

'Bonners,' 16 Park Square, Luton

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SUMMARY

A description, with reference to the tenurial history of a brick-fronted, timber-framed house built in the town of Luton for Daniel Brown, baker and maltster in 1748.

INTRODUCTION

The facade of the mid-eighteenth-century house described in this paper together with the adjacent building has been illustrated several times before, initially with the caption:

Shops in Park Square today [1964]. The one on the right dates from about 1760.¹

A later reproduction described the buildings as:

Shops in Park Square, originally houses dating from about 1760.²

In 1977, the same photograph was given a more extensive caption:

Shops in Park Square, photographed in 1962. They were originally houses: that on the right dates to about 1745 (*recte* 1748) and was built for Daniel Brown, baker and maltster. From 1748 until 1800 it was also used by the Quakers for their meeting place. Adams Yard was built behind this house in 1796. The house on the left was built in 1850 following the building of Park Street West. The main structure of these buildings exists today.³

The photograph of 1962 showed the house as it was when examined by the present writers in April 1973. The ground floor was divided into two shops, a smaller one occupying the two southern bays of the facade, a larger shop occupying the centre and two northernmost bays. Although in 1962 and for two decades earlier under the same management, the two shops sold different goods: the southern one was a confectioner's, the other sold millinery.

When examined, the building was unoccupied. Subsequently, for two years about 1977 the building was used by a clothing supplier, trading under the name 'Denim Haven'. At this time the facade was painted in a kaleidoscope of psychedelic colours to reflect the merchandise purveyed therein. It retained this facade until 1985.

A photograph taken in the early twentieth century shows the house with only the southern shop cut into the ground floor of the original facade.⁴

LOCATION AND SITE

The house stands on the west side of Park Square, Luton. In 1985 it was completely refaced at both front and back, although the roof has been left largely intact. The new brick front face keeps the original fenestration pattern, although the windows themselves and other features are in a weak sub-Georgian style unworthy even of such a modest original. For most of the last forty years the building was known as 'Bonners': the address is 16 Park Square, Luton.

In 1842 it appeared on the title map of Luton as plot 1612, a house and malting occupied by William Adams.⁵ In John Waller's *Who's Who in Luton in 1842* it is plot 281.⁶

TENURIAL HISTORY

No specific bundle of deeds is known for this property. However, as with so many of the houses in the town of Luton, No. 16, Park Square was subject to entry fines to the manor of Luton. Record of admissions is thus preserved in the court books which have entries from 1732 through to 1847. These entries were written annually.⁷

In 1842, a detailed map of the town was made.⁸ From the accompanying schedule it is possible to correlate occupiers in that year to specific properties. Most of the town was held by copyhold tenure, changes in which can be traced through the court books of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Because of the 1842 map it is possible to relate the individual tenement history of much of the town to specific properties.

The first record of No. 16 Park Square in the court books was on 19 July 1732 when William Gutteridge was admitted to a messuage devised to him by his father, Matthew Gutteridge.⁹ William Gutteridge may be the unnamed son of Matthew Gutteridge, farmer of Luton, who was baptised on 24 October 1699. An unnamed wife of Matthew Gutteridge was buried on 26 July 1706, two weeks after her un-

named child of unknown sex was buried. Matthew Gutteridge, himself, was buried on 13 May 1729.¹⁰ He is described in the parish register as a "rich man"; his will states that he was "yeoman of Dallow".¹¹ Dallow was then a hamlet of Luton, but not one like Stopsley or West Hyde which was regarded as separate for the collection of taxes.

William Gutteridge retained the property for almost twenty years. Sometime before 2 June 1748, he sold it to Daniel Brown, baker. In 1748, William Gutteridge was described as "formerly of Luton, now of Dunstable, a baker".

Daniel Brown II was admitted to the property at the court held on 30 May 1751. Seven years earlier he had been admitted to various small parcels of land and a house "in the South End of Luton" following the death of his father, Daniel Brown I.¹²

When Daniel Brown II died in 1774, aged 63, he owned property both in Luton and at Stanbridge. In Luton, he owned a house near the Market House and another in Church Street as well as a house with an adjacent malthouse and orchard in Stopsley and closes both in Luton and Stopsley. All of these were left to his son, Daniel Brown III. The will of Daniel Brown II makes several personal monetary bequests totalling £832.¹³

One of the other beneficiaries of the will of Daniel Brown II was his daughter, Elizabeth, who died unmarried in 1777. Her will left the lands in Stanbridge — which had been bequeathed to her by her father — to her brother, Daniel Brown III, subject to the payment of a number of monetary bequests. The latter add up to £352.¹⁴

Thus three years after his father's death, Daniel Brown III had reassembled his father's landed property. When he died in 1815, aged 73, he owned property at Luton and Stanbridge, in Bedfordshire, at Mangrove in the parish of Offley, Hertfordshire, and at Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire. All of this was left to his son, Daniel Brown IV. To his daughter, Elizabeth Phillips, he bequeathed £3,000, and to the husband and children of his deceased daughter, Ruth Kempton, a total of £1,500.¹⁵

These bequests are apart from the personal estate of Daniel Brown III which was affirmed at under £4,000.¹⁶

Daniel Brown IV did not retain No. 16 Park Square for long. At the court of the manor of Luton held on 6 June 1816, he was first admitted to "a message over and against the Cross Pond" and then recorded as having alienated the property to William Adams, who was his kinsman. In 1817, the Land Tax returns record "William Adams, late

Daniel Brown, £2-2s-0d".¹⁷ William Adams is recorded in various early-nineteenth-century directories¹⁸ as "baker and maltster" and also as "brewer, corn dealer and mealman". It is he who is the occupier in the book containing the schedule accompanying the tithe map of 1842, recording "William Adams, a house and malting".

The malting attached to the house at this date is known from photographs to have been built in 1796 as the date was picked out in raised bricks within a large panel on the upper part of its facade.¹⁹ It was presumably built by Daniel Brown III, although it was known for many years in the late nineteenth century and beyond as "Adams' Yard". It is thought that the malting was demolished about 1950 when the buildings of J.W. Green's brewery were rebuilt. During the twentieth century, the malting and the house had been in separate ownerships.

The house is not recorded in the "list of hereditaments held of the land of the manor of Luton" in 1904 and the date of the enfranchisement of the copyhold is not recorded.²⁰

The Browns were a prominent Quaker family in Luton.²¹ On 10 June 1748 the house of Daniel Brown was licensed for meetings of the Society of Friends.²² It remained licensed until the Quaker Meeting was built on vacant land adjacent to Castle Street in 1800.²³

DESCRIPTION

The building here recorded was of mid-Georgian type though with a later shop-front inserted in the ground-floor storey. Of two storeys with a cellar and with an attic-stage partly masked by the simple parapet, the building was of darkish red bricks measuring 9 x 4 x 2½ ins (23 x 19 x 6 cm) with brighter red-brick trim for the flat arches above the first-floor windows.

The ground-floor shop-fronts had large plate-glass windows supported by very thin wooden mullions of circular section. The sills were low — 1-1½ ft (0.3-0.45 m) above pavement level. At each end was a flat-elliptical pilaster with simple base and capital, and there was a further example of this between the two shops, south of centre. They supported a simple architrave with bead ornament along the bottom and simple roundels with a dot or boss in the centre above each of the pilasters. A simply moulded cornice was placed above this. All this was carried out in timber. The doorways were set well back from the frontage so that the spaces behind the plate-glass windows served as quite large display areas.

16-16A Park Square, Luton: sketch plan of ground floor

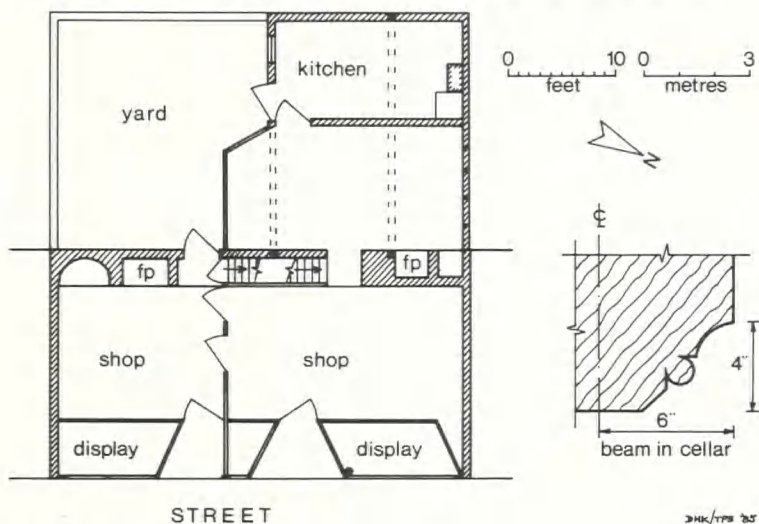


Fig 1 Sketch plan of ground floor of 16-16A Park Square, Luton. Inset shows beam in cellar.

The first storey preserved its Georgian appearance with five sash windows arranged 2:1:2. The central window was further distinguished by a slightly projecting 'keystone' (of brick) reaching up to cornice-level. The windows were set back from the wall-face and had red-brick flat-arches in gauged-work. A moulded-brick parapet-cornice separated the main wall-face from the quite high and plain parapet which had a simple coping of two oversailing courses of stone. At the time of recording, the parapet was rendered, but this was probably not a primary feature.

The roof had a fairly steep pitch and was covered with plain red tiles measuring $10 \times 5\frac{1}{2}\text{-}7\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$ ins ($25.5 \times 14.19 \times 1.3$ cm), slightly cambered in both directions; they had two peg-holes but no nibs. A number had been replaced, particularly towards the bottom of the roof. There were two hip-roofed and tiled dormers with casement windows. The cheeks were rendered, probably from the first.

In plan the building was L-shaped (Fig 1): at the rear a two-storey wing occupied the northern side of the property, the southern half being an open yard. The cellar was reached *via* a straight flight of brick steps and extended only under the main block, not the wing. The cellar was brick-lined with a more or less central brick pier of square section. In the east (front) face were four recesses and a coal-chute, and there was a further recess in the west face. A wide brick shelf ran along the south wall. A moulded

beam (Fig 1, inset) ran north-south from the pier to the south wall.

Much of the ground floor of the main block was taken up by the display areas for the shops. In the south-east angle of the large northern display area was an iron pillar. All the display areas had roller-blinds and had originally been gas-lit. In the main building part of a carved beam was visible above the doorway at the west end of the central partition. The south shop had a fireplace (blocked) in its west wall, and to the south of this was an apsidal recess or press with a slightly domed head. Otherwise, the only features were panelling and shop-fittings of the nineteenth century. The boarded ceiling was probably of this date too.

The west wing at the rear of the main block was divided into two, the smaller western portion forming a kitchen. This contained a built-in copper with a brick stack against the north wall. The larger eastern room had a fireplace in its east wall with a built-in press with a shallow barrel-vault adjoining it. A large bay with sash windows formed the southern end of the room. Ceiling beams and wall-beams (posts or studs) were noted as shown in the plan; the studs in the north wall were only 2 ins (5 cm) wide.

At first-floor level there was a cased beam running the full length of the building. This floor was divided into three rooms, the southern partition being of timber-framing: slim studs at 2 ft 3 ins (0.7 m)

intervals; there was one straight tension-brace at the east end. The north room contained a fireplace (blocked) in its west wall, and there was another in the west wall of the southern room; to the south of this was a small built-in press. The west wall of the west wing at this level was timber-framed with the wall-plate only 4 ft 10 ins (1.5 m) above floor-level: the room was partly within the roof-space. The central post (or stud) was about 6 ins (15 cm) wide; others could be seen only as 'ghosts' behind the plaster. The wing contained a number of windows, all of casement type. The western of the two rooms into which the wing was divided also contained a dormer in the southern roof-slope.

The attic-space was divided into two rooms, both ceiled at collar-level. The north wall was of timber-framing comprising six straight and slight studs only 2 ins (5 cm) wide at about 2 ft (0.6 m) intervals. The central partition had slightly wider studs at about 3 ft (0.9 m) intervals. No traces of studs were observed in the south wall. The purlins, partly set in-pitch and partly square-set, were visible at the level of the ceiling. As previously mentioned, there were three dormers in the east (front) face. The chimney stack at this level was against the west wall; to its north were two presses in the brickwork and a further press was to the south. The attic space of the wing was not used for rooms.

DISCUSSION

There is no reason to dispute the suggested dating of 1748 to c 1760 for this building.²⁴ The shop-front was inserted perhaps a century or so later, though it is interesting to note that the elliptical pilasters pick up a theme which was quite common in Luton in the eighteenth century.²⁵ There is no reason to suppose that the brick frontage was later than the timber-framing behind it; the latter was decidedly late and 'decadent', and we clearly have here a case of a 'show' front with cheaper building behind.²⁶ It is noteworthy that the rear windows (and those of the dormers) were of casement type whilst the principal front had the then more fashionable sash windows. The ground-floor bay at the rear, with its sash windows, was probably a later (nineteenth-century?) alteration. The moulded beam in the cellar was seemingly out of place, and was presumably re-used from a much earlier building, here or elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

No. 16 Park Square, Luton, was a house dating to the middle years of the eighteenth century. There

were ownership changes in 1748 and 1774, of which the first was a sale to a new owner, Daniel Brown II, who in the same year is recorded as having his house licensed for Quaker worship. It seems not improbable that this house was then newly built.

From a description of Luton in 1804, it is clear that Daniel Brown III occupied No. 16 Park Square and that his son, Daniel Brown IV, lived further down the street at the house later numbered 48 Park Square.²² This was the house mentioned in the court roll entry of 1744 as "a house in the South End of Luton". No. 48 Park Square is now demolished but early-twentieth-century photographs make it clear that it was of more recent refurbishment in 1815 than No. 16. Both in 1804 and in 1842, Daniel Brown IV lived in a house with an early-nineteenth-century brick front of three bays and a recessed waggonway adjacent.²⁸ Indeed his widow lived there until 1879.²⁹

Since he had his own, more recently updated, house, it seems probable that Daniel Brown IV sold his father's house to William Adams in 1815 partly because he had no need of two houses and partly to pay the legacies of his father's will.³⁰

William Adams was resident from 1815 to after 1853 in a home which by the end of his occupancy was well over a century old. When built, No. 16 Park Square was a very fashionable house and one of the earliest brick-fronted houses to be erected in Luton. If the supposition be correct that No. 16 Park Square was built for Daniel Brown II in 1748, when he was thirty-two years old, then the house shows what a successful baker and maltster in Luton could afford, having established his business — he had been in business for over seven years — but by no means at the end of his career: Daniel Brown lived in No. 16 Park Square for another twenty-six years.³¹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Luton Office of Messrs Whitbread Ltd., the owners of number 16 Park Square, Luton, for permission to survey the building in April 1973 and for providing every facility so to do. On the documentary side we have benefited from advice and information, as well as access to documents and photographs, at Luton Museum and Bedfordshire County Record Office. At the former we are indebted to Mrs M. Calcut and at the latter Miss P.L. Bell and Mr. A.F. Cirket.

ABBREVIATION

BCRO, Bedfordshire County Record Office.

NOTES

- 1 J. Dyer, F. Sygall and J.G. Dony, *The Story of Luton* (1964), pl. 23 lower.
- 2 [H.O. White], *Old Luton* (1974), pl. 23 lower.
- 3 H.O. White (editor), *Luton Past and Present* (1977), pl. 51 upper.

- 4 Luton Museum, unnumbered.
- 5 BCRO, document with map.
- 6 Printed pamphlet; a reproduction of the map which accompanied the original is sold by Luton Museum. Map is insert W. Austin, *A History of Luton and its Hamlets* (2 vols. 1928), vol. II after 150.
- 7 BCRO, documents X 312/1 (1732-87), X 312/2 (1787-1903), and X 312/3 (1903-1939). Individual court entries are not referenced below.
- 8 See notes 5 and 6. Note the town of Luton was mapped at the scale of 1:1188 by the tithe commissioner, Henry Davies of Kimpton, Herts. The scale (53½ inches to 1 mile) allows properties to be easily identified when surviving.
- 9 Entries in the court book for 1732 are composite for about thirty years preceding.
- 10 *Parish Registers of Luton, 1602-1754* (1979, being Bedfordshire Parish Registers, volumes 53A, 53B, 53C), items not individually referenced.
- 11 BCRO, document ABP/W, 1729/23.
- 12 Daniel Brown, maltster, will (of 1741), BCRO, document C532.
- 13 BCRO, document X80/16.
- 14 BCRO, document BS 637.
- 15 BCRO, document X80/17.
- 16 Note of probate attached to BCRO, document X80/17.
- 17 BCRO, documents QDL, Luton, 1817. He is so recorded until 1832, after which land tax records cease.
- 18 Those produced by Pigot & Co. in 1823/4, 1830, 1839, Robson in 1839, Kelly in 1847, Slater in 1850, Craven in 1853; William Adams does not appear in the directory produced by Cassey in 1862.
- 19 Photograph, of unknown date, reproduced *Old Luton*, pl. 47 lower right, and White (ed., 1977), pl. 52 lower right.
- 20 BCRO, document X 312/3.
- 21 Further material on the Browns is given W.L. Austin, *A History of Luton and its hamlets* (1928, 2 vols.), vol. II, 57-58 with pedigree.
- 22 *Bedfordshire County Records I Notes and Extracts from Quarter Sessions Rolls, 1714-1832* (n.d., but 1907).
- 23 White (ed., 1977), pl. 111 lower; this building is now demolished.
- 24 Dyer *et. al.* (1974), pl. 23 lower; the photograph is omitted in subsequent editions. See also above, with notes 1-3.
- 25 It was used for door-cases to houses published as of the time, cf A.E. Richardson, "Luton Doorways", *Beds. Magazine*, 9, No. 67 (Winter 1963-4), 112-113. In fact, these doorways date to after 1850, and probably reflect the influence of Sir Samuel Smirke's rebuilding of Luton Hoo after the 1843 fire. The addresses given by Richardson are for areas not developed on the 1842 tithe map, with the possible exception of 32 Castle Street. However, Richardson's general point, here followed, that local craftsmen were influenced by working at Luton Hoo (and for that matter Stockwood Park) remains valid. D.H.K. is collecting notes on the influence of the great houses on small towns.
- 26 For the use of contemporary and poor framing behind brick facades cf. T.P. Smith, 'Bedfordshire Timber-Framed Buildings - I', *Beds. Magazine*, 17, No. 132 (Spring 1980), 144; H. Forrester, *Timber-Framed Building in Hertford and Ware* (1965), 5.
- 27 Printed sheet, Luton Museum, 'The Town of Luton in 1804' refers to Daniel Brown III as "Mr Daniel Brown, sen." and Daniel Brown IV as "Mr. Daniel Brown jnr., flour and pig dealer". There is no good published photograph of No. 48 Park Street, Luton. It appears as the large building on the extreme right of 'Park Street Baptist Church Band of Hope leaving for a temperance outing in 1897', in White (ed., 1977) pl. 54 lower. There are good photographs in collections of Luton Museum. Will of Daniel Brown IV, BCRO, document X80/29.
- 28 Comments based on examination of photographs; the building was demolished c 1960. Both the present authors were then pupils in the early years of Luton Grammar School.
- 29 Will of Lydia Brown, BCRO document X80/30, Lydia Wallis was the second wife of Daniel Brown IV.
- 30 Will of Daniel Brown III, BCRO, document X80/17; see above under Tenurial History.
- 31 Paper completed 1 October 1986. The building was examined jointly in 1973 as part of a (now abandoned) project to survey the surviving timber-framed buildings of Luton. Neither author is resident in the town. Figure 1 and description of the building written by T.P.S.; tenurial history by D.H.K.; other portions are joint authorship.