

**A summary of historical information about
the site of the Corn Exchange (formerly
Constitutional Club), Market Place, Barton on
Humber.**



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These two articles were written for Barton on Humber Civic Society's annual Newsletter, 2015 and 2016.

Part 1.

In the summer of 2014 Geoff. Bryant and myself were loaned a collection of 52 legal documents relating to the evolution of the site on and around where the Corn Exchange now stands, immediately north of Barton Market Place.

The documents referenced changes across the generations from 1688 to the early 20th century and included wills, indentures, abstracts and the like – all manuscripts (hand-written by legal clerks), except for insurance company documents, some difficult to read. Indentures had a jagged edge which would knit with the edge of the copy document held by another party.

The documents recounted a vast amount of information, albeit written in a very legalistic manner, about personalities involved in transactions, wills, mortgages, debts, inheritances and the like. However in scanning the documents my single purpose was to search for evidence about the site and buildings thereon, a theme which occupied a small percentage of the total.

In handing over the bundle of documents the organising Committee of the Corn Exchange were asking for them to be deposited in an official archive repository. Following the above scanning the collection was deposited at Grimsby Archive Office, Town Hall, Grimsby and it is here that any future researcher may access this material for their studies.

An 'Abstract' dated 1809 recounted 14 transactions between 1688 and 1792 related to the site immediately north of Market Place. The 'abstracts' are particularly useful documents in that they re-tell the details of preceding transactions relevant to the then current issue, as such they may be used to fast-track research. From the earliest document onwards the term 'Market Place' is used. For how long before 1688 the Market Place had been so located is not known as it is thought that across time Barton's market place had migrated across a series of intermediate sites from an early medieval (original) location, probably near St. Peter's church (see Geoff. Bryant's article in this Newsletter).

It also seems likely that the present 'Butchery' may have once been part of the present Market Place and the site in question part of the market place. This is supported by the fact that the 1688 document refers to the purchase of a 'cotte or tenement' in (as opposed to 'next to') 'Market Place near the pinfold' and standing in an area defined as 'Empringham's Ground'. The document also identifies the adjacent 'Webster's Ground' and 'Whaley's Ground'. Thomas Tombleson records a transaction from the minutes of the

manorial court, also of 1688, whereby 'a messuage with all buildings called Whalley's Ground' changed hands.¹ Although writing of medieval Norfolk Dymond writes that 'Market places did not always retain their original shape. They often tended to shrink as encroachments were made around their edges or islands of development were planted inside them' (Dymond, D. *The Norfolk Landscape* (Bury St. Edmunds, 161).

The term 'ground' was repeatedly used in documents up to the mid 19th century (particularly 'Whalley's Ground') – clearly, given the limited size of the total area these 'grounds' must have been plots² rather than old enclosures, although in the late 17th century all were not built on. It seems likely then that the areas today called Market Place and the Butchery were then an open area, divided into 'plots' and with the beginnings of in-fill development. Perhaps this open area extended to Priestgate, although this was soon to change as the present properties between Priestgate and the Butchery (that is 17 and 19, Priestgate) have all the hallmarks of Georgian double-fronted town houses. The phrase 'cotte or tenement' was clearly a legal term, probably referring to a mud, stud and thatch cottage, typical still of properties in Barton in late Stuart times.

The term 'pinfold' usually referred to a pen (stockade) in which stray farm animals were put by the 'pinder'. The owner could reclaim the animals on payment of a fine.

Another recurring term in the earliest documents was 'together with the Commons', although tempting to think it may be a reference to pre-Enclosure circumstances it probably conveyed the sense of 'in common with'.

The 1809 document also references a 'conveyance' of 1713 whereby a 'barn' and 'one bay of Buildings' in 'the Yard' of a dwelling house (presumably on the site of the Corn Exchange) changed hands. The term 'one bay' suggests that the building comprised two or more box frames (as can be seen at 51, Fleetgate today), this suggesting that adjacent bays might have had different owners. The 1713 extract then defines the location of the 'plot' by reference to the neighbouring plots, as did many other extracts. On its east side was a 'close', to its south a stable, to the north a 'banke' (Priestgate?) and to the west a yard. Clearly the area was far from 'built-up'. The subsequent transaction of 1718 was the first to define the 'plot' as being bordered to the south by the Market Place, so the present (reduced) Market Place has been

¹I am indebted to Geoff. Bryant for bringing this fact to my attention. Thomas Tombleson wrote his 'Notebooks' (this reference from Notebook 9) in the early 20th century. If, as implied, he had access to manorial court records their whereabouts is not now known.

²Plots or 'messuages', a term which back then could mean land on which there was an intention to build a dwelling as well as meaning an existing dwelling. 'Whalley', 'Emperingham' etc. were presumably the surnames of the landowners, names that endured after their death.

so for almost 300 years.

One aspect of a 'Release' dated 1809 is that it records the trades of the people involved when the property changed hands on no less than 16 occasions between 1688 and 1792. Trades and situations recorded up to 1723 were; butcher, chandler, thatcher, cordwainer, tallow chandler, widow, yeoman, baker, miller and gentleman. Gentlemen, widows and spinsters figure largely in transactions across the rest of the 18th century while other trades recorded included ironmonger and cabinet maker. In 1734 the now widow of a man who had bought the property in 1723 was to use the rents from 'these properties' to 'bring up maintain and educate his six children'. If these rents proved insufficient she was to sell some part(s). In 1775 another widow was to use the income from 'messes cottages and tenements' to 'putting out of her children apprentice', a decision that could involve some cost. A further will of 1786 ordered that the income from the sale of the property was to be used to pay off the late owner's debts and funeral expenses, the remaining sum to be invested in 'securities' with the widow to receive the interest unless she re-married at which point it was to revert to the sons and daughters.

Further evidence as to the nature of the property in the 18th century may be illusory. A document dated 1723 confirmed the purchase of a cottage 'and tenement' ... 'barns' ... 'estate' and deeds, while a will dated 1778 referred to 'Messes Cottages and Tenements' ... 'formerly in one Cottage'. A striking feature of this whole collection of legal documents was the absence of any plans or maps. The option chosen for defining the location of the property in question was by defining the properties on each side, invariably an option that made more sense then than now. This type of description was repeated in many documents. For example, an indenture of 1809 locates a 'dwelling house at the Market Place' as bounded to the north by an adjoining house and yard, on the south by the Market Place and on the east by a ground level passage with party wall above. This last point is particularly interesting in that the Corn Exchange today is bounded on the east by a ground level passage with a party wall resting on the passage ceiling (see Fig. 1). Unless the adjoining house and yard to the north was 17, Priestgate (as now) the reference suggests that what is now the Butchery was then densely built-up with a cluster of small properties presumably accessed by passages. This last point seems confirmed by the requirement in the 1809 indenture that the party wall, passage wall (see above) and pump (shared water pump) be kept in good condition 'together with all other ways, paths, passages, cellars, lights etc'. This last reference is intriguing as it is too early to be street lights or gas lights and may be a use of the word 'light' in an ecclesiastical sense, i.e. windows.

Clearly then, by the early 19th century the area behind today's Corn Exchange

was a maze of diverse properties and land uses – this in a relatively small area. This image is continued by a description in a document dated 1816 and entitled 'Manor of Barton' which (presumably referring to the environs of today's Corn Exchange) states 'one messuage or tenement three warehouses one stable one dovecot one orchard and one garden lying and being in the Market Place of Barton aforesaid and commonly called Whalley's Ground'. A later document (1853) with the same title identifies 'that messuage or Tenement and Dwellinghouse and shop with the warehouses stables and other outbuildings garden piece or parcel of land or ground the same situate lying and being in the Market Place of Barton upon Humber'. Clearly a property beside a market place would be in a good location for conversion to shop premises, on the ground floor at least. This document then locates the property in relation to surrounding ones and repeats the term 'Whalley's Ground'.

The process whereby the present building replaced its predecessor started in 1853. An indenture of that year confirmed the conveyance of that property from William Graburn Esq. to the 'Trustees of the Proposed Corn Exchange and Butter and Poultry Market'. Three attached documents comprise, a constitution to govern the actions of the 15 Trustees (William Graburn was clearly the most influential subscriber), a further indenture requiring the existing buildings be 'pulled down' and usable materials sold off, and thirdly an 'Intention to Build'. By the terms of this last document the Corn Exchange and 'covered Butter and Poultry Market' were to be open during 'fairs', market days and at other times as decided by the Trustees. The Trustees were to provide equipment for 'weighing and measuring' and to collect 'tolls', the income from which was to pay off the 'mortgage' and to keep the building in good repair – this overseen by a 'Committee of Management'. The Trustees were also to allow 'public meetings' to be held on the site.

A further indenture of 1861 (see later) described the new building in detail, although the figures are hard to interpret. The dimensions given are here listed;

'Entrance' – 38 feet, 5 inches by 8 feet, 6 inches

'Ante room' – 11 feet, 2 inches by 8 feet, 6 inches

'Exchange Room' – 43 feet, 1 inch by 31 feet, 1 inch

'Butter and Poultry Market' – 32 feet, 11 inches by 18 feet, 1 inch with staircase and landing and on the second storey a

'Large room' – 28 feet, 3 inches by 19 feet, 8 inches and a

'Smaller room' – 18 feet, 9 inches by 16 feet, 3 inches with 'ante room and conveniences'.

Further confusion arises from the phrase 'having an external frontage next to the Market Place' of 29 feet, 9 inches, a dimension that doesn't fit any of the above.

Although not stated in the 1861 document it can be assumed that the ground floor (the 'Butter and Poultry market') had open arches facing the Market Place, these built of white bricks laid in rusticated fashion, as seen today (the infill brickwork of a later date). The Corn Exchange on the first floor was an enclosed room. Another document dated 1861 and concerning the purchase of 'a parcel of ground situate ... behind the Corn Exchange' refers to 'privies and conveniences' shared by the Trustees of the Corn Exchange and two local residents, this further evidence of the in-fill in the Butchery.

It is this document, and another (both dated 1861), which confirm that the Corn Exchange had ceased business, the reason given then as being insufficient income. So the building, built in the style of a Tudor market hall, survives but its life as a functioning asset to the farming community lasted only five to six years at most. The return on the investment by the Trustees must have been disappointing, the reason(s) for this a matter of speculation. However it seems odd that the investors took fright so quickly.

The nature of the property sandwiched between the Corn Exchange and the corner property incorporating the ground floor 'passage' remains uncertain. A conveyance of 1855 refers to a shop and dwelling house bounded to the east by a passage and adjoining the property 'belonging to the Trustees of Barton Corn Exchange'. Was this sandwiched property incorporated into the Corn Exchange building, the exterior wall of which was later (1950s?) to be replaced with the glass and brick wall seen today?

Into the 1870s documents continued to refer to 'the building formerly of the Barton Corn Exchange Trustees', its post Corn Exchange purpose being unclear. A 'Supplemental Abstract' dated 1878 related to a mortgage for a 'dwellinghouse and shop' next to the property 'formerly of the Barton Corn Exchange Trustees', this nearly 20 years after it had ceased to function as a corn exchange.

However, two documents dated 1887 and another dated 1895 make clear what change of use had taken place, but not when. All three refer to the building 'known as Volunteer Hall formerly called the Corn Exchange'. Who were the 'Volunteers' and for what purpose(s) did they own the building? The most likely explanation is that here is evidence of a local unit of the Volunteer Force, a citizen army of part-time rifle corps, which had existed from the 1860s, was the descendent of local militia units³ and the ancestor of today's Territorial Army regiments. After 1881 local units became volunteer battalions

³Witness the name Volunteer Arms, Whitecross St., said to celebrate the local militia force raised during the Napoleonic Wars to face the threat of French invasion. No such invasion threat existed in the late 19th century, the second half of the century seeing only a series of far-flung colonial wars in Afghanistan, Sudan, China and South Africa (Boer Wars).

of the new 'county' infantry regiments and in 1908 all units were merged into Territorial Force overseen by the Secretary of State for War.⁴ Presumably then the ex-Corn Exchange was used by the Volunteers for meetings, training and the like although a fire insurance policy dated 1897 referred to a 'magazine' in the 'Volunteers Hall' (!), a factor which must have influenced the premium!

There are various references to the cottage properties around the ex-Corn Exchange. An 'Abstract' of 1868 references a 'little cottage lately erected' (1859) which had a yard and garden and was sited 'in the Market Place'. It was bordered to the west by 'a passage' and may have stood where the where the T.S.B. Bank now stands. Also referenced is a cottage built in 1859 'the garden lately (date unclear) purchased by the Trustees of the Corn Exchange'.

Part 2 (March 2016).

In 1853/4 the Trustees of the (Proposed) Corn Exchange and Butter and Poultry Market had the existing building on the site demolished, this being one of a number of buildings of varying size, style and age on the north side of the Market Place (had this demolished building been one of Barton's last 'mud and stud' buildings?). In its place the Trustees had built a neo-Tudor market hall of two storeys with a facade of expensive white bricks laid in rusticated fashion. The new build had a party wall with the existing property immediately east which in turn had a first-floor party wall with the property immediately east of the long standing 'ground-floor passage' (see Fig. 1). This surviving 'passage' had been clearly referenced in legal documents since 1809 (see above).

⁴This information comes from the Wikipedia website 'Volunteer Force (G.B.)'. The standard text seems to be Beckett, I.F.W. *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859-1908* (Pen and Sword, 2007).

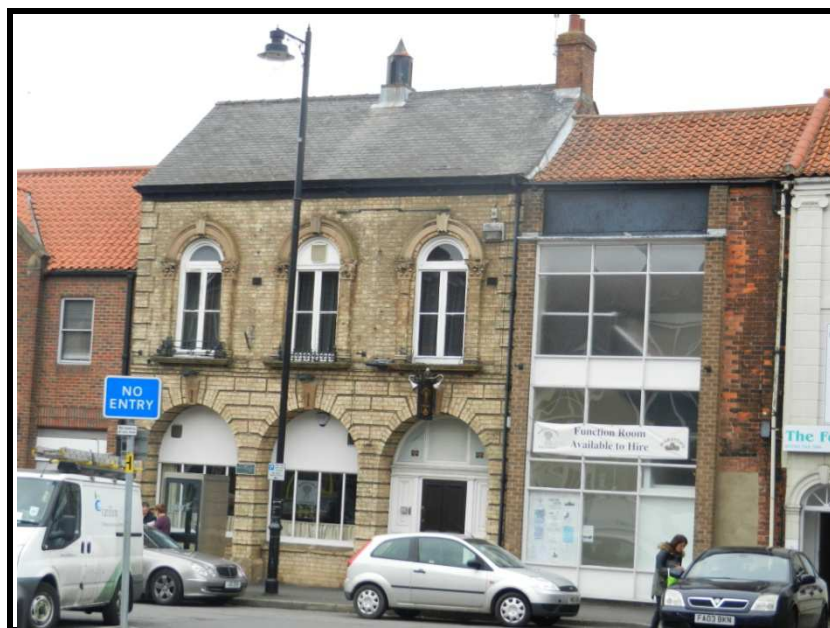


Fig. 1 The property sandwiched between the Corn Exchange and ‘the passage’ was clearly re-fronted at some point as the existing brickwork to the right of the 1960s glass panels is good quality machine-cut bricks laid in Flemish bond. The brickwork of the existing property immediately east (incorporating the passage) is older.



Fig. 2 This early photograph shows that the building adjoining the Corn Exchange to the east was originally a three-storey property with a shop on the ground floor. At some point after this property was acquired by the Trustees of the Corn Exchange, or later owners, this building was converted internally to two storeys whereas the adjoining building east appears to still be of three storeys.⁵ With thanks to Brian Peeps for permission to include this photo.

By 1861 the Corn Exchange and Butter and Poultry Market had failed financially and by the late 1880s had become the ‘Volunteer Hall’ (see above),

⁵ Since writing Part one I have been shown round the inside of the ‘Corn Exchange’.

but the fine building survives. Clearly no expense had been spared in the initial building programme (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 As well as white brick laid in rusticated fashion and to a ‘flemish bond’ the ground-floor arcade (originally open-fronted) has bricks built in the style of voussoir stones supporting a sandstone keystone. The first-floor windows were/are fronted by a shallow balcony with a low decorative wrought iron surround and framed by brick pilasters with foliated, neo-gothic capitals and an arch of moulded sandstone with a decorative keystone. To the side is a wall-mounted support for a flagpole as well as a wrought iron air brick.

Before considering the rear of the Corn Exchange, two further early photographs of the Market Place courtesy of Brian Peeps.



Fig. 4 The earliest photograph, probably pre-Great War, showing the 'old house' in the Market Place – an image copied by Ted Lewis for his collection of drawings, now held by the Civic Society.



Fig. 5 The Market Place, probably 1950s, Market Lane still then had not been widened and no division/pavement between the Market Place and the road. An early 'Belisha Beacon' – probably more thoughtfully located than the present zebra crossing.

Today the 'Butchery' is an open area which has/is used as the site for a small weekly market. Historically, although probably once a site for market traders (see above), it had become by the 18th and 19th centuries a cluster of warehouses, stables and other outbuildings' as well as 'dwelling-houses' (see above). To the rear of the Corn Exchange is a complex of roof-lines and apparently separate buildings (see Fig. 6). In fact the double-pitched roof is that of the Corn Exchange as is the pitched roof immediately north as I am

informed that in the loft, above the room where Barton Band practices, the round window in the gable-end wall is prominent.⁶



Fig. 6 The Butchery, view south-east.

An early photograph shows a remnant of this cluster, now gone (see Figs. 7 and 8).



Fig. 7 Photograph courtesy of Brian Peeps.

⁶ Round windows are not common in Barton – see the ex-in-town farmhouse and barn at the corner of Maltby Lane and High Street.



Fig. 8 The same view today.

Fig. 9 shows the one remaining remnant of the once densely built-up Butchery.



Fig. 9 See the tumble-gable brickwork showing the earlier roofline of a one-and-a-half storey building.

The story of the Corn Exchange, Barton, although interesting in itself, is evidence of many of the changes over time that could impact on the market area of an English market town.

