock Street, were founded by Benjamin Tomkins the elder who built Stratton House (37) and whose will was proved in 1733. The building consists of eight almshouses in a one-storeyed brick courtyard with a pedimented gateway and a closing end centrepiece and was probably by the same man who designed the other houses for the Tomkins family (Nos. 37, 40 and 43).

43. 26, 26A, 28 *Ock Street* (Plate VIIa, N.B.R.) This house (known as Lantern House from the cupola on the stable archway) was most probably built by one of the Tomkins family (Nos. 37, 40 and 42) in the first quarter of the 18th century but it is possible that it might be after 1750; it is one of the most imposing in the town. Of three storeys it is built in the local brick in nine bays with sash windows and a centrepiece breaking forward; there is a pronounced panelled parapet over a dentilled cornice and there are moulded bands at the first and second floors. On either side of the main first and second floor windows in the centrepiece and on each end of the front are narrow

¹ *Country Life*, 28 Sept., 1929.

sash windows so that in effect each floor has nine windows; some of the original glazing bars remain. In place of the original doorcase with steps leading up to it are now two doorways as the house is now divided. On the east side a vaulted coachway leads to the stabling with a clock tower on it. The good interior includes a panelled staircase (Plate VIIb), plaster work, niches and fireplaces (N.B.R.) There are chimney stacks with moulded tops on the east and west sides set back towards the centre of the house.

44. *Twitty's Almshouses* (Plate VIIIa) were founded by Charles Twitty, an Abingdonian who died in 1706 providing £1,700 for their erection and endowment for parishioners of St. Helen. The single-storeyed red brick range of seven almshouses has a central pediment, with inscription panels, and cupola, a modillioned cornice, mullioned and transomed windows and a hipped tiled roof. They may have been built by Samuel Westbrooke and Charles Etty (see 45 below).

45. *Brick Alley Almshouses*. A two-storeyed almshouse for 18 was built in 1718–20 at the cost of some £632 in replacement of an older one on the same site by Samuel Westbrooke, mason, and Charles Etty, carpenter, two Abingdon men. No architect is mentioned. These two men also contracted to build the Council Chamber (see 46 below).¹

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

There are some thirty houses of which it is not possible, except in a few instances, to be more precise in their date than to say that they might have been built at any time in the century. They are, for the most part, built of red brick, sometimes plastered and sometimes timber-framed. Some have pedimented doorways and a dentilled cornice and where variegated brick is used it produces a good effect.

"*The Abbey*". South-west wing.

12 & 19 *Bath Street*.

Crown & Thistle Inn, Bridge Street (N.B.R.)

24, 26 & 38 *Broad Street*.

The Guildhall and Council Chamber and Committee Room.

Twickenham House, 22 (Plate VIIIb), 40 & 42, 58 & 60 (the malthouse of John Tomkins, 1748), 21, 23, 27, *East St. Helen's*.

2 (N.B.R.), 4 (timber-framed and an 18th century style front), 10 (painted brick front on possibly an older house with two good bow windows and doorway (N.B.R.), *High Street*.

7 (N.B.R.), 13 (N.B.R.), 6, 8 (doorframe frieze has triglyphs and paterae), (N.B.R.) *Ock Street*.

38, 42–44 *Stert Street*.

21 (N.B.R.), 45 (N.B.R.) *Vineyard*.

¹ A. E. Preston, *Christ's Hospital, Abingdon* (1930), 59–60; H. M. Colvin, *Biogr. Dict. Engl. Architects* (1954), 660.

46. *The Municipal Buildings* (N.B.R.) contain four rooms, the Mayor's Parlour, the Committee Room (or small Council Chamber), the Great Chamber and the Gate Room.¹ The Guildhall was raised one storey by 1735 and the large Council Chamber here formed in 1759; the exterior is built in ashlar and the north front has in the first floor a central pedimented niche with lateral pairs of flat bracketed pilasters; inside the staircase has carved balusters. The Small Council Chamber has a good 18th century Venetian window with Ionic columns.

47. *Twickenham House* (Plate VIIIb) This distinctive house of the 18th century is one of the best in Abingdon and chiefly acquires its merit from the tone and texture of the local variegated red brick which adds distinction to its good design; it also serves as a foil to the earlier plastered gabled houses elsewhere in the street. Judging from the remaining details the house was built in the first half of the century possibly about 1740 and with contemporary interior fittings. The seventeenth century type windows in the stable wing are a local survival of a local architect's design. The well-proportioned front of five bays has a pediment and two flat pilasters. The elegant doorcase has a pediment supported by a modillioned cornice on two engaged Ionic pillars; the doorhead has a mask and swags; the original lamp support curving over the front steps has recently been replaced. The back elevation has a cornice and parapet above which, in a dormer roof, is a three-sided lantern with sash windows, a moulded cornice and a lead cupola above (N.B.R.) The wing here, on the right hand, is early nineteenth century. The interior contains late 18th century gothic bookcases and a staircase with a chinoiserie balustrade (Plate IXa); the rococo chimneypiece, doorcases and other fittings (N.B.R.) in the ground floor rooms are notable. Mr. Arthur Oswald comments² on the possible designer or builder of this and other houses such as Stratton House (37) and the double house in Ock Street (43). These three "belonged to the Tomkins family, rich Nonconformists who had made their money out of malting early in the 18th century. Stratton House was built in 1722 by Benjamin Tomkins, who left money to his sons (Benjamin and Joseph) for the endowment of the almshouse in Ock Street. Their initials 'Mr. B. T. and Mr. I. T.' are over the door, in addition to those of Benjamin himself and his wife. The younger of the two, Joseph, in 1766 was living in Twickenham House, so that it is reasonable to suppose that originally it was built by that same architect whose handiwork can be recognized in the other two. And as the Tomkins almshouse which the brothers erected in 1733 'according to the form presented by their father' (42) exhibits the same characteristics, it would seem that he had a regular family connection. If our theory is correct at Twickenham House the charmingly designed stables are his work."

LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

7, *The Abbey.*

23-25, 8 & 10 (dated 1793 N.B.R.) 30 & 32 *Bath Street.*

44 (N.B.R.), 17 *East St. Helen's.*

5 *High Street* (N.B.R.)

¹ E. M. Jope, *Berks. Arch. Journ.* LI (1948 & 1949), 53.

² *Country Life*, 28 Sept., 1929; J. Townsend, *Hist. of Abingdon* (1910), p. 146.

16 NOTES ON THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF ABINGDON

1-3 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.)

2 *The Square* (Plate IXb).

Most of these are in variegated brick of plain design but the following are good examples of the use of ornament to improve the appearance.

48. 44 *East St. Helen's* is of two-storeyed variegated brick with a cornice and parapet and three sash windows in keystone frames. The good pedimented doorway adds distinction.

49. 2 *The Square* (Plate IXb) is of three storeys in good variegated brick with a moulded cornice and a low parapet. The cills of the side windows in the first floor have been lowered at a later date and small balconies added. In the ground floor two modern three-light windows have been inserted. The somewhat severe façade is enhanced by the good pedimented doorcase with Doric pilasters and a fanlight.

LATE EIGHTEENTH TO EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY (c. 1800)

4, 6, 24 *Bath Street*.

46, 63 & 65 *East St. Helen's*.

16, 18 *High Street*.

47, 24A *West St. Helen's*.

Nearly all these are of two to three storeys of variegated brick and a few are timber-framed.

50. 4 *Bath Street* has a variegated brick front on a possibly ancient core.

51. 63 & 65 *East St. Helen's* and

52. 47 *West St. Helen's* have timber-framed fronts.

53. 24A *West St. Helen's* is in poor condition but of unusual design.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REFRONTING OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY OR EARLIER HOUSES

3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13-15, 14-16 *Bath Street* (N.B.R.)

12-14-16 (N.B.R.), 28 & 30 *Broad Street*.

10 (King's Head & Bell Inn) (N.B.R.) *East St. Helen's*.

5 (N.B.R.), 23-25 (N.B.R.), 27 (N.B.R.), 95-97, 52 *Ock Street*.

52 (The Knowle), 24-26-28, 38-40, 46 *Stert Street*.

15-21, 7, 8, 9 *Market Place*.

Remodelling and reconditioning of 17th century and earlier houses took place frequently in the 18th century and generally consisted of dropping a new front over the earlier core which might be of stone or timber framing.

54. 12-14-16 *Broad Street* (N.B.R.) is of one build with a brick and roughcast front with three gables and 18th century windows on an early 17th century house which retains its stone stack.

55. 28-30 *Broad Street* (N.B.R.) was originally a 17th century house with a central stack and was refronted in brick with a cornice and two dormers in a tiled roof and the house divided into two.

56. 10 *East St. Helen's* (King's Head and Bell Inn, N.B.R.) The front was lately remodelled and well done in 18th century style. The house is now mainly 18th century with some 17th work remaining; it is timber-framed with a gallery at the back.

57. 95-97 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) Demolished in October 1958, the range consisted of good brick cottages with tiled roofs on a 17th century core. The stone-stack of the earlier two-gabled wing at the back had, in the first floor, a good stone fireplace with moulded jambs and spandrels (N.B.R.).

58. 52 *Ock Street* (N.B.R.) is a good two-storeyed red brick fronting of an early timber-framed house. It has a modillioned eaves cornice and a tiled roof in which are two gabled attic dormers; two 19th century sash windows and a small bracketted hood to the doorway.

59. 52 *Stert Street* (The Knowle N.B.R. Plan F, Plates Xa & Xb). A well sited house of about 1580 origin with a five-bay refronting of the 18th century with sash windows and a good Doric doorcase with a curved pediment with the initials A and R. There are three gabled dormers in the tiled roof. The 16th century (? earlier) east gable end (Plate Xb) has a bracketted overhang (much nibbled at by the passing lorries) at the first floor and a coved one above the first floor. The good interior include an early 18th century staircase, panelling and niches (N.B.R.).

60. 24, 26, 28, 38 & 40 *Stert Street* are all 18th century refrontings with later alterations, of 16th or 17th century timber-framed houses which have gables and dormers. Modern shop fronts.

61. 46 *Stert Street* (Bee Hive Inn, N.B.R.) is an interesting structure having timber framing of probably 15th or early 16th century with an overhang. It seems to have been remodelled in the late 17th or early 18th century and has a central chimney stack.

62. 15 *Market Place*. Probably originally a 16th century and plaster structure on a rubble base with an overhang at the first floor. The front has been altered by "boxing-out" and adding a parapet.

63. 16, 17, 18, 19 (Old Globe Inn), 20, 21 *Market Place* (N.B.R.) These timber-framed houses with an overhang to the Stert Street backs may possibly be late 15th century in the core. The fronts have been rebuilt or remodelled in the late 18th century or later with varying degrees of success and their present condition is poor.

18 NOTES ON THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF ABINGDON

EIGHTEENTH TO NINETEENTH (c. 1800) REFRONTING OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY OR EARLIER HOUSES

4-6 Broad Street.

27A & 29, 54 & 56 East St. Helen's.

14, 7 & 9, 11 (N.B.R.), 15 (N.B.R.) High Street.

64. *7 & 9 High Street* has a rendered front on timber framing with a 17th century rubble structure at the back which has a steep-pitched roof.

65. *11 High Street* is a re-fronting of an older, probably 17th century, timber-framed house.

66. *15 High Street* (Lion Hotel. N.B.R.) has been partly rebuilt with a modern front on to a 17th century timber-framed house: it has two gables on the front.

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Old, Gaol, Bridge Street.

48, 43 & 45, 59 East St. Helen's.

St. John's Hospital, Vineyard.

Northcourt House in Northcourt Hamlet.

67. *59 East St. Helen's* has an early 19th century brick front with two-storeyed bay windows (N.B.R.) probably on an 18th century house behind.

68. *St. John's Hospital* (N.B.R.) is of two-storeyed redbrick with a pedimented front with lateral projecting wings with casement windows; there are four tenements and a central passage way. The inscription states "endowed before the Reformation. Rebuilt by the Corporation of Abingdon. Bernard Bedwell of London, esq. a liberal contributor. Anno Dom: 1801." Bedwell's monument is on the north wall of the outer north aisle of St. Helen's church.

69. *Northcourt House* (Plate XI) is dated 1805 with the initials K:H.A. on it. It was built by Henry Knapp (Banker and Mayor in 1805 and 1813, who died in 1825) and Anne, his wife; his monument is at the west end of the nave in St. Helen's church. The house is of three-storeyed variegated brick with rubble cellars on a square severe plan; there is a Welsh slate hipped roof behind a small parapet over a moulded stone modillioned cornice and it has sash windows. An interesting feature is the exterior "gothic" porch with a traceried panelled parapet on the east face. The interior has a contemporary staircase and fireplaces.

70. *The Old Gaol in Bridge Street* was built in 1805-11 to the design of Daniel Harris, an Oxford architect and builder and Keeper of the County Gaol.¹ Of coursed rubble in roughly an hexagonal form with three wings it dominates the entrance to the town from the south-east.

¹ H. M. Colvin, *Dict. of Engl. Architects* (1954), 226.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

"*The Abbey*" (Northwest wing in brick and rubble).

5, 7, 31 & 33, 61 *East St. Helen's*.

6-8, 12 *High Street*.

71. 31 & 33 *East St. Helen's* is in one build of ashlar. The others, 5, 7 & 61 are of brick.

72. 6 *High Street* has a stone Doric portico front.

NINETEENTH CENTURY REFRONTING OF SEVENTEENTH OR
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HOUSES

3, 25, 27, 61 *East St. Helen's*.

13 (N.B.R.) *High Street*.

List of Dated Houses

1678 County Hall (24).

1698 Re-set. "The Old Cottage", The Abbey (25).

1707 Twitty's Almshouses (44).

1718 Brick Alley Almshouses (45).

1719 Ely's Conduit, re-set in 1947 in east exterior wall of Tomkins Almshouses.

1722 Stratton House in Bath Street (37).

1732 57 East St. Helen's (40).

1748 58 & 60 East St. Helen's. (p. 14)

1793 8-10 Bath Street (p. 15).

1805 Northcourt House (69).