Bishop Lloyd's Palace

A Grade 1 Listed building in the heart of Chester

HISTORY MONOGRAPH No 11 –
OWNERSHIP OF BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE : 'An object of interest to strangers till time shall be no more'

A Lucrative Let

There has been a differentiation between ownership and occupation in these buildings since the eighteenth century. The cellars of the houses and the space for shops at Row Level have given the building flexible possibilities. On the first floors are grander reception rooms and there are spacious attics. At the back there were two large burgage plots with access to Commonhall Street. All this gave ample opportunity for an owner to gain a rental income.

This much accommodation and its central location on Watergate Street have meant that it was only affordable to the richest citizens of Chester.

Running parallel with the economic aspect of the buildings is their beauty. They remain late Tudor timber structures and have an unusual carved frontage on the western house. As Thomas Hughes wrote in 1856,

> *'this house as a masterpiece of art (will) be an object of interest and delight to strangers till time itself shall be no more.'*

This monograph explores the ownership and some of those occupying the building from 1706 to 1900, as well as the public appreciation of its unique carved frontage.

The Partingtons

The Kilmoreys sold the property to Thomas Partington (1656-1716) in 1706. He was a merchant, but also involved in the city's administration. He had been Sheriff in 1702 and Mayor in 1710. His son, Edward (1707-1748), was living in the house by 1733. He also was Mayor in 1740. He was an attorney-at-law and land agent to a number of prosperous Cheshire families, including the Grosvenors.

At some stage another detached house was built in the burgage plot garden at the back of the house (See Fig 1). This was happening in other burgage plots at this time. Lyon House was built at the back of Leche House.

The plan used to show the changes to the rear burgage plots is taken from the sale of the property in 1871 for the heirs of John Pritchard Harrison. This forms part of the Brown family documents from which much of information about the ownership of the house has been taken. Charles Brown employed Lawson, a Chartered Architect, to research the history of the properties from the information available in the deeds.

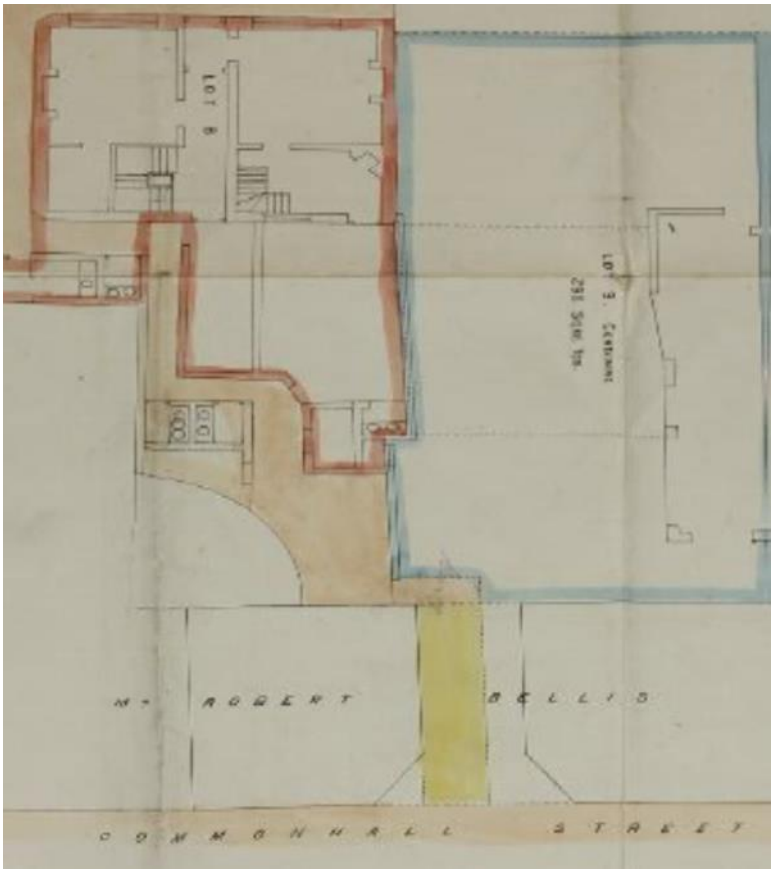


Fig 1: Double pile layout of ground floor, designated Lot 8.

The principal door is facing the Rows, nearly aligned to the passageway from the Rows. Large front windows are shown. Some alteration has taken place from the original house to make it into a rented tenement. A larger entrance to the property from Commonhall Street is indicated. Lot 9 is situated partially in front of the easterly house's burgage plot. It extends over into the neighbouring plot. It is described in 1871 as a builder's yard.

On the Harrison plan of 1871 the ground floor of this house can be seen. A central doorway leads into a long hall. Two large rooms at the front of the house lead off from either side of the long hall. Two slightly smaller rooms lead off from the hall at the back of the house. Stairs at the side of the hall lead upstairs. There are fireplaces in each room.

Lawson felt that this house 'was rebuilt immediately after the purchase of Thomas Partington and that he and his son Edward resided in this house'. This would mean that it was built sometime in the reign of Queen Anne or the early Georgian period.

Lawson actually saw the building. It would have been nearly two hundred years old at that time and quite distressed from the multiple occupancies of its recent years. He would have recognised the style. Thomas and Edward Partington were the last two owners, who actually lived on the property until the Harrisons in 1808. It would seem likely that they would build for themselves a modern residence.

The double pile ground floor plan would suggest a date in Queen Anne's reign. The front of the house was symmetrical. It would be likely to have been built in brick with flush sash widows. There may even have been a classical hint in its decoration: perhaps a pediment at the front.

The house was placed towards the back of the two burgage plots to get as much light as possible. A wider entrance to the rear of the burgage plot would allow access to Commonhall Street for horses and carts.

The property was inherited by Edward's son, Thomas Walley Partington (1730-1791). His aspirations went beyond Chester. He also was an attorney and worked as a land agent for the Grosvenors but moved his practice for them to London. He took other lucrative positions in the capital. On his death he left the huge sum of over £20,000. He sold this property to Thomas Brock in 1774. More on the Partingtons can be found in Monograph 4.

The Yacht

Whilst Thomas Walley Partington and Thomas Brock owned the property it was being used as an inn, The Yacht. This is described in detail in Monograph 5 where the dates suggested for The Yacht are between 1750 and 1783. In the Brown documents Lawson suggests the hotel was here from an earlier date in the Partington ownership. One of the tenants was Thomas Carter. What is important to the further development of the rear burgage plot is Thomas Carter's venture into the stagecoach business. The house was known as The London House for a period of time, because it was a staging post for the Holyhead to London traffic.

The Chester Courant carries prominent advertisements for the service in 1776, but its success was cut short by the death of Thomas Carter in1779. The following advertisement appears in a local newspaper,

> *'to be sold by auction at the Yatch Inn Wednesday 6th January 1779 upwards of 30 seasoned horses for the machine pulling and farming business, with harnesses and four post chaises, part of the effects of Thomas Carter late of the above inn'*

The Yacht was a staging post on this journey. It offered meals and accommodation to the travellers, but it offered the same to the horses. The auction notification suggests that stabling might be needed for up to thirty of them and storage for his Diligences. The coach would have entered the premises through Commonhall Street and the necessary stabling must have been in the burgage plots. We already know that a fairly large house was situated near to Commonhall Street and behind both houses.

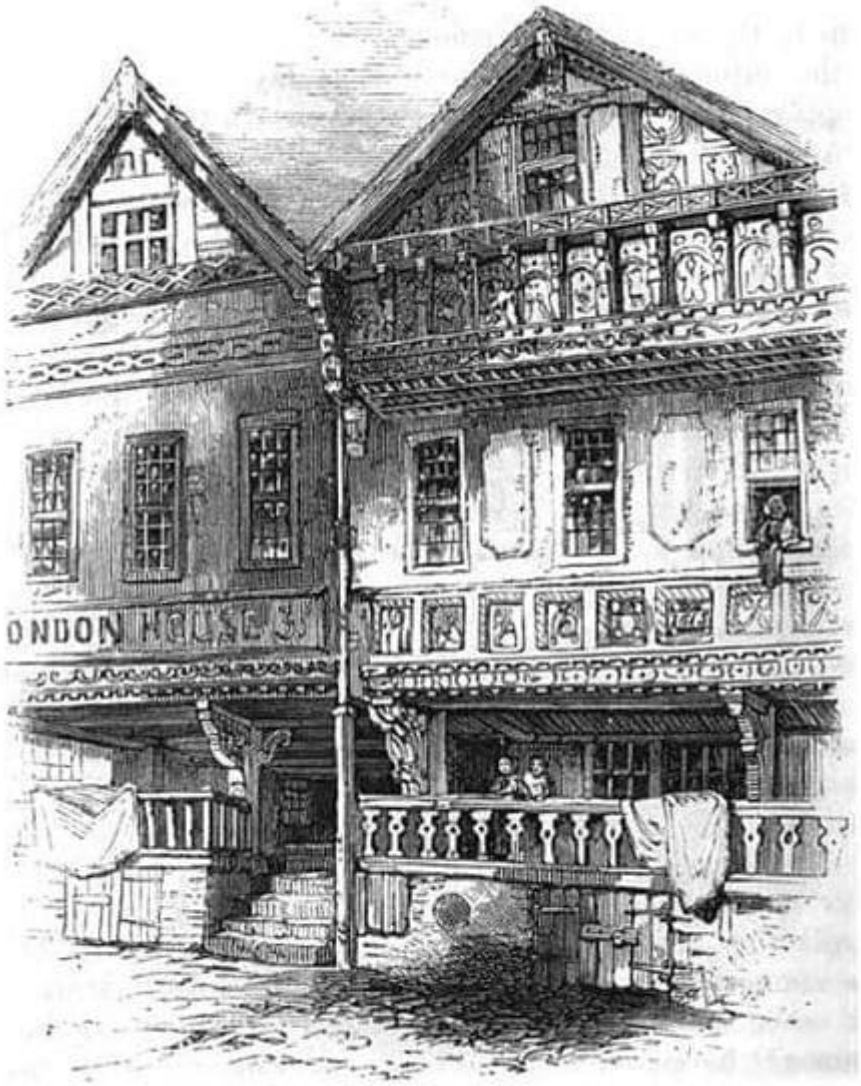
Returning to Fig 1 there is a large open space next to the newly built house, behind the easterly house (Plot 9). This seems to be the only area which could accommodate the needs of the staging company. It goes slightly beyond the original burgage plot of the easterly house. Later legal documents write of a right of passage in the burgage plot through a passage door communicating with the stable yard. This extra land may have been bought at this time. It was still free of buildings when bought by Charles Brown in 1899.

Thomas Brock and some thoughts on Fenestration

Thomas Brock (1728? -1785) began his career as an attorney. He became a freeman of the city in 1756 and the Town Clerk. He had to act as clerk to the Assembly, courts and improvement commissions. Brock was closely involved with all city business. In 1762 the Corporation Improvement Act changed the role of the Town Clerk. He became directly responsible for receipt of all the corporation earnings and payment of all corporation debts.

He became more affluent as a landlord. He bought the manors of Christleton and Preston on the Hill. He also had property in Chester.

He becomes interesting in relation to Bishop Lloyd's Palace, because of his relationship to the architect, John Wood the Younger (1728-82). Wood's father was involved in the planning and building of Bath. The Circus was his work. He also designed Liverpool Town Hall, but the younger Wood supervised its realisation between 1750-54. It is likely that it was then Brock met the young architect and his father. Brock was mixing with architects at the cutting edge of design.



Bishop Lloyd's House, Water Gate Row.

Fig 2: The earliest known drawing of the houses.

'London House' can be clearly seen on the easterly building. The sash windows are inserted. However, the work is by George Cuitt and is from 1809. This was nearly thirty years after Thomas Carter's death and the closing of the stagecoach business. Cuitt presents the buildings in a picturesque way, making them seem interestingly distressed. This was done about the time John Harrison was involved with the building.

The young Wood married Brock's sister, Elizabeth. Thomas became more involved with the family and helped his brother-in-law acquire the land in Bath on which he would build the magnificent (Royal) Crescent. The road joining The Crescent to his father's Circus was named Brock Street in honour of his wife, Elizabeth.

Wood built The Crescent between 1767 and 1774. It was in 1774 that Brock bought Thomas Walley Partington's property from him. Simultaneously he also bought 1, The Crescent, possibly the grandest house in the development. He never actually lived there but rented it out to a retired Irish MP. However, there was a monumental difference between his new Chester and new Bath properties.

The Chester property had grown organically over centuries. It was a magnificent example of late Tudor timber framing and adornment. It was quintessentially local in its design and created by Chester craftsmen. The house in The Crescent was part of a planning concept and designed by a trained architect. Local stone and craftsmen may have built it, but its inspiration came from the classical world. It was the height of fashion. The Chester house had not been fashionable since the turn of the seventeenth century.

Fig 3: No 1, The Crescent is the building in the forefront of the photograph. The Crescent is in the background. Brock bought this property and Bishop Lloyd's Palace simultaneously. The Crescent was at the cutting edge of town planning and architectural design,

What is interesting is that Brock, with his money and grasp of modern architecture, left the Chester houses in a hybrid condition. The late Tudor decoration and gables are kept, but each house had been given three sash windows with any earlier decoration at that level obliterated. Fig 2 illustrates this. He did not choose to do what others were doing and encase the timber framing in a brick Georgian façade. Fig 4 is an example of what he could have achieved. The resulting hybrid concoction was rather ungainly. This was done only three years after Brock bought his Watergate property. Usually, leaving a timber framed building uncovered by a Georgian façade suggested that the owner could not afford this modern make over. This was not the case with Brock. It was a choice on his part.

Fig 4: House in Watergate Street.

New façade of orange-brown bricks, sash windows and pediment encase the original timber framed building. Done in 1777

Brock may be revealing an early appreciation of antiquities. He has recognised the intrinsic value of the highly decorated frontage. Batty Langley writes, '*Gothic Architecture Improved*' for builders in 1747. Chippendale in '*The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*' in 1754 had included three designs-Chinese, Modern (i.e.Rococo) and Gothic. Jane Austen's Catherine Morland happily exchanges the classically planned Bath for the irrational mystery of Northanger Abbey in her 1802 novel.

There was antiquarian interest in the Chester area. The one-time Mayor, William Cowper (1701-1767), had amassed old documents and written nostalgic poetry. The Ladies of Llangollen were joyfully decorating their house with cannibalised Jacobean furniture at the end of this century: conversely, the donors of the furniture were joyfully giving it to the Ladies. Taste was varied.

Brock drowned himself in the Dee in October 1875, a year after selling the buildings. The coroner described him as a '*lunatic of anxious mind*'. Not being of sound mind when he committed suicide meant that he could have a burial, and his body was

placed in the graveyard of the old guild church of St Peter. Brock had been a successful man, who had become extremely rich. The verdict showed the town's recognition of his work, and also that his life was problematic to him. It may be to Brock's foresight that we owe the continued survival of the front of the buildings. He retained the carvings with the Georgian sash windows and plaster.

The house had been sold to Thomas Cotgrave and George Whitley, the Younger, who is described as 'a gentleman' in various legal documents.

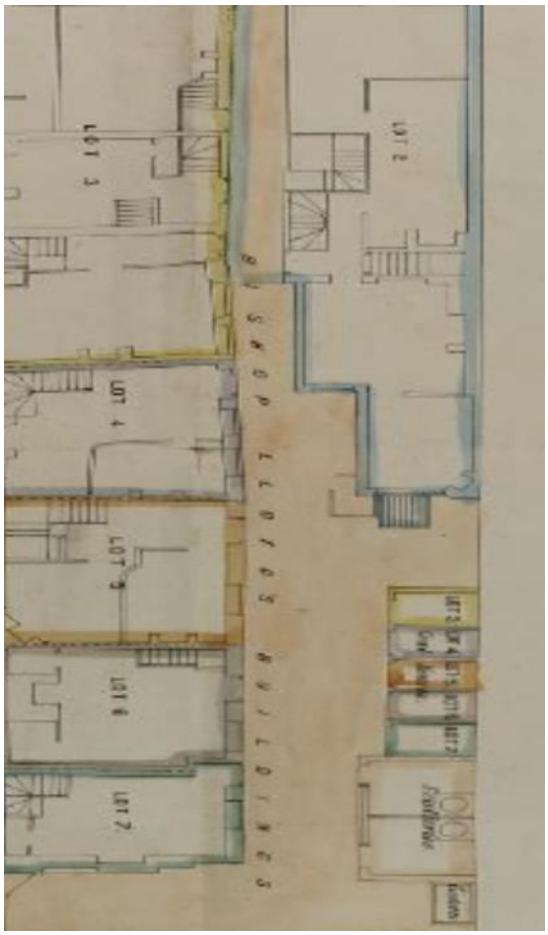
1783-1819 and the end of the Burgage Plot.

The Cotgraves may have lived on the property. William Cotgreave inherited the property from his father He is listed as a silk dyer of Watergate Street in the 1789 Chester Trade Directory. George Whitley continues to share ownership with him.

They sold the property in 1800 to George Christopher Franks (1734-1813), Oldfield Kelsall (?-1817) and Francis Edge Barker (1778-1827). Oldfield Kelsall was Lord Leigh's agent in Little Leigh. George Franks was leader of the band of the Royal Cheshire Militia. He also taught music. Francis Edge Barker was a local attorney.

In 1808 they sold the house to the Harrisons for one thousand pounds.

John Harrison, his wife, his younger son and his family appear to have lived in the house on the burgage plot. Harrison's widow, Jane Harrison, and son, Miles Harrison, were certainly there in an advertisement in the Chester Chronicle to auction the property in 1819. This sale never occurred.



It is from 1808 that the burgage plot changed dramatically. In the 1660s we know it had gardens as well as stables. In the eighteenth century The Yacht's gardens are mentioned. A garden is still mentioned in the documents selling the house to the Harrisons. The Harrisons were obviously not interested in such elegance.

Fig 5: Back of west house in 1871 at Row Level.

For many years this was known as 'Harrison's Court.' The development of the cottages begins almost immediately at the gateway of the passage leading to the Rows at 'B' on the diagram. The cottages formed Lots 3-7 in the 1871 sale. Each has a coal house. Their two latrines are marked. The nightsoil men would have had to come in from Commonhall Street to empty them. The earlier house was a little way behind this new development. The easterly house has also been extended from the end of the passageway.

John Harrison was a house carpenter and builder by trade. The burgage plot from the passageway to the Rows and as far as the Partington's house was filled with five cottage (Fig 5).

Although these were destroyed in the twentieth century, they were not regarded as 'slum' dwellings. The 1911 census records them as having five or six rooms each. They never have any adverse comments in the local press, unlike Brittain's Entry, which was adjacent to the east building. Some tenants remained there many years. They were a quiet small community hidden away down a Row's passage. It is also probably from this period that the accommodation in the timber framed west and east houses began to take on permanent divisions for rental purposes.

After John Harrison's death the property was described as consisting of, 'house, edifices, buildings, shops, cellars, stables, yards, gardens, courtways, paths and passages.'

The Harrisons had a high mortality rate. Of the nine children born to John and Jane Harrison only three survived to adulthood-Sarah (Dutton) Harrison, John Pritchard Harrison and Miles Harrison. Two of these pre-deceased Jane. John Pritchard Harrison had no children. Of the thirteen children born to Miles Harrison only four survived to adulthood. The year 1817 was a particularly difficult year for the family. The father, John Harrison, died in February 1817. The elder son, John Pritchard Harrison, died in December 1817.

A son was born to Miles in 1817. He named him 'John Pritchard' after his brother. Sadly, he died in December 1819, exactly two years after his uncle. This was a family in constant bereavement.

John Harrison died intestate. His interest in the house was passed to his legal heir, John Pritchard Harrison. John Pritchard Harrison was an interesting character. He went to sea and by 1772 was purser on HMS Phaeton. The Phaeton had a colourful history and captured a number of foreign vessels. Spoils were divided amongst the crew incrementally, according to rank.

He returned to Chester where he continued his nautical career by investing his naval money on the docks in Chester. He went into a partnership. Poulson and Harrison had a lucrative business. They had a virtual monopoly of Queen's Wharf, Chester, being its wharfingers, carriers, dealers and chapmen. Harrison also bought property in the dock area. He owned two houses in Kitchen Street and three houses in Crane Street. The firm dealt mainly with Liverpool and Manchester. The partnership was dissolved in July 1817. Harrison wrote a will in October 1817, two months before his death.

He owned the building for ten months whilst he was alive. He owned it for over fifty years after his death.

A Family and a House in Chancery:1819-1871

John Pritchard Harrison had chosen Thomas Tolver and Thomas Bagnall as his Executors. Thomas Tolver's grandson, the surgeon Sir James Paget, describes him as an idler and a parasite,

'a kind of self elected fine gentleman, highly self estimated, who never engaged himself in business. He married a rich widow and lived on the remains of her property, helped later in life by that of an old lady who lived with him and two of his daughters-Maria and Frances-who had incomes of their own'

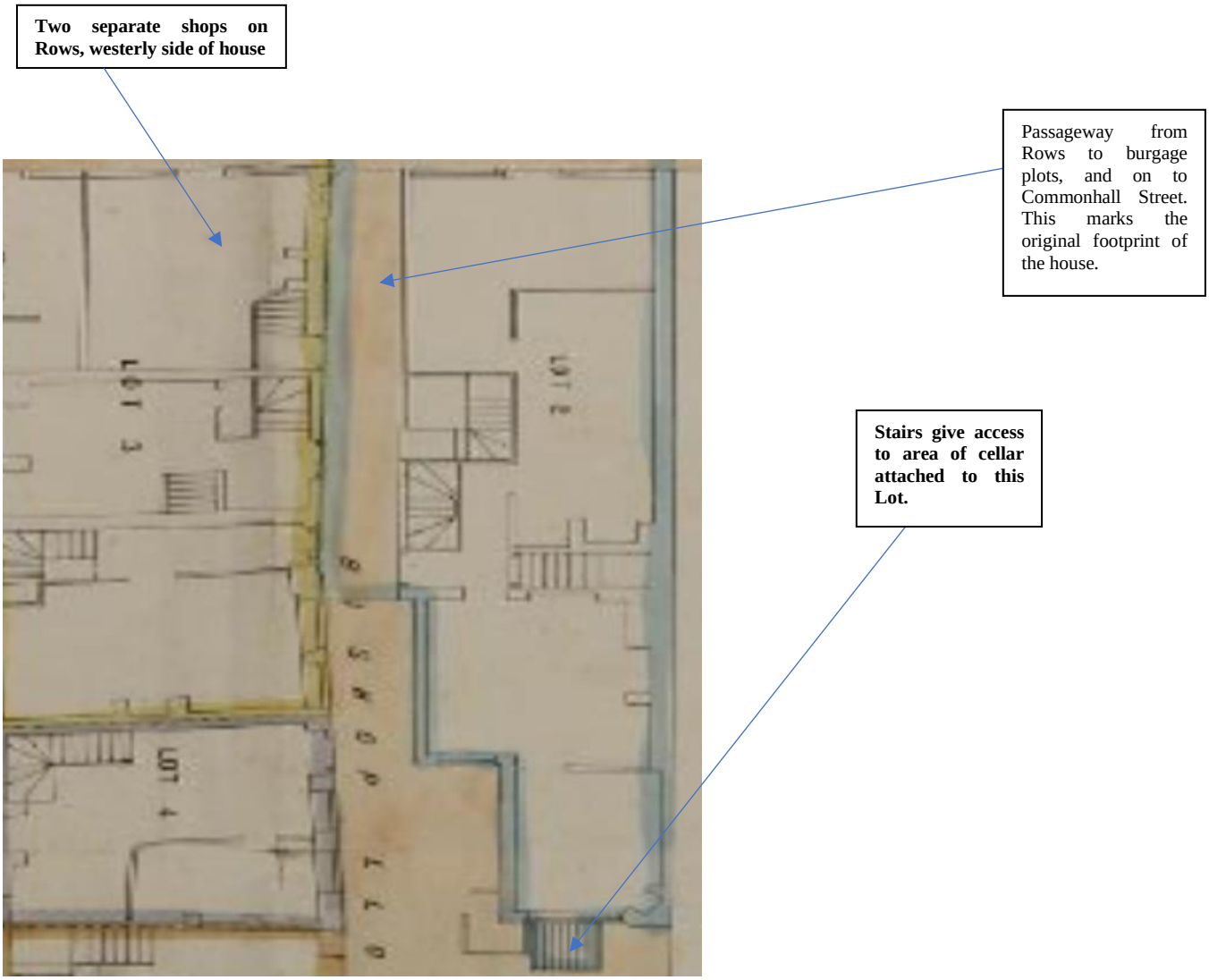


Fig 6: During this period the house is sectioned off for commercial purposes.

The Lots are from the 1871 sale. The house at Row's Level and the floor above are once more divided into two separate units The passageway from The Rows to the burgage plots is a demarcation line. Lot 3 has two shops, a workshop area and a cottage at Rows Level. Steps lead to the floor above where there are three rooms. Lot 2 has a large lower room and access to a cellar area at the back of the building beyond the original footprint of the house. Stairs led to two upstairs rooms, which go over the passageway. No reference is made in any document to attic ownership.

The Tolvers and Pagets were Great Yarmouth families. The Paget family may have been particularly prejudiced against Tolver. Their mother, Sarah, was sent to live with her paternal aunt in Great Yarmouth. It was here that she met and married their father, Samuel Paget.

There was some truth in Paget's accusations. Tolver had married a wealthy widow, seven years his senior. Sarah Applethwaite of Huntingfield, Suffolk, married Tolver in 1777. Their daughter, Sarah Tolver, was born in Huntingfield. It was she, who married Samuel Paget. In 1781 their second child, Maria was born in Chester. Frances was born a year later in Chester.

He did become friends with a wealthy widow. Mary Rathbone of Greasby owned lands in Hoole, as well as Greasby. In his will her husband, Matthew Wilson, ensured her own property was returned to her. This was in 1777. Mary Wilson died in 1797 and left considerable land in Hoole to the Tolver's family.

In 1800 Tolver was declared bankrupt. He appears not to be the most competent person to use as a Trustee to one's will.

The second executor, Thomas Bagnall, was a surgeon at the Chester Infirmary under Doctor Thackeray. He appears to have become more prosperous, as his career progressed. He moves from Foregate Street to Nicholas Street and then to Blacon Point House.

Tolver and Bagnall pay John Pritchard Harrison's debts and other bequests from his cash assets but retain his property as a rental income for his benefactors. The properties remained mortgaged from John Harrison's occupancy in 1808. There were to be three changes of mortgagees in the next fifty-four years, and there was still an outstanding debt on the mortgage in 1869. This was when the fate of the properties was finally decided.

Tolver and Bagnall created a real estate knot, which eventually had to be unravelled in the Court of Chancery. Charles Dickens imagined a similar contemporary protracted problem in Bleak House (1857) with the case of Jarndyce versus Jarndyce in the Court of Chancery,

> *'Innumerable children have been born into the case: innumerable young people have married into it: innumerable old people have died out of it…'*

Thomas Tolver died in 1827 and Thomas Bagnall in 1849. No other trustees were ever appointed. There was no-one to decide the building's long-term fate. For the next twenty years the properties remained orphaned with an accountant and an estate agent collecting the rents and conducting its necessary business.

It was John Pritchard Harrison's nephew, Miles Hale Harrison, who in 1869 eventually attempted to solve the problem of his uncle's will. He had never known either his uncle or his grandfather. He had been born in 1818, the year after John Pritchard Harrison's death. He had gone to live in Ireland at an early age. He had married there and become prosperous. His business premises were in Fleet Street near to Trinity College. At this time Fleet Street was a prestigious address. He commuted to the prosperous village of Cooldrinagh, Leixlip, in Kildare. His connection with Chester had long since been severed.

The original will had left provision for Jane Harrison (John Pritchard Harrison's mother); his two siblings, Sarah Harrison (Dutton) and Miles Harrison and his wife Hetty Harrison (Esther Howard). In 1815 he had married this much younger woman of twenty-one from Wicken, Essex. He was in his mid-sixties. On the deaths of Sarah and Miles their portions were for their children.

Like Jarndyce and Jarndyce, the legal situation becomes more complicated, as the years pass by.

Sarah Harrison (Dutton) died in 1821. She had ten children. Five of these were alive in 1869. Her interest accrued to them. Jane Harrison died in 1826. Her grandson, Miles Hale Harrison, says in his deposition to Chancery that she had 'received all to which she was entitled'. There is some evidence that she tried to resolve the problem of the Executors and the will shortly before her death. She presented to Chancery a family tree

showing those who had been born into the Harrison family and those who had died. Nothing came of this. Her interest in the will returned to the Duttons, Miles Harrison and Hetty.

Miles Harrison died in 1835. He died intestate, but his elder son, Miles Hale Harrison, did inherit a small amount of money. Most of his inheritance from his affluent brother had been assigned to his creditors during his lifetime.

Of his children, who had survived to adulthood, only his elder son's whereabouts was known. George had gone to America in 1848, and no-one had ever received any communication from him. Eleanor had married a John Buddicombe and had left Chester. She had not kept in contact either. Jane died in 1837. She was the only one of Miles Harrison's children to have any children. Only three were alive in 1869-Frederick, Robert and Lucy Peters. Miles Hale Harrison said in his deposition to Chancery that some of those entitled to inherit 'have assigned their shares or interest in the said testator's estate'. Nevertheless, this left Miles Hale Harrison as the principal beneficiary of the estate. His sister's children had equal shares in her inheritance.

Hetty Harrison was the final beneficiary of the will. Miles Hale Harrison in his deposition to Chancery also says of her that she received 'all to which she was entitled'. She must have found her inheritance inadequate. At some point she applied for relief to the Admiralty's Charity for Officers' Wives, because her husband had been a purser on the Phaeton.

In 1823 she had married John Hugh Pritchard. He was a carpenter and builder. They lived on Watergate Street. With him she had a large family. When he died in 1845, she moved into Harrison's Buildings with her family. This would have been adequate, but in no sense luxurious. She was there in 1851. By 1861 she was living with her youngest son, Arthur Pritchard, in Peploe Street, Hoole.

All the Pritchard boys had been apprenticed in a trade. At fifteen Arthur had been a paper hanger's apprentice. He was industrious and ambitious. He became an articled clerk to the Chester solicitors, Duncan and Cayley. In 1865 he qualified as a solicitor. Later he was to go into business as Duncan, Cayley and Pritchard. Finally, this was to be Duncan and Pritchard. This was the Chester firm, which dealt with Miles Hale Harrison's Chancery claim.

Hetty Pritchard died in 1867. She was the last of the four named beneficiaries of John Pritchard Harrison's will. Her portion would accrue to that of the Dutton and Harrison families. It is highly possible that her son, Arthur, contacted Miles Hale Harrison and began the Chancery process. Both were competent businessmen.

Arthur had nothing to gain financially from the actual will. He would have known the buildings and its tortuous history since childhood. Before he moved to Hoole, he would have seen it every day. He would have known it was owned by his mother's long-since-dead first husband. He would be aware that his mother had some income from it. Its fate had become of interest to him. He was to continue to be involved with the building up until his death in 1892.

Who to challenge with the deposition in Chancery was a problem. No-one had acted legally as an Executor for over twenty years. Thomas Bagnall's elder son was still alive. Thomas Bennion Bagnall had been born in Chester but had lived for many years in Thurles in Tipperary, Ireland. Like Miles Hale Harrison he had severed his links with this city. The will had made no provision for the legal appointment of new trustees. However, implicit within the wording of the will was that the 'heirs and assigns' of the original

trustees should replace them after their deaths. Thus, Bennion Bagnall became the defendant in the case.

In spite of all these vicissitudes around John Pritchard Harrison's will, the building continued to be attractive to rent. Unfortunately, many of the names of people, who were involved with the houses were very similar. Where possible their full names are given to prevent too much confusion.

For some time, Edgar's Academy was in the easterly building. In 1831 Joseph Hemingway perambulating the Rows said that the building had a school and shops. John Romney included the school's sign on a drawing in 1851. (See Fig. 7) However, by 1851 the school was no longer in the building.

Monograph 6 discussed a Catholic Oratory being in the building between 1858 and 1860.The public chapel accommodated sixty people. It was probably meeting in the chamber above the Row on the westerly side.

Thomas William Pritchard, Master Brewer, was working and living in the easterly building in 1851. He appears to have emigrated to America. By 1861 his brother, Charles Arthur Pritchard, was keeping the beer house. Small beer houses brewing their own product were a feature of life in Victorian cities. In 1840 there were two hundred and thirty beer houses in Chester.

Although breweries were important industries, many public houses continued to brew themselves. Pritchard was still here in 1871 when the buildings were sold. By then he was only one of seven remaining artisan brewers in the city. By the time the property was sold in 1871 Thomas William Pritchard had named his pub, The Palace Vaults. The name 'Bishop Lloyd's Palace' was becoming current for the houses.

There was some accommodation in the grand easterly upper rooms. A George Halliday lived there.

There were two shops abutting the Rows in the westerly house. In 1871 they were a grocer's and a confectioner's shop. There was also a small shoemaker's shop in the easterly cellar area.

The undercroft was very important. This cellar area went under both houses. It was a large, secure, cool storage area. In 1871 it was the bonded warehouse of the wine merchants, Ayrton and Groome. Mr Ayrton was a local notable. He had been a founding member of the Chester Archaeological Society. He had also been a mayor of the city. That the building was kept in good condition would have been important to him for security, storage and its antiquity. The Ayrton and Groome sign can be seen on Fig 9.

On the old burgage plot there was a large builder's yard. In 1871 this was being rented by a Frank Wright.

Only in the 1851 Census do we get any idea of whom lived in Harrison's Buildings/Court. The house on the burgage plot is also tenanted by 1851 and divided into two units of accommodation.

NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES IN HARRISONS BUILDINGS OVER 16 1851-1871

GENDER	1851	1861	1871
MALE	16	11	21
FEMALE	10	10	20
TOTAL	26	21	41

ORIGINS OF PERSONS OVER 16 IN HARRISON'S BUILDINGS 1851-71

ORIGIN	1851	1861	1871
CHESTER	12	12	30
CHESHIRE	4	2	4
NORTH WALES AND RIONTHSHIRE	7	4	1
LIVERPOOL	2		1
IRELAND		1	1
NORWICH, NORFOLK		1	
WHITTINGTON, SALOP			1
PENBRIDGE, STAFFS			1
ESSEX	1		
DOVER, KENT		1	
HEREFORDSHIRE			1
LONDON			1

OCCUPATIONS OF PERSONS OVER 16 IN HARRISON'S BUILDINGS 1851-1871

OCCUPATION	1851	1861	1871
HOUSEKEEPER	8	5	7
RETIRED/UNEMPLOYED			5
STONEMASON	3	1	1
JOINER	2		
PLUMBER/GLAZIER			2
BRICKLAYER			2
POTTER			1
CABINETMAKER	1		
UPHOLSTERER	2		
DRESSMAKER		1	2
TAILOR	1	1	
SHOEMAKER		2	1
GLOVER		1	
BONNET MAKER			1
MACHINIST			2
HAIRDRESSER	1		
GROCER	2	1	
BUTCHER	1		1
BAKER		1	2
SHOP ASSISSTANT		2	
SERVANT	1	2	2
CHARWOMAN			2
PORTER	2		2
CURRER/GROOM/COACHMA		1	2
SOLDIER			1
PRINTER COMPOSITOR	1	2	2
MESSENGER	1		
SOLICITOR'S CLERK		1	1
POST OFFICE CLERK			1
ASSISSTANT OVERSEER			1

The tenants were generally transient. Two families did stay there many years. When the house was sold in 1871 Mrs Batho was a tenant in the westerly house. She was a seamstress from Staffordshire. She may well have been using this larger accommodation to conduct her work. She had been a 'teacher' at St Mary's School previously. She could have been teaching these skills there. The changing times are shown in that her daughter worked as a machinist, a new industrial skill. Mr and Mrs Batho had frequently lived separately because he was a gentleman's servant. This was becoming another defunct occupation. This family lived in the Court for over twenty years.

A Griffiths family was also there over the twenty years of the census. Mr Griffiths was fifty-nine in 1851, and so the family may have lived there even longer. Initially, his trade was a grocer, but he later became an assistant overseer.

As said earlier, Hetty Pritchard and her five children were living in one of the properties at the 1851 census.

Throughout these twenty years the families in Harrison's Court were mainly from Chester. There is a sharp rise in occupants in 1871, and it does seem that some of the houses were over-crowded at this time.

This coincided with a spike in the local population. Between 1861 and 1871 there was a 17.1% rise in Chester's population to 39,757. The population had been rising fairly steeply since 1841. After 1871 the rise decreases. 1840-70 were boom years in Chester with rises in business and rebuilding beginning in the centre.

The number of children in the Court was always higher than the number of adults. The biggest occupation was housekeeper. Most households had one person, usually the wife, looking after the children and doing the arduous tasks necessary when there were no electrical appliances to help with home maintenance. There was also no running water or toilet facilities in the houses.

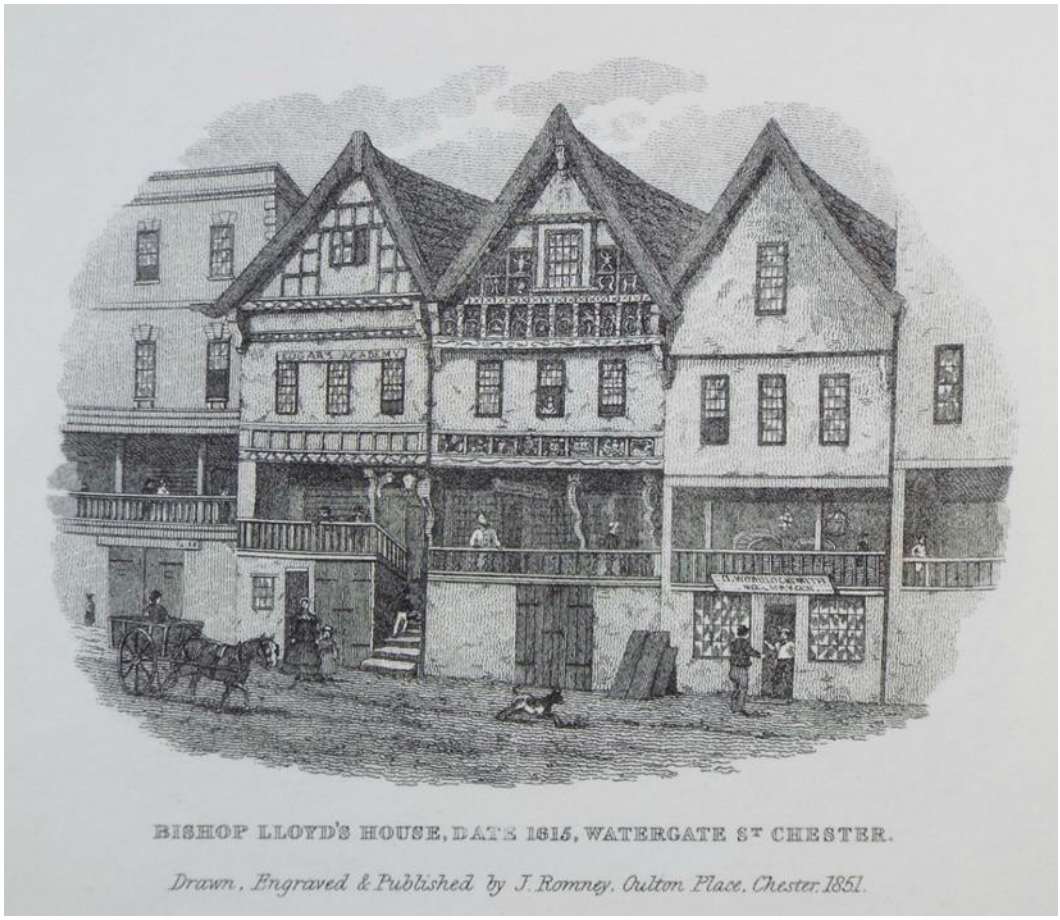
After that of housekeeper, the occupations are mainly artisan, although clerical and machine jobs are beginning to appear. Except for machinists, there seems little employment in the new factories. The one potter could have been employed in a local pottery factory, which closed in 1776. The employment is mainly in the food and textile sector. Building and road services are represented. In spite of the importance of the new railway in Chester no-one seems to work there, unless the 'porters' are railway porters. In fact, the road service in which some are employed is still with horses. Financial, administrative and legal professionals do not live in the court except for two young clerks in 1871.

Meanwhile antiquarian interest in Chester was growing. In 1849 the Chester Archaeological Society was formed. By 1857 it was arguing in its publication for the retention of 'ancient landmarks' in the city. They felt that there was a need to restore the city's old houses and erect new ones 'of the same distinguishing type'. In 1865 it followed its own dictum by buying Stanley Palace to prevent its transportation to America.

Chester's buildings were becoming famed nationwide. Not all late Georgian commentators shared the burgeoning taste of the Archaeological Society. Joseph Hemingway had included our buildings in his History of 1831. However, whilst recognising its age and being erudite about the carvings, he dismisses it. The carvings are 'rudely carved work' and the giants at Rows' level are carved 'in a ludicrous manner'. He seems to have lacked any sense of playfulness.

Fig 7: The board for Edgar's Academy can be seen on the easterly house.

By 1851 when John Romney published this engraving the easterly house was a beer house. This was engraved during the period when the house was 'orphaned'.



Within another twenty years the Victorian guide writer, Thomas Hughes was to present a different view in his perambulations. In 1856 Hughes published 'The Strangers Handbook to Chester' He writes of the building with joy and admiration,

> *'This house is without exception the most curious and remarkable of its kind in Chester and one which perhaps has no parallel in Great Britain. … Grotesquely carved from the apex of the gable to the very level of the Row this house exhibits a profusion of ornament and an eccentricity of design unattempted in any structure of the kind within our knowledge. It is indeed a unique and magnificent work of art. ... If it be true that "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" then will this house as a masterpiece of art be an object of interest and delight to strangers till time itself shall be no more.'*

Shortly before his death in 1862 the artist, John Romney, was commissioned by Cambridge University to do a drawing of the carvings on the front of Bishop Lloyd's Palace. For whatever reason the houses had not been gentrified in the previous century, it had proved a felicitous decision.

1872 To 1899: A House Divided.

The Court of Chancery decided that the problem of John Pritchard Harrison's will, and its fifty years' ramifications would be solved by the selling of the properties.

The sale advertisement described the buildings as a,

> *'…. magnificent specimen of ancient architecture and of great antiquarian interest, the wood carving on the front being of very great antiquity…'*

This may be sale's talk, but it illustrates that the building was now generally appreciated for its age and artistic features.

Fig 8: Bishop Lloyd's Palace in 1874 about the time of the sale, which divided the ownership of the property.

Although artists had portrayed the house in picturesque distress, this shows the buildings were in sound condition. Ayrton and Groome's sign on their bonded warehouse can be clearly seen.

Tolver and Bagnall had created pandemonium. It had taken from 1869 to 1872 to be resolved. Any profits would have to be off set against the accumulation of costs.

The final mortgagee was John Ellis Edwards. He was a local businessman and City Treasurer. He had acquired the mortgage a year earlier. Seven hundred pounds was still owing after sixty years. He had to be reimbursed. The Court of Chancery would have costs. There had been two legal teams. Duncan and Comyns had done the legal work in Chester. Broderick and Gray of Bow Churchyard did the legal work in London.

The local architects, Rimmer and Snugbury, drew up plans of the building for the sale. These had to be available for interested parties. Payment was needed there. Blossoms Hotel and an auctioneer had to be hired for the sale. The sale had to be advertised. In Dickens satirical conclusion to the problem of Jarndyce and Jarndyce no-one in the families involved received any financial remuneration. The whole of that estate was needed to pay legal fees.

John Pritchard Harrison's personal acquisitions in Kitchen Street and Crane Street were also sold at this auction.

The easterly house sold for £200.The westerly house sold for £265.The house built by the Partingtons sold for £152. The four cottages went for £375. The undercroft sold for £220 and the builder's yard for £186. The sale brought in £1,398. John Pritchard had bought the property in 1808 for £1,000 and he had invested in building work. John Ellis Edwards alone was owed seven hundred pounds.

The 1872 sale marked a turning point in the history of the building. For many years the buildings and burgage plots had been divided into different units for rental purposes. Yet the buildings and land had always been a unity, belonging to a specific person or, for a brief time, persons. In 1872 these rental units were sold individually to different buyers. The houses and grounds were no longer a commercial or physical unit.

More about this sale is in Monograph 7 where the full plan of the lots can be seen. These are cannibalised in Figs 1, 5 and 6.

The builder's yard (Lot 9) and undercroft (Lot 1) were bought by Henry Hassall. He had already bought the burgage plot on the easterly side of the building. The Hassall's were a prosperous family, living in Abbey Square. They eventually described themselves as 'landed proprietors', but their money originated in the wine trade. Henry's father was a partner in the business of Hassall and Foulkes.

Chester was noted in Georgian and Victorian times for its disproportionate number of wine merchants. Thirty-four were registered in the city in 1871. By 1911 this had dropped to eighteen. The earlier large numbers could have been a relic from its time as a port importing Gascony wines. It also had a large hinterland with prosperous landed families. Chester itself had a large number of bourgeois families.

The Hassalls moved to London before the father's death in 1853 The family rented property in the best addresses in the capital. Henry continued to divide his time between Chester and London. The undercroft became one of his firm's bonded warehouses. The prosperity of his firm is noted in this newspaper item from the Chester Chronicle in 1851,

> *'One of the most flourishing businesses of the City of Chester is its wine trade and few persons we believe form an accurate idea of its extent and its importance. The arrival of the brigantine Charles Souchay, Captain Thomas, with 150 pipes and 20 hogheads from Oporto, this week, for Messrs. Hassall and Foulkes is a circumstance of local interest. The stock in their immense*

bonded vaults is equal, we understand to that of any private house in the kingdom.'

This immense amount of alcohol was the fortified wine, port. Hassall and Foulkes flasked it for sale. Port was a popular drink amongst the upper and middling classes. It had a social cache.

When Henry died in 1904 in his Regent Street home, he left £144,715.9s. 7p. This was a large amount for a provincial merchant.

Henry Hassall is important in the history of the buildings. He owned the largest portion of this estate and took responsibility for the deeds of the whole property.

Lot 2 was bought by John Henry Fricker. It was the easterly house from the Rows' Level upwards. It had access to its own part of the cellar space. It had use of the yard, two sculleries, four privies and right of way to Commonhall Street. Entry was from the Rows only. Pałace Vault's patrons had no right of access through the passageway to Harrison's Court.

This marked a turning point in a local brewing tradition. The Pritchards had been one of the few remaining master brewers in the city and had brewed on the premises of their beer house, The Palace Vaults. Fricker represented the large brewery interests in the city, the Chester Northgate Brewery. The Eaton family had owned the Northgate Brewery and had built a large brewery complex in the Northgate in 1850. In 1864 the family had sold the business to a partnership of local entrepreneurs. They were a firm, which was expanding. They had numerous tied beer houses, and the Palace Vaults was to be one of these.

At Rows level was to be the bar. The next floor up, which had previously been accommodation, was the smoke room.

Fricker bought the property, but it was quickly passed on to Robert Nicholson, Frederick Gunton and Charles William Duncan for the original price. These three buyers also represented the Northgate Brewery's new partnership.

The property was not bought out right. They had a mortgage with John Rowe Bennion of Nursted House, Petersfield. The mortgage remained with him until Northgate Brewery sold the property to Charles Brown. Bennion's connection with the property appears to be as a cousin to Thomas Bennion Bagnall on Bagnall's maternal side.

Fig 9: Photograph taken on the 16th of June 1887.

The building is still in good condition. The Northgate Brewery have put up a sign saying, 'Bishop Lloyd's Palace'. They are colluding in the antiquity of the building. The beer house was known as Palace Vaults. William Brown referred to it as such in his 1901 will. Neat café curtains are up in the smoke room. It looks like the men have left off drinking to be in a photograph. The shop still exists in the undercroft at this time. Hassall and Foulkes is written above the door to the undercroft.

The westerly property was bought by Arthur Pritchard. Lot 3 consisted of two shops on the Rows. The next section was a room on the ground floor behind the shops; three upstairs rooms and use of an area of cellar space. The entrance was in the Row's passage. Next to this was a cottage with three downstairs and one upstairs room. It was also a desirable buy, because it was the building with the unique carvings on the frontage.

Fig 10:
In no legal documents is there any reference to the attics. This is a much later photograph of the inside of the house. It is taken after T.M. Lockwood and Sons' internal alterations. The staircase is much earlier and shows attic access from Lot 3.

Arthur Pritchard was now thirty-six years old. He was a man still on the rise. He had come a long way from being a trainee paper hangar. He had moved from Peploe Street to Hamilton Street. Unfortunately, his first wife had died, and he was bringing up his two young daughters with the help of a servant. He had become a partner in the solicitor's firm for which he worked. He was later to expand his interests into being a director of Chester Tramway Company and the River Dee Fishing Board. The latter had offices in the same building as himself in 33 Pepper Street. He was to be clerk to the Lancashire Sea Fishery.

He married a second wife, Maria(n) Levens from Edgehill. They had a second family. His love for the sea can be seen in his finally buying Richmond House, Heron Terrace, Abergele.

To buy this Watergate Row property he had to take out a mortgage. He borrowed the money from the Reverend William Hayes, who had just become vicar of St Thomas, Stockton Heath. Before this transfer to Stockton Heath, he had been Vicar at St Andrew, Tarvin. He died shortly after his arrival in Stockton Heath. They had money. His wife had tilework put up in the chancel of the church in his memory and impressive tombs for him and her recently deceased sister. When Pritchard's portion of the building was sold in 1899, moneys were still owed to the vicar's widow, Eleanor Hayes. By this time, she was living in the large Chester House in Worcester. When she died in 1908, she left the impressive sum of £18,328 to her son. Her tomb was also in Stockton Heath. The connection between Pritchard and this affluent family may have been from when Hayes was Vicar of Tarvin.

Arthur Pritchard had a house in Hamilton Street. He liked the seaside. He was a single parent. He had a burgeoning workload as a solicitor. It is a puzzle why he should have bought property of this age in a multioccupancy building in Watergate Street. There were surely more tempting rental properties in Chester that would need less attention.

For Arthur this may have been a 'nostalgia' buy. He appears to have been the person, who had worked to sort out the tangled will. The house may have been emotionally linked to his mother and her first family. He had given his first two

children the second name of ‘Dawson’. Dawson had been his mother’s birth name. This house and street were part of the landscape of his childhood. In some way, he had given his dead mother and his family their dues. He may have felt that his mother had been ill-treated in the original will and how it was executed.

Lots 4, 5, 6 and 7, the four other cottages (see Fig 5), were bought by Joseph Hunt. Prior to Joseph Hunt’s purchase the owners of the property had been rich enough to buy the building outright or had borrowed from private individuals. John Ellis Edwards had been the final mortgagee for the whole property of John Pritchard Harrison. Prior to him the mortgage had been bought and sold by a number of other private individuals. Arthur Pritchard had borrowed money from the Hayes family. The Northgate Brewery had a mortgage with John Rowe Bennion. Joseph Hunt and his brother did this differently. They were members of the Constitutional Permanent Benefit Society of Liverpool.

Uniting together to buy property was not a new idea. The first friendly society to do that had been in Birmingham. Meeting in a pub in 1775, the landlord had created Ketley’s Building Society. All members paid monthly into an account to buy/build houses for members. Once every member owned a property the society would terminate. In 1845 this idea was developed into the *permanent* building society. The society would take on new potential purchasers when an earlier one had a property. The first permanent building society was the 1845 Metropolitan Equitable. By 1860 there were seven hundred and fifty societies in London and two hundred in the rest of the country. Their position was further protected by the 1874 Building Society’s Act.

The Hunt brothers had also bought properties in Cable Street, Liverpool with the Constitutional. When the society was dissolved Joseph Hunt was owed money but could not be traced.

The old Partington House, Lot 8, was bought by William Latham. He initially goes to a private individual for the money, William Lloyd. Lloyd was a provision dealer from Handbridge. By 1875 he too gets a mortgage from a public institution, the North and South Wales Bank.

This had been begun in Liverpool in 1836 to service Wales. By July 1836 a branch had been opened in Chester. The building can still be seen on the south side of The Eastgate, the North and South Wales Bank and Grosvenor Club. It was to finally become part of the Midland Bank.

Both Joseph Hunt and William Latham show the changes coming about in the financial sector for the middling classes. William Latham describes himself as a marine store dealer in Lower Bridge Street. At this period a marine store dealer could range from a chandler to a general provisioner to a glorified rag and bone man. He certainly was not a member of Chester’s top society. He moves to the public sector to help himself finance his aspirations.

The westerly and easterly houses had very few occupants, but the properties in the burgage plot continued to be rented. The overcrowded situation of 1871 never returned. By 1881 the population had dropped from forty-one to thirty-one. In 1901 it drops to eleven, including the property’s caretaker and his wife. There are no children there in this period. This seems to have been a deliberate policy of Charles Brown to remove the tenants from the court. His heirs seem to have reversed this policy because by 1911 there were seventeen adults and seven children living there.

NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES IN HARRISONS BUILDINGS OVER 16 1881-1901

GENDER	1881	1891	1901
MALE	19	14	6
FEMALE	12	14	5
TOTAL	31	28	11

ORIGINS OF PERSONS OVER 16 IN HARRISON'S BUILDINGS 1891-1901

ORIGIN	1881	1891	1901
CHESTER	18	18	2
CHESHIRE	1	4	
NORTH WALES AND MERIONTHSHIRE	2		6
LIVERPOOL		1	1
IRELAND	2	1	1
SHROPSHIRE	1		
NEWASTLE-UPON-TYNE-STAFFS		1	
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	1		
LANCASHIRE	1	1	
ARUNDEL, KENT	1		
HEREFORD	1		
LONDON	1	1	
DUDLEY		1	
YORK			1
LINCOLN	1		
SCOTLAND	1		

OCCUPATIONS OF PERSONS OVER 16 IN HARRISON'S BUILDINGS 1881-1901

OCCUPATION	1881	1891	1901
HOUSEKEEPER	8	8	4
RETIRED/UNEMPLOYED/INDEPENDENT MEANS	1	3	
LABOURER	3	8	
SEAMSTRESS/DRESSMAKER	2	2	
TAILOR	2		2
SHOEMAKER	5	1	
BLACKSMITH		1	
ENGINE CLEANER		1	
PORTER	3		
COURIER		1	
CURRER/COACHMAN	2		
SALT CARTER			1
BUTLER		1	
CHARWOMAN	1		1
SAILOR		1	
SALESWOMAN	1		
IRONMONGER'S ASSISSTANT			1
ERRAND BOY		1	
MUSICIAN	1		
CARETAKER			1
ASSISSTANT OVERSEER	1		
LANDSURVEYOR			1
SOLICITOR'S CLERK	1		

Because 1901 is aberrational the other two censuses are a better dip into the life of the court. Chester born occupants still preponderate. As in the earlier censuses the places from which the other residents originate seem random.

The residents are mainly transient. Mr Griffiths is still here in 1881. He is seventy-five and still an assistant overseer. The Batho's daughter, Harriet Hogg, is there in 1881 and 1891. She is still pursuing the same trade as her mother, needlewoman. As before, most women are housekeepers, and are the largest proportion of workers.

There is a definite change in the occupations of the residents. Previously, there were a lot of skilled building trades represented, but now 'labourers' are the only building workers resident. This could be because a lot of the building in the city centre was nearly completed, or that skilled tradesmen were able to afford better housing outside the courts.

Shopkeepers have also vanished. There are shop assistants in the houses, but no grocers, bakers or butchers. There are a lot of shoemakers in the court. All five of them in 1881 live in the same house. Three are related, but the other two are lodgers. The lodgers come from other areas of the country. One is from Northampton, a shoemaking centre. It seems likely that they are not artisans, but work in a factory. Alfred Bostock and Company had a factory on City Road near the canal bridge from 1872 to 1892. At its height it was producing two thousand to three thousand boots a week. His brother, Edwin Bostock had a small shoe factory in King Street from 1860 to 1902.

Other trades are sharing accommodation. The currer and coachman are living in the same house. With the salt carter they are involved in horse transport. The blacksmith, engine cleaner and porter could be working for the railway.

Financial, legal, and administrative professions are hardly represented. The Solicitor's Clerk, who is there in 1881, is forty and has a wife and four children to support. The land surveyor is a boarder from York.

The Court has continued to be a place of temporary residence. Tradesmen are no longer living here. The residents are more involved in factory work or transport.

In the centre of Chester, the views of the Chester Archaeological Society were being put into practice. New buildings were being erected 'in the same distinguishing style' as the original timber framed houses. T.M. Lockwood (1830-1900) designed one of the most iconic of these, 1, Bridge Street.

He had worked for Thomas Mainwaring Penson (1814-1864). Penson is credited as being the first architect to work in the revived black and white architectural style. Lockwood set up his own practice in the city. His buildings were in various styles, but predominantly influenced by Tudor and Jacobean designs. However, his designs were not historical, but exhibited much flamboyant freedom in their style. They were *reimaginings*.

1, Bridge Street is a memorable concoction on the most important corner of the city. It was built in 1888. It is where the four major Roman streets would have met. It is still one of the most photographed places in Chester and frequently used to represent the city (See Fig 10). It sits catty-cornered to the square with the town's cross. It is emphasised by being a slightly lower timber framed construction to the buildings around it. A wide flight of stairs creates a cinematic entrance to the Rows. The entrance is emphasised by a large, rounded arch and a turret. Lockwood then

pulls out all the stops with parquetting, gargoyles, the Grosvenor coat of arms and two symmetrical attic gabled windows. The Chester Civic Trust book, '*Two Thousand Years of Building'* describes it as a '*somewhat whimsical fancy'*. There will be more of Lockwood's drama later.

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then our building was very flattered in 1889. Thomas Edwards designed King's House on Bridge Street in this year. He chose to include panels of Biblical scenes above Rows Level. Some were even those included on Bishop Lloyd's Palace (See Fig .12). Our buildings were being seen as quintessentially a blueprint of early Chester timber framing. Chester's association with timber framing - both authentic and revival - was now firmly sealed.

Fig 11: No 1, Bridge Street as a synecdoche for timber-framing, Chester and England
Thames Town, Songiiang district, near Shanghai.

Fig 12: Imitation of the panels in Bishop Lloyd's Palace, 1889, King's House

There was new ownership to the properties over the next twenty years. Henry Hassall had divided his life between Chester and London for many years. In 1890 he was sixty-four and extremely rich. He began to break his connection with Chester and the wine trade. In 1887 he had passed one of his properties, The Anchorite's Cell and surrounding land, to the council. By 1891 Charles Brown had bought the builder's yard and the adjacent property.

The undercroft remained empty for a few years. Eventually it was bought by Charles and Walter Washington in 1893. They were involved in selling sanitaryware. This was a growing business field. Bishop Lloyd's Palace and Harrison's Court were typical of most dwellings at the time. They had no water piped to individual dwellings. They shared outdoor cesspits, which had to be cleared by the nightsoil men. At times the stench in the court must have been overpowering.

The newly built houses for the middle classes were having indoor water. They could have the new water closets. A lot of new working-class housing was being built with outdoor flushing toilets. Firms, such as that of Thomas Crapper, Thomas Twyford and Henry Doulton, were producing the new ceramic toilets. The Washingtons had a flourishing business. It was taken over by Walter Samuel Washington in 1897.

Henry Hassall continued to be the guardian of the deeds and documents of the whole of the property until it was sold in 1899.

Arthur Pritchard had not been content with owning merely the westerly building. In 1878 he bought the four cottages from Joseph Hunt. In 1885 he purchased the old Partington house from William Latham. He now owned the westerly house and its burgage plot. Only the shared undercroft was not his. This is a triumph for the one-time apprentice paper hangar. He now eventually owned the whole westerly property.

The new train system ran to Abergele, and he eventually began to commute from his house there to his office in Pepper Street. He enjoyed this full ownership of the property for seven years. He died in 1892 at Abergele. He was only fifty-seven years old. The history of Bishop Lloyd's Palace could have been very different, if he had lived for another ten years.

1899 and 1901: A House United

In 1899 the houses and burgage plots were owned by Maria Pritchard, Northgate Brewery and Walter Samuel Washington. Henry Hassall still held the deeds. Charles Brown owned the builder's yard, which had once been Henry Hassall's property. This was a different situation to 1871 when the property had been divided into nine purchasing lots.

Watergate Street had become unfashionable. Eastgate Street and Bridge Street had the towering shiny black and white revival buildings. Retail had become central to Chester's economy. Here were the new stores, which were attracting shoppers to the city. The markets, town hall and cathedral were on Northgate Street. Watergate Street was a retail backwater. The houses here were often authentic timber-framed buildings or had Georgian facades. In the burgage plots behind them overcrowded and insanitary courts had developed. The entries to these were either through alleys on the Rows or Commonhall Street.

Louise Raynor shows them in picturesque distress, and some were. However, not all were decaying. Figs 8 and 10 are photographs and show our buildings in a good

state of repair. An iron girder had been inserted at Row's Level to help the giants hold up the bulk of the house. The housing on the burgage plot was to remain inhabitable.

To return to the 1857 dictum of the Chester Archaeological Society - 'ancient landmarks' in the city should be retained and restored. Many new ones had been erected in 'the same distinguishing type'. Watergate Street was the treasure trove of original timber framed properties.

Charles Brown (1818-1900) was a member of the Brown family, who owned Browns of Chester. The frontage of the store was in a number of architectural styles, but they were the first to employ T M Penson to create a revival black and white frontage on their store.

The Brown family diversified into property ownership in the city, as well as their up-market retail business.

Charles went into local politics, being mayor in 1880-1881, 1883-1885 and 1891-93. He was a member of the Liberal Party. This created some opposition to the pervading power of the Grosvenor family. He was a philanthropist, particularly interested in housing and sanitation. He was an active member of Chester Archaeological Society, being its Chair before his death. Contemporary Chester and the preservation of ancient Chester were his life's interests.

Fig 13:

The symbol of Chester Cottage Improvement Company indicates properties built by this model housing organisation. This taken from Priory Place, 1898.

The Duke of Westminster was a significant innovator in this organisation.

Legend has it that Charles Brown bought Bishop Lloyd's Palace to prevent American buyers obtaining it. In the ripping yarn, told by his nephew, the buyers from New York were on the high seas coming to England, when Brown clinched the sale. They were going to offer three times more for the building than he had done.

Brown himself spoke of these buyers having been previously in England and *taken* two pillars back with them. We can only assume he meant Roman pillars. He was obviously horrified that any of Chester's artefacts should be sold on the open market and removed from the country.

The situation was actually not so simple as Charles Brown versus dastardly American buyers. He had been buying property in proximity to Bishop Lloyd's Palace since 1889.

Watergate Street lined what had been the *Via Principalis* when the town had been the Roman military station of Deva. Under the Rows and their burgage plots had been Roman buildings. Behind 43, Watergate Row (The Lord is my Strength) can still be seen the remains of a Roman pillar. Charles Brown had photographs taken of it. He cared about preservation in Chester.

Charles Brown went on a property spending spree in 1889. He bought 43 Watergate Row (referred to as The Lord Is My Strength) and 45 Watergate Row (referred to as St Ursula's). He also purchased Fern Cottage, behind The Lord Is My Strength in Williamson Court and the whole of the street from the Rows (the entry between St Ursula's and The Lord Is My Strength) through Williamson Court to Commonhall Street. This was the once notorious slum area called Brittain's Entry. The slum housing was still here, but only two were occupied in the 1881 census. He purchased Bellis' Yards on Commonhall Street and the builder's yard bought by Henry Hassall. In 1890 he bought Benson's Court, which was adjacent to Brittain's Entry and Commonhall Street.

Fig 1 shows Bellis' Yards and the Hassall property. Brown is expanding into our buildings. He has purchased a whole swathe of land from the edge of Bishop Lloyd's Palace burgage plots to the burgage plots behind St Ursula's and The Lord Is My Strength. Only the *actual house* between Northgate Brewery's Palace Vaults and St Ursula's does not belong to him. Its old burgage plot does.

This suggests he had a plan in mind. It certainly meant that he could oversee any building in this large area and protect any more archaeological finds.

Fig 14: An illustration of the properties bought by Charles Brown between1889-1890.

The black lines show the extent of his purchases. The blue lines show the extent of Bishop Lloyd's Palace lands. At the top of the map is The Lord Is My Strength and St Ursula's in Watergate Street with the alley between them. This led to Williamson's Court and turned into the slum street of Brittain's Court. It roughly followed the path leading through what is now Old Hall Place. Fern Cottage and the Roman pillar were behind The Lord is my Strengths. The property at the bottom of the blue line had been Bellis' Yards. This is transposed over a modern street map and is diagrammatic, not spatially accurate. The model housing built by Charles Brown is marked on in Old Hall Place (what had been Brittain's Entry and Benson's Court). Other properties are on Commonhall Street. The area without housing, bordering on Old Hall Place/Brittain's Entry was Hassall's builder's yard.

Charles Brown now owns two houses on Watergate Street. The Lord Is My Strength was a one bay timber-framed house, which had been plastered from the Rows upwards and two sash windows added. St Ursula's was also a gabled one bay property, but seems to have louvred windows. What Brown does to these may indicate his intentions when owning our property. He has an excellent opportunity to do at least some restoration to their original forms. St Ursula's is especially important because parts of its undercroft date to the late twelfth century. This gives it some of the earliest features in all of the Row's undercrofts (See Fig 16).

Instead, he chooses *reimaginings.* The architect for The Lord Is My Strength is believed to be T M Lockwood. The renovations are dated 1890 on the building. The date includes his initials-18CB90. Lockwood is more restrained than in Bridge Street. He retains the one gabled frontage. He close studs the floor above Row level with mock vertical timber framing. He adds a central seven light casement window. Above Row level is the legend, adapted from the Psalms, *The Lord Is My Strength*. Further up Watergate Street God's Providence House also has a Biblical reference.The effect achieved by Lockwood is unconvincing and rather clumsy.

There is no known architect for St Ursula's. Nowhere is St Ursula's attributed to him. This could be because the two buildings were seen as a united pair. Once more we have a total *reimagining* on a building, which had a Georgian façade and an important ancient undercroft. This undercroft is refaced at street level with three sandstone arches and a sandstone balustrade. At some point St Ursula's is carved upon the sandstone. This is said to refer to a tearoom, which was there until 1948. It may have been called that because the alms-houses in Commonhall Street, originally dedicated to St Ursula, were sold and demolished about 1871. Above Row level a fantastical central projecting bay rising for two storeys in black timber. Above Row's level this incorporates white arches. At second floor level it incorporates some unusual white roundels. The whole effect is dramatic but unwieldy (See Fig 19).

Looking at these two buildings Charles Brown, a leading member of Chester Archaeological Society, certainly wished to retain 'ancient landmarks'. In restoring them, his interpretation of using 'the same distinguishing style' was extraordinarily broad. This gives us some idea of the historical latitude to expect in his later treatment of Bishop Lloyd's Palace.

Brown's 1889-1890 spending spree did not stop there. What Brown did in the burgage plots behind these houses was more remarkable than his work in Watergate Street. He knocked down all the twenty-two slum properties in Brittain's Entry and Benson's Court. We do not know what these houses were like. A reporter visited one rented by Mr O' Cafferty in 1865. He described it as consisting of two small rooms.

In their place Lockwood designed four model cottages in red brick. The style was essentially a modified version of Arts and Crafts. Brown even obliterated the name of the infamous street. Brittain's Entry was now to be called by the grander name of Old Hall Place. These red brick model cottages continued into the property, which Brown had purchased in Commonhall Street.

Fig 15: The Lord Is My Strength and St Ursula's in Watergate Street before Charles Brown restored them.

The Lord Is My Strength is furthest from us. It is a plain gabled plastered house with two sash windows at the level above the Rows. There is no evidence of a Biblical legend. St Ursula's is gabled and higher than her neighbour. It has louvered windows. The intervening building between these and Bishop Lloyd's Palace was not bought by Charles Brown.

Fig 16: The Lord is my Strength and St Ursula's after Brown's and Lockwood's (?) reimaginings. 18CB90 can just be seen above the window. Brittain's Entry is between these two buildings at Row Level

The Duke of Westminster was constructing Parker's Buildings at the same time in 1888-1889. These were tenement buildings in the centre of the city. By 1892 he too was looking at building cottages for accommodation in the city area. He set up the Chester Cottage Improvement Company. This was also to create a better quality of social housing to replace the notorious courts on the old burgage plots. In 1895 Tollemarche Terrace was built facing the canal. More houses were built in 1895 at 1-13 New Crane Street and 30, 32 and 34 Love Street. In 1898 an enclave of sixteen houses was built in Priory Place. (See Fig 13).

There is no doubt that there was rivalry, if not enmity, between the Liberal Charles Brown and the Tory Duke of Westminster. The furore created in 1880 when a Liberal candidate won the Chester Parliamentary election was fuelled by Tory discontent. The Commission set up to examine electoral bribery in the city concluded that 'the greatest electoral weapon in Chester is alcohol'. A typical witness said that 'Beer was flowing like water, and men and women were drinking it like milk all day'. This was not untypical of electioneering by all parties over the whole country.

Charles Brown was cited as a briber. He was said to have been giving large sums of money to local innkeepers. This was to effect his national reputation and political ambitions. He still had local support and was quickly chosen as mayor in 1883-1885. This was at the height of the rumpus when the Liberal Gladstone brought in The Corrupt Practices Act. He was to be mayor again in 1891-1893. Brown and Westminster's genuine philanthropy may also have been fuelled by personal and political rivalry. The CCIC could well be called the *Conservative* Cottage Improvement Company. Brown's work was more involved with his own personal aggrandisement, as well as his Liberal politics.

Charles Brown's houses were initially seen as a type of 'estate' village for workers in Browns nearby department store. However, census returns for the next thirty years show that Old Hall Place was never used in this way. In the 1891 census the household heads were a bookmaker, a tailor, a print compositor and a butcher. In 1901 the bookmaker is still living there, but other occupations are instrument maker, tailor, GPO worker, coachman and hotel porter. Fig. 14 shows the layout of the new houses.

Brown may have wished to expand westwards to Bishop Lloyd's Palace. Certainly, Henry Hassall was looking for someone to buy the undercroft and he had had financial dealings with Brown previously. Hassall did not sell it to the Washington brothers until 1893.The Northgate Brewery may have been willing to sell. The real prize would have been the westerly building but the likelihood of Arthur Pritchard being willing to sell would have been low. It was nearly ten years before Brown could extend into this area.

In 1899 Cheshire Notes and Queries said that the building came on to the market in November 1898. The situation was more complex than that. The building and burgage plots were owned by three different parties. In no way could it simply come onto the market. In fact, Walter Samuel Washington was still refusing to sell at the price offered by Brown when the others had accepted his offer. Brown through his solicitors Joliffe and Joliffe, must have initiated the negotiations about the sale.

Something must have reawakened his interest in expanding his property portfolio in this section of the city to include Bishop Lloyd's Palace. After he had bought the

property, he told people that he had no idea what he was going to do with the Row's buildings,

'What am I going to do with it…. I cannot tell'.

He was clearer about the burgage plots. He said that 'the disuse of this and similar gardens led to the formation of the wretched courts, which were such a blot upon Chester.' Behind Bishop Lloyds Palace had been one of 'the worst courts in the city known as Brittain's Entry' He told them that he had destroyed twenty-two of these 'miserable tenements' and built new model cottages.

As this had been done in 1889, he could be thinking of a plan he had in mind to expand this cottage scheme further to the west of his property. From the 1901 census, we know that he had reduced the tenants in the cottages behind Bishop Lloyd's Palace to occupying only four of the houses. Fig 14 shows the size of the plot, if the blue and black portions are combined. A larger and more rational exit to Commonhall Street could be devised.

It may be that the American interest had galvanised him to buy the property. It had reawakened in him a social housing plan, which he had ten years earlier. He had already half completed it, and now wished to finish it. It was not a simple patriotic reaction to a possible foreign sale.

Fig 17: Old Hall Place taken from Commonhall Street in 2023. The road shows the direction of Brittain's Entry. It turned slightly right at the top and led to the alley between St Ursula's and the adjoining property. Lockwood's model cottages are shown. The land to the west still remains derelict as it did when Brown bought it. He died shortly after buying Bishop Lloyd's Palace and never had the opportunity to implement his plans. The much later Weaver Street extension can be seen. It cut through all the old burgage plots.

It was an opportune time to begin negotiations to buy the properties. Arthur Pritchard had died in 1892, leaving his properties and £4,361. 10s 1d to his second wife. She had moved from Abergele back to Chester and acquired Holly Bank on Liverpool Road. Maria(n) had no emotional allegiance to her husband's Watergate Row property. She had never met Hetty Pritchard. She had left her Lancashire home to

move into Hoole. The property might bring in a rent, but she still had to pay a mortgage to Eleanor Hayes in Worcester.

Walter Washington was a businessperson and could store his sanitaryware somewhere else. The price would be the deciding factor with him.

Northgate Brewery had other tied public houses. The Palace Vaults had many disadvantages. Access to Commonhall Street was inconvenient. The toilets were a long way from the pub, as was running water. Northgate Brewery still had a mortgage with John Rowe Bennion of Petersfield on this property.

In the end Maria(n) Pritchard received £1,100 for her property. Northgate Brewery received £530 for Old Palace Vaults. Walter Washington eventually received an adequate sum. Charles Brown owned the whole property in 1899.

In his obituary a local newspaper wrote that,

> *'Mr Charles Brown's last act of public munificence was to renovate and make habitable at considerable personal expense, Bishop Lloyd's Palace, which had fallen into a bad state of dilapidation.'*

This was not the case, as the photographs of the building show. When he had conducted a party of guests around the property in April 1899, he pointed out that the '*interior was in a fair state of preservation*.'

The Rows' properties had been divided into two. The Pritchard property was cut off from The Palace Vaults. The alley between the two had only been available to the Pritchard property. What Brown wanted to do was reunite the property at the floors above the Rows where the Jacobean carvings were. He would keep the properties at Rows' level and the undercroft as independent entities to rent. He also wanted to make the front more unified and remove the sash widows. He could see that these were ugly and incongruous with a late Tudor building.

He turned to T.M. Lockwood to do this. Charles Brown was now eighty-one years old. Lockwood was sixty-nine. He had gone into partnership with his two sons, William and Philip, in 1892. It was this partnership, which was to realise Charles Brown's brief.

Lockwood had worked with Brown on his redbrick model cottages in 1889. He had probably worked on The Lord is our Strength house. That house was rather understated but showed that they both were happy with *reimaginings* when it came to restoration work. We have also seen Lockwood's penchant for eclectic drama in his buildings, as in 1, Bridge Street.

His son, William Lockwood was an architect, who was willing to use new ideas and materials. He designed the controversial St Michael's Arcade, in what was to be extended to become the Grosvenor Shopping Centre. Architectural faience had only been available since 1904. He was using it on a large project by 1909. This was the famous occasion when pressure from the Council and the Bishop of Chester meant that the newfangled faience had to be ditched for black and white on the Bridge Street entrance to the arcade.

This was a unique opportunity. Charles Brown would know that the westerly house was one of Chester's jewels. As Hughes had said,

> *'…. this house as a masterpiece of art (will) be an object of interest and delight to strangers till time itself shall be no more.'*

He and the Lockwoods' practice had a piece of architectural history in their hands with its carvings above the Rows and at the attic level. There were the giants holding up the house from the Rows. Internally, there was important plasterwork.

The Lockwoods blocked the external alley between the houses. This made it into a passageway. A staircase was built into the easterly house from the passage. Reclaimed pieces were used as bannisters. A huge reclaimed Georgian window was put in to give light to the new staircase. Other staircases to this floor were closed.

This created shop areas in both houses leading onto the Rows. The access to the end of the easterly house from the undercroft was retained. This is still there. The westerly access to the undercroft was removed.

Doors were placed between the two houses at the north and south ends of the floor to create access between them both. The old Jacobean staircase to the attic level in the westerly house was retained (See Fig 11).

The extension, which can be seen in Fig 5 as Lot 3, was retained. A casement window was put into the back of the westerly building, letting in light, and overlooking the courtyard. These bull's eye windows were also used internally. Further alterations were made in the twentieth century, disguising some of the Lockwood partnership's work. They are principally at the back of the westerly building.

The genius of the Lockwood practice is to be seen at the front of the building. The carvings were retained. The firm also replaced some of the distressed caryatids at attic level. They also added masks to both houses.

Fig 18; A carving in the attic of two intertwined monsters. At either side is a caryatid. The figure of a woman at the right-hand side is badly distressed. She carries a shield or a man's head. She could be Judith with the head of Holofernes or Salome with the head of John the Baptist. She is original from the late Tudor period. The figure at the left-hand side is in good condition and is the Lockwoods' replacement. It could be an adult baptism. *Skysnapper aerial film and photography*

Fig 19: One of a number of masks added at Row's level on the westerly house by the Lockwoods. *Skysnapper aerial film and photography*.

Fig 20: A similar mask added to the easterly house. The photograph also shows that these two separate houses are not aligned. Part of the Lockwoods' work was to give the illusion of unity between them. *Skysnapper aerial film and photography*

The glory of the Lockwoods' work was in the type of fenestration used to create unity between the houses. The easterly house is slightly taller than the westerly one. The carvings give less space in the westerly house for fenestration than in the easterly house.

The easterly house had only a small vent to let light into the attic storey. The westerly house had a large window in its attic.

The Lockwoods placed the same type of window into the two attics. The frame of the original window can still be seen in the westerly house. Two mullions and two transoms create three bays of windows. Each bay has twenty individual panes of glass. The lead work in the windows seems to rise to form foliage at its top.

It is the use of fenestration in the rooms above Rows' level that is the true master stroke. The six sash windows did proclaim the unity of the house but were aesthetically inappropriate. The Lockwoods make a leap of imagination and unite the houses in a huge swathe of glass. Initially, the eye doesn't register that the windows are a different size in both houses. The carvings leave less space for windows in the westerly house.

In the westerly house there are three bays of glass separated by two mullions and a transom in each bay. This creates a row of smaller windows above larger windows. The larger windows have leaded arches and the smaller ones more intricate patterning.

The easterly house also has three bays of windows separated by two mullions and *three* transoms in each bay. This creates *two* rows of smaller windows over a larger window. One more the larger windows have leaded arches and the two smaller windows more intricate patterning similar to that in the westerly house.

Fig 21: The fenestration in the westerly house. At attic level the original window frame can still be seen. The westerly house has two rows of panes; the easterly house has three rows of panes. The leading is complementary in each house.
Skysnapper aerial film and photography.

This is one of the Lockwoods' total dramatic *reimaginings.* The original fenestration was probably three casement windows in each house. There may even have been more carvings between the windows in the westerly house. Fig 2 shows raised patches between the sash windows on that house. These are visible on a number of other early drawings, and could indicate carvings beneath the plaster.

This fenestration is reminiscent of the extensive use of glass on the Bear and Billet. This building was finished in 1664 and was one of the last timber framed structures to be put up in the city. Its architecture was retrospective, harking back to Chester before the Civil War Its windows resonated with Jacobean Renaissance style. There is a taste of Hardwick Hall and its famous ditty, *'Hardwick Hall/ More glass than wall'*.

The Lockwoods did a brilliant piece of work on Bishop Lloyd's Palace. It has paradoxically a restrained flamboyance. There is nothing tasteless about it.

It lacks any historical accuracy to the period of the incarnation of the house. It does not reflect the class and architectural choices of the local middle-class owners, who had the house reconstructed. Instead, we have an aesthetic delight. If Hughes felt that the house was a wonder with its disastrous sash windows, what a joyous reaction would he have had to the present building.

There was a structural problem, which the Lockwoods had to tackle. The giant brackets were not strong enough to hold up the house. A rather ugly iron bar had been inserted at Row level. They replace it with more columns, probably disguising metal rods. More brackets of giants were added. These were made rather spindly to differentiate them from the original Jacobean highly masculine creations.

Fig 22: The virile Jacobean giant and its spindlier late Victorian companion. Both, with columns, are supporting the upper part of the building.

At a later date the Lockwood practice put in a new staircase to the Rows replacing the original steep ones, which ascended up directly to that level.

It was the end of an era. In 1899 Charles Brown's political and philanthropic rival, the Duke of Westminster, died. Charles Brown died in April 1900. Lockwood died in July 1900. His sons continued the practice until 1906 when they went their separate ways.

Brown was involved in restoring one of the most important town houses in Chester. His plans for behind these houses never came to fruition. He did not find any important archaeological artefacts behind his Watergate properties. What he left was a number of Listed cottage properties and an area of dereliction. This now has buildings on it, but there could have been a little planned Lockwood estate village behind Watergate Row.

Brown loved what he had achieved with Bishop Lloyd's Palace. In his will he asked that his descendants,

> *'…would maintain the property in Watergate Street and especially Old Palace Vaults and Bishop Lloyd's Palace in the same condition as hitherto and that their ancient character should be preserved.'*

Fig 23: The houses as they are now after the Lockwoods' work.

Author: Karen McKay, 2024

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