

# QUEEN ST

## TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE SCHEME NEWSLETTER

EDITION NO. 2

Since the last Newsletter we have been working closely with property owners, and our project partners, to develop grant schemes, and grants have now been approved to renovate the first three historic properties within the Queen Street Gateway area.

Work has already started on number 48, which is home to a local firm of solicitors, and will soon be underway at numbers 47 and 45, which have been vacant for some time, and will be brought back to full use, the owners of 47 having planning

approval for conversion to flats, whilst 45 will be renovated as lettable office space. The 3 properties will benefit from grants totalling some £165,000, with the works expected to be completed by mid-summer 2018.

The properties are late-Georgian townhouses, dating from about 1815. They remain remarkably intact both externally and internally with many surviving features of interest, and are therefore listed at grade II.

Queen Street was laid out in the 1770's across then open garden crofts. The northern side of the street was fully developed by the late 1780s, but for more than forty years the southern side of the street remained as open land without any development. In contrast to the northern side of the street, once development commenced it was undertaken in a more disciplined fashion in the form of virtually identical blocks of 3 storey townhouses infilling between the notable civic and ecclesiastical buildings that still form such a distinctive feature on the southern side of the street. Numbers 47 and 48 form part of a short terrace infilling between the Dispensary and Assembly Rooms (later the Crown Court), with 45 paired with 44 between the Dispensary and the Mechanics Institute (now the Army Careers Office). Prior to the construction of the Express and Star building a continuous terrace of similar houses



occupied the longer frontage between the Assembly Rooms and the site of the Congregational Chapel on the corner of Princess Street, however now only numbers 56 and 57 survive next to the Job Centre.

The work is being carried out by Midland Conservation Ltd, a locally based company, specialising in historic properties, and will comprise repairs to the external envelopes including re-slating, making good chimney stacks, new

## Shopfronts

Shopfronts have always been designed to attract attention and trade and therefore perform a vital role in contributing to the character of towns and the creation of environments of quality, character, vitality and viability that are attractive for residents, visitors and shoppers. The delivery of high quality and authentically reproduced replacement shopfronts, is therefore a key objective of the Queen Street Townscape Heritage Scheme.

Traditional shopfronts feature a simplified classical style, in which the component parts reflect the elements of classical architectural composition, however this only became established practice during the early part of the 18th century, when under the influence of the European Renaissance classical composition was introduced to the English high street. Architectural pattern books such as "The Builders Jewel" of 1747, and Batty Langley's "The City and Country Builders and Workman's Treasure" of 1750 became popular at this time, and provided drawings of specimen shopfronts together with the architectural detailing for individual components that could then be combined to individual taste.

This era also coincided with technical innovations that made glass more

leadwork, new gutters and downpipes, the overhaul and replacement of windows, and renovations of brickwork, stone detailing, the front walls and railings.

The Council is working with other parties to deliver further grant aided schemes on Queen Street, and is hopeful that the owners of numbers 44 and 49 Queen Street will participate in the programme to consolidate the work undertaken by their neighbours.

affordable, and so came about the typical shopfront featuring, multi-paned display windows framed by pilasters and a fascia, which mimics the frieze of the classical entablature and provided an ideal location to display the name of the proprietor and the wares available. The effect was to create a quality joinery item attached to the front of the building in the manner of a display case. Prior to this merchandise would have been displayed, if at all on open stalls, secured out of trading hours by solid wooden shutters erected across the opening.

The design disciplines established at this time continued through the Victorian and Edwardian eras and into the inter-war years. With further technological advances combined with the lifting of excise duty on glass in 1845, larger areas of uninterrupted glazing became more common, culminating in the use of expensive plate glass in the most distinguished of retail premises. The introduction of effective artificial lighting facilitated more deeply recessed lobbied entrances that provided further opportunities for the display of goods. Such a traditional approach was typical of the shopfronts along Queen Street, however since the 1960's much has

been lost through demolitions, and the replacement of individual shopfronts within surviving buildings.

Utilising old photographs discovered by the Friends of Wolverhampton Archives, supplemented where necessary by planning drawings from the 1950s onwards showing existing shopfronts that were about to be replaced, we have been able to establish the original design of many of these shopfronts. To promote the Townscape Heritage shopfront programme to owners and tenants these have now been presented as attractive CGI images produced by ETC Design.

For some properties photographs specific to the frontage have provided clear and unambiguous information; for example the Dutch gabled terracotta building, 19-21 Queen Street where an Edwardian advert for Daniel Reid and Sons, Truss and Surgical Instrument Manufacturers, trading out of No. 19 shows the original shopfront complete with a window display of their wares, whilst photos from a brochure of 1953 show No 21 occupied as a sales outlet for the National Coal Board. In other instances only oblique

street views have been available, but with careful examination these have provided sufficient information for the reconstruction of frontages to individual properties. In some cases, notably the Edwardian terracotta Trocadero Building, we been unable to discover any early photographs. However a planning application from the early 1950's has provided sufficient information to inform the reconstruction of the building's original shopfronts. These sources have revealed that some properties have featured a number of different traditional shopfronts, notably No 26 where photos and planning drawings show that between construction in the 1860s and the 1930s, there have been 3 different shopfronts:- initially in a simple classical style as shown in our image; then a more elaborate late Victorian shopfront for Martyn's Drug Store; followed in the inter-war years by a stylish bronze framed deco shopfront for Timothy Whites, the chemists.

The Townscape Heritage Scheme makes generous provision for the replacement of shopfronts, providing grants of 85% towards these works including appropriate forms of security and advertisement.



The former Trocadero Building, 29 to 31 Queen Street

# Computer Generated Images Showing how Restored Shopfronts Might Appear



19 to 21 Queen Street



25 Queen Street



25 Queen Street



26 Queen Street

## Which Queen?

Without further thought many might assume that like Queen's Square, Queen Street is named in celebration of Queen Victoria, however the street considerably pre-dates 1837, the year of Victoria's succession to the throne.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery has a splendid painting of the christening of Princess Victoria, the first daughter of Queen Victoria and Albert, painted in 1841 by Charles Robert Leslie. At the launch of the Queen Street project the painting was brought out of storage for people to see because it also portrays the Dowager Queen Adelaide after whom we thought Queen Street might have been named. Queen Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen was Queen Consort to William IV, and she can be seen on the left of the painting with her hands on the font.

With further research on the early development of Queen Street we no longer believe this to be so. In Sketchley's

and Adam's Tradesman's True Guide for 1770 the street is noted to have already acquired its present name. However, not long before this a deed of 1761 still refers to the area as Wooten's Cross, later known as Langley's Croft. Therefore assuming that the street was named between 1761 and 1770, the Queen at the time would have been Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz the wife of King George III.

Charlotte married George at 18 and gave birth to 15 children, with 13 surviving to adulthood. She was a keen amateur botanist, taking a particular interest in Kew Gardens, and the explorations and discoveries of Capt. Cook and Joseph Banks. She was also an enthusiastic patron of the arts with Mozart publishing six sonatas in her honour.



*Christening Of The Princess Royal*, Lslie, Charles Robert (1771 - 1859)  
Image courtesy of Wolverhampton Arts & Culture

## Archive Research

As part of our Community Engagement Programme volunteers Jackie Harrison and Patricia Hughes from our Partners the Friends of Wolverhampton City Archives have been tremendously busy researching the origins and development of Queen Street and its people.

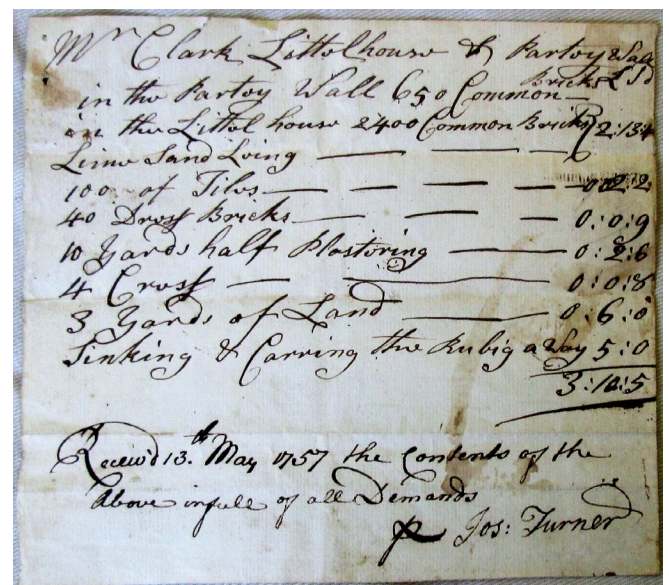
Ninety-nine percent of the sources used in the research have been found amongst the rich store of deposits housed at Wolverhampton City Archives. Using the likes of trade directories; the Register of Electors; deeds; poor rates; Transcripts of the Town Commissioners, and newspaper clippings they have managed to piece together the development of the street, and for most of the properties compiled a list of the owners and occupiers over time, including records of some of the interesting businesses and trades that could at one time be found along the street. This work has also highlighted photographs and plans which have revealed the changes to the local townscape over the past 150 years. The work has been compiled into a fascinating booklet, which is available in the City Archives.

During their research Jackie and Patricia have discovered some fascinating documentation which in some instance has revealed in surprising detail the history of properties on Queen Street.

In 1750, Wooton's Croft, alias Langley's Croft, was in the ownership of Thomas Tomkys of Neachells. Mr Tomkys died in the summer of 1753 and his last Will and Testament, proved in 1755, instructed his executors to "... sell and dispose for the best price that can be got ... all my freehold Lands Tenements Messuages Meadow Leasows and Hereditaments of what nature kind or quality the same

are ...". The land was duly staked out into plots, differing in size because of the triangular nature of the croft as a whole. The earliest deed in the City Archives concerning the sale of one of these plots is dated 2nd December 1756 and cites the Will of Thomas Tomkys as the reason for the sale. The plot was sold to William Clarke of Wolverhampton who was a White Tawer (someone who turns animal skin into white leather) by trade. It measured 123 square yards (103 square metres) and cost Mr Clarke thirteen pounds six shillings and eight pence (£13.34). The deed discloses that there was already a newly built house belonging to Samuel Doleman adjoining the east side of Mr Clarke's purchase and that a piece of land had been reserved in the south for a street – ie Queen Street.

The deed also encloses an account for the building of a small house on the corner of Queen Street and what is now Princess Street, together with a party wall linking to Mr Clarke's property. It gives details of the materials used and the quantities involved - see below: There were no property numbers in



existence in Wolverhampton at this time so it is often difficult to locate a building within its environment, but by great good fortune a fire insurance policy of 1879 exists for this property and shows that the insured building was on the site of what is now number 16 Queen Street. The fire policy also covered number 14 Queen Street, (misleadingly recorded as 14 Princess Street) a small house

on the corner with Princess Street. Number 14 can no longer be seen as it was demolished in the mid 1850s when Princess Street was widened. Also demolished at that time was one half of number 15 which itself then became the small corner property and is now subsumed into number 16.

## Our exhibition

“A Walk Along Queen Street” opened at Wolverhampton Art Gallery on Saturday 26th May, and will now close at the end of October. The Exhibition is the culmination of our community engagement programme, which has been led and coordinated by our Community Engagement Officers, Stuart Williams and Ashleigh Hudson. It provides an opportunity for our research volunteers, pupils, students and community groups to show some of the work they have undertaken.

By arranging the material as if walking along the street it is hoped that visitors will be able to appreciate the interesting information that has been uncovered.

Highlights include textile pieces produced by the “Bantock Bodgers”, showing some of the street’s most notable buildings, art work produced by the Black Country Urban Sketchers on our Queen Street “sketch crawl”, and a model of the street produced by architecture students from the University. Also on display will be some of the images captured on our Heritage Photography Days, together with interesting artefacts, images and stories discovered by our volunteer researchers. There will also be a children’s activity area where youngsters will be able to experience something of the life of their Victorian forebears by dressing up in Victorian outfits.



## Student model

As part of our community engagement programme first and second year students from the School of Architecture & Built Environment at the University of Wolverhampton have produced a physical model of each of the buildings along the Queen Street. The model has proved an invaluable teaching aid at many of our Queen Street themed children's events, and will be on display at our upcoming exhibition at the Gallery.

Queen Street provided an ideal case study for students participating in the School's History & Theories of Architecture, and City & Urbanism modules. The students conducted initial historical research into the area at the City Archives, then using information from:- "Digi-map" drawings; surveys of elevations, and photographs, small groups collaborated to develop CAD

drawings for individual buildings. The models were constructed in the School's workshops using a laser cutter programmed to follow the CAD drawings. The project was undertaken as an extra curricula activity, and was completed in just over two weeks.

The School of Architecture & Built Environment continues to work with the Queen Street Scheme. Students have recently completed a laser scan dataset of the exterior of the street together with a detailed internal scan of one of the street's typical Georgian townhouses. The next phase of the project commences in June when student interns will begin to work up 3D graphic images showing how the street developed and some of the buildings now sadly lost to demolitions, these will be incorporated into our interpretative "app".





# The Black Country Sketchers

The Black Country Sketchers are an informal group of artists who aim to tell the everyday story of the Black Country and its surrounding areas through the growing movement of “urban sketching”. The group arranges ‘sketch crawls’ that aim to capture the essence of an area through sketches depicting the places, people and objects which catch the artists eye.

During March the group braved freezing temperatures and snowy conditions to take part in a “crawl” along Queen Street. This talented group, including a notable visiting artist from New York, have produced some distinguished sketches and watercolours of key buildings in the Street. Please do come along to our exhibition to view these fabulous illustrations.



Queen's Building, Wolverhampton  
Courtesy of Ron Macklin

## “Bantock Bodgers”

Locally based craft group the “Bantock Bodgers” have embraced the community engagement programme, with their fantastic textile pieces in the form of wall hangings featuring many of Queen Street's historic buildings and are a focal point in the Queen Street exhibition.

The name of the group comes from ‘Bantock’ House – which is where the group meets and ‘bodges’, the craft of making rugs by pushing small pieces of, often reused fabric through a hessian backing, a process also known as ‘podging’, ‘pegging’, ‘ragging’, or any one of a dozen other names given to it.

From small beginnings the group has developed into a thriving forty-strong membership producing wall-hangings, garlands, and cushions as well as the traditional rag rug, and now also uses other craft techniques such as felting, knitting, crochet, embroidery, and applique.

Some of the pieces are individual works, whilst others have been produced collaboratively by small groups of two or three craftspeople.

The following buildings have been depicted and were chosen on the basis of personal memories or intrinsic appeal:

- Number 13 - The Maypole grocery store (now Shipley's)
- Number 19 – 22 - Dutch-gabled block
- Number 26 - shown as a hat shop at the turn of 19th century (now Admiral)
- Number 27 - shown as Snape's tea merchant (now Johnny Barber)
- Number 44 - a red brick Georgian house
- Number 49 - Known as 'The Judge's House'
- Number 50 - The Court House
- Number 51-53 - The Express & Star building
- Corner plot with Market Street shown as the Congregational Chapel. (Replaced by the Job Centre)



Also involved are a group of adults with learning difficulties, who have been busy working on smaller, more manageable pieces, producing 'pennants' showing the distinctive signs of past shops, such as Fenwicks and Martyn's Drug Stores, together with some of the goods they sold, for example flowers and fruit.

## The App

At an early stage in the TH programme the development of an interpretative digital “app” was identified as an opportunity to involve the community in revealing the history of the street, and to provide residents and visitors with a new and accessible medium that would encourage interest in the street, and an appreciation of the significance of its buildings to the overall heritage of the City.

We set up a working group to guide the project and they set out the following objectives:- to open eyes to the heritage of Queen Street; to encourage people to raise their eyes above the shopfronts to more fully appreciate the buildings; to encourage individuals and community groups to research the history of the street through archive research and oral histories; to encourage children to explore the heritage of the street and participate in the gathering and presentation of material; to help residents and visitors, from all backgrounds to understand the history and stories from the street, and finally to promote the street’s lesser known buildings and reveal their histories.

The HLF asked that we carry out a survey so they could be certain of the success of the “app”. Our survey showed that

60% of respondents would download and use an interpretative “app”, with the highest percentage amongst the over 65s. 59% showed a strong preference for an emphasis on the display of archival material, such as old photos and documents, followed by 30% expressing an interest in the presentation of 3D visualisation recreating scenes from the street’s past. 59% thought a dedicated children’s section would be useful, although the proposition of interactive content, such as quizzes was less popular

We have tried to take all these views into account in the final specification for the “app”, and have now appointed Audio Guide Productions to build the app with content supplied by our community engagement volunteers and the University’s School of Architecture and Built Environment who will develop the 3D virtual images. The app will include information on up to 20 information points of interest, and will include 6 virtual image sequences. There will be a dedicated children’s section including a quiz. This exciting innovation will be launched during Architectural Heritage Week in September 2018

## Conservation Skills Training Days

We have now run 11, day courses exploring materials and techniques that are appropriate when working on older buildings. Most have been led by Mark Womersley, a former conservation officer, but today the proprietor of one of the country’s leading suppliers of conservation and ecological building materials. Our day on slate roofing and lead working was led by Richard Jordan

and Darren Warren, and on historic ironwork by Dominic Grosvenor, the proprietor of the locally based specialist foundry Barr and Grosvenor, assisted by craft smith Bob Garlick, and metal conservation specialist Peter Meehan. We are hugely appreciative of the excellent workshop facilities that have been made available by our partner The City of Wolverhampton College, and others who

have assisted including:- Lime Green; Darwen Terracotta; Aura Conservation, and Window Care Systems.

We have run two days looking at brickwork; one workshop based at the college, and the other at Northcote Community Farm with its range of listed farm buildings proving ideal to illustrate and understand on-site practice.



*'...it made me look at brickwork in a totally different light.'*

We have also spent a day looking at terracotta, with visiting lecturers providing varying perspectives on production, specification and installation, including a tour of some of the City's terracotta buildings. We have also spent a day exploring lime mortars, plasters and renders, and another day looking more specifically at plasterwork. A day on historic joinery provided delegates with opportunities to assemble and repair sash windows.

We have also spent a day exploring methods and materials that can improve the thermal performance of older buildings whilst maintaining their breathability.

As part of National Maintenance Week, held in November of every year, we have held 2 days on the Surveying and

Maintenance of older buildings. These have been based at Bilston, where we have been warmly welcomed by the Reverend Wills, the vicar of St. Leonards, to view conservation works on site and to use his church as a case study exercise for delegates.



*'Teamwork with people of different skills.'*

In early October we shall be running a final workshop looking at Shopfronts. This will be facilitated by Mark Womersley, who will explore the elements of a traditional shopfront and their architectural antecedence, together with examples of good and bad practice in design and construction. The University's school of Architecture and the Built Environment have offered to make available their model making facilities for delegates to build shopfronts from their component parts, whilst the City of Wolverhampton College will provide specimen items of joinery to demonstrate good and bad practice. The Workshop will include a walking tour of the City centre. The content and unusual format for the day should prove to be attractive to a target audience of local architectural practices, and commercial property companies, and will contribute to quality outcomes in Queen Street and across the wider City centre.