

MERE – BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE

Mere Historical Society
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FOREWORD

Mere - Buildings and People records Mere's older buildings and some interesting people and events connected with them. As a reference document, prepared with a view to facilitating historical town walks, buildings are in the sequence in which they stand along the main streets of the town. Street order in the document is alphabetical.

Mere town walks - telling stories of the town's history to both visitors and local residents - are a venture of Mere Historical Society (MHS). An MHS Working Group (comprising Ros Castro, Caroline Cook, David Hope, and Janet Way) progressed the idea with the dual aim of not only devising walks to be led by guides, but also of publishing a self-guided town-trail.

We plan to follow our inaugural guided walk in July 2009 with others, including a walk in Autumn 2009 to coincide with Mere's Literary Festival. If the walks are successful, we hope to offer them again in future years.

We have also launched a self-guided historical trail publication, entitled *A Mere Meander*, available free from the Information Point in the Public Library. It is hoped that this illustrated publication with its included street map will appeal, in particular, to visitors to Mere as well as being well received by residents.

Much of the centre of Mere is designated as a Conservation Area, where town-planning objectives aim to preserve or enhance the character and appearance. The Conservation Area has been reappraised (see 'Sources') which could influence its future extent.

A number of individual older buildings in Mere are statutorily listed, but the town lacks a 'Local List'. Local Lists can be drawn up, at the discretion of local planning authorities, to highlight buildings of local architectural or historic interest. Such buildings do not meet criteria for national statutory listing, as Grade II, II* or I, but are considered to be worth conserving for their local character or interest.

Although a Local List has no statutory force, it can – if adopted by the local planning authority and backed up in a Local Development Framework - be a 'material consideration' in individual planning decisions. We envisage that *Mere - Buildings and People* might well serve as an input to a Mere Local List, should the new Wiltshire Council decide to compile one.

We are indebted to local historians, past and present, whose work we acknowledge under 'Sources'. We are also grateful to the former Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council for supplying the statutory list of listed buildings, the draft Mere Conservation Appraisal, and the Mere section of the Extensive Urban Survey of the Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns.

David Hope
July 2009

MERE – BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE

THE TOWN OF MERE

Mere is a small Wiltshire market town with medieval origins, situated off the London to Exeter road on the spring-line, where the Wiltshire Downs meet the clay lands of the Blackmore Vale. It borders Dorset and Somerset, and the town's name possibly comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Maere* meaning boundary.

Mere sits below Castle Hill where Richard, Earl of Cornwall (1209 – 1271), the son of King John and younger brother of Henry III, built a castle. The castle has long disappeared, its stonework re-used within the town, but the Duchy of Cornwall remains a major landowner around Mere.

The Earl, who was given the Manor of Mere by his brother in 1243, attempted to create a new town. Mere's distinctive street pattern is characteristic of medieval town planning, with a central market place, The Square, and narrow plots (burgage plots) extending back from the principal streets to back lanes. The use of local stone for the older buildings gives the town cohesion and an attractive townscape. The modest scale of building is exceeded only by landmarks such as the tower of St Michael the Archangel Church, near Castle Hill; a former brewery chimney to the east of the town; Nonconformist churches; The Old Ship Hotel (Castle Street) and Dewes House (Salisbury Street).

The area of settlement created in the C13 seems to have contained growth in Mere until the later C19. To the east side of the town, the Shreen Water and Ashfield Water influenced development with the construction of mills and other industrial activities. Compared to the orderly pattern of the town, a residential area along the upper Shreen Water named The Fields has a haphazard settlement pattern, possibly derived from early squatting on the Manorial Waste.

Mere's older buildings, constructed mainly of local stone, exemplify the vernacular style created by local craftsmen for local needs, little subject to architectural fashion. All houses up to the late C19 front directly onto the street. Except for a few larger buildings, individuality is expressed through varying rooflines, windows and doors. Unfortunately, the local stone is soft and weathers badly. Hence it is not suitable for working into features, and at best can either be formed into blocks laid in courses or used as roughly coursed rubble construction.

It can be misleading to date buildings from external evidence only, especially as many houses have no doubt been refronted, remodelled or rebuilt. It is safe to say that little survives before the C17 because of the impermanent materials used for ordinary buildings up to that time. Furthermore, records show that there were major fires in Mere in 1529 and 1670.

The stone which gave Mere a new look from the C17 and C18 came from Dead Maid Quarry, (now an industrial estate at the end of Castle Street), and also from Wolverton where a greenish sandstone was mined in medieval times. Some older houses in Mere, notably west of the town centre, feature random squared blocks of this greenish stone, especially as quoins, which were possibly taken from the abandoned Castle. Stone with roofs of thatch remained the standard building materials until well into the C19. From 1880, the hard Gillingham (Dorset) red brick was used in Mere for quoins and for dressings around windows and doorways.

Many cottages were overcrowded by modern standards in the C19, and to make matters worse, a number of houses on the main streets became shops as well as homes. Until the first main sewer of 1879, residents relied on earth or bucket closets and on cesspits near to the wells from which they drew water until 1909, when mains water arrived.

Gas came to Mere in 1837, and gas lighting in 1839. Initially, the gas works was in North Street near the Methodist Church, but later the works moved to The Island, Edge Bridge, off Pettridge Lane. Mere was connected by electric telegraph at its then Post Office in 1870, but was only linked to the National Grid for electricity supply in 1931.

Given its location by the chalk downs, Mere became a centre for the medieval woollen industry from the C14 until the C16, when a cottage-based linen industry began to replace the woollen trade. Flax was widely cultivated, and weavers specialised in bed ticking. After the late C18, the linen trade declined and was, in turn, replaced by silk throwing in the C19. However, this along with industries such as edge-tool manufacture, brewing and bacon curing had largely disappeared by 1900. Today's businesses include brush manufacture, candle making, a trout farm and horticulture under glass.

The oldest road locally, with milestones on it dated 1750, is the very ancient trackway over Mere Down to Willoughby Hedge on the A303 east of Mere. Prior to the mid C19, transport was via ill-kept parish roads shared by wheeled traffic, packhorses and possibly herds of farm animals being driven to market. Mere had a limited coaching trade from the opening of the Wincanton Turnpike through the town in the 1760s, with fast mail coaches dating from 1784. However, the coach system collapsed when the railway came to Gillingham (Dorset) in 1859. A number of horse-drawn carriers continued to operate locally until the coming of motor vehicles, including a horse bus from Mere to Gillingham Station.

The town seems to have changed little up to the First World War but thereafter, changing lifestyles and growing personal mobility wrought considerable changes, from the first Council houses in 1926 to estates of private housing from the 1960s onwards. With growing numbers of motor vehicles passing through the town, and a decision after the Second World War that the A303 should be the primary route to the south-west, some older buildings were demolished to ease bottlenecks. Mere is now by-passed by the A303, the by-pass having been built and opened in 1975.

ANGEL LANE

Fives Court, a modern care home in Angel Lane, is named after the nearby buttressed wall of a former fives court standing behind the Angel Corner Tea Rooms in The Square. The game of fives was played in this area in the C18 and C19, and involved striking a two-inch leather covered ball with the hand. The sides of church towers were often used as makeshift fives courts.

A matching pair of C19 cemetery chapels, probably for Anglican and other denominations respectively. They stand side-by-side within the cemetery, at the southern end of Angel Lane, which opened in 1856 when the churchyard of the parish church was closed for burials. The chapels are constructed of coursed and squared stone, with gabled front and end walls rising to coped upstands above tiled roofs. Buttresses subdivide the side walls into three bays, each with a single lancet window with ashlar dressings and leaded lights. Front walls have pointed arched entrances containing diagonal planked double doors, and above these a large recessed pointed arch containing a composite Gothic triple-light leaded window. All arches and openings have ashlar dressings. Interiors have angled cross-braced rafters. The north chapel is complete with interior pews, arranged lengthways and facing in collegiate fashion, and contains a wheeled bier. The south chapel is now converted to a maintenance store.

CASTLE HILL

Castle Hill, at the eastern end of Long Hill, was reshaped when Richard, Earl of Cornwall (the younger son of King John) built a castle on the summit in 1253. No visible trace now remains of Mere Castle as its stone was taken over the years for buildings in the town. However, excavations in 1887 for a flagpole, involving the local historian Thomas Baker, unearthed some of the C13 foundations. In 1937 the size and form of the castle was recorded in a booklet published by Baker's daughter, probably with the benefit of further excavations. The castle was a rectangular structure, with massive walls, a gatehouse, a hall and chapel. But it was never used in war, and was abandoned in 1398 when Richard II ordered lead to be stripped from its roof for use elsewhere.

The flagpole was first erected on the summit of Castle Hill in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee and the Prince of Wales leased the hill to Mere at a peppercorn rent. The war memorial, unveiled in 1949, commemorates the 43rd Wessex Division and replicates a memorial on Hill 112 near Caen, site of the Division's first major battle in July 1944 after the D Day landings in Normandy. There is a fine view from Castle Hill over the town and the Wiltshire Downs with their medieval strip lynchets (cultivation terraces).

CASTLE STREET

Castle Street, the western approach to Mere, fed into a large medieval market place. It lies below Castle Hill and retains a run of burgage plots on the north side, which has an attractive group of mainly two and three storey traditional vernacular cottages and houses. This mix of buildings with varying rooflines is unified by a consistent building line set at the back of a high pavement, and by the predominance of the local stone in construction. A number of dwellings have been re-fronted or remodelled in the Georgian period or later. This group of both listed and unlisted buildings is of considerable value to the character of Mere. The Duchy of Cornwall still owns some of the properties.

The Old Ship Hotel, along with Dewes House in Salisbury Street (q.v.), is one of the more substantial historic buildings in Mere. Although of only two storeys with attics lit by roof-lights flush with the roof plane, the Inn is of more civic proportions than other buildings in the town and indicates the relative prosperity of Mere in the C18.

Originally, an earlier C17 house on the site was the home of Sir John Coventry MP, a Royalist in the Long Parliament. The property was rebuilt in 1711 by Henry Andrews of Woodlands Manor (q.v.). It flourished as a coaching inn when the Wincanton Turnpike was opened in 1756 and Mere found itself on the main route between London and Devon and Cornwall (prior to this, the main West country route had been over the Downs to the north of Mere where milestones dated 1750 can still be seen).

The impressive street frontage comprises a symmetrical façade of seven bays with a central carriageway arch. It is constructed of coursed square stone blocks and the front roof-slope has stone slates laid in diminishing courses up to the ridge. The windows enhance the character of the building, with sashes on the ground floor and mullion-and-transom casements on the first floor, which resemble those of Dewes House.

The striking projecting sign is probably the work of Kingston Avery, a local clock-maker in the C18. It has been described as “ . . . a network of scrolls, spirals and flowering plants with a crown on top and a bunch of grapes at the end”. The sailing ship was the badge of Johannes de Mere who founded a chantry in the parish church in the C14.

The interior of the building contains a grand dog-leg staircase and, in the bar, a fireplace with an early fire surround moulding under a Jacobean overmantel to a C20 mantel shelf, and a central painting of Charles II.

Castleton House is a three bay, two-storey symmetrical house in a Georgian idiom having a central panelled door with top-lights and 12-pane sash windows. The window and door openings have prominent painted quoins and lintels with keystones. The construction with coursed random rubble-stone contributes to the pleasing combination of vernacular cottages and houses along the north side of Castle Street.

Latimer House is named after a surgeon of Mere who died in 1832 aged 77. He came to the town in 1784 and practised as a ‘Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-midwife’. In 1797, he was paid £37.10s for ‘vaccinating the poor’ during a severe outbreak of smallpox; this is surprising because Edward Jenner was still testing his vaccination theory at that time and vaccination only became widespread from 1803. Latimer is commemorated in a memorial tablet in St Michael’s Church.

The listed late C18 house, part of a street row, consists of two storeys and an attic. It has a nearly symmetrical façade of regular ashlar stonework rising to a cornice and parapet. There is a string-course at first floor level, 12-pane replacement sash windows in original openings, and a Classical style doorway with a pediment on scrolled brackets.

Nos. 20, 22 & 24 Castle Street (listed as Homestead, and Barbican Cottage) present a broad frontage. They date from the C17 but were much modified in the C19 and C20. The two-storey building, which included shops in the early C20, is constructed of coursed rubble-stone that may have been rendered formerly. The window arrangement is irregular.

The building is one of the earliest surviving properties in Castle Street. Its plan may once have taken the form of three rooms with a cross-passage and a main stair and chimney stack to the left; the last structural bay to the right has probably been added to the original.

Yew Glen probably dates from the mid C19 and is listed for its value as part of a street row. It was the home of Thomas Standerwick who had a saddlery workshop directly across Castle Street at this point. It is built of small squared stone, three storeys high, with a lofty canted bay window projecting from the first floor to the left. An old photograph shows that there was a shop window to the right of the central front door. In 1874, Standerwick settled £200 on trust to provide a minister's house, now The Old Manse, just of The Square next to the Congregational Chapel.

The Butt of Sherry PH has its origins in 1848 when a widow and her son set up in Castle Street as spirit dealers. The proprietor of the Bell & Crown PH at Zeals bought the property in 1894 and opened it as The Butt of Sherry PH. Local Catholics met in the Butt of Sherry prior to the provision of their church in Pettridge Lane (comprising a converted Nissen Hut from Warminster Army Depot). 'The Butt' is currently a tenanted pub of Enterprise Inns plc of Solihull, West Midlands.

The listed building is late C18, built of coursed rubble-stone with a mansard roof of plain tiles incorporating a central dormer. Attractive details include the shallow bow window with pilasters and a frieze over, and window lights with Gothick heads; tripartite sash windows; and a contrasting greensand band flush with the other stonework at first floor level below the applied name board. In 2008, the façade was greatly improved by the removal of unsightly ribbon cement-based mortar pointing, and repointing with lime mortar flush with the stonework.

Manderley, to the left of the Butt of Sherry PH, is a C18 two-storey house with later date windows. Its frontage is rendered and scribed to resemble stonework. To the right, is a projecting former shop window comprising three main lights in a flat-roofed rectangular bay. Manderley is listed for its value as part of the street row of vernacular buildings.

West of Manderley and The Butt of Sherry PH, the continuous group of older vernacular buildings continues for some distance along the north side of Castle Street, broken only by the formal **approach to Castle Hill**, which was laid out as a garden for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee of 1897. Although none of the houses west of Manderley are currently listed, they collectively make a positive contribution to the character of this western approach to Mere. Individually, the buildings range from an impressive two-storey house with roof dormers and stone mullioned windows, to a couple of houses incorporating former shop windows. One of these is **Lander House**, former home of the inventor William Lander (1763 – 1843). Having set up as a brazier and inventor, Lander produced household goods, machinery and a wheeled 'waywiser' device for surveyors to measure distances. He also submitted, unsuccessfully, a design for a new bridge at Clifton, Bristol, loosing out to Brunel. Lander is buried in the churchyard and an example of his surveyors' waywiser is in Salisbury Museum.

The Old Saddlers, near the western end of the row of older development, was Stone's saddler's and harness maker's shop in the early C20. Before the advent of motor cars, there were three such businesses in Castle Street. The group of houses which includes The Old Saddlers, together with an early Victorian lodge building on the other side of Castle Street, form a tightening of the townscape as you approach Mere from the west.

The Lodge was designed by the architect George Gilbert Scott and built in 1835 as part of a workhouse complex for the local Poor Law Union established under a new Poor Law of 1834. The Act aimed to end the Speenhamland system of outdoor relief, which involved supplementing wages out of the poor-rate in proportion to the price of bread. It set up unions of parishes with elected Boards of Guardians under Poor Law Commissioners. The Guardians administered relief to the destitute and sick poor and managed the Workhouse with a building called the Infirmary. The complex was supposed to accommodate 100 persons, but

45 was the usual average under the charge of a Master and Matron with a Head Nurse at the Infirmary.

A 'workhouse test' was introduced: no outside relief was to be given to the able bodied, and conditions inside the workhouse were designed to deter any but the destitute from applying. However, the workhouse test was impossible to enforce and records show that the Guardians were more humane than might be expected. Relatives were allowed to visit inmates twice weekly and gifts were received from the public. And whereas in the early days, recipients of Poor Relief attended the Workhouse Office to receive their dole, subsequently a Relieving Officer went weekly around ten parishes to pay relief in cash and bread at people's homes.

It is worth noting that up to the C19 the Penal Code was very harsh; the minutes of Quarter Sessions record death sentences for horse and sheep stealing, which might sometimes be commuted to transportation. The Game laws were also an affront to hungry labourers, and were harshly administered by magistrates who were often also the local squires. Moreover, the Law of Settlement in the early C19 restricted the free movement of labourers from one parish to another in search of work.

In 1943, the Local Government Board ordered that the name of 'Workhouse' should disappear and the Poor Law ceased to exist with the passing of the National Assistance Act 1946.

Mere's workhouse complex comprised a pair of corner lodges and a central gatehouse fronting the highway, with a courtyard and a large workhouse building behind. The former right-hand lodge has survived along with the rear part of the original building (Union House). The last recent use of the lodge was as part of a motor service station. As a listed building, it is gratifying that it will be converted to residential use as part of a housing scheme for older people (St Michael's View, 2008 – 09) developed on the former workhouse/filling station site.

A mid-C18 milestone, set back against the wall of Milestone Cottage, records 'Wincanton 7 Hindon 7' and is a survival of the Wincanton Turnpike established in 1758. Before that date, traffic between London and Exeter would have probably bypassed Mere, using the prehistoric trackway north of the town over Whitesheet Hill and Mere Down, which has milestones along it dated 1750.

Milestone Cottage and Milestone are the right and left halves respectively of a pair of listed C18 houses built of coursed rubble-stone. On Milestone Cottage, the upper courses of stone are better cut than those below, which may suggest a previous raising of the roof. The flat-roofed bay window was the shop display for a former saddlery business run by a Mr Dean. Milestone is characterized by three-light leaded windows offset to the left of centre, and by | Chilmark stone flush quoins to the corners. The whole of Milestone lies below the level of the footway, with a partly concealed plinth and steps down to the front doorway.

Milestone Cottage saw the start of The Hill Brush Company in 1922 when Fred and Bill Coward, whose father ran a wood turning business, began making bass brooms for the wholesale trade, using a workshop in their father's yard. The business moved to Lordsmead Mill (q.v.) in 1927 and subsequently to a purpose built factory on Duchy of Cornwall land in Woodlands Road.

A property listed as **Tithings** consists of a long row fronting onto the footway of the south side of Castle Street. It is probably of C18 origin, but has modifications of the C19 and C20. The stonework includes squared and coursed stone in varied thick and thin beds. The first section to the right is of two storeys with three sets of casement windows and a projecting flat-roofed C20 porch. Left of this is a coursed rubble-stone single section with a set of

casements, and further to the left is a somewhat higher section with plank doors under an archway, and a further set of casements and a single plank door to the left.

Ridge House is listed for its value as part of a group which includes Tithings to its right. Ridge House appears to be of late C18 date, but Victorian sash windows set forward with the plane of the wall later replaced its original windows. The façade has coursed and squared stone graded from thick to thin beds.

Left of Ridge House and Tithings and ending at the public car park is a **terrace of three C19 houses** of two storeys with roof dormers to attics. The terrace is built of coursed stone and has sash windows with margin lights under segmental arch heads. This terrace and the public car park occupy the site of a former C15 building called the Deanery on early OS maps. T H Baker, a local antiquarian, who considered it to be contemporary with the grand restoration of St Michael's parish church in 1460, recorded the building around 1890, shortly before its demolition. Despite its name, it never appears to have been occupied by senior clergy. By the late C19, it was used as a barn known as Parsonage Barn, but it retained elaborately decorated fireplaces and a fine C15 oak roof. What may be part of its cellar is in the basement of the two houses nearest to the car park.

CHURCH STREET

The premises occupied by **Hambledon Estate Agents** comprise, on the right half of the building, coursed rubble-stone with a modern shop window, a part-glazed door and a square paned 2-light casement window under the eaves. The reconstructed left half of the building was the **Old Fire Station** and consists of regular coursed stonework, a modern garage door and an under-eaves 2-light casement window with square panes.

A **K6 type of telephone kiosk** stands beside the front wall of Hambledon Estate agents/the Old Fire Station. Designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and made by various contractors, it is of cast iron, a square kiosk with domed roof, unperforated crowns to the top panels, and margin glazing to the windows and door.

The Old House has a long frontage to the south side of Church Street, from its junction with Angel Lane. It is dated 1720 on a stone on the corner, and is built of regular coursed stone with quoins to the corners, and is of two storeys with a tiled roof. The modern windows are arranged irregularly and divided by horizontal glazing bars into two lights. The two front doors have external steps and flat hoods above them on shaped brackets; one door was possibly a surgery entrance between 1845 and 1877. In the 1950s, the property was the Tudor Tea Rooms and later on a restaurant, before becoming a private house in 1986.

To the **right of The Old House is another two-storey property** with a long frontage. It consists of coursed stone blocks and has four 4-pane sash windows on the upper floor, with matching windows and a recessed panelled door with an overlight at ground level. A pair of plank doors with ventilation grille above are set into a large flat-arched vehicular access way. Dated 1753 over an archway to the basement at the rear of the premises. The left-hand ground level windows replace the former shop-front of Nurden's Butchers (closed 2008).

Mere Fish & Chips has a painted two-storey frontage but stonework construction is exposed on its right hand gable end. Probably dating from the C19, it has a slate roof, two large 4-pane sash windows on the upper floor, and two plain glass display windows below to either side of a modern glazed door.

Pilgrims is a slate roofed two-storey house of coursed stonework with prominent quoins of contrasting stone at its ends. On the first floor, are three modern 2-light square paned casement windows beneath original voussoirs set under the eaves. On the ground floor, a recessed integral garage door and a transom-light window are to the left. To the right of a modern panelled front door is a long 4-light square paned window which appears to have replaced two earlier windows, as indicated by the two sets of voussoirs above.

Milton Cottage and St Peters are a handed pair of C19 two-storey houses built of coursed stone with red brick quoins and dressings. Central paired recessed doorways are flanked to each side by one bay of margin-light sash windows. Ground floor windows are under segmental brick arches with keystones, first floor windows are directly under the eaves.

Warwick House is a two storey dwelling of coursed rubble-stone under a slate roof with red ridge tiles. There are large quoins of a different stone to the right-hand end and inset from the left-hand end where the end window-bay may have been added. The middle section of the building is a regular three-bay design, having a central panelled door with overlight and a bracketed flat hood, and also 16-pane sash windows, the upper windows being directly under the eaves. To the right-hand end, which was a grocer's shop around 1950 – 62, is an inserted integral garage with a further under-eaves sash window above.

Nos. 1 & 2 Church Street are situated beside the churchyard and form an end to the rows of cottages on the south side of Church Street. They are taller than their neighbours, two storeys with gable-fronted attic dormers. Perhaps because of their key location beside the parish church, they have been given a rendered painted finish to the façade and left-hand gable with stucco detailing comprising quoins, a plinth, and raised bands at mid and eaves levels. The right-hand gable end facing the church shows rubble-stone construction with brick dressings, and so it can be conjectured that the property has been refronted. Each of the pair of houses has two bays comprising a deeply recessed door with overlight, and margin-light sash windows, all under segmental arch heads with voussoirs. An area of garden now belonging to No. 1 was once a children's playground for the former National School (Grove Building and Library building) on the opposite side of Church Street, having been given to the school by Miss Julia Chafyn Grove of Zeals House

On the north side of Church Street, **Glebe Cottage and Archway Cottage** date from the late C18 or early C19, and comprise a two-storey row built of coursed rubble-stone under a pantile roof. **Glebe Cottage** is a listed building. It has a central plank door under a flat timber hood with a bay of windows to each side under wooden lintels. The windows are 2-light small pane casements, except to the right on the ground floor where there is a paired 12-pane sash window. To the right of Glebe Cottage is the eponymous archway, defined with red brick dressings and having a pair of plank doors, and a casement window above the arch. The archway may have given access to a former butcher's shop in Castle Street. **Archway Cottage** appears to have been altered, possibly from some former commercial use, as its centre bay has a 4-pane sash ground-floor window with an infilled door-sized recessed panel above it. Other windows are 6-pane sashes, all under wood lintels. The part-glazed door at the right hand end is inset with canted recessed side-lights.

The Little House steps forward from the adjacent Library and forms a stop to the row of cottages to its right (Glebe and Archway Cottages). This small two-storey house is a listed building, mainly for its value as part of a group. It possibly dates from the C18 but was refenestrated and raised in the mid C19. The roof is concealed behind a parapet which returns back at both ends. A panelled door with overlight to the right is set back in reveals. Windows are 4-pane sashes.

The Library, Museum and Tourist Information Centre was originally the National School. It is dated 1839, enlarged 1892, on an external stone plaque. The building is constructed of squared and coursed stone under a slate roof, supported on the original roof trusses, which provide a single wide-span space. The street frontage has a deep eaves and five windows, four of which are large 4-light windows subdivided by plain stone chamfer mullions rising to cusped heads under hood moulds with end stops. The central 3-light window is above an oval stone panel in a keystone rectangular surround, inscribed and dated in fine cursive lettering. The coped gable end to the left, facing Barton Lane, has two 4-light windows as on the main front.

The site of the National School was given by the Dean of Salisbury, and the building was erected with funding from the National Society for the Education of the Poor According to the Principles of the Church of England and with contributions from local people. The building was enlarged by adding a classroom at the rear (north) in 1864, and facilities were extended at the end of the C19 by providing the adjacent Grove Building.

At around the same time as the founding of Mere's National School, a school for the children of religious Nonconformists was established in 1840 at the Congregational Chapel in Boar Street. It became known as the British School. In 1879, education became compulsory, and in 1902 voluntary schools were made a charge on the rates. However, the dichotomy over education between Church and Chapel was only finally resolved in 1922 with the amalgamation of both Mere schools.

In 1944, the Church Street building became a Secondary Modern School. It became the Mere Library and Museum in 1970, and an Information Point. was added around 2004.

The Grove Building was built in 1891 as an annexe to the adjacent National School at a cost of £2,400, paid for by Miss Julia Chafyn Grove of Zeals House, a generous benefactress of the town of Mere, who died in that year. The building has an L-shaped plan and is constructed in squared and coursed stone with hard red brick dressings and a broad sweep of roof of plain tiles. Its design, by the architect C E Ponting, is vigorous and characteristic of the turn of the C19/C20.

The front facing the parish church is one storey with three Flemish gables. The wider left-hand gable has a semi-circular termination, a large oculus window below with glazing bars, a recessed door and two small 2-light casement windows with segmental heads, all set in a brick panel. To the right of a buttress, there is an alternation of under-eaves 2-light casements with transoms and, in gabled bays, very tall 2-light casements with two transoms. The brick or terra cotta dressings include a cill band, and decorative tops to the gables.

The gabled end wall to Barton Lane has two large 2-light two-transome windows as on the front wall. To the right of this is a single storey long wing with a door in an arched opening and small casement windows.

The interior seems to be reasonably intact, and features a glazed brick dado. As built, it had two large rooms used as an infant schoolroom and a technical room, as well as a small parish room (now the kitchen) with a separate entrance and lobby.

During the First World War, the Grove Building was used as a Red Cross Hospital. Casualties were received direct from the Western Front and 1,273 soldiers were treated here in total between October 1914 and February 1919. A commemorative wooden panel records the names of people who helped in the hospital as nurses and orderlies.

The Grove Building is currently used by local organisations and for a variety of community events such as public meetings, concerts, lectures and charity sales.

Glebe House, formerly Parsonage Farm, is attached to the Grove Building. Although it may originate from the C17, the present house is mainly later C18 or early C19. It is considered likely to be the property described in 1771 as a 'new or newly tiled house called Dewdneys'; in that year, the tenancy was given up by a farmer named Dewdney, who by 1773 had become a churchwarden of the parish church. After Farmer Dewdney, there seem to have been successive tenants until 1861 when the Ecclesiastical Commissioners finally sold the house to the Chafyn Grove family of Zeals House. That family later sold it to the then manager of the Wiltshire & Dorset Bank in Mere (now Lloyds TSB), a Mr Edwin Card. In the early C20, the house became a preparatory school for boys. Since 1927, it has belonged to the local Coward family.

Glebe House is a listed building, two storeys, built of coursed rubble-stone under a roof of plain tiles. It has an L-shaped plan with a lower wing to the rear left. The façade to Church Street has a right-of-centre panelled door, part-glazed under a timber hood. Left of the door are a large 20-pane and small 16-pane sash windows, and right of the door are paired 16-pane sashes. The first floor has four 20-pane sashes. Some straight joints in the walling are indicative of earlier openings. The left-hand gable end has a canted bay window with a 3-light steel casement above and an 8-pane fixed window to the right. The wing has 3-light and 2-light leaded casements, a through-eaves dormer, and an added brick lean-to.

Tower View, St Michael's Cottage, Stevens Cottage, and Stower Cottage comprise a row of four early C19 two-storey cottages built of coursed and squared stone under a slate roof. There are large flush quoins of different stone on the ends of the row. To the far left (Tower View) there are 16-pane sash windows in what appears, from the stonework, to be an added bay under a hipped end. All other windows are 2-light small pane casements beneath flush voussoirs. The doors are: a plank door between bays 1 and 2; two C20 part-glazed doors between bays 3 and 4, one with an integral 'fanlight'; and a C20 part-glazed door at the right-hand end of the row. These modest cottages are listed because of their importance to maintaining the character of the area surrounding the parish church.

The Close, a house of two storeys and an attic under a roof of plain tiles, dates from the C18 but has been much modified in the C19 and C20. It is constructed of coursed and squared roughly dressed stone with the end corners featuring irregular flush quoins of a different kind of stone. The ground floor has a 4-pane sash window flanking each side of a part-glazed door under a flat timber hood. On the first-floor are three 2-light small paned casement windows. All windows have thin timber lintels. The front roof pitch has a single central hipped dormer featuring a 2-light casement, and there is a small single light to the attic in the right-hand gable end. The building is listed for its value as part of a group enclosing the space to the north of the parish church.

St Ann's, a listed building, is a detached two-storey house to the west side of Church Street on the corner of Church Lane. It originated as two C17 cottages, but additions at the rear and also much of the present detailing are of the late C19. The house is built of small coursed rubble-stone with quoins of contrasting stone at the corners and areas of contrasting masonry in the façade, especially to the top right. The roof is of plain tiles, with two hipped ends at the right-hand side with a valley running back centrally. A C19 door of six fielded panels, the top two panels being glazed, is under a flat hood on brackets and off centre to the right. On the right of the door is a single bay of margin light sash windows, and on the left, two bays of the same windows all under thin wood lintels.

In the C19, one of the two cottages was occupied by the sexton of the parish church, James Cross, subsequently by his son Frank, and after 1881 by Frank's widow. The cottages were

probably made into one dwelling after her death, and the curate, the Revd. William Chell lived there. His unmarried sister occupied the house after his death in 1920 and ran a school there for a short time. Between 1947 and 1961, it was the home of a GP and his family, Dr Owen Hart, who ran his surgery from the house.

The Old Rectory is a large detached listed house opposite the west end of the parish church. It has an L-shaped plan and consists of two storeys and an attic on the side towards the church. It dates from 1774 and from the C19, and is built of coursed rubble-stone with a roof of fish-scale tiles. There are three bays of windows facing the church, mainly 4-pane sashes, but including a 2-light small pane casement on the first floor, and to the right a further 4-pane sash and a 2-light leaded opening brought to ground level.

The wing which returns back to the north, now known as Old Rectory Cottage, has small 2-light casements with leaded lights to wood lintels below a large tripartite sash window (4:12:4 panes), 3-light leaded casement and two hipped 2-light dormers. The entrance door is within the L.

The house is a former vicarage, and despite its name was never a rectory. In 1774, an earlier house was burnt down, and the widow of the Revd. Thomas Staples, (he died in 1774, having served as vicar for barely a year), was compelled to rebuild it. Hence most of the present house dates from that time, but the interior includes two rooms of the earlier house with a large kitchen fireplace, old casement windows and an arch leading to the back of the house.

In 1863, the then vicar, Henry Townsend, petitioned that the house was 'in a most dilapidated state and should be sold'. Accordingly, a large replacement vicarage was built in 1865 along Castle Street below Long Hill, and this building is now Bramley House, a care home for old people.

After the Revd. Townsend, the building was renamed Layfield House and passed through several ownerships. In 1935, it was bought by Col. C H Walsh who renamed it as The Old Rectory. Since 1964, the author, local historian and retired GP Dr David Longbourne and his family have owned the house. The coach house was converted to a doctor's surgery and was used until shortly before Dr Longbourne's retirement in 1990, when a new purpose-built surgery was opened at the rear of the Salisbury Street car park.

The Chantry, is a house backing on to the churchyard directly behind the parish church. It is one of the oldest surviving medieval domestic buildings in Mere, and is listed in the higher Grade II*. It was originally built to house three chantry priests, probably around 1424 when King Henry VI allowed the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury about an acre of garden on the south side of the church to accommodate the chaplains of the Chantry of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church of Mere. With the Reformation in the C16, chantry endowments were taken over by the Crown (1546), and priests no longer lived in the house after 1548 when it was granted to Sir John Thynne, ancestor of the present Marquess of Bath of Longleat. Sir John initially let the property, but sold it in 1563 to Thomas Chafyn.

The property was substantially altered in the C16 to convert it to a family home, even though the exterior was largely untouched. The alterations included inserting extra floors, lighting a new room in the roof with dormer windows, and probably removing staircases which are thought to have existed on the evidence of some remaining tiny windows that must have lit stairways.

Subsequently, the house underwent various further alterations, some of them associated with changes of use between a home and a school. In particular, the roof timbers were hidden behind lath and plaster ceilings to the bedrooms.

Major renovations were made in the 1960s by Mr & Mrs Frank Newby. The medieval hall was restored to its full height, revealing the timber roof structure, and most of the medieval windows were reopened. The works were carried out using salvaged and authentic materials, such as old timbers, stone, and weathered elm planks; windows were specially made by a blacksmith in Mere.

Some earlier C20 repairs had led to the discovery beneath the floor of a downstairs room of the bones of a man, woman and dog several centuries old. Their presence remains unexplained and the remains have been reinterred in the churchyard.

The main two-storey front of the house is built of good quality coursed and squared stone with large flush quoins; rubble-stone has been used elsewhere. The long rectangular block has the open hall and parlour to the left (west) end; the hall is now opened up after having been floored over in the C17 and after. There is an extensive service range to the right which may originally have had priests' rooms to the upper floor, and a cross passage with screens which is roughly central and emerges opposite the south porch of the church.

The main south front has varied fenestration; medieval forms have replaced some C18 sash windows shown in a watercolour of 1830. The north wall facing the churchyard has a large external gabled chimney stack and a variety of windows, including a C15 2-light casement and other 2-light and 3-light casements. A full and detailed architectural description of the exterior and interior of the building can be found in the entry in the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

William Barnes the Dorset dialect poet and a man of wide learning ran a school at the Chantry from 1827 to 1835, after having commenced teaching in the Cross Loft of the Market House in The Square at Mere. His teaching methods would be considered enlightened today, as he considered that minds should be trained in discrimination and not crammed. In November 1823 he wrote to his future wife, Julia Miles, that '*The number of my pupils is somewhat increased this quarter, but from the depressed state of agriculture, or from the peculiar poverty of Mere, or some other cause, I have much difficulty in getting my bills discharged*'. He added that his principal pursuit out of school was poetry. In particular, he composed a poignant farewell sonnet, '*To a Garden – On Leaving It*', upon moving from The Chantry to Dorchester.

In 1969 the owners of The Chantry acquired part of the garden of the neighbouring Deans Orchard comprising a large pond fed by a spring. Beside the pond is some old masonry, which may be the site of a former corn-mill that is known to have existed around here in the year 1280.

Chantry Cottage, a former service range to The Chantry, is of the C16, C17 and C20. It is now a house, having an entry to The Chantry. It is a long low block with a lofty and wide throughway towards the north end stable block. It is built of coursed and squared rubble-stone with a tile roof to the east and a slate roof to the west. To the road, the west face has a wide opening with C16 moulded stone jambs to a wood lintel, a pair of C20 plank doors, mainly plain walling to the right, a tall square external eaves chimney stack and two lights at the south end. The cottage is a listed building and the 3-metre high **boundary wall adjoining the stable block**, which joins the churchyard wall, is also listed in its own right because of its visual importance as part of the ensemble of historic properties.

Deans Orchard, a listed building, is a large detached house backing on to the south side of the churchyard. The name comes from a grant by Edmund, son of the Earl of Cornwall, to the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury in 1280 of land and a mill for grinding corn. The property was known as Mere Garden up to the C16, but has been known as Deans Orchard since the C17.

The present house was built in 1708, enlarged in 1756 (a date scratched in plaster on the first floor), and further extended across the north side later on. It is built of good coursed and squared stone to the south front, with some Chilmark stone such as quoins, and mainly of rubble-stone elsewhere. The roof is of plain tiles.

Originally, it was a three-bay symmetrical early C18 house on three floors plus attics. In the mid C18, it was extended by a further three bays on two floors with attics under a continuous roof line. In the later half, is a lofty ground floor, including a drawing room with a high ceiling and a wide fireplace. The extension added to the north side retained in the hall passageway the original front door and also the windows (now display cabinets) that had looked out onto the churchyard. A full architectural description of the house can be found in the entry in the statutory list of listed buildings.

In 1754, the house was leased to a doctor, Thomas Tatum, and later transferred to his sister, Sarah Still. The Still family, commemorated in the Still Chapel of the Parish Church, then occupied the house up to the early C19. From 1943, it was the vicarage but in 1969 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold it, and a modern house for the vicar was built on land behind it.

THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

The Parish Church of St Michael the Archangel, built of large squared coursed stone blocks under a slate roof, is the oldest surviving building in Mere. Although there is some evidence of a Saxon church, there is a definite record of a church existing in the year 1091. The rough masonry wall of the tower pierced by an arch and facing the nave, is probably of this date. A piece of charred timber protected by glass high up on the south side of the arch appears to be part of the wall-plate of the C11 building, and indicates not only its width but also its damage by fire.

In the early C13, the church was incomplete on the evidence of a visit by the Dean of Salisbury, who by virtue of his office was also the Rector of Mere. Although the structure possessed three altars, a tower and bells, its chancel was roofless. However, the present chancel with a barrel vault roof was built later in the C13. It has choir stalls with C15 panels in the front of the forward stalls. The back stalls on the south side are C15 originals with misericords, but those on the north side are C20 copies. On the north wall of the sanctuary is an alabaster tablet of the Adoration of the Magi, found in 1878 in a garden below Castle Hill; it is thought to date from 1450, and was probably originally displayed in the church but discarded at the Reformation. A niche below and to the right of the alabaster tablet may be a C13 Easter Sepulchre.

Two C14 chapels, both to the north and south sides of the chancel, were founded in 1325 by John of Mere, a steward of the Royal Manor of Mere. He was granted land and rents to fund a chaplain to pray for the souls of Queen Margaret (Edward I's second wife), the steward and his wife. Subsequently, and until the Reformation, there were three chantry priests living in the house named The Chantry (q.v.) that still stands backing on to the churchyard.

The chantry chapels were wider than the north and south aisles then existing, and the former east end rooflines of the aisles can still be discerned internally. Externally, angled buttresses had to be constructed at the west corners of the chapels. These buttresses were not altered when the aisles were widened later in the C14 to align with the walls of the chantry chapels.

Centrally on the floor of the south chantry chapel is a brass of Sir John Bettesthorpe of Chaddenwyche (Charnage, a hamlet east of Mere) who died in 1398. Close to the south side of the altar is part of another brass of about 1430. In the top lights of the south-west window are four C14 stained glass panels dating from the foundation of the chantry, and at the south end of the sanctuary step are fragments of C14 tiles of 'Wessex school' designs.

The north chantry chapel – the Still chapel – is named after the Still family whose burial vault is beneath the floor. King Richard II in 1393 granted land for the further endowment of this chapel, and by the C15 it may have become a chantry for the Stourton family of what is now the Stourhead estate. The roof of the chapel, a wagon-head vault divided into 20 plastered panels by oak ribs, has some old carved bosses and two dated shields of 1604 and 1791 respectively. More prosaically, the chapel housed 'seating for the poor' in the C19.

In the C15, the church underwent a 'Grand Restoration' supervised by Gilbert Kymer, Dean of Salisbury, whose arms are carved on a bench end in the choir stalls. The church was increased substantially in width and height, and the tower was built. The chancel arch, the tower arch and the nave arcades are all part of this C15 rebuild. Clerestory windows were added on each side, with blind windows on the north side (the north aisle having already been rebuilt in the C14 to its present height, and to align with the chantry chapel).

In the south aisle is a C15 Purbeck bowl font on a C19 granite base. There is some evidence that there was once an altar here dedicated to Our Lady in Childbirth, and a pew for the Churching of Women service existed into the C19.

The fine rood screen before the chancel is also of C15 date, with a C20 gallery and rood. Above the coving are traces of colouring and the whole screen bore traces of colour until restorations of 1856. The screens between the chancel and both side chapels are probably also C15.

The pews date from 1640 and are by Walter the Joiner (William Walter) of Maiden Bradley. Alterations in the 1850s reduced their height to less than three feet and set them on a raised floor.

On the north wall, the Royal Arms of King James II are rare. He ascended the throne in February 1685 and these were put up in March 1685, so they are thought to be the earliest of his reign in any church.

A former gallery at the west end of the nave under the tower was made in 1705 to accommodate 24 singers and an organ. In the C17, there was a gallery for 9 people at the east end of the north aisle, and in 1704 a gallery of similar size was installed at the east end of the south aisle. All the galleries were removed in 1855-56.

In 1712, the wall between the nave and the south aisle had become unsafe and it was rebuilt. A new nave roof was put on, but it was repaired again in 1856. Most of the ceiling panels of the nave were installed in 1998, but the easternmost ones in red and green were part of a roof restoration of 1895. All of the roof bosses date from the late C19.

Because much of the church's fabric had deteriorated by the 1850s due to previous neglect, the Diocesan Architect, T H Wyatt, drew up a scheme of major works. The exposed rough stonework of the interior, previously plastered and probably painted, dates from this C19 reorganisation.

The tower was rebuilt in the C15 and is an early example of Perpendicular style. It is 125 feet high to the tops of the pinnacles, and has an embattled parapet and an octagonal buttress at each corner, that on the north-west corner containing a stairway to the roof. The tower is

divided into three stages by string courses. The middle stage is subdivided into two: a clock chamber above and a ringing chamber below. The clock chamber has a disused C18 clock by Kingston Avery, Mere clockmaker and blacksmith, who also made the elaborate projecting sign on The Old Ship hotel; a new clock and chimes were installed as a World War 2 memorial. The top stage of the tower has eight bells, the oldest of which dates from 1460. The bells were re-hung in 1911.

The south porch, rebuilt in 1707, has a priest's chamber over it with a little window on its north side as a 'peep' into the church. The south side of the church has two or three scratch dials, primitive sundials cut into the stone that probably enabled the vergers to ring the bell for services at the correct time. The south chantry chapel has an east window with hood mould of the Decorated period, with a crowned head at the apex and four feminine heads below.

The north porch in two storeys was built in the C14 of local Wolverton stone, and has a fine decorated ceiling and a doorway of Perpendicular style with a pair of wide plank doors to strap hinges. There is an upswept parapet with a saddleback coping, pinnacles, and a central cross. A fine C15 inner door with Perpendicular tracery is beneath an image niche containing an unidentified headless statue discovered in a local pond. Over the outer door, a niche with a rich canopy has a statue of the church's patron saint, the Archangel Michael, dating from 1160. He is depicted defeating the serpent, and faint traces of colour remain. As this C12 statue was built into the C14 porch with a holy water stoop under it to the left, it must have been an object of veneration.

The north porch also has a turret staircase, and two unusual carvings of bats. The room over the porch was called 'The Treasurye Loft' in 1636, and was used for meetings of the Vestry, and later for a church museum, set up by local historian Thomas Baker, who was its first curator. Baker transcribed the church records of births, marriages and deaths from 1557 to 1853, forming three volumes. He also transcribed the stones and memorials in the churchyard that would otherwise have been lost to the ravages of time and weather. His own weather records showed a trend to wet summers and mild winters. He planted a memorial avenue of trees on the Downs.

LISTED STRUCTURES IN THE CHURCHYARD OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

The main gates and gate piers to the churchyard from Church Street were originally erected in 1716. The gates, piers and the boundary walls are listed for their importance to the ensemble of the church and its surroundings. The churchyard was closed to burials in 1856, when a new cemetery was made in Angel Lane.

A so-called **Charnel House**, a listed building on the south-east corner of the churchyard, is used as a store. Built into it is a doorway and a window rescued from the C16 Church House, which used to stand nearby until it was demolished in 1890.

The remains of a Medieval Cross stand some 9 metres (m) north of the north porch of the church. It has a small square base, an octagonal plinth block, and the broken 'stump' of an octagonal tapering shaft. This cross, destroyed by Cromwellian soldiers in 1643, was restored to the churchyard from fragments that had been used as boundary markers.

A Memorial Cross, erected in 1904 in memory of Julia Chafyn Grove (d. 1891), stands near the Church Street frontage. It is a well proportioned and executed version of a medieval

church cross, used as a monument. A square base in three steps carries a tall square plinth and a tapered octagonal shaft with a carved Calvary. The plinth is inscribed on its east face.

An unidentified Chest Tomb of 1700, about 4m west of the Chafyn Grove memorial, has on its south side a panel with a moulded top edge bearing a partly legible inscription in lower case:

*'Thinke on mee as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
But now I lye d . . . h . d to dust
Hoping to rise among the just.'*

Such sentiments have been expressed in monuments since the early C12.

Three unidentified Coffin Tombs of badly worn stone, probably C17, are located some 3m north of the north aisle of the church. They are set parallel, touch at the widest point, and are tapered and deeply chamfered. Some lettering can be discerned, possibly Sarah Rogers. These tombs are characteristic of the memorials used for those of middling station in life.

The Edward Dolling monument, about 10 m east of the north-east corner of the church towards the entrance gates from Church Street, comprises a headstone dated 1737 with cherub's head and leaf scrolls. It records that the deceased:

' . . . dyed of ye smallpox which he designedly took Sept. 6th 1737 aged 21 years '.

*'Stop passenger, my fate deplore,
take warning by my tomb
and never like me tempt ye Lord
least thou shouldst have my doom.'*

Dolling died as the result of self-administered variolation, an early and unsuccessful attempt at inoculation using smallpox serum; it was a dangerous procedure, albeit often used with some success, until Edward Jenner's discovery of a more certain working method in 1796 using cowpox serum.

The John Philips Chest Tomb, dated 1843 and of Portland stone, is situated about 10 m south of the church tower. It is a lofty chest, with panels formerly painted black, to John Philips and other members of his family. It is a monument still in the late C18 tradition with well-cut inscriptions.

An unidentified Coffin Tomb monument of the C17 or earlier, some 3 m north of the south wall to the churchyard, comprises a shaped slab with steep sides carrying bold Roman lettering but essential data is illegible.

An unidentified Coffin Tomb, probably C17 or possibly earlier, about 5 m west of the 'Charnel House' is one of a small number of monuments of early provenance still remaining in the churchyard. It is mostly covered in lichen and the inscriptions are illegible.

MILL LANE

The Old Town Mill, now a private house, stands at the confluence of the Shreen Water and Ashfield Water. There was sufficient waterpower to drive the mill both day and night, and the last miller, George Dodd, ground corn there until the early years of the C20. The mill consists of three adjoining two-storey ranges under pitched tiled roofs, with a long composite south-facing main frontage. The much lower range to the far left is constructed of stone with a central gabled bay and brick dressings to modern windows and doorways. The other ranges are constructed of brick.

The taller middle range has a central part-glazed door under a pitched tiled hood on timber brackets and irregular fenestration of modern 2-light casement windows in the original openings under segmental brick arches. A deeper narrow window on the first floor, above and to the right of the entrance door, was formerly a door for loading when the building was a working mill. Former shallow windows under the eaves, that would have served to light an attic floor (possibly the floor for grain storage), have been bricked up.

The right hand range appears to be the original mill house. It has a slightly lower roof ridge and a brick chimney stack. The ground floor has a central part-glazed door under a pitched tiled hood on brick piers, a small oculus window, and a 4-pane sash window to each side. The first floor has three under-eaves 4-pane sash windows.

NORTH ROW

The Silk Houses are a row of cottages built in the 1860s to replace the former Silk House that burned down in 1861. The silk industry developed in the early C19 to replace the fading linen trade, and became the largest employer of female labour. The Silk House was 100 feet long, and employed up to 120 women and girls.

NORTH ROAD

North Road has groups of short terraces set perpendicular and gable end to the road, with small gardens running parallel to the road. This is a distinctive local characteristic that makes an interesting townscape. The pattern of development to North Road resembles that of the adjacent areas along the Shreen Water.

NORTH STREET

North Street developed as a Victorian extension to the town, and has formalised what was a back lane to Salisbury Street in the medieval street pattern. The street forms an attractive group of modest 2 – 2.5 storey houses, often with roof dormers, focussed around the Methodist Chapel. The local stone is commonly used, with limited use of brick for dressings and chimneys in some later houses. Roofs are predominantly of clay tiles. Although views are limited, there are some open views of the rear of properties in Salisbury Street, which makes these aspects as sensitive as the main facades to Salisbury Street.

The Methodist Church, a listed building, is a simple and relatively unaltered chapel, originally built in 1846. A schoolroom at a lower level to the north end was added in 1874. It is a plain square chapel built of rock-faced coursed and squared stone under a roof of Welsh slate, with plain tiles to the schoolroom. The gabled two-storey front has a raised coping, two small arched lights flanking a central pair of plank doors under a fanlight, and three tall arched lights on the first floor; over the centre window is a small panel 'Methodist Church 1846'. The sides have two tall arched lights similar to the front. The interior, modified in the C19, contains a panelled gallery on slender cast-iron columns, pitch-pine pews, a central reading desk, and an organ and pulpit of 1936.

During the Second World War, the schoolroom was maintained as a rest room for British and American troops stationed locally. The Caisson Choir, formed from US black troops, is remembered for their inspiring singing of Negro spirituals in concerts given by them for the Church.

SALISBURY STREET

Salisbury Street, beginning at Bower House on the north side of The Square, presents a richly varied yet cohesive townscape. Rows of mainly two storey stone buildings are set on a consistent building line along the back of the footway, broken only by the gaping entrance to a public car-park on the south side of the street. Eastward views, which are deflected by the curvature of the street, eventually focus upon the former brewery complex occupied by Yapp Brothers with its landmark chimney. Yapp's building in conjunction with adjacent groups of cottages on both sides of the curving street, form a pleasing group that constitutes a threshold to the older centre of Mere. Behind and parallel to Salisbury Street is North Street, a Victorian extension to Mere, which was originally a back-lane to medieval burgage plots in Salisbury Street (a similar relationship to that between Castle Hill Lane and Castle Street).

Bower House has a regular façade comprising sash windows of four-panes, with a door to the left. The building may be older than the modern roof tiling and alterations to the frontage would seem to suggest. The mixture of large and small coursed stone blocks and the lintel over the ground floor windows may indicate that there was a former shop-front or workshop.

Cross House is listed mainly for its value as part of a street row. The street frontage of squared and coursed stone has unprepossessing C20 windows and a door, but its interior and rear may be C18 or earlier. The rear was possibly a workshop or commercial premises attached to the house front. Note the boot scraper in a stone surround adjacent to the front door, and also the slate hipped roof dormer with a C19 sash window with margin lights.

Crossways has a rendered façade over rubble-stone construction, with a string-course at first floor level. It is of two storeys with an attic lit by a roof-light let into the plain-tile roof. Windows are 6-paned sashes in moulded architrave surrounds, except for the wider ground-floor window to the right where there was probably a former shop display. Although Crossways was much modified in the C19 and C20, it is listed for its value as part of a row of cottages.

To the right of Crossways is a **two-storey house and shop** (currently vacant [Dec. 2008], formerly 'Conundrum') built of coursed rubble-stone and dating from the C18 or earlier. The steep roof slope of plain clay tiles and the windows and doorway offset to the right in the façade suggest an earlier building than the frontage now shows. At the first floor are two 9-pane sash windows set at the outer wall face. The ground floor shop display comprises 4-pane casements flanking a modern part-glazed door, all under an extended lintel. To the extreme right, is a plank door to a throughway.

The hair salon ('Lou's It', Dec. 2008) has a recessed shop front of canted plate-glass windows and a central glazed door under a full width fascia carried on cast-iron columns. The interior also retains some cast-iron supports. The first floor frontage has two large 12-pane sash windows set in painted coursed stonework (the natural stone shows on the gable end) under a C19 Welsh slate roof. The building is listed as a house and shop dating from the C18.

To the right of the hair salon is a **long row of cottages and former shops** built of coursed rubble-stone, including **Vogue Cottage, Boot Cottage and the premises of Mere Osteopathy**. The row is listed and was probably constructed as one unit in the C17, but it has undergone much modification in the C19, C20 and C21. In particular, former shop display windows, indicated by extended lintels, have been replaced by a variety of domestic windows, and one of two throughways (extreme left) has been blocked. On the first floor, four windows under the eaves consist of a casement, a margin-light sash, and two paired 12-pane sashes. The long steep roof slope of clay plain tiles has two small 2-light gabled dormers. The high coped upstand on the right-hand gable-end of the roof suggests that the building was previously thatched.

The **Victorian building occupied by Elite Financial Planning and Mere Snooker Club** was originally **built as a Temperance Hall**. The Hall opened in 1865 and replaced a public house called The Swan Inn that had been acquired for the Temperance Movement by John Farley Rutter, a Quaker. J F Rutter came to Mere and bought Dewes House, on the opposite side of Salisbury Street, in 1855. He practised there as a solicitor, and became a leading light in the Mere Temperance Society, founded in 1841 by his father (of Rutters solicitors in Shaftesbury).

The Temperance Movement in Mere appears to have begun in 1834 and to have strengthened through the 1840s – the ‘hungry forties’ – when hardship and poverty led to increased drunkenness. As well as redeveloping the site of the Swan Inn, the Mere Temperance Society was influential in closing down some informal beer-houses in and around Mere and for opening a Coffee House and a Temperance Hotel in the town. The White Hart Inn in The Square was also demolished in 1862.

The Temperance Hall had a large committee room above and a reading room below. It later became the Liberal Club, and was a public Branch Library between 1947 and 1970. The upper room is now the Snooker Club and the ground floor has an office use. The building, constructed of coursed stone blocks with moulded cornices at first floor and eaves levels, has a bold design. At street level is a large triple mullioned plate-sash window, which lit the former reading room. The arched main entrance with a panelled door and top-light is to the extreme right. On the first floor is a composite window, in stone surrounds and subdivided by stone mullions, featuring a pair of tall central arched windows flanked by a lower rectangular window to either side.

To the right of Mere Snooker Club is a **two storey Victorian House with a rendered frontage** partly occupied by Rutter & Rutter solicitors. The panelled front door with a top-light is set in plain pilasters and has a flat hood over it on scrolled brackets and a plate-sash window above. To the right, a canted bay with two windows rises through two storeys and to the left is a further set of sash windows. The door and windows are all offset to the right in the façade, as there is a plank door and top-light to a throughway to the extreme left.

The next two-storey house to the right is listed as a **Georgian House** of the late C18 or early C19. It is built of coursed squared rubble-stone with a double Roman tiled roof. At street level on the left is a former shop-front of the C19, consisting of four lights with shaped heads under a common fascia with the panelled front door with its shaped overlight. To the right is a 12-pane sash window and on the first floor are two 12-pane sashes, all windows being set to the front plane of the wall.

A listed early C19 house named **Pickwicks**, for many years Norris’s baker’s shop, is situated at the end of the street row on the corner of a footpath called Penny Bank Lane. It is built of coursed and squared stone under a pantile roof. The symmetrical frontage is distinguished by two lead-capped bow windows with square panes, flanking a central part-glazed modern door. The bow windows were part of the former shop but do not retain original glass. On the first floor are two 16-pane sash windows; between them there used to be a wooden board displaying the business name and also projecting ‘Hovis’ signs.

Penny Bank Lane, the footpath between Pickwicks and Potters Croft, may have given access to the former Mere Penny Bank opened in 1859. The Penny Bank appears to have become too successful and too much of a responsibility, and so it was scaled down in 1888 and closed a few years later.

The listed early C19 two storey house named **Potters Croft** begins another row to the right of Penny Bank Lane. Built of thin beds of squared stone under a Welsh slate roof, it has a

symmetrical front of 16-pane sash windows, those on the ground floor having later shutters. The central modified C19 stable type door is set in pilasters under a flat timber hood. A roof-light is set into the centre of the roof.

The listed **late C19 house next to the Kia Motors showroom** stands out from other houses in the row with its extra height and projecting oriel windows. It has two storeys and an attic, a tiled roof but slate hanging on its gable-end adjoining the slate-roofed Potters Croft. The stonework is of good quality: coursed and squared stone with ashlar dressings to the doors and windows and flush quoins at the ends. The ground floor has two 12-pane sash windows, with a panelled door under a margin-bar transom light on the left of each window. On the first floor are two canted oriel windows on stone bases with carved brackets, and between the oriels a 12-pane sash window. Two hipped dormer windows, centred over the oriels, light the attic.

A long free standing two-storey **row of three cottages listed as 'Downlease'** - now one property used by the Talbot Garage (Kia Motors) - stands to the right of the motor showroom. It dates from the C18, has a C19 tiled roof, and probably is a restructuring of an earlier building. The first cottage on the left has a separate roof-line, a mixture of squared stone and rubble stone laid in courses, and rat-trap bond brickwork on the gable end; a pair of 4-pane sash windows under extended painted wooden lintels flank the plank front-door, and are offset to the right of centre. The middle and right-hand end cottages are under a common roof. The middle cottage has 3-light casement windows flanking a plank door and a further window bay to the left with a 6-pane sash at street level and a single plain window above. The end cottage has a plank door to its left with a single bay of 6-pane sash windows staggered one above the other. Some of the windows in the row are blocked out with motor trade advertisements, there is motor signage fixed to the gable end and the cutilage is incorporated into the garage business.

The **final eastern section of Salisbury Street** makes a pronounced double curve up to where it becomes Hazzards Hill at the Shreen Water and the Yapp Brothers complex. Although no individual building on the north side of the street is especially notable, and there is variability in details such as doors and windows, the cottage rows have a strong and harmonious presence. The consistent building line along the curving street, together with the two-storey scale and the predominant use of stonework make for a cohesive townscape.

In the row opposite the public car park, there are three traditional shop-fronts framed by pilasters rising to bracketed cornices. The window of Jill Christie's hair salon, in particular, is subdivided by mullions into 6 lights with curved heads; in the early C20, the premises was the bakery department of the then Mere & District Co-operative Society.

Yapp Brothers, where Salisbury Street becomes Hazzards Hill and meets Water Street, is a complex of former brewery buildings occupied by Yapps, importers of Rhone and Loire wines from France. There is a clear cut-off point here between the older core of Mere and C20 development towards the A303.

The history of this site begins with the establishment of a malthouse in the C18. There were several malthouses in Mere and barley was then an important crop in Wiltshire. A brewery was established on site in the C19, using a supply of very clear water from a spring which still exists. The complex of buildings retains its tall chimney, which is a landmark, terminating the view from the town along Salisbury Street and on the approach to Mere from the A303.

The buildings are grouped around an internal courtyard, which as its centrepiece has a reproduction of the fountain in the courtyard at Chateauneuf du Pape. There are a number of diverse elements around the courtyard: a two-storey four-square factory type of building, constructed of stone with brick pilasters and tall square-paned windows under brick arched

heads; a stone house facing Water Street with three chimney stacks and three sets of 4-pane windows; and adjoining this building to the left, a lower range with an entrance archway and four through-eaves gabled dormers with casement windows. The brew house was probably in the building directly opposite the entrance archway, on the east side of the courtyard.

The brewery was modest in scale. Its supplies were probably restricted to small beer houses and to off-licences for home consumption. In part of the house facing Water Street, the brewers established a 'tap bar' called The Ring of Bells with a six day trading licence.

After the brewery closed in 1885, it became a bacon-curing factory for some 10 years. Thereafter, the buildings were used as a milk factory, with periods of particular prosperity during the two C20 World Wars when it produced National Dried Milk. Cow & Gate took control in 1959 but soon reduced their operation here to a laboratory and an experimental station. The factory closed altogether in 1970 and, following a period of ownership by a property developer, was bought by Yapps whose excellent reputation has made Mere more widely known.

A row of two-storey cottages, including The Cottage and Corner House, is stepped up the slope of the ground and set at an angle across the corner of Water Street and Salisbury Street. This row is prominent in the street scene at the threshold of the older core of Mere with Salisbury Street curving to the right. Fronting the cottages is a valuable survival of traditional stone paving.

Jeans TV and Electrical Shop, the house to its right and Mere Cottage to the left, are listed buildings which represent what much of Salisbury Street must have looked like before changes made in the C20 affected many properties. **Mere Cottage** to the left dates from the early C19 or late C18; it has a lower roofline with plain tiles and one set of 12-pane sash windows to the left of a C20 door. It is built of coursed rubble-stone with irregular flush stone quoins to the left and also a lean-to with broad plank doors under a triangular glazed area.

Jeans shop and the house to its right are relatively untouched externally, and are built of coursed and squared rough dressed stone with double Roman roof tiles. The double fronted traditional shop front has framing pilasters to the ends and to the central doorway, with decorative scrolls to a simple continuous fascia with a moulded cornice. The left-hand shop window is subdivided by vertical glazing bars with arched heads. To the right of the shop, is a panelled door with a horizontal over-light and a 16-pane sash window, and across the first floor are four 16-pane sash windows.

Jeans premises abut the public car park on the south side of Salisbury Street. This break in the continuity of the street frontage is mitigated by the rows of two-storey cottages and shops on the concave curve of the north side of the street.

The **gateway and walls to Courtyard Cottage** (but not the Cottage itself) are listed structures, probably of the late C18. The gateway consists of a wide elliptical opening framed by dressed stone piers and an arch with a keystone, rising above to a tiled coping and pier caps. The composition is important to the street scene and echoes similar structures to the right of Dewes House.

Dewes Lodge, formerly a service wing to Dewes House further right, is of the C17 and C18. It consists of a lower part to the left, featuring a small horizontal casement window and a 6-pane fixed light, both under long wood lintels with infilled stonework below indicating that there were formerly larger openings in the wall here. To the right, a higher two-storey section has 2-light casement windows with stone mullions in moulded architrave surrounds, flanking a panelled door. There is a small window, probably to a stair, under the eaves to the extreme right.

Dewes House, one of the largest and finest buildings in Mere, is partly set back from the street. The building originates from around 1660 but also comprises work of the C18 and the C19 when it was enlarged on the south side overlooking lawns. It is possibly named after the family of Richard Dewes who is recorded as living in Mere in 1585. Between 1855 and 1926, it was the home of the influential Rutter family of solicitors and doctors, and its garden was often used for social occasions in the town.

Dewes House is a symmetrical five-bay house with a central stair turret at the rear and a large added or modified wing to the left, brought forward to the pavement. It is constructed of fine stone ashlar but has a roof of modern concrete tiles that replaced the former stone slates (as still remain at The Old Ship Hotel) that were removed in 1963. The street frontage consists of two storeys with attic dormers. In the set-back part, is a central panelled door, up three steps, set in a moulded architrave under a closed segmental arch pediment; a set of five mullion and transom casement leaded-light windows; and a plain string course at mid-level which is carried around the projecting wing. The wing features later-date 12-pane sash windows on the ground floor with mullion and transom leaded-light casements above. The house has a basement, indicated by basement lights to the right of the doorway: an advertisement of 1795 refers to "two large cellars with wine vaults". Dewes House is listed at grade II* because of its particular architectural and historic interest.

The **wall with two doorways between Dewes House and the Lecture Hall** is a listed structure of the C18. It returns back to enclose the frontage of the house and is important to the continuity of the street. It is built of coursed and squared stone with ashlar dressings, rising to a stone coping some 3 metres high, but swept down to each side. The two plank doors are set within plain pilasters and flat elliptical arches with projecting keystones.

The Lecture Hall was built in the 1860s by J F Rutter, solicitor and Quaker, of Dewes House. It incorporated a Friends' Meeting House built in 1863. The Lecture Hall was used for meetings of the Mere Temperance Society, the Band of Hope, concerts in aid of the British School, Methodist rallies and Liberal Party meetings. No alcohol was permitted to be consumed on the premises. The custom of reading a passage of scripture preceding meetings continued for a time after J F Rutter died in 1899.

In 1924, a Lecture Hall Trust was founded and endowed by Dr Rutter to promote the welfare of Mere people 'along lines not inconsistent with Nonconformist Christianity, Temperance or similar objects'. In 1928, a Small Lecture Hall was added to the building, and was used for many years as a Friends' Meeting House. The Lecture Hall was refurbished in 2008 and continues to be well used for a variety of purposes, including meetings, films, plays and charity sales. The 'no alcohol' rule remains.

The Gables, next to the Lecture Hall, is a C19 three-storey gable fronted building constructed of coursed and squared stone with stone quoins to the edges of the façade. The ground floor has a pair of matching shop windows flanking a central doorway under a dressed stone lintel and a cornice. A tripartite sash window on the first floor and two individual sashes on the second floor have dressed stone surrounds.

On the glazing of the inner doors to the shop premises is etched the name of the Swan Coffee House. Coffee houses were opened in later Victorian times in various British towns as part of the Temperance Movement's drive against alcohol. Mere's Swan Coffee House opened in 1882 and lasted for some seven years.

During the First World War, Mrs Alice Rutter, the wife of Dr F B Rutter, opened the building as a home for unmarried mothers called The Retreat. Mrs Rutter was the honorary superintendent and Dr Rutter was honorary treasurer and medical officer. As illegitimacy was

frowned upon at that time, especially in small communities, this was a courageous venture by the Rutters. They employed a matron and deputy matron, and enlarged the home in 1919 by extending into two adjacent cottages. The Retreat operated for 10 years and admitted over 300 mothers in that time.

Leading into The Square, the south side of Salisbury Street is fronted by **two attached rows of C19 two-storey cottages**, built of coursed and squared stone, **namely Homelea and Truscott, The Cottage and Corner House**. The former each have recessed panelled doors at the ends of the row with plain overlights, a single 4-pane sash window on the ground floor and two 4-pane sashes above, all with moulded wood frames under plain stone lintels. The latter, with a gable-end facing The Square, are characterised by a broad brick band at mid-level, brick quoins and dressings to doorways and window openings, and 4-pane sash windows set back in reveals. The Cottage has recessed paired doors and Corner House has a single door to the right end, all with plain overlights. These cottage rows contribute to the townscape at the critical junction of Salisbury Street with The Square.

THE SQUARE

The Clock Tower of 1868, a listed building, was paid for by the Prince of Wales whose emblem is on the building. It replaced a medieval Market House demolished in 1863. The Market House had open arches at ground level for traders' stalls. Its upper storey, the Cross Loft, was used for the Duchy of Cornwall Manorial Court, and in the 1820s by the young William Barnes (the Dorset dialect poet) who ran a school there prior to moving to The Chantry (q.v.); lessons were accompanied by ticking from the town clock and noise from the market below.

The George Inn is a listed building constructed of stone. It probably dates from around 1580, although its rendered and timbered finish dates only from the 1920s. Between 1822 and 2002 it was called the Talbot Hotel, as a Talbot dog was the crest of the local Chafyn Grove family who leased the building in 1711 and acquired the freehold in 1866.

King Charles II came in disguise to the inn for refreshment on 6 October 1651 after defeat at the Battle of Worcester. The King's companion, Captain Phillips, knew the landlord of the time to be loyal to the King, and having been warned of the Roundheads' approach, the royal party were sent safely on their way. The King's escape route is commemorated in the Monarch's Way, a walking trail which runs through Mere.

As one of the centres of Mere life, the George Inn has been a venue for auction sales and, after 1863, the Duchy Manorial Court. In the early twentieth century (C20) the inn's garage provision for customers was the origin of the Talbot Garage in Salisbury Street (F J Chalke Ltd).

The George Inn's former outbuildings, comprising a brew house and cottages to the north side, were demolished in 1968 for road widening.

Lloyds TSB Bank occupies a symmetrical two-storey building of yellow brick with a hipped slate roof. It was built in 1858 for the Mere branch of the then Wiltshire & Dorset Bank. The façade is articulated by quoins at the corners of the building and at the projections of the two middle bays, each of which has a linked pair of sash windows on the ground floor. The windows are set in architrave surrounds and there are matching door-cases at either end, that to the left now blocked and accommodating an ATM machine.

In the C19, the local agent for the Wiltshire & Dorset Bank was Charles Card, the predecessor of John Walton & Co. The bank operated in his shop to begin with, on the other corner of Manor Road, until he erected the present building that was acquired outright from him in 1879. Lloyds Bank took over the business in 1914.

The **Nisa supermarket** is a late C19 building, which is listed as a ‘vigorous commercial design with high townscape value and a well considered corner’. It was formerly the main store of Walton & Co. John Walton came to Mere in 1864 and dominated the retail trade in the town in the latter part of the C19 and the first half of the C20. At the height of Walton’s success, the business had 14 departments around the centre of Mere with branches in four surrounding villages. The adjacent building to the right (Brainwave shop) was John Walton’s home and a former Post Office.

The Boardroom House is a listed C18 building formerly used as a shop with residential accommodation above. It has a bold symmetrical front, comprising a central Palladian doorway flanked by side-lights and, to each side, two-storey flat-roofed canted bay windows. To the far left is an elliptical arched throughway with iron gates. In the C18, it was the hub of a substantial foreign import and export trade in textiles and other goods run by Henry Hindley until his death in 1783. More recently, it was the boardroom and offices of John Walton & Co.

The **three-storey building, which includes a Chinese take-away shop**, is a listed late C19 structure on a larger scale than other buildings in the town centre. It is distinguished by good stonework, a canted two-storey bay towards the centre, and richly modulated mouldings to window and door surrounds. A former property on this site once belonged to the Marquis of Bath (of Longleat) and an inn called The White Hart once stood here.

Mere Pharmacy stands out against its neighbours because of its red brick rather than the local Mere stone. Dating from about 1900, it was Walton’s newsagents department for a time and then their pharmacy, a use that continues today under different ownership.

Balcony Cottage is a listed C19 house, which was formerly two dwellings. It is important to the character of Mere in forming the visual closure to the east side of The Square. To the left-hand (north) side of the cottage, there used to be a Tudor house called The Triangle, but it was demolished in 1962 for widening the A303 road, which then ran through the town centre, prior to construction of the present by-pass.

Walton’s Shop and Post Office and 1 The Square were built in 1985 when the late Andrew Young, general manager of Walton’s, took over the post office and built the present shop and the house next door. In the 1960s, Mere’s first supermarket The Mini-Mart opened here.

The Old Bakery, now a private dwelling, was a baker’s shop between 1925 and 1978.

The Fruit Shop is an Edwardian style gabled building, probably built around 1912. It was once part of Walton’s stores business when they acquired it to extend their ironmongery department.

The stone building which includes Finan & Co is listed and dates from the C18. It comprises dwellings with a shop to the left and is distinguished by its stone façade, a number of 16 pane sash windows, hipped dormers to the extreme left and right of the roof, and a fine double-fronted shop front of the mid C19 with slender cast-iron colonettes. From the C18 until 1884, when Walton’s ironmongery department took over the shop, it traded as linen drapers, mercers and grocers. When the ironmongery use ceased in 1990, the property was carefully renovated by Robert Finan, antiques auctioneer and valuer.

The Co-operative Supermarket occupies the former Victoria Hall, built in 1899 by the Conservative Club for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee (1897). The hall was intended to be used for all political parties and sections of the community. In the early 1920s, a cinema operated here, run by the landlord of the then Talbot Hotel and Charles Jeans who developed what is now Jeans electrical and TV business. The Co-op first began trading in the town in 1890, in competition to Walton's, as the Mere and District Co-operative Society in what is now Gilyard Scarth estate agents office in Salisbury Street. The present Co-op has recently extended to the right into what was once part of the former Angel Inn.

The Angel Corner Tea Room, together with the premises to the left of the same build, was formerly the Angel Inn. A new and reduced Angel Inn opened in 1883 and continued until 1969. In the early part of the C20, it was adjoined by a Temperance Hotel established by J F Rutter of Dewes House, Salisbury Street, a local solicitor. His father, J Rutter senior of Shaftesbury, had founded a Mere Temperance Society in 1841. The Society was instrumental in closing some informal beer houses and an inn in Mere, opening a Temperance Hall and a Coffee House, forming a Benefit Club, and founding a Fife and Drum Band.

BOAR STREET/PETTRIDGE LANE

The Old Manse, at the corner of The Square and Boar Street, dates from the late C18 or early C19. It was bought from the Duchy of Cornwall for £300 in 1879 to provide a minister's house adjacent to the Congregational Chapel, now the United Reformed Church.

The former manse building is long and narrow and comprises two storeys and an attic. Its left-hand gable end and main façade are covered in cement rendering, scribed to resemble stonework, but rubble-stone construction is visible at the rear and on the right-hand gable end. The manse backs on to Balcony Cottage in The Square and seems formerly to have incorporated part of the cottage. Its gable end fronting The Square shares similar 16-pane sash windows as the cottage, and appears to have incorporated a doorway where there is now a smaller window on the left.

The façade to Boar Street has all 12-pane sash windows in moulded architrave surrounds. The two ground floor windows are offset to the right, leaving a large blank area of wall to the left; the windows flank a fine panelled door under a flat stone hood.

The **two Congregational Chapels** consist of a very large building alongside Boar Street and a smaller one to its right bordering Dark Lane footpath. These are the third and the second chapels respectively to be built on the site. Although there is a record of religious Dissent and of a Meeting House in Mere as early as 1705, the first Independent or Congregational Chapel was built in 1795 by Robert Butt. He was a native of Mere who sold a prosperous business in Warminster and bought land on the corner of Boar Street and Dark Lane in order to build a chapel as a thank offering, after regaining health following a serious illness. This first chapel seems to have been a modest building, with three lancet windows along the side and domestic accommodation built onto one end (see Longbourne, D., p. 30). In 1812, when Butt moved back to Warminster, the congregation and supporters bought him out, and the ownership of the chapel was vested in trustees.

An important employer in Mere, a silk throwster named Charles Jupe, subsequently invested both time and money promoting Nonconformity in Mere and Zeals following his marriage into an ardent Congregationalist family. Membership outgrew the original chapel, which was replaced by a second chapel, still standing by Dark Lane. A schoolroom for the British School was provided underneath this chapel, which was itself superseded by a third chapel in 1868.

Thereafter, the second chapel was used as the British School, the Mere Junior School, a furniture depository, and currently as a showroom for Jeans TV and electrical goods business of Salisbury Street and by Leaping Frogs pre-school playgroup.

The third chapel, now the United Reformed Church, was built next to its predecessor in 1868. It was financed entirely by Jupe. It could accommodate 600 people and was reputedly well filled at the time. Internally, the long galleries along each side of the nave were for boys on one side and girls on the other. Although opinions differ as to the architectural merit of the building, it is an impressive and little altered example of Victorian Nonconformist architecture. However, with today's much smaller congregations and the expense of heating the spacious interior of the church, clear plastic sheeting now covers the nave at balcony level to serve as a 'false ceiling'.

The row of houses consisting of **No. 1 and Hatherleigh in Pettridge Lane** is situated on the left just beyond the Congregational chapels. Although the varying roofline gives the appearance of three houses, there are only two. They are listed buildings of the early-mid C19 and represent the limit of pre-C20 development on this edge of Mere town centre. No. 1 has an attic dormer and casement windows. Hatherleigh is in two sections, taller to the right-hand end of the row, with mainly 12-pane sash windows. There is a good fielded 6-panel door on the left of the taller building with a flat metal hood on decorative cast-iron brackets.

UPPER WATER STREET AND THE FIELDS

This area, on either side of the upper reaches of the Shreen Water, has a most irregular pattern of development compared to the orderly form of development in the town. Houses jostle together at different angles on tiny plots approached by winding footpaths. One idea to explain such haphazard growth is that these houses could result from early squatting on the Manorial Waste, but this is conjecture pending further research.

WATER STREET

Habberley is a listed and relatively unmodified early C19 house at the end of a much modified row of cottages opposite The Grange (q.v.). It is a two-storey house with an L-shaped plan. The materials consist of squared and coursed stone, graded to smaller courses at the upper levels, large greenish quoins, a slate roof and brick gable chimney stacks. The symmetrical street front comprises 16-pane sash windows, which retain their panelled shutters, flanking a six-panel fielded and part-glazed door under a flat timber hood on wrought iron brackets. On the first floor, 2-light small-pane casements flank a central recessed blind opening.

The Grange (Nos. 1 & 2) was originally one large house, perhaps dating from the C15 as the roof timbers suggest a medieval structure. It was once owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and was the residence of the Duchy's bailiff. The first floor had an upper hall with two chambers and a loft, and the ground floor had a large lower hall with buttery, parlour and other rooms. The house was much modified in the C19 and C20, and was divided into two dwellings in 1938.

It is built of small squared and coursed rubble-stone with some large flush quoins, probably of Wolverton stone. The tile roof possibly replaced stone slate. A projecting section of the street front to the right, now fenestrated with 3-light casement windows of small panes, may once have been a large external chimney stack.

The section to the left end of the house is slightly angled forward to the remainder and has a C20 door underneath a 2-light window. Between this and the aforementioned projecting section, there is an off-centre C20 porch with a panelled door, 2-light transom bar casement windows flanking the porch, and four 2-light casements under the eaves on the first floor. On the far right, is a small C20 single light above a recessed doorway with a plank door and overlight.

In 1774, The Grange was advertised as 'a large and commodious farmhouse with convenient outbuildings' forming a four sided farmyard. In 1843, when the resident farmer named William Wickham retired and sold his livestock, the property was acquired by Charles Jupe, the silk throwster and ardent Congregationalist. Jupe demolished the farm buildings behind the house and re-used their stone to build an adjoining silk factory bordering Dark Lane. A surviving end of the factory, now a dwelling called The Silk House (q.v.) is still attached to the right-hand end of The Grange.

Around 1910, Duncan Walton of John Walton & Co lived at The Grange. He was the second son of John Walton and succeeded his father as a director of the department store business, which had 14 departments at the height of its prosperity. In 1938, when Mrs Walton died, the house was subdivided: one unit for Mr Walton until his death in 1943 and the other unit for one of his daughters.

The Silk House, a dwelling adjoining The Grange, is the remaining end block of Charles Jupe's silk factory that bordered Dark Lane in the C19. Jupe was a silk throwster. For much of the C19, the 'throwing' of silk was a mainstay of the local economy, having largely replaced the previous staple trade of processing flax into coarse grades of linen, notably bed-ticking. Initially, the silk business was outsourced from Spitalfields in London to areas of very cheap female labour. Silk houses were set up around Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire employing girls without the use of machinery.

Silk seems to have come to Mere in 1814. Charles Jupe, son of an old Mere linen family and a strong supporter of Congregationalism, became a partner in the business at a time when the development of powered machinery for silk throwing caused the abandonment of silk houses and a move to factory production. Eventually, besides a factory at Crockerton near Warminster, Jupe had three factories in or near Mere at Hinks Mill, Lordsmead Mill (q.v.) and The Grange.

Charles Jupe acquired The Grange in 1843, lived in the prestigious house, but demolished the farm buildings and recycled the stone to build his adjoining factory. As the site lacked waterpower, there might have been a small steam engine or else the site would have been used for just sorting and cleaning.

After Charles Jupe died in 1883, the business was continued by his son Isaiah who duly moved into The Grange. However, the business declined against competition from France favoured by tariffs. All of the factories closed in October 1894, and this collapse marked the end of textile working in Mere.

The Water Street factory was used later by the Royal Wilton Carpet Company for the hand weaving of carpets up to 1939, but it was subsequently demolished except for one wall in Dark Lane, and the end block, now a house.

OUTLYING BUILDINGS

Lordsmead Mill, a former water mill on the Shreen Water off Pettridge Lane, is a listed building and dates from the late C18 or early C19. Although flax spinning was in decline by the early C19, the mill was converted by John Jupe from a grist mill to Mere's first factory for the machine spinning of flax at that time. He installed a new and more powerful waterwheel in 1837, which survived until the Second World War. John Jupe's son Henry continued as a 'Flax spinner, Linen, Tick and Cheesecloth Manufacturer' until around 1860 when the linen trade faded out to be replaced by the silk industry.

Lordsmead Mill was taken over by Charles Jupe who had silk factories at Crockerton near Warminster, and at Hinks Mill and The Grange (q.v.). At Lordsmead Mill, Charles Jupe installed woodworking machinery to produce bobbins for silk winding – silk arrived from cocoons unwound, and was cleaned, wound onto bobbins and graded. In the latter part of the C19, the silk industry was the largest employer of women and girls in Mere, but the factories closed suddenly in 1894.

From 1927 to 1935, Lordsmead Mill was used as the factory of the Hill Brush Company, which had originated in 1922 in a workshop at Milestone Cottage (q.v.) in Castle Street. The mill's waterwheel was used for driving the brush making machinery. The company relocated from the mill in 1935 to their present factory in Woodlands Road.

Although the interior of the mill has been completely modified for domestic use as a dwelling, the mill remains a fine building in the functional tradition. Its main section is built of coursed and squared stone under a slate roof; a small section to the right is lower with a tile covered mansard roof and horizontal boarding in the upper part of the gable end. The main building consists of eight bays with 36-pane windows on two floors.

Woodlands Manor is situated about a mile south of Mere, just within Wiltshire but close to the border with Dorset. As a Grade I listed building, it is distinguished as being of national importance.

N.B.: the building is a private house; it is screened by tall hedges and cannot be seen by the public. Reference is made to published sources, from which the following information is derived.

The manor house was built for Thomas Dodington around 1370 – 1380. The property had been owned by the Guphaye family and passed to Dodington, a widower, upon his marriage to Jane Guphaye, the daughter of the holder of the manor at this time. Dodington was a younger son of the family, of Dodington Hall, Nether Stowey, Somerset. He was descended from a Norman knight who came to England in 1066 and who was duly rewarded with large grants of land. This knight was keeper of the King's hunting forests in Somerset, and part of the family's coat of arms, namely three hunting horns on a shield, is fixed over the main entrance porch of Woodlands Manor today.

The house originally consisted of a hall block and a chapel. An east range was added in the mid C15, and the building underwent much internal modification in the C16 and C18. The fortunes of the Dodington family appear to have declined in the C17, possibly because of the Civil War. The house was mortgaged in 1672 to Matthew Andrews, a London merchant (who was elected M.P. for Shaftesbury in 1695), purchased by him in 1705, and let as a farm. In the late C18, it passed to the Meyrick family and remained with them until the mid C20.

In the late C19, the house was in a decayed state due to neglect by absentee landlords. The architect C E Ponting and the Wiltshire Archaeological Society were instrumental in the late 1880s in preventing the loss of much of the building by stopping a scheme of alterations and demolition. The building owes its present state mainly to the substantial and careful

restoration work of the early C20. In particular, the Revd F Meyrick Jones undertook extensive restoration along with a small addition to the kitchen wing, as featured in *Country Life* (Vol CL: 1924, May 10 & 17).

In 1949 – 50, the then owner (Mr Leigh Holman) built a new wing adjoining the west end of the medieval hall, using stone from an old cottage demolished at Donhead. Old oak doors were installed, with new latches and hinges made by a Mere blacksmith. It is understood that the current owners have continued restorations and improvements

The chapel, with coped gables, is the upper storey of a two-storey building, lit by three windows with tracery and having arched doorways, a piscina and a barrel vault roof. As originally built, it may simply have had an open vault beneath for storing carts. However, this lower storey was converted into a room in 1530 and an exterior staircase to the chapel was removed. The lower room has three plain C16 windows and a doorway connecting with the hall in the south wall and an outside door on the north wall.

The medieval hall is parallel to the chapel and joined thereto by a passage. Former bedrooms inserted at first floor level were removed in 1921 to restore the hall to its full height, thus exposing the 6-bay arch-braced collar roof. The hall is lit by a tall square headed window and two shorter ones, all with tracery. At the east end, a gallery is built over a screens passage leading from the south porch. The porch has a small room over it with an arch-braced roof; pigeon holes, discovered around the room in the 1920s, suggest it had been used as a dovecote. Leading off the screens passage is a C15 extension with a massive fireplace, probably added as a kitchen block.

Hinks Mill Farmhouse, on the Shreen Water in Whitehill Lane outside Mere, is a listed early C18 L-plan building, representative of larger farmhouses in the area. It is constructed of coursed and squared stone, with a roof of Roman tiles. To the road, the north front has two wide spaced bays: to the left a 16-pane over 20-pane sash window, and to the right paired 8-pane sash windows over a cross window with paired casements. To the stream, on a deep plinth, are four windows. In 1832 – 34, Hinks Mill became a silk mill under Charles Jupe, having previously been a centre of the flax industry. In February 1956, one old four-storey building, formerly used as part of the silk mill, was demolished.

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ADDENDUM

The Malt House Castle Street (adjacent to The Old Ship)

From the 1980s, until shortly before his death, The Malt House was the residence of Wolfe Frank (1913 – 1988), who was the most important, and highly respected, interpreter at the Nuremberg Trials (the International Military Tribunal (IMT)). These trials of Nazi war criminals held after the Second World War are considered to be one of the most important in history. The Trials were also the first to use simultaneous translation which Wolfe Frank

helped to develop. The duty of informing the accused of their fate, listened to by an estimated radio audience of 400 million, earned Frank the title of the Voice of Doom.

In his autobiography, Wolfe Frank states that he “had been more totally and decisively immersed in recording the horrors of the war than most of the millions who had fought in it.” He was praised for superb scholarship and intellectual integrity, satisfactory alike to the bench, the defence, and the prosecution.

The Nuremberg Trials lasted from November 1945 until sentencing day on 30 September 1946; the condemned Nazis were hung on 16 October 1946. After the IMT, Wolfe Frank was involved in the Subsequent Proceedings, trials of less high-ranking Nazis, but he left Nuremberg in 1947.

From 1948 he undertook a covert undercover operation in the east and west sectors of Germany, on false papers, to gather evidence for articles in the New York Herald Tribune entitled *Hangover After Hitler*. He had become concerned that Germany was hoodwinking the world with the information that it was providing to the media. He discovered a former SS officer, a Nazi general on the allies most wanted list of war criminals, working under an assumed name for the British, took his signed confession and turned him over to the authorities.

Wolfe Frank was born in Saxony of Jewish descent. In May 1937, with the Gestapo after him, he fled to Britain. He mastered English and could move flawlessly back and forth between English and German. At the start of the war he was interned, but he campaigned for his release and was allowed to enlist in the British Army, rising to the rank of Captain. In July 1945 he was instructed to join the British War Crimes Executive, which led on to his role in the Nuremberg Trials.

Wolfe Frank was a colourful character who had five marriages and countless love affairs. He was, at various times, financial adviser, racing driver, theatre impresario, broadcaster, journalist, salesman, businessman, restaurateur, skier and property developer. He was acknowledged to be an exceptionally charming man, intelligent and of immaculate appearance.

His final role was interpreting work for the European Union but Parkinsons and Glaucoma made it impossible to continue travelling to Brussels. His health and finances declined and, facing homelessness, the then Salisbury Council found him a bungalow in Lynch Close, Mere and helped him with social benefits. On 10 March 1988, he dressed in his best clothes and enjoyed the finest cuisine and champagne at his favourite restaurant, The Old Ship Inn before committing suicide by inhaling exhaust fumes in his car off the Mere By-Pass.

He left his memoirs in several boxes of documents to his friend in Mere Mike Dilliway, the proprietor of a vehicle body repair business that Wolfe Frank often visited because of the number of minor motoring accidents in which he was involved. Dilliway paid for Wolfe's funeral and cleared up his affairs, but the documents remained stored and uninvestigated in his loft for over 25 years until he was about to move house. He then asked Paul Hooley, a writer and lecturer on military history, to catalogue them and Hooley edited two books of autobiography, the sources of this summary.

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