4.1 Setting the Scene

Bridgetown is the part of Totnes that is east of the River Dart, occupying the rising valley slopes that face west towards the rest of the town. At first glance it looks to be a 19th century suburb (that expanded a great deal during the 20th) but its origins are very much older, and at least medieval, since a small borough was created here (to rival Totnes) some time between 1232 and 1247.

When originally established the settlement was quite small and occupied only the slight rise that reaches out towards the ancient river crossing point. The open meadows to the north continue to define its linear form, but when spring tides and heavy rain conspire to flood them they recreate the original relationship Bridgetown had with its riverside setting [above].

Where the main street begins to climb the steep valley side en-route to the equally historic settlements of Berry Pomeroy and Paignton, both the ancient and modern routes towards Newton Abbot lead off north, and are very quickly ‘out-of-town’. The former is much as it was; a lane beyond Bourton Road making dry but hilly passage past Bourton and Gatcombe. The latter, on the other hand, is ‘engineered’ (probably around 1810) to take a more direct line beside the tidal marshes of the Dart, hugging the quarried and well-wooded hillside that characterises this part of the suburb [above]. Indeed the woodland is a very significant landscape feature which, along with the Dart, draws the countryside right to the heart of the town [below].

The expansion of the suburb during most of the 20th century has been away to the south of the main street across the valley slopes that associate visually with the rest of the town to the west. Away to the north, however, it seems that the spread of development was consciously checked before it spilled over into the Bourton Valley [left]. As the photograph also shows, when the villa development off Bourton Road was continued, the route of Jubilee Road was chosen, not Bourton Lane, with the villas sited to face the town from the crest of the tree-lined ridge.
What makes the Bridgetown part of the Conservation Area distinctive is the transformation it underwent during the 19th century, heralded by the construction of the new bridge. Any semblance it may have had of being the poor neighbour of Totnes was soon lost and, looking the most fashionable of places to live, it was incorporated into the borough in 1834.

Although transformed during a period when the use of materials and the style of architecture was fairly restrained (with rendered finishes, multi-paned sashes and classical detailing creating much cohesion and harmony), in Bridgetown there is no shortage of variety in the way new buildings were sited and designed. As a result, street scenes are full of interest, being characterised by broken building lines, changing building widths and building heights ranging from 2-stories to 3 plus an attic (left). Designs too range from the completely symmetrical (above) to the quite informal (below), while the host of architectural features they display are quite random in their distribution.

As well as creating variety and interest, some of Bridgetown’s characteristics tend also to separate the suburb into a number of distinctive parts - particularly the ones relating to the form buildings take, their usage and the way they’re arranged. The part that focuses on the ancient core is doubtless the principal one, comprising the narrow band of buildings facing the main street on its curving approach to the Bridge. They are mostly in rows or terraces, and with a substantial number 3-stories in height, the street’s appearance is very much urban and town-like (above). Although now largely residential, the surviving fronts of former shops, the shops that continue to trade, the squeezed-in site of the church and the ‘back-of-the-pavement’ location many buildings have, strengthen the street’s urban qualities and point to it once being rather more of a commercial and social focus than it is today.

Redundant shop-fronts are several, but their authentic character is nowhere better preserved than in this ‘purpose-built’ terrace at 28-31 Bridgetown [above]. They clearly evidence the suburb’s ‘commercial independence’ during the 19th century, but once the bridge tolls were scrapped on the last day of October 1881, this must have begun to quickly disappear.

Although the main street is almost continuously built up, building lines on both sides are much more staggered than along other main streets in the town. The pattern has its roots in the way the extensive re-building works along the street were carried out during the 19th century. Existing buildings that were re-fronted (or otherwise left as they were) remained on their ‘back-of-the-pavement’ line (above). New buildings intended for commercial use followed this line too (above right), but the many new ‘desirable villas’ that were introduced were nearly always set back a few feet to allow space for a forecourt [right].

The setting back of Seymour Terrace is unusual because it’s accompanied by the construction of a raised terrace that turns what would have been ground floors into basements [above]. Perhaps this arrangement was preferred to the alternative that would have required steps down from the highway to the front doors. Fortunately, the terrace railings serve a safety purpose, which is probably why these weren’t also removed along with the others from elsewhere in the area.

The cast iron railings that would have ‘protected’ all the forecourts have mostly gone leaving only the low stone plinths into which they were fixed. A few have been reinstated, while those at Seymour Court and Seymour Terrace survive [right] to illustrate the ‘pavéhead’ designs that were probably common to them all (and have indeed been used for the new railings at ‘Bridge Terrace’, just across the river and at Devon Place further up the main Street).
A feature of many elevations along the main street, and some nearby, is the parapet. This architectural device adds a touch of grandeur as well as real height, particularly when treated as originally intended: in the same finish as the main wall [right]. Their concentration along the main street tends to heighten its status as Bridgetown’s principle thoroughfare, and also provides one of the more obvious visual links with the Plains across the bridge. Indeed, the parapets on the bridge itself take the link over [below right]. The parapets to Seymour Place also play a linking role by helping to integrate the terrace into the visual realm of the main street via the similarly treated corner shop [below].

Nowhere dominant, and infrequently seen, are walls hung with slates. Only two of the buildings facing the main street have their rear elevations so clad, while at front, the Albert Inn is alone in having its upper floors completely covered…which helps considerably in signposting its whereabouts! [left]. There are other examples of slate hanging in the Area, but they’re few in number and always confined to sections of elevations. Having more than most is 5 Bridgetown [below left]. It is the only other significant example in the main street, and draws attention to what is probably the oldest building along its length (dating from the 16th or early 17th century). Certainly, though, it’s the only one to survive with its jettied and gabled form intact.

Slate is the dominant roofing material throughout the Area, mostly grey-blue, not dark. This example, just renewed, is one of several that are hipped, and shows the traditional, and the most attractive, way to form them using mitred slates [below].

This appraisal was completed with a funding contribution from Totnes and District Preservation Trust.

To get this information in another format or language, tel. 01803 861234.
**4.1 Setting the Scene**

Bridgetown is the most prominent water front in the Area, dominating the main street (determined by the bridge) and the north wing of Seaton Road, as well as Pathfields and the west end of Weston Road. Although most are now passed, a few examples still survive in their original smooth and separated form, not least the two famous shutters at Devon Road Bridge and Seymour Street Bridge. The topography of the hillside made it necessary for the road to give the impression of rather 'upmarket' stone bridges with the joint usually called arching 'joints'.

**4.2 The Conservation Area**

When the Totnes Conservation Area was first designated by Devon County Council in July 1963, two to Bridgetown was in focus on the oldest part of the suburbs which were the 'most fruitful in decoration'. This included the main street as far as the Newton Abbot road junction, the quay on the East, and head in the Seaton Place and Seaton Avenue.

Since then this part of the Conservation Area has been extended (twice by the District Council). In October 1985, to include the mostly detached fabric on part of the New Road and Addison Road that comprise Bridgetown's oldest 'suburban' enclaves, and in September 1992, to include Brion Neage and the grassy area.

Plan 4 identifies the boundary proposed based on the odinated version of the Ordnance Survey Map and taking account of the findings of this Appraisal. It supersedes all previous boundary designations.

**Cautionary Note**

The formal designation of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Order and Scheduled Ancient Monuments is a continuous process if you need to be certain that the designations shown on the Map are still current, please check with the Planning and Building Control (Conservation Team) at the District Council.

**4.3 The Listed Buildings**

Of the 42 Listed Buildings in the Totnes Conservation Area, 60 are located here, with all three described in the List documentation as dating from the 18th century (or three being marketable) – the Bridge is Grade II* (outstanding), while all the others, including St John's Church, are Grade II. Plan 4 identifies them all, along with their addresses as summarised below:

- **Marlborough Lodge** [above] – towards the north end, on its south side, numbers 1-4, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24 (Dartvale Mansions), 25, 31, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.

- **The Seymour Hotel** (now Seymour Court) was obviously built to take full advantage of the river views, not only to capture the splendid, picturesque views, but also to give the prominence needed to attract custom away from the town across the bridge. While no longer a commercial building, in its original form, it was an important part of the town and is thought to have a river view, and the place lost a lot of the architectural features and the character of a 19th-century building. But in keeping with the character of the Area, the correct front is particularly appealing, although in symmetry was maintained to the conversion, by alterations to the top-right window [above].

- **Buckland Lane** north of the main street, and Buckland Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Bridgetown Hill** – on its south side, the main road junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 10, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.

- **Routon Road** – towards its north end, Mount opposite the river front junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 3 (as on the present road), 7, called Rommey House when built, an attached pair, Dunnalls and Strathmore and Fernbridge.

- **Pathfields** – on its south side, Seymour Cottages, and on its east side before it becomes cut down, two detached pairs, 1, 2, 3, and 4 Seymour Villas.

- **Seymour Place** – part of the same development in H1 and H2, Bridge, a long narrow elevation in R3 and R4, and seven of them with a bed and breakfast, all with their addresses as summarised above.

- **Seymour Lane** – north of the main street, and Seymour Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Buckland Lane** north of the main street, and Buckland Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Bridgetown Hill** – on its south side, the main road junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 10, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.

- **Routon Road** – towards its north end, Mount opposite the river front junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 3 (as on the present road), 7, called Rommey House when built, an attached pair, Dunnalls and Strathmore and Fernbridge.

- **Pathfields** – on its south side, Seymour Cottages, and on its east side before it becomes cut down, two detached pairs, 1, 2, 3, and 4 Seymour Villas.

- **Seymour Place** – part of the same development in H1 and H2, Bridge, a long narrow elevation in R3 and R4, and seven of them with a bed and breakfast, all with their addresses as summarised above.

- **Seymour Lane** – north of the main street, and Seymour Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Buckland Lane** north of the main street, and Buckland Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Bridgetown Hill** – on its south side, the main road junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 10, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.

- **Routon Road** – towards its north end, Mount opposite the river front junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 3 (as on the present road), 7, called Rommey House when built, an attached pair, Dunnalls and Strathmore and Fernbridge.

- **Pathfields** – on its south side, Seymour Cottages, and on its east side before it becomes cut down, two detached pairs, 1, 2, 3, and 4 Seymour Villas.

- **Seymour Place** – part of the same development in H1 and H2, Bridge, a long narrow elevation in R3 and R4, and seven of them with a bed and breakfast, all with their addresses as summarised above.

- **Seymour Lane** – north of the main street, and Seymour Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Buckland Lane** north of the main street, and Buckland Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Bridgetown Hill** – on its south side, the main road junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 10, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.

- **Routon Road** – towards its north end, Mount opposite the river front junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 3 (as on the present road), 7, called Rommey House when built, an attached pair, Dunnalls and Strathmore and Fernbridge.

- **Pathfields** – on its south side, Seymour Cottages, and on its east side before it becomes cut down, two detached pairs, 1, 2, 3, and 4 Seymour Villas.

- **Seymour Place** – part of the same development in H1 and H2, Bridge, a long narrow elevation in R3 and R4, and seven of them with a bed and breakfast, all with their addresses as summarised above.

- **Seymour Lane** – north of the main street, and Seymour Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Buckland Lane** north of the main street, and Buckland Road with Buckland Lane (Grade II) and Buckland House, a similar design with shallow curving heads [above]. Their numbers appear entirely in keeping with their riverside setting [above].

- **Bridgetown Hill** – on its south side, the main road junction is listed. Numbers 1 to 10, and then 32 (Abbey Lane), 34, 35, and nearer to the bridge, 1 to 4 Seymour Terraces.