

A late 16th century timber-framed building at 137–143 High Street, Guildford

PHIL ANDREWS

with contributions by

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Excavation, building recording and documentary research have provided complementary evidence for a sequence of occupation beginning in the late 12th century. The principal discoveries were parts of two medieval undercrofts and the substantial remains of a late 16th century jettied timber-framed building hidden behind an early 18th century façade. This building contains traces of wall painting and was later occupied by two of Guildford's most prominent families — the Parsons who were wealthy drapers and the Russells who were cutlers and booksellers.

Introduction

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a programme of archaeological work at 137–143 High Street, Guildford, following the granting of planning permission for redevelopment. The development proposals included the demolition and replacement of a 20th century extension to the rear of 137/139 High Street, and the refurbishment of the interiors of the two Grade II listed buildings on the High Street frontage (137/139 and 141/143 respectively).

Setting and geology

Nos 137–143 High Street lie near the centre of Guildford, on the north side of the High Street, and are centred at SU 9978 4950 (fig 1). They occupy a long narrow plot approximately 13m wide by 74m deep, just 10m to the east of the Guildhall. The site is partly bounded to the east and west by standing buildings and does not extend as far north as North Street, although the rear of the property, which is used as a car park, is accessible from this street.

The site lies on chalk on the east side of the Wey valley, at c 50m OD, on a moderate south-west facing slope approximately 30m to the east of the present course of the river. Within the site itself the ground level slopes down quite steeply to the north, away from the High Street.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A considerable number of archaeological sites and findspots have been recorded within a 200m radius of the site (Wessex Archaeology 1998). These almost all reflect medieval and post-medieval settlement concentrated along the High Street frontages.

Topographically the tenements and their backlands along this part of the High Street reflect the town plan, laid out in the Late Saxon period, of long, narrow burgage plots running from the spinal main street to the town ditch which is today fossilized in the line of North Street (O'Connell 1977, 32). Subsequent growth and prosperity during the 12th and 13th centuries are reflected in the building of undercrofts beneath the High Street frontages (O'Connell 1983, 107). In addition to the well-known undercrofts described by Wood

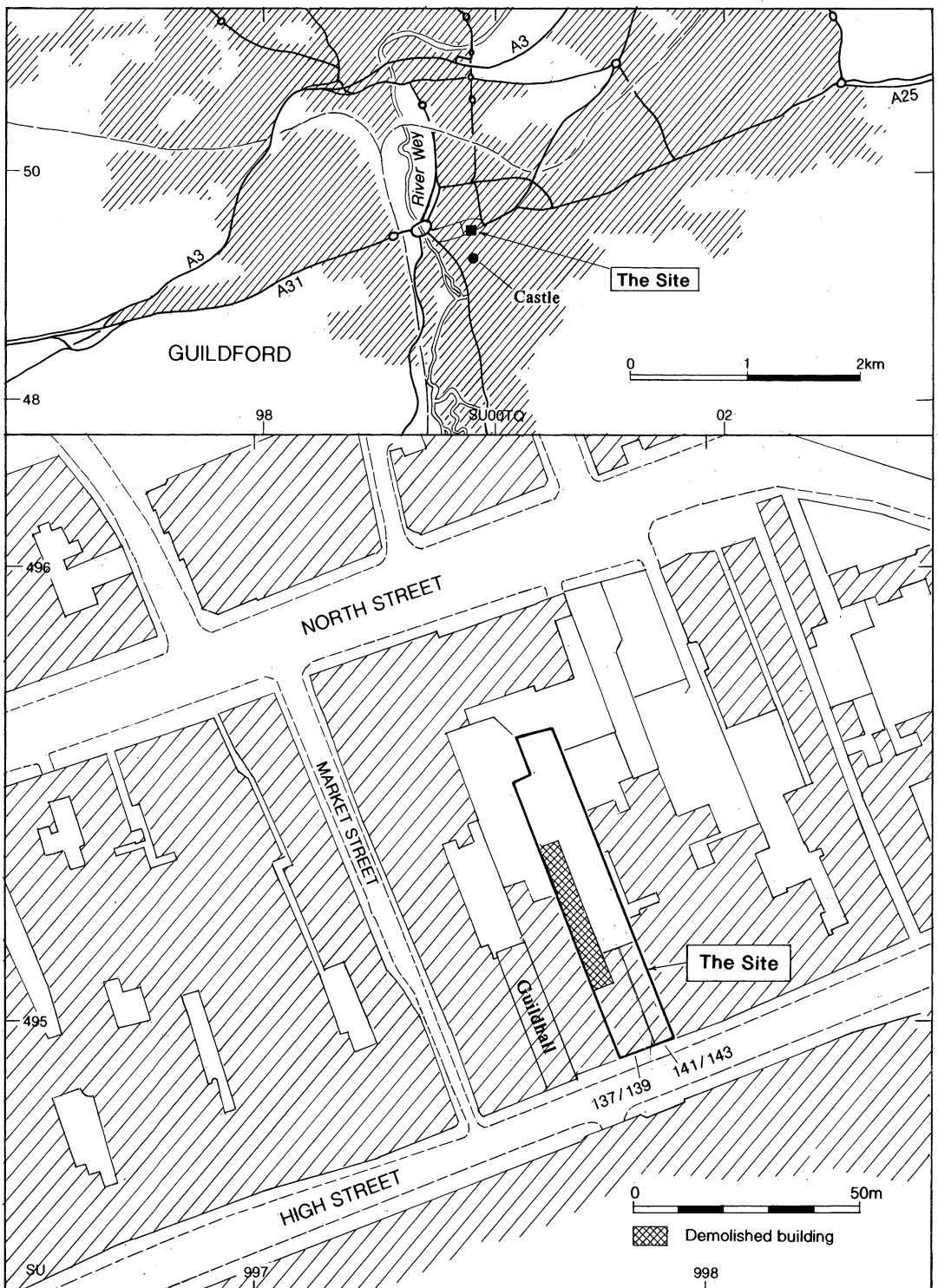


Fig 1 137–143 High Street, Guildford: site location plan, based on OS 1:1250 map, 1979. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Ordnance Survey, © Crown Copyright NC/01/24321)

(1950, 82–4), at the Angel Hotel and 72/74 and 149 High Street, further undercrofts have recently been reported at 93/95, 129, and 159 High Street (Bird *et al* 1996, 191, 193–4). Guildford did not have a specific market place, but from Tudor times right up to 1865 the weekly markets were held along the High Street.

Throughout the Middle Ages Guildford remained a small but wealthy town, its wealth largely derived from the wool trade. Many houses were replaced between c 1550 and c 1650 as part of the Great Rebuilding which saw houses built of a standard plan and structure using, at first, Wealden oak. The narrow tenements meant that most of these buildings, particularly along the High Street, had to be built at 90° to the frontage with passages running the length of the buildings. A number of these buildings survive, mainly in the High Street, Quarry Street and Chapel Street, often hidden behind later façades.

A dwindling cloth trade by the 17th century was counteracted by increasing coach traffic through Guildford in the 17th–18th centuries and the opening of the Wey Navigation, which renewed the town's prosperity and led to a general rebuilding, or refronting, of buildings along the High Street (O'Connell 1977, 32).

Archaeological remains have been recorded within the site at 137–143 High Street on two occasions. A medieval rubbish pit was discovered towards the rear of 137/139 during a watching brief in 1977, the upper part filled with a notable assemblage of early 16th century pottery (Holling 1984). A watching brief in the basement beneath 141/143 in 1995 recorded a section of medieval undercroft of probable 12th/13th century date fronting the High Street (GMVEU 1995). Access was restricted and only limited time had been available to record these remains which were subsequently plastered over and are not currently visible.

The listing description for 137/139 High Street describes the building as early 18th century, while that for 141/143 High Street records an 18th century façade with an older core (DoE 1988).

Archaeological fieldwork

METHODS

A staged programme of archaeological work was undertaken in advance of and during redevelopment (Wessex Archaeology 1999a). This programme comprised the following elements: an archaeological excavation; a strip-and-record investigation; a watching brief during contractors groundworks; a watching brief during the opening up of the historic core of the listed buildings by the contractors.

The fieldwork was undertaken intermittently between February and June 1999, and an assessment of the results prepared in October 1999 (Wessex Archaeology 1999b). Full records of the work and the finds are held in the excavation archive (ref W44982/RB4082) which has been deposited with Guildford Museum.

The results of the excavation, strip-and-record investigation and watching brief during contractors groundworks (fig 2) are described together below, followed by a separate discussion of the historic building recording.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Introduction

The excavation trench, undertaken prior to demolition, was approximately 7.5m long and 2m wide, constrained by standing walls to the east and west and the presence of services. The strip-and-record exercise followed demolition of the 20th century extension to the rear of 137/139 High Street and the removal of a concrete slab from an area, approximately 18 x 5m, to the west of the excavation trench, along the west side of the site. In addition, a total of sixteen hand-dug and ten machine-dug geotechnic and pad

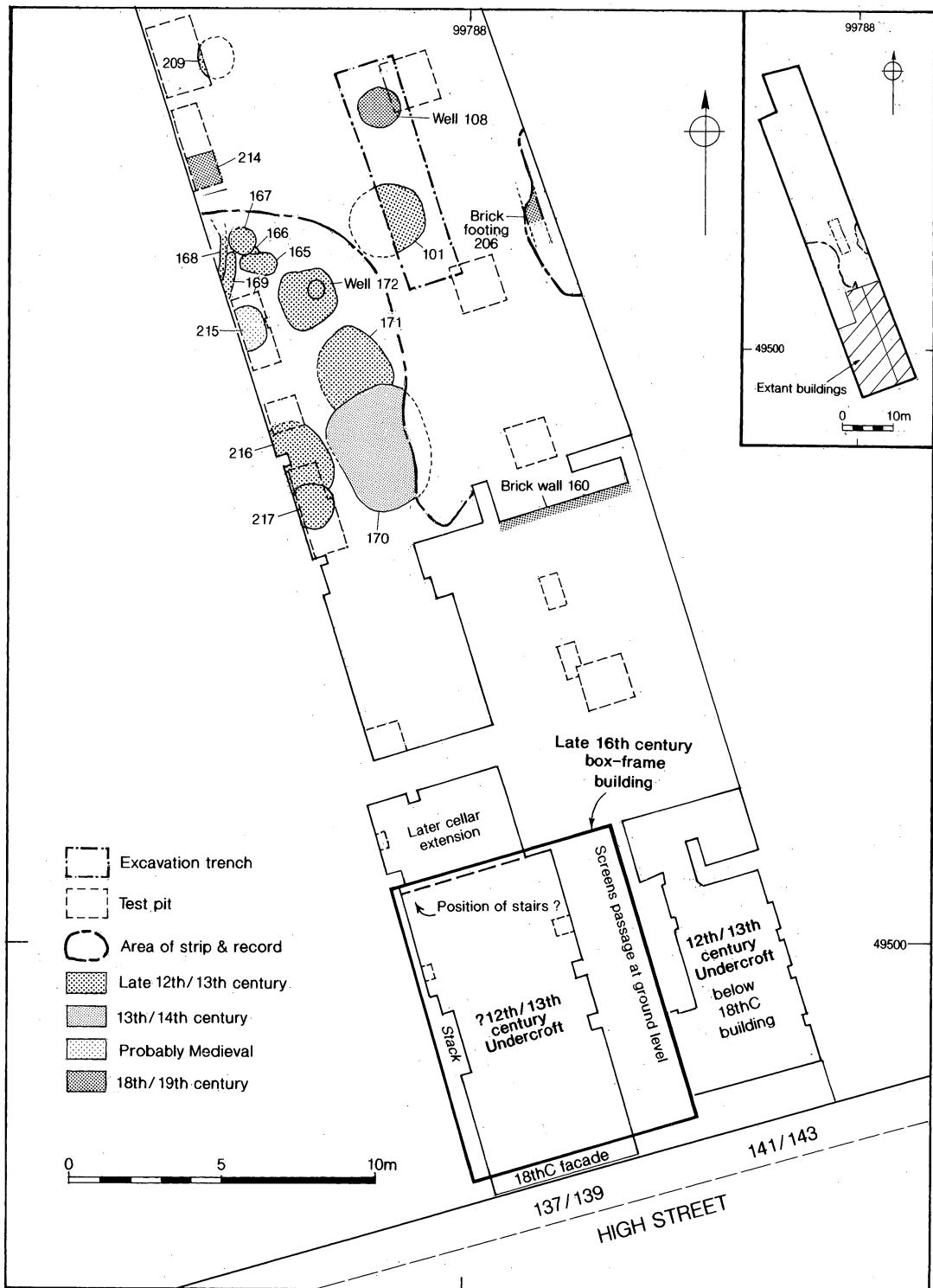


Fig 2 137–143 High Street, Guildford: plan showing locations of principal buildings and excavated features

foundation pits were monitored; all but two of these pits were dug to the rear of the listed buildings to depths of at least 1m.

Natural chalk was revealed immediately below modern made-ground at a depth of 0.15–0.2m. The surface of this appeared not to have been terraced, except at the southern end of the strip-and-record area, and was characterized by several periglacial 'stripes' running north-north-west-south-south-east.

Late 12th–13th century

Eleven features have been assigned to the late 12th/13th century, mainly on the basis of the pottery they contained. A large, circular pit (101), approximately 2.3m in diameter and 0.7m deep lay towards the south end of the excavation trench and extended beyond the limit of excavation to the west. Removal of the concrete slab revealed six features of broadly the same date comprising one large, oval pit (171) 0.63m deep; three smaller, intercutting pits (165, 166 and 167), all less than 0.25m deep; a well (172) which was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m and had a circular ?barrel-lined shaft (of which no trace of the lining survived) that contained some 13th/14th century pottery in the uppermost fill; and a short length of a possible gully (168). A further short length of gully (169) contained no dating evidence, but is thought on stratigraphic grounds also to have been of late 12th/13th century date. A further three pits (209, 216 and 217) probably of this date were recorded in the geotechnic pits, although pit 216 produced no pottery.

13th–14th century

One very substantial, oval pit (170) was of 13th/14th century date. This measured c 5 x 4m and was at least 1.2m deep (not fully excavated). It produced the largest assemblage of pottery from the site (74 sherds/1.55kg) and 26 horncores. One further pit (215) which produced no dating evidence, but was probably medieval in date, was recorded in a geotechnic pit along the west side of the site. Pit 215 is almost certainly the same pit that was recorded in a contractor's trench during redevelopment in 1977. This pit is published as a medieval feature which contained a substantial assemblage of early 16th century pottery in its upper fill (Holling 1984; see below).

Post-medieval

Three brick-lined features were recorded comprising a well (108) of probable 19th century date (excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m) and, along the west side of the site, a pit (214) and a drain or culvert.

Remains of post-medieval (?18th century) brick walls/footings exposed to the south-east (160) and east (206) of the main strip-and-record area possibly represent buildings which correspond with structures shown on a large-scale plan of 1739, John Harris's Ichnography, which is discussed below (p 281 and fig 8). These may have been outbuildings or more substantial structures grouped around an elaborate courtyard and passage (Mr Parson's Entry) which extended between the High Street and North Street. However, these particular buildings are not shown on the 1849 tithe map, and thus had probably been demolished by this time to be replaced by a yard.

FINDS, by Lorraine Mepham

Introduction

A small number of artefacts were recovered and, with the exception of two pieces of burnt, unworked flint, which could be prehistoric, all this material is of medieval or post-medieval date.

Pottery

The small pottery assemblage (194 sherds/2.997kg) includes material of medieval and post-medieval date. Medieval sherds occur in four fabric groups: shelly wares, chalk-tempered wares, sandy wares and whitewares, all of which are well-documented within the medieval assemblages of Surrey (Jones 1998). While the various medieval types have an overall potential date range of 11th–14th century, all could fall within a more restricted range of late 12th–13th century.

The shelly wares (pits 101 and 167, and well 172) can be compared to ware S2, which is widespread across Surrey from the 11th into the 13th century. Two sandy wares with sparse shell (well 172) are more likely to fall within the poly-tempered sandy ware group (Q1), as are the chalk-tempered wares (two sherds from pit 101, including one finger-impressed jar rim, and one sherd from pit 171). Q1 types are most common in the late 12th–13th century.

Whitewares occur in two contexts only (both in well 172); the sherds from fill 186 derive from a rod-handled jug, while the single sherd from fill 188 is a jar rim. These whitewares are closest in character to the Coarse Border ware type of Surrey Whitewares, as produced, for example, at the Farnham kiln(s) (Cole & Timby 1982), from the 13th century.

The remaining sherds are in sandy wares, most of which contain iron-stained quartz within a coarse-grained (<2mm) or medium-grained (<1mm) range. These are equivalent respectively to the GQ2 and Q2 fabrics of the grey/brown sandy ware tradition, common in the later 12th and 13th centuries across the county. A few sherds (pits 101 and 172) are in a finer, micaceous fabric (FQ2).

Post-medieval sherds, which have an overall potential date range of 18th to 20th century, include glazed and unglazed redwares, tin-glazed earthenware (including one wall tile), porcelain, white salt glaze, stoneware, creamware and industrial whiteware.

Other finds

Ceramic building material comprises fragments of brick and roof tile (peg tile). This is not easily datable, but most fragments occurred in contexts containing medieval (12th/13th century) pottery. A few small fragments of fired clay comprising a clay matrix containing fragments of chalk, may represent fragments of daub or cob walling.

A worked antler stamp was recovered, associated with post-medieval pottery (18th–20th century). This comprises a flat, rectangular fragment of antler (50 x 25 x 5mm) with a design worked in relief on one long edge. The central motif, enclosed in a rectangular cartouche between two elongated triangles, could be interpreted as the letters 'LI'.

Two small fragments of stone, a medium-grained sandstone and a coarse shelly sandstone, came from contexts associated with medieval (late 12th/13th century) pottery. These might be stone roof-tile fragments.

The few other finds comprise mainly bottle and window glass, iron, and plain clay pipe stems, all of probable post-medieval date.

ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

Animal bone, by Pippa Smith

Animal bone (146 fragments) was recovered from three features comprising well 172 and pit 101, both of late 12th/13th century date, and pit 170 assigned to the 13th/14th century.

The animal bone was in good condition with little evidence of surface weathering or carnivore damage, suggesting that it was deposited in the pits immediately after use rather than being left on the surface before deposition. Cut marks were evident on many bones, particularly on the skull fragments and horncores.

The assemblage is not typical domestic waste from an urban site of this period, particularly the group from pit 170 which includes 25 cattle horncores (chopped and cut)

and one goat horncore (sawn). The predominance of horncores is more indicative of an industrial process, possibly horn working.

Charred plant remains

Two bulk samples from pit 101 (late 12th/13th century) were processed and both contained large amounts of charred grain fragments and a few charred weed seeds. A small quantity of charred peas/beans was present in one sample, from the lower part of the pit.

Historic building recording, by Bob Davis and Phil Andrews

INTRODUCTION

Nos 137–143 High Street appear in several illustrations of the 18th and 19th centuries, most notably a 1778 watercolour of the High Street (fig 3; hereafter the ‘1778 watercolour’) by Thomas Russell (1748–1822). He was rector of West Clandon and brother of the well-known artist John Russell whose family actually lived at 137/139 (Rhodes 1986; Guildford Museum acc no TG1346). Although there is a somewhat confused depiction of the ground-floor elevation of 141/143, the 1778 watercolour is very helpful in its portrayal of various details of these buildings, particularly on the ground floors which have now been replaced by modern shop fronts.

137/139 HIGH STREET

Introduction

Fairly extensive opening-up work was undertaken by the building contractors in 137/139 High Street. Because of the scale and nature of the earlier surviving remains, a more detailed standing building survey than originally proposed was carried out. In addition to annotating architect’s drawings, some scaled plans and elevations were drawn, accompanied by a photographic and written record. These records were produced in accordance with the RCHME’s specification at level three (RCHME 1996).

A large part of a jettied timber-framed building of probable later 16th century date (figs 4 and 5) lies behind an early 18th century façade, itself altered at attic level in the late 19th or early 20th century and at ground-floor level in a more recent shop conversion. Below this are the remains of an undercroft of probable late 12th/13th century date. The timber-framed building is of box-frame construction of three equal bays, and occupies an area of approximately 10 x 7.5m, aligned at 90° to the High Street (fig 2). It is double jettied on this frontage, with a vertical, gabled rear elevation. The original joists and floorboards at all levels in the central bay, and the roof timbers in this bay, had either been destroyed or damaged by a fire and replaced. The fire probably occurred during the 20th century, but no record of such an event has yet come to light. The location of the damage suggests the fireplaces and stack were on the west side of the central bay, where there have clearly been some repairs or alterations, but no plaster was stripped from this area which might have confirmed this. The location of the stairs was not established, but these may have been in the north-west corner or, and perhaps less likely, in an external stair turret. The majority of the floorboards in the first and third bays (ie those not fire-damaged) at first- and second-floor levels are probably of 18th century date, and a number of the earlier structural timbers had carpenters’ marks.

The brick building immediately to the rear of the listed building is most likely to have been of 19th century origin. It had clearly been extensively gutted and refurbished, probably in 1977 when a long, narrow brick extension was built to the north. These buildings were demolished as part of the 1998 redevelopment.

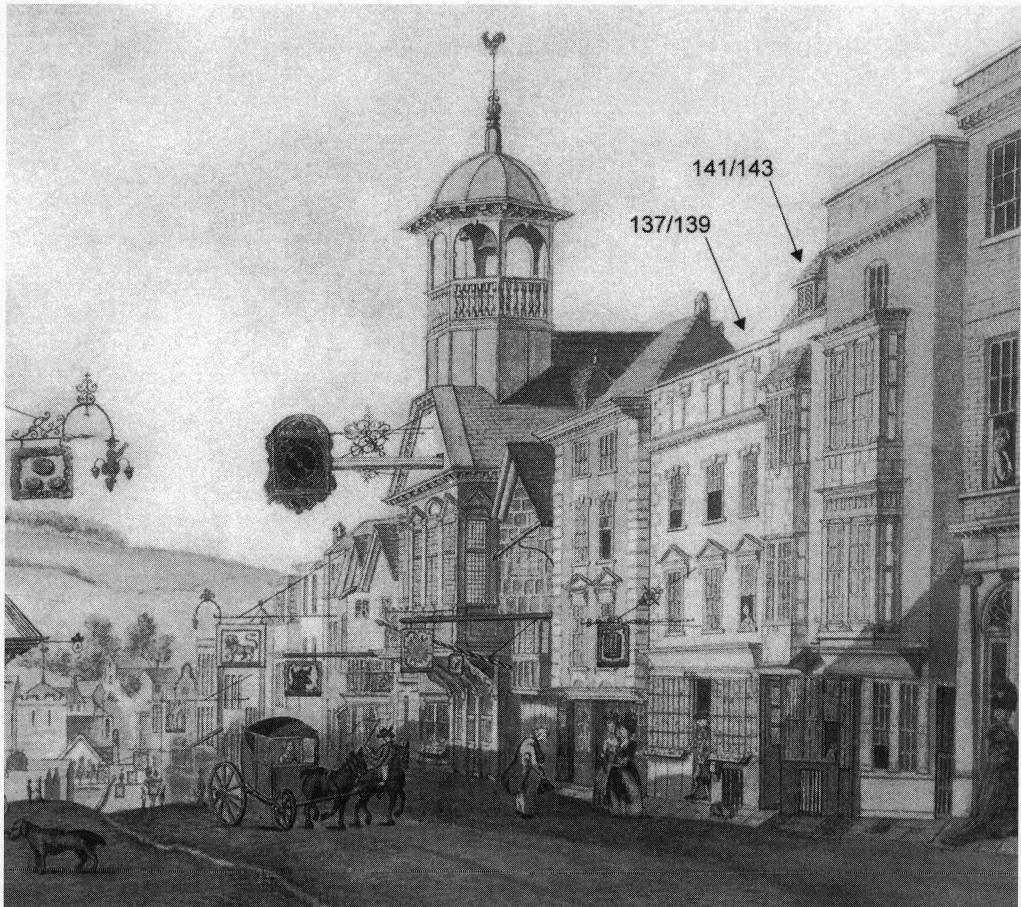


Fig 3 High Street, Guildford: watercolour painting of 1778 by Thomas Russell. Nos 137/139 and 141/143 are indicated. (Reproduced by kind permission of Guildford Museum)

Cellar

Despite modern alterations and extensive plastering over of the cellar walls, it was possible in several places to see traces of an original (?late 12th/13th century) undercroft built of chalk blocks. This measured approximately 10 x 4.5m, and the front wall lay flush with the edge of the pavement to the High Street. Towards the east end of the front wall were the truncated remains of what may have been a cellar light-well. No evidence for an original entrance was seen in this or any of the other walls — the rear (north) wall had been largely removed when the cellar was extended. No early floor surfaces survived and natural chalk lay immediately beneath a brick floor, which was in turn sealed by a modern concrete surface. It is relevant to note that the 1778 watercolour indicates a cellar light-well in the position recorded, but no entrance from the street, whereas the undercroft below 141/143 High Street is shown with an entrance from the street and two window light-wells (fig 3).

Ground floor

At ground-floor level the timber-framed building covers an area of c 10 x 7.5m, with the upper jettied level corresponding with the front of the undercroft — a projection of about

0.8m. The timber-framing of the ground-floor front elevation has all but been removed, but the surviving overhead jetty plate or bressumer has sections of decorative roll-moulding on the front underside. The joists here, as in the jetties above, had been framed into the bressumer using mortice-and-tenon joints. Most of the main posts at this level seem to be in place, and on the east side the posts were seen to rest on a sill beam. The poor condition of the sill beam may, in part, reflect that it probably lay within a screens passage which ran the length of the east side of the building at ground-floor level, providing access to a yard at the rear (fig 2). A mortice hole in the underside of one of the transverse beams probably held a vertical post which formed part of the screen to this passage, and indicates that it was approximately 1.5m wide. This is in the position of the passage shown as Mr Parson's Entry on the map of 1739 and which still appears on 20th century maps (see fig 8 below).

First floor

The first floor has surviving floor joists with tenons pegged into two transverse beams. These beams have plain chamfers with straight stops. A pair of diamond-mortices was found on the upper face of a surviving sill within the timber-framing exposed on the street frontage elevation, with a third possibly concealed by a later post (ie 0.2m apart). This provides clear evidence of windows to the front of the building which were possibly placed symmetrically on this level. Elsewhere, all traces of the earlier windows appear to have been removed when the lath-and-plaster façade was added and new windows were inserted in the early 18th century. One of the main posts, all of which had jowls, on the south side of the postulated position of the fireplace, had extensive traces of a painted, polychrome, floral design, of probable early 17th century date (figs 4 and 6). The next post to the north had faint traces of similar decoration. This decoration may have covered the west wall and perhaps more of the interior on this floor, although no trace survived on the wall either side of the posts since this comprised entirely modern plaster.

Second floor

The second floor also has surviving floor joists with tenons pegged into two transverse beams. It is possible that most of the front elevation timber-framing at this height has been removed (although this could not be verified) causing a sag in the tiebeam above. The west side of the room, which occupies the whole of this floor, had areas of timber-framing (studs and rails) exposed and the timbers showed stave grooves and slots for holding panels of wattle and daub. Most of the downward diagonal braces were also present.

Timbers in the rear elevation showed signs of re-use. Most of the posts are probably *in situ*, but the studs and rails have been in some cases turned and reset into new positions. Where visible, the main upright posts showed the empty mortice slots of diagonal bracing. The downward braces are missing and were probably removed at the same time as the studs and rails were changed.

Attic

The roof has double, clasped purlins with a high percentage of original common rafters in place. The central roof bay, particularly on the west side, has been extensively damaged by fire and most of the rafters and part of one of the purlins replaced. The upper purlin has wind bracing on the underside slotted and pegged into the principal rafters; there were two straight wind braces per bay. The purlins have possible face-halved and bladed scarf joints located within the front roof bay. The three surviving trusses have an upper collar supported by queen struts which are slotted and pegged into interrupted collars tied into the lower purlin. This joint is in turn supported by princess struts. On the rear truss there is clear evidence of wattle-and-daub panelling with stave grooves and slots clearly visible,

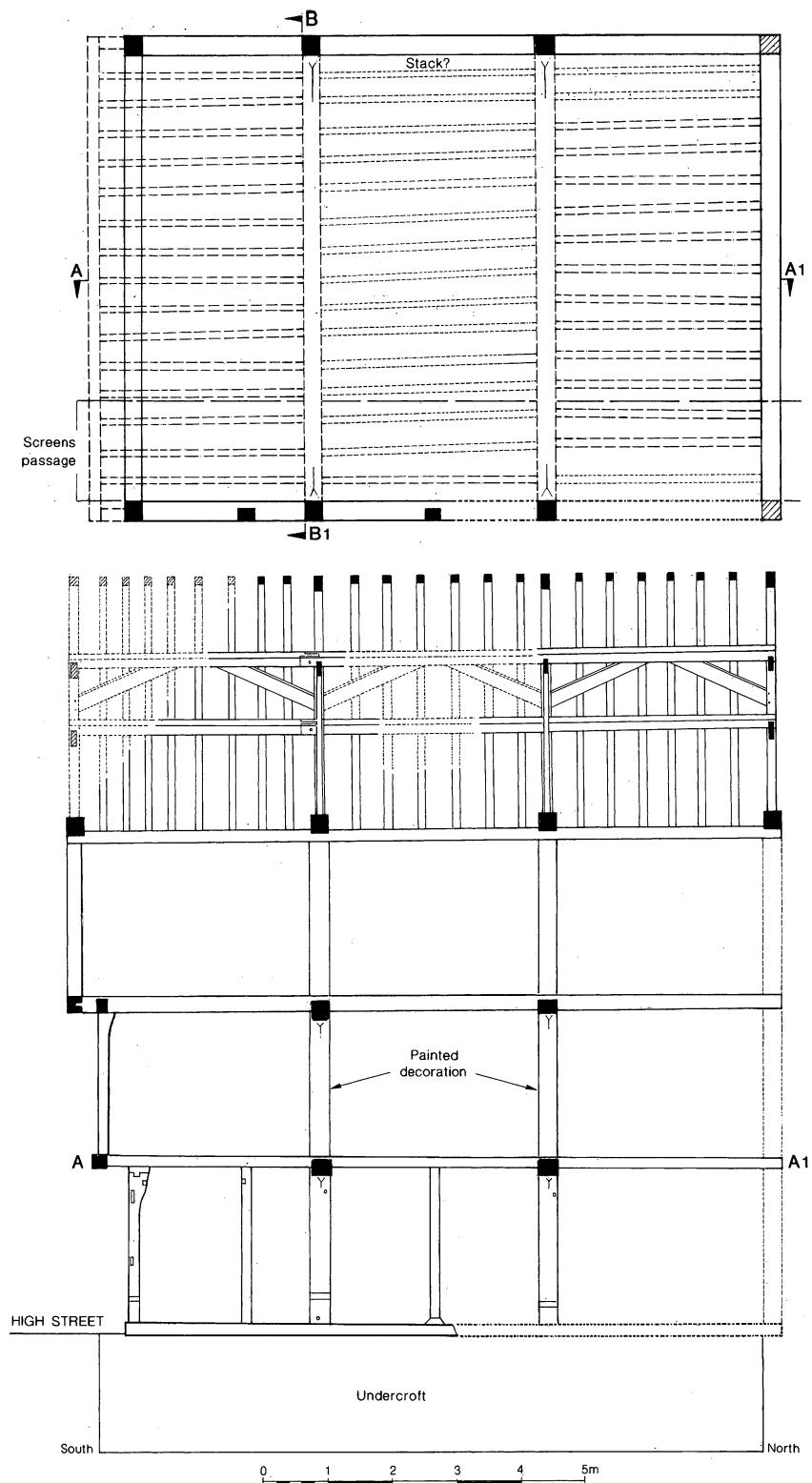


Fig 4 (*opposite page*) 137/139 High Street, Guildford: Ground-floor plan and long section. Dashed lines show first-floor framing; dotted lines show framing which has been removed.

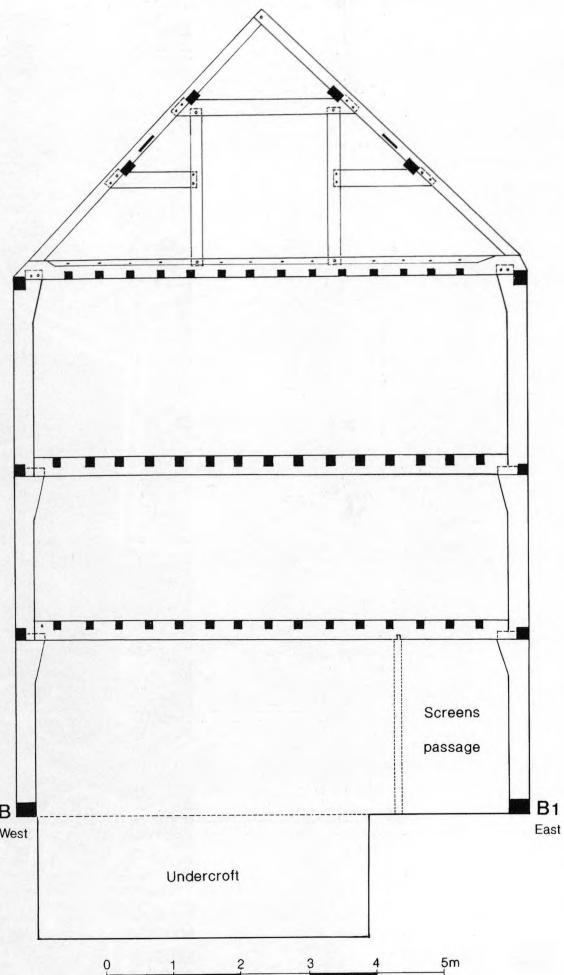


Fig 5 137/139 High Street, Guildford: cross section

although no wattle and daub now remains. The front truss is missing as a result of the rebuilding of the roof at the front of the building, probably in the early 18th century, when it was converted from a gabled to a hipped roof and the new façade was added. The hip rafters are clearly re-used showing mortice holes that do not relate to the present roof. Some of these timbers may have come from the timber-framing of the second-floor frontage.

There is also a dormer at the front of the roof space, added when the parapet of the early 18th century façade was removed. The casement window had possibly original catches attached, suggesting an 18th century date, with perhaps a later, early 19th century window stay. Some of the floorboards in the attic space may have been original, of late 16th rather than 18th century date.

Façade

The early 18th century lath-and-plaster façade was added directly to the front of the timber-framed building, thereby preserving the earlier front and jettying behind. New windows were created at first- and second-floor levels by setting them in deep, splayed, panelled recesses between the old and the new fronts. Examination of the façade suggests

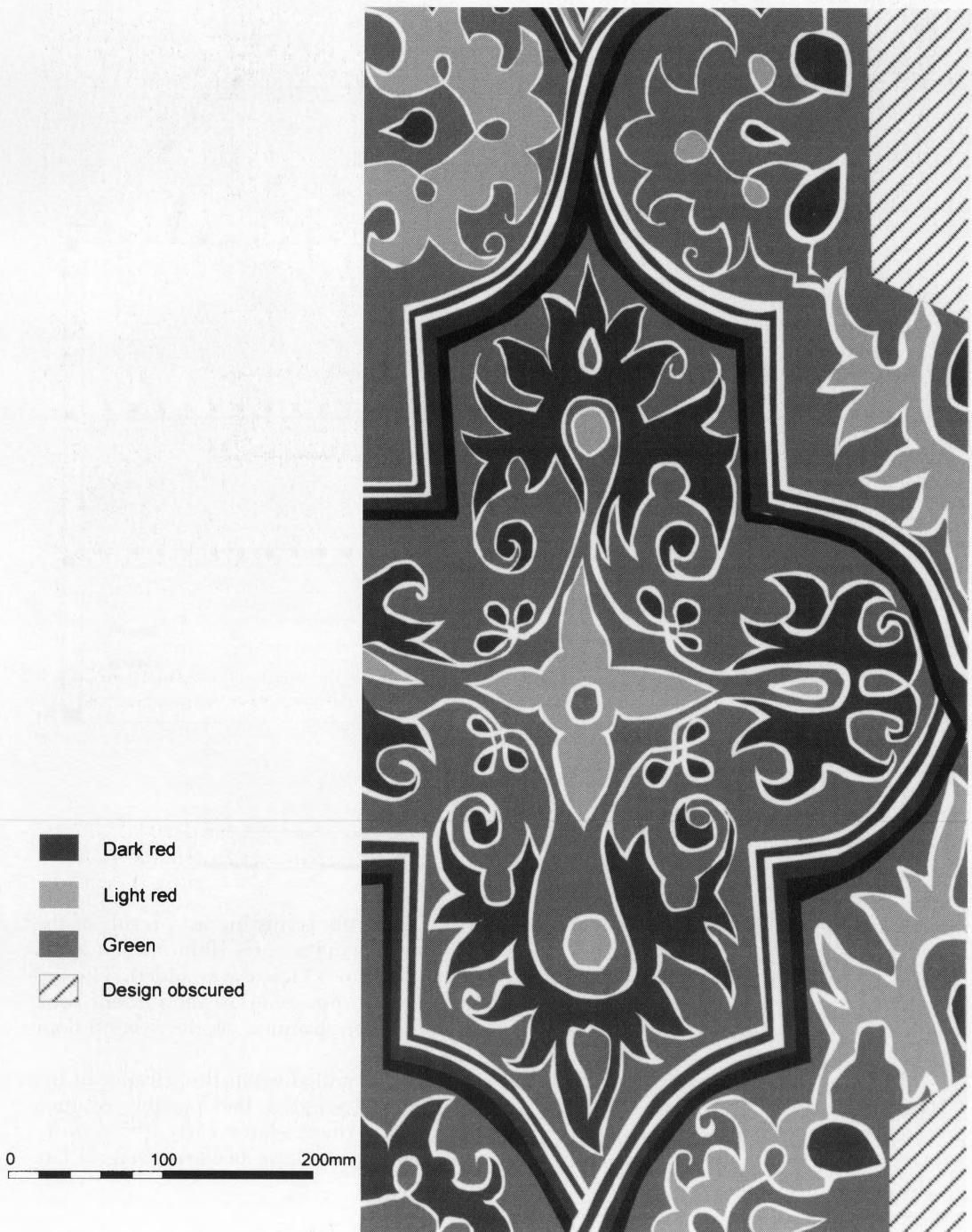


Fig 6 137/139 High Street, Guildford: detail of painted decoration on principal post

that it was substantially re-faced in the 20th century, with modern render on a wire-mesh base. This would explain the clear differences in style between the existing architrave surrounds to the windows at first- and second-floor level and those depicted in the 1778



Fig 7 Guildford High Street in 1998. Nos 137/139 and 141/143 are in the centre. (Photograph by Elaine Wakefield)

watercolour (figs 3 and 7). The 1778 watercolour also shows a parapet with three blind windows, presumably taken down in the late 18th or early 19th century when the dormer window was inserted.

141/143 HIGH STREET

The opening-up work carried out in 141/143 High Street was very limited. The two window recesses, blocked doorway and part of a side wall of a medieval undercroft of probable late 12th/13th century date recorded in an earlier watching brief (GMVEU 1995), but now covered by plaster, were not further exposed. The entrance to the undercroft as well as the pavement grilles to the window light-wells are clearly portrayed in the 1778 watercolour.

An inspection of the attic space and comparison with the 1778 watercolour (fig 3) indicate that the roof has been lowered since the late 18th century, and no evidence for a pre-18th century structure was recorded at this or any level above the cellar. Furthermore, documentary sources (see below) have shown that much if not all of the building from the ground floor upwards was rebuilt c 1728. The existing 18th century façade is in brick, one bay wide, with a canted bay rising through the first and second floors. The stone-coped, panelled parapet is of probable 19th or early 20th century date, added when the earlier roof with attic dormer was replaced (figs 3 and 7).

Cartographic and documentary evidence, by John Chandler

SINCE c 1850

The site was surveyed at large scale by the Ordnance Survey in 1868/9, and appeared on a published sheet at 1:500 scale in 1871. This shows a pair of buildings immediately behind and apparently attached to those on the street frontage, with a narrow (covered) passage

running between 137/139 and 141/143. Behind these is an area of walled garden, in which a rectangular building sits centrally. Later editions of OS maps (at 1:2,500 scale) suggest that an extension to the rear of 141/143 was built before 1896, together with an addition to the east of the garden building. No further significant change had taken place by 1934. Properties in the High Street were renumbered between 1959 and 1961: the present 137/139 was previously 32; the present 141/143 was previously 31.

Guildford trade directories (*Guildford Almanac*; *Kelly's Directory of Guildford*) have been consulted at approximately five-yearly intervals from 1853 until the last issue to be published, in 1975. From these it can be seen that most or all of 137/139 was continuously occupied by a printer/bookseller's business from the earliest date (1853) until after 1950. Likewise 141/143, following its occupancy by a hairdresser and umbrella maker until after 1870, was occupied by an estate agent for most of the period from before 1876 until after 1934, and by a related firm of upholsterers from before 1894 until after 1912. After 1950 businesses frequently changed, although a fruiterer appears to have occupied 137 continuously from before 1953 until after 1967.

FROM c 1850 BACK TO c 1800

The Guildford Holy Trinity and St Mary's tithe map and apportionment of 1849 (SHC: 864/1/73–4) provide a secure anchor for the addresses given by the sequence of directories presented above, and for the lists of earlier tenants and householders. In 1849 the present 137/139 and all the backlands behind 137–143 belonged to, and were occupied by, G W & J Russell (tithe parcel number 35). James Heath was the owner (or possibly leaseholder) and occupant of 141/143, but apparently not of any of the backlands (tithe parcel number 34). These names correspond with those given by the earliest (1853) trade directory. The Russells were there described as 'booksellers, stationers, printers, working binders, cutlers, etc', and Heath was a hairdresser and umbrella manufacturer.

Using ratebooks and other sources it is possible to assert that members of the Russell family occupied 137/139 back to c 1800 and before. James Heath, however, had arrived between 1831 and 1835, and previous occupants of 141/143 had been William Miles (1826 until after 1831), and Widow Harrison (before 1811 until 1826), who presumably remained there after the death of her husband, the householder from before 1790 until after 1807.

Archives of the Russell family of Guildford and Shalford, 1797–1834 (SHC: 1534) shed much light on the premises, 137/139, which they occupied during this period. John Russell senior (1711–1804) was a Guildford cutler whose son, John Russell junior, was the noted artist. By c 1800 John Russell senior's cutlery business had long been combined with those of printing and bookselling, and the trade was continued by his son Samuel until the latter's death in 1824, and then by his nephews (who appear to have sold out between 1853 and 1856). Several very detailed inventories of the premises survive from the 1820s, including a room-by-room inventory of Samuel's effects after his death in 1824 (SHC: 1534/7). The rooms include: library, yard (with bath stove, chicken coop, grindstone, and stepladder), circulating library, pantry, manservants' room, warehouse, back parlour, front parlour, passage, pantry, kitchen, wash-house, cellars, Miss Russell's room, Mr Will Russell's room, small back room, great back room, breakfast room, and dining room. More details of the business are given in another inventory, of 1829 (SHC: 1534/6), which includes: printing office, lumberhole adjoining, a pipe stove, quantity of old boards, etc, outer printing office, little warehouse-under, paper warehouse, sale library, circulating library, shop, upper workshop, little back room, warehouse closet on stairs, dark closet, back shop, back and middle garrets, and cutler's workshop. This inventory includes very detailed lists also of the stock in trade and working tools of the business (see also SHC: 1534/4–5).

FROM c 1800 BACK TO c 1740

No large-scale maps have been discovered depicting the site and its surroundings during this period (the 1739 Ichnography is discussed below). In order to identify the occupants of 137–143 High Street recourse has therefore been made to rating records. These survive more or less complete for the period 1725–1846 among the parish records of Holy Trinity, Guildford (SHC: BR/HT/3/1–2; GUHT/16/1–2).

From this search it becomes clear that 141/143 had only three householders between 1740 and 1800: Robert Harrison, who succeeded Edward Stares between 1773 and 1776, who in turn succeeded Ann Adey between 1746 and 1749. Property 137/139 was occupied by John Russell senior from about January 1760 until the end of the century. He succeeded Samuel Parvish, although it seems clear that Parvish and Russell both moved into the house in about July 1752. Samuel Parvish was in fact John Russell's father-in-law, he having married Ann Parvish in 1741. John became the ratepayer at 137/139 in 1760 because Samuel Parvish had died in that year (SHC: 1534/3). Before they moved to 137/139 in 1752 the property was occupied by Mrs Clarke, widow of Richard Clarke, who was the householder from about December 1740. During this period John Russell and Samuel Parvish are listed as householders nearby, and the location has implications for the birthplace of the artist, John Russell junior, which has previously been assumed to have been at 137/139 (and is commemorated by a plaque to this effect).

The evidence suggests that John Russell senior, upon his marriage to Ann Parvish in 1741, moved into premises within the Bull's Head or Bull's Head Inn (now 123/125 High Street), close to those of his father-in-law, Samuel Parvish, where his bride had perhaps lived with her father since 1728. There the newly-married couple remained until 1752, when they all moved to 137/139 High Street, now Russell House. During their period at the Bull's Head John Russell junior, the artist, was born on 29 March 1745.

FROM c 1740 BACK TO c 1700

John Harris produced the large-scale plan (which he called an Ichnography) of Guildford in 1739. The detail reproduced as figure 8 shows an alleyway or passageway (marked 15) between 137/139 and 141/143 which the key tells us is 'Mr Parson's Entry'. The entry leads to a long irregular courtyard flanked by buildings on both sides. Another passageway (marked 14), immediately west of the site, is Coffee House Gate.

The sequence of householders derived from ratebooks extends back to 1725. It suggests that Ann Ady at property 141/143 had succeeded her father Benjamin Ady, a coffee seller, between 1725 and 1730. At property 137/139 Richard Clarke succeeded William Parson or Parsons (householder from 1725 onwards) between October and December 1740. Although no ratebooks survive before 1725 this evidence may be compared with and supplemented from other sources, including deeds and wills as well as the Ichnography of 1739.

The ownership and rebuilding of 141/143 during this period is described by deeds. Ann Ady, having acquired her father's house in 1726, set about rebuilding it (although the rebuilding may have begun a little earlier, following mortgages of 1716–17). A mortgage of 1728 recites that she had pulled down the messuage, or the greater part of it, in order to rebuild it, and that the messuage was then set up and rebuilt but unfinished; she was therefore seeking to borrow a further £60, in addition to £100 lent to her in 1716. Sarah Parson, her neighbour, also lent her money, and by 1737 the messuage had been completely finished (SHC: G46/4/15, G46/4/20, G30/1/10). Thus the substantial rebuilding of 141/143 can be securely dated between 1717 and 1737, with much of the structural work complete by 1728.

The abutments given in these deeds relating to 141/143 are informative also about 137/139. In 1710 it belonged to Henry Parson, in 1716 to William Parson, and in 1717 to Widow Parson (SHC: G30/3/17–19). This is explained in the will of Henry Parson of

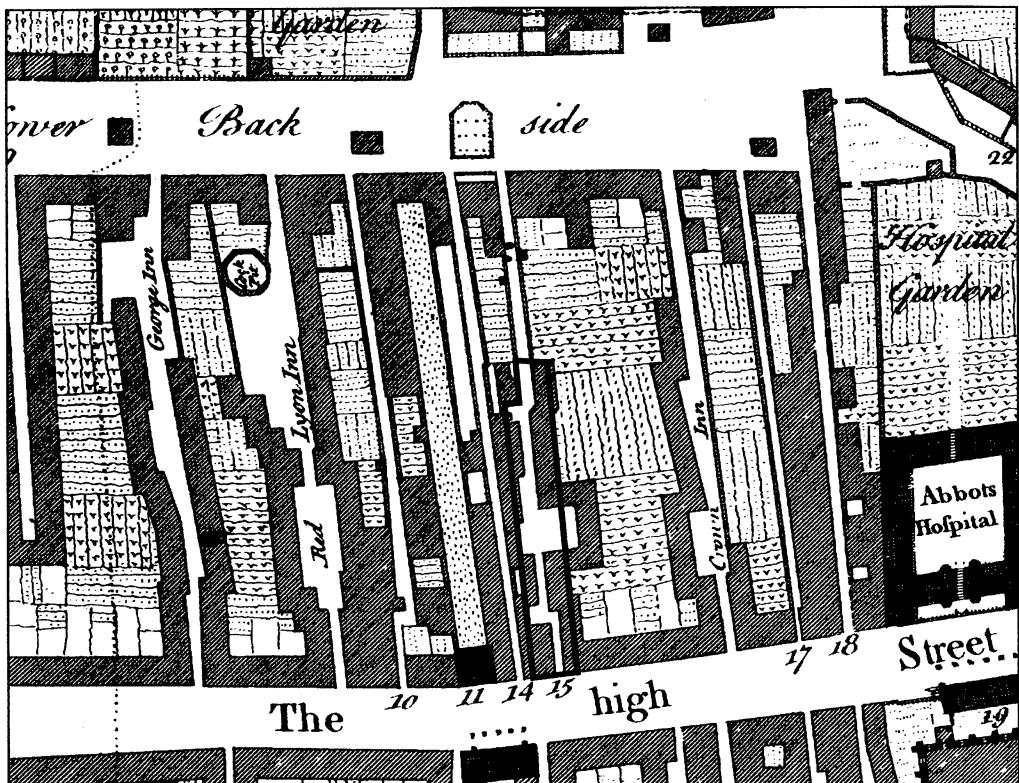


Fig 8 Guildford: extract from the 1739 Ichnography, with site boundary superimposed

Guildford, draper, which was proved in 1712 (SHC: G85/41/11a). His son William continued the business, and stayed in the house until 1740.

The circumstances of William Parson's departure from 137/139 High Street may be enshrined in a folk tradition of possible archaeological significance, which was current at the end of the 18th century (recounted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1799, 438–9). In 1796 two brothers, William and Henry Parson, successful linen and woollen drapers in Guildford, endowed an almshouse at Stoke, near Guildford. Both died during the 1790s, William in 1799 aged 73. He would thus have been born c.1726, and so they were very possibly sons of the William Parson of 137/139 High Street, whose occupation they were to follow. A bill-head of 1762 describes them as 'William and Henry Parson, drapers, mercers and undertakers' (Shilton & Holworthy 1924, 75–6 and pl VI(a)). William junior in 1799 left a fortune of £50,000, and his wealth was explained thus:

It is supposed that the father and mother of the above gentlemen [William junior and Henry], who formerly lived in the High Street of Guildford, found some money hidden in a vault under the cellar of the house which they then inhabited. The circumstance is related as follows: Mrs P one evening examining whether the house was safe, on searching the cellar, fancied a part of it sounded hollow, and on calling her husband, they sent the servant to bed, and, pulling up some of the pavement, found a complete, dry, arched vault. They acknowledged they thus found the vault, but were shy of speaking any thing farther. However, that they found money was little doubted, as their circumstances were from that period considerably improved.

This account, from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, was cited and in part quoted by John Russell senior in the second edition of a *History of Guildford* (Russell 1801, 271). He was perhaps unaware that it very probably related to the building in which he printed the book, and in which he had lived for almost 50 years.

BEFORE c 1700

Despite the large, well-catalogued accumulations of Guildford deeds from this period, research has proved largely disappointing, and little can be said with confidence about the 17th century or earlier history of the site.

There is, however, a possible link between the Parson family and the adjacent properties to the east (ie behind and beyond 141/143). The 1739 Ichnography, it will be recalled, suggests that Mr Parson's Entry led to a long courtyard flanked by buildings on either side (fig 8). Those on the east side are shown as very substantial, and project eastward well into the adjacent tenement or tenements. Something is known of these tenements in the 17th century because they are referred to in deeds of the property which later became Haydon's Bank (SHC: 1479). In 1664 William Cooper sold to Peter and James Quennell, Guildford butchers, the property (two tenements and a malthouse) later to be Haydons Bank (tithe no 32), which was then occupied by Samuel Shaw and Edward Brinckwell, and which abutted the tenement of Richard Gardiner (later John Lee's, tithe no 33) on the west (SHC: 1479/1/1). The Quennells had built a slaughterhouse in place of the malthouse by 1671, and corn lofts by 1683. The 1664 sale was the result of the death in 1663 of William Cooper's father, Edward Cooper, a Guildford baker, who was also Henry Parson's father-in-law (SHC: 1448/3). Edward Cooper left other bequests to Henry Parson, and to Henry's daughter Sarah. Sarah, as an old woman, it will be recalled, helped to finance the rebuilding of 141/143 High Street. The Parsons, like the Russells, were a prominent Guildford family in the 17th century. Several were included on a list of freemen in 1654 (SHC: BR/BUR/2), and five (including William Parson, woollen draper in 1683, perhaps Henry's father) had wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (Webb 1993), which was generally a sign of wealth, or pretensions to wealth.

No 135 High Street, the property to the west of 137/139, was in the ownership of several generations of a family of apothecaries, all named William Shaw. They are recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries living and trading there, and the name can be traced back to 1691 (SHC: BR/T/984/6). Their holdings probably expanded westward, since between 1782 and 1830 they held land also behind the Guildhall (SHC: BR/T/1002/1-5).

The evidence suggests that in this area, although the medieval tenement boundaries were preserved, the process of renewal during this period was carried out by a group of successful tradesmen and businessmen, connected through apprenticeships, partnerships, marriages and financial interdependence. Such links crossed tenement boundaries, so that the Parson family (owners of 137/139) appear to have been able to construct substantial buildings behind 141/143, perhaps impinging also on the backlands formerly owned by their kinsmen, the Cooper family, whilst helping to finance the rebuilding of a coffee house on the frontage of 141/143.

Discussion

Although there has been a considerable amount of archaeological work undertaken in Guildford during recent years, much of it has been small-scale in nature and often in the rear parts of properties which have yielded little structural evidence. The archaeological and building recording work undertaken at 137-143 High Street has provided an unexpectedly coherent sequence of structural and backland remains associated with occupation from the late 12th century onwards. The results of these investigations have

been considerably enhanced for the post-medieval period by a study of the documentary sources.

No evidence for any Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman settlement was found, but excavation was restricted to areas away from the street frontage which itself was truncated by the construction of later undercrofts/cellars. Very limited work in the cellar at 137/139 has indicated the existence of a medieval undercroft built of chalk blocks, similar to that recorded earlier at 141/143 (GMVEU 1995). Both undercrofts are completely or almost completely hidden by later additions and modern plaster, but a late 12th or 13th century date seems probable for their construction, and their recognition further increases the number of medieval undercrofts which are now known along the High Street. The undercroft at 141/143, set back from the pavement, seems certainly to have had access via steps from the High Street, but this was probably not the case for that at 137/139 which was slightly larger and extended right up to the pavement edge. However, the gap between the undercrofts almost certainly marks the line of a passageway between the buildings, and it is possible that there was a side entrance to the undercroft at 137/139 via this passage. Any trace of this entrance may have been obliterated by a later cellar entrance (now blocked in brick) in the same position.

It was the undercroft at 137/139 where, in the early 18th century, it is reputed that William Parson and his wife 'found some money hidden in a vault under the cellar of the house'. It is unclear what this 'complete, dry, arched vault' represented or where exactly it was located. The inference is that it lay under the floor of the cellar and may have been a stone-lined pit of some sort perhaps contemporary with the undercroft, although it could have been part of the undercroft itself — perhaps a blocked door or window, or part of a vault.

The majority of the rubbish pits recorded to the rear of the buildings were of late 12th/13th century date, and probably broadly contemporary with the construction and use of the undercrofts. A well and all these pits appear to lie in the property which belonged to 137/139, but there was no evidence for a physical boundary between this and 141/143. An area apparently devoid of pits, extending back some 10–12m immediately behind the building on the street frontage, hints at the existence of a yard, although no trace of any surfaces had survived later terracing.

Other than the undercrofts, no remains of any medieval structures have survived rebuilding in the 16th century and later. However, a very small quantity of daub and two fragments of possible stone roof tile provide very slight hints as to the nature of the timber-framed structures which are likely to have been built directly on the undercroft walls. Whether these structures were rebuilt between the late 12th/13th century and the 16th century is unknown.

There was only one pit of 13th/14th century date and no features or finds which could be assigned to the 15th century. This later pit contained a notable group of horncores, perhaps indicating horn working in this property; tanning seems unlikely in this location, away from the river. The paucity of later medieval evidence has been noted on other sites in Guildford as well as in towns elsewhere (eg Salisbury) and is likely to reflect a change in rubbish disposal practices rather than any changes in the density of occupation.

At some time probably in the second half of the 16th century the medieval building at 137/139 was demolished and cleared, and a new timber-framed building erected. Although much remained unseen at first- and second-floor levels, hidden beneath later plaster which was not removed during the refurbishment, the ground and attic floors were largely stripped of later accretions. From this it has been possible to adduce a considerable amount about the construction and appearance of the building. No trace of such a building was found in the limited investigations at 141/143, and the documentary evidence indicates that this may have been completely rebuilt in the early 18th century.

The timber-framed building was located on a prime site, on the High Street close to the Guildhall, and this is reflected in its three-storied, double-jettied construction — a form of

building found only in the most prosperous parts of important towns, and likely to be an indicator of considerable wealth. The attic appears to have been an original feature and the medieval undercroft was retained and perhaps altered. The building seems to have had a screens passage along the east side providing access to a yard to the rear, and this passage may also have linked the service rooms with a parlour at the front. The chimney stack was probably located in the central bay along the west side, but the position of the stairs was not established.

Of particular interest was the discovery of traces of painted decoration on two of the principal posts which probably lay either side of the fireplace on the first floor. This decoration is likely to have been part of a more extensive scheme, and might suggest that the first floor comprised a single, large and perhaps important room. If the decoration was more extensive then it may have been applied directly to the wall, or perhaps to canvas or linen which was stretched between the posts. Wall hangings became very common in the 16th century, and around the middle of the century wall paintings also came into use as a decorative feature in domestic houses. The earlier ones were pictorial, but more common and perhaps later were floral or geometrical patterns, often repeated in panels or bands usually contained within a decorative border (Brown 1986, 152). The geometric style is the most common category of late Tudor to early Stuart vernacular wall painting to survive in south-east England. A wide variety of motifs can be found, including interlocking medallions, zigzags, diaper patterns, conjoined circles, grotesques and a variety of arabesques (David Gaimster, pers comm).

The Guildford painting, although not paralleled precisely elsewhere, falls into a group of early 17th century survivals with a trellis of interlocking quatrefoil panels containing stylized arabesque foliage in polychrome colours (David Gaimster, pers comm). Although beginning in the 1580s, the foliate forms become increasingly stylized through time and the very formalized arrangement of the Guildford painting puts it into the 1600–35 period in terms of date (Reader 1941, 194–202; Croft-Murray 1962, pl 70). Some of the closest examples of this style are to be found in Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. A more local, but slightly different floral design has been recorded in a decorative panel above a fireplace at the Old Rectory, Albury, executed in colours of coral, dark turquoise and black (Butts 1987, 10). This is perhaps of late 16th century date, as are a few other examples of wall paintings in and around Guildford (Butts 1987), including a particularly fine example from the Lion Hotel in the High Street (now in Guildford Museum). There are also two in Quarry Street, one at no 13 comprising three panels occupying the entire wall of one of the upper storeys; the central panel includes a figure with costume dated to the mid/late 1560s, possibly as late as 1570 (Mary Alexander, pers comm). The other, at no 53 opposite, covers a ceiling beam and part of the wall around a fireplace on the ground floor. Also of interest are several panels of stylized decoration at East Manor, Bramley suggested to be of c 1580 (*SyAC* 1926, part I, xxxvii). These are mostly on canvas or linen stretched over the walls, but there are traces of painted decoration on a timber fireplace support.

Very slight remains of a window survive at first-floor level, with at least two diamond-mortices in the sill. This perhaps suggests the diagonally-set mullions of ‘wind-eyes’ and may, therefore, indicate that the windows had shutters rather than being glazed. The arrangement of rooms at second-floor level was unclear, but evidence of wattle-and-daub infill survived and there was clear evidence for some of the studs and rails in the rear (north) wall having been altered and in some cases reset.

The attic, an original feature — possibly a garret — also contained some elements which had perhaps been re-used from elsewhere in the building at a later date, and the fire-damaged central bay appears to confirm that the stack was located in the centre of the west side. However, much of the roof structure is original and, along with other features, provides important evidence for the date of the building.

The clasped purlin roof with queen struts, the face-halved and bladed jointing of the purlins, and the straight, rather than curved wind braces all suggest a date in the second half of the 16th century. Various other features would not be out of place in a building of this date. These include the jowled principal posts, square joists, close-studded walls with wattle-and-daub infill, floor joists framed into the bressumers of the jetties as well as being tenoned and pegged into the transverse beams, and the evidence for shuttered rather than glazed windows. The accumulated evidence from wall paintings recorded elsewhere in Guildford and further afield suggests that the example at 137/139 should be ascribed to the early 17th century, and is thus likely to represent part of an early, if not original decorative scheme.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the timber-framed building at 137/139 High Street was constructed sometime towards the end of the 16th century; it could be slightly later, but is unlikely to be much earlier. Future dendrochronological dating would very probably clarify this, but this did not form part of the 1999 recording programme. The suggested dating of 137/139 broadly corresponds with that of the central, three-bayed section of the Guildhall, occupying the next property but one to the west. This has a very similar roof structure to 137/139 and is known to have been built in 1589.

The construction of timber-framed buildings reached its peak in the great period of rebuilding spanning the mid-16th to the mid-17th century, although in the 17th century timber-framing began to be restricted to buildings of lesser importance (Brown 1986, 26). It is not known who was responsible for the rebuilding at 137/139, but the property was certainly in the possession of the Parson family by 1710 (according to the earliest surviving deeds) and possibly had been for some time before. The Parsons were wealthy drapers and a prominent Guildford family in the 17th century, and it was perhaps they who in the late 16th century constructed the existing timber-framed building.

It is tempting to link the substantial assemblage of approximately 100 early post-medieval pottery vessels found in 1977 in the top of a pit to the rear of 137/139 (Holling 1984) with the rebuilding of the house in this property. The wide range of vessels represented, their relative completeness (although they were recovered from a contractor's trench) and the likelihood that they were deposited over a very short period, perhaps all at the same time, might suggest that they derived from clearance of the house immediately prior to demolition and rebuilding. However, this assemblage has been dated to the first quarter of the 16th century (Holling 1984, 300) and may, therefore, pre-date the construction of the timber-framed building recorded at 137/139 by half a century or more.

It is of interest that the pit recorded in 1977 and again in 1998 (pit 215) lay below the party wall separating 137/139 from the basement of 135, which is the vault of the National Westminster Bank. At least two other medieval pits apparently extended beneath the party wall, and this would suggest that there was a certain degree of flexibility across property boundaries, a situation that is clearly evident from documents of the 17th century.

The historical regression exercise has not located documents relevant to the late 16th century building which is incorporated into the present 137/139 High Street. However, a fairly complete picture of the ownership and use of 137–143 has been reconstructed from c 1700 to the present. The principal points of interest to emerge are: that the reconstruction of 141/143 can be dated to c 1728 (certainly between 1716 and 1737); that the 18th century owners until 1740 of 137/139 were members of the Parson family, wealthy drapers, who subsequently endowed an almshouse; that the medieval undercroft beneath 137/139 was probably 'rediscovered' during the 18th century, and items of value found there may have contributed to the Parson family's wealth; and that very detailed inventories survive of goods and possessions existing in 137/139 during the 1820s, when it was in use as a booksellers and printers. The research also suggests that it is very unlikely that the artist John Russell was born at 137/139 (as is popularly believed), since his parents did not move there until he was seven years old.

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