

[RETAIL SERVICES]

MARKETS

Taunton may have had a market by 904 and its tolls were given to Bishop Aelfheah I (934—51), a grant confirmed c. 970.¹ In 1086 the market yielded £2 10s. to the manor.² Taunton remained a major market town until 2008 but thereafter had only small pavement markets.

By the mid 13th century there were permanent stalls and butchers shambles were roofed.³ A large stall was let for up to 3s. 4d. a year in 1309—10.⁴ In the late 1280s stall rents, grain and other tolls were received and the borough court fined forestalling and regrating, buying for resale on the way to or at the beginning of the market.⁵ There is no record of an indoor market although evidence of a large hall of c. 1300 was found on the corner of Fore and High Streets.⁶ There were bread shops by the market and near the cross in 1320.⁷ Bakers, tailors and tanners paid a fixed sum by the 1330s when new stalls were built and farmed out.⁸ Shambles and stalls were traded like houses; one man had seven in 1341 and another had a three houses, five shops and two market stalls by 1347.⁹

Guildhall was a tub store.¹⁰

The market place was a large triangular area surrounded by Fore Street and extending north to the river with rhynes or gutters on either side.¹¹ The Cross was recorded by 1309—10¹² and both the Cheese and High crosses in the 14th and 15th centuries, the former on

¹ The 904 charter was probably fabricated H.P.R. Finberg, *Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964), 128, 145, 234—5.

² *Domesday*, 234.

³ SHC, T/PH/win 1254—5, 1265—6.

⁴ SHC, T/PH/win 1309—10.

⁵ SHC, T/PH/win 1286—90, 1297—1300.

⁶ 'Somerset Archaeology 1974—5', *PSANHS CXX* (1976), p. 73.

⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1305, 1320—1.

⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1334—5, 1336—9.

⁹ TNA, E 326/4960, 4968; SHC, T/PH/win 1340—1; S.F. Hockey, *The Reg. of Wm Edington Bp of Winchester 1346—66*, II (Winchester, 1987), p. 41: Cal. Pat. 1354—8, p. 223.

¹⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3.

¹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3, 5.

¹² SHC, T/PH/win 1309—10.

Cornhill.¹³ The High Cross on the south-west corner of the market place housed the constables' weights, which they sublet by the 1720s.¹⁴ It was an elaborate late medieval structure with a roof supported on six columns. Above the roof the central column carried statues and terminated in a spire with a post-medieval sundial and weathercock. It was demolished in 1771.¹⁵

The Middle Market lay between the Cornhill, recorded by 1309—10,¹⁶ on the north and Fore Street to the south. On the west a guildhall was built c. 1466 when Bishop Waynflete granted the site of an ancient watercourse 63 ft by 30ft to the vicar of St Mary's to build a hall of judicature at his own expense.¹⁷ By 1612 it belonged to the trustees of the Town Lands charity with 16 shambles.¹⁸ It was open at ground level with stalls, replaced by shops before 1706, and two lockups called the Cow House and Little Ease. The upper hall measured 78 ft by 28 ft so possibly jettied out beyond the building's footprint.¹⁹ In 1682 a market house 100 ft by 80 ft with hall over was planned to the south. In 1684 permission was granted provided the passageway was not altered, no-one was charged for pitching goods for sale and the town had the rooms above.²⁰ Built by subscription it stood on brick pillars and in 1698 was used for corn sales and the upper assembly room with garret was approached on the east by an outside staircase.²¹

Substantial shops and houses with solars over were built in the market place where shambles had become permanent structures with stone tiled roofs by the 1320s. A row of four shops with solars over was treated as a burgage in 1384.²² Two shops in the Middle Market in

¹³ SHC, T/PH/win 1388—9, 1409—10, 1412—13; DD/SP/325/2; TNA, E 210/4226.

¹⁴ SHC, Q/SO/9, f. 372v; below, local govt.

¹⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 161—2; T. Mayberry, *The Vale of Taunton Past*, 26.

¹⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1309—10.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/10; DD/DP/93/4; DD/MK/9.

¹⁸ *5th Rep. Com. Char.* 512.

¹⁹ SHC, DD/BR/py/120.

²⁰ SHC, DD/SP/18/56; DD/MT/15/1 (1684).

²¹ SHC, DD/DP/23/8; DD/SF/2/52/3/5—6; C. Fiennes, *Through England on a side saddle* (2009), 63.

²² TNA, E326/4971, 4982, 4988, 5010, 5022, 5493.

1459 were described as on Mercery Lane by 1548.²³ In 1555 the manor held a burgage at the Guildhall door and five shops in the market.²⁴ A boarded house and shop was recorded at the Corn market in 1652.²⁵ Occupants of Fore Street added pentices and market standings to their frontages, which they were ordered to remove in 1618, but in 1700 the manor court was still trying to remove ‘fore shops’ and windows from the pavements.²⁶ In the early 17th century a house and shop called the Bread or Bird Cage or High Hall, recorded in 1536, was replaced by 12 fixed shambles in three rows called the New Shambles to support a charity.²⁷ They were decayed by 1764 as it was cheaper to sell from outer or moveable standings.²⁸ By then houses, shops and shambles adjoined each other on Mercery and Shambles Lanes where messuages were recorded.²⁹

The bishop’s tenants were exempt from fair and market tolls and by 1301 others had been freed.³⁰ Although the plague reputedly reduced tolls they were not much lower than previously and were farmed from 1349 for 13s. 4d. rising to 20s. by the 1370s.³¹ The right of strangers to trade in wool, cloth, lace, meat, salmon, porpoise and hides was restricted to wholesale transactions, except in the fairs, to protect the town traders.³²

The market monopoly of meat sales was maintained until the 20th century and meat was checked for unbaited bull meat, diseased meat or meat from animals that died before slaughter.³³ In 1404 a tenant in Fore Street had a share in a pigsty but was forbidden to keep a butcher’s shop.³⁴ By 1412 there were two sets of shambles held by local farmers, chantries

²³ TNA, E326/5058; *Cal. Pat.* 1547—8, 410.

²⁴ SHC, T/PH/hps/1.

²⁵ TNA, E304/6/P8.

²⁶ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Apr. 1618); DD/SP/61/5; DD/MT/15/1 (1700).

²⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1535—6; DD/SAS/C795/TN/10; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 216.

²⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3; A/CPT/15/5, pp. 421—3.

²⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, 31/5/2; TNA, SC12/29/25.

³⁰ *Cal. Close*, 1377—81, 447—8; BL, Lansdowne MS. 110/19; SHC, T/PH/win 1301—2.

³¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1338—9, 1347—50, 1353—4, 1373—4, 1377—8, 1388—9.

³² SHC, DD/X/HUN/6/2, photos of BL, Harl MS 408, ff. 212—13.

³³ e.g. SHC, DD/SP/49 (Feb. 1588), 50 (Dec. 1612).

³⁴ SHC, DD/PM/7/2/9.

and fraternities and each sublet for 8s. a year.³⁵ However, in the early 16th century several were unlet and entry fines were as low as 4s.³⁶ In 1549 merchant William Leonard bought former chantry property including six shambles and shops in the market place and an Essex man bought four standings with chopping blocks and seven shops.³⁷ A Bridgwater man charged six shambles with payment of £110 in 1600.³⁸ Gerard noted the flourishing state of the market in the 1630s when 140 butchers attended.³⁹ Butchers had to bring the tallow and hides with their carcasses and lay green skins and hides on the Cornhill.⁴⁰ In the late 17th century shambles could only be used on market days and rents varied with size and position from 6d. a year to 12s. for an inner shamble and the freehold of a fixed shamble cost £24 in 1696.⁴¹

Fishmongers' stalls were farmed out by 1305 and presumably sublet.⁴² The farm rose from £1 6s. 8d. in 1499 to over £5 in 1555.⁴³ A tenant from Essex sublet two to men from Sidbury, Devon c. 1587.⁴⁴ In 1669 the fish shambles was moved to create more meat shambles.⁴⁵ Stalls were often sited in front of shops and in 1613 it was ordered that a 4ft way was kept after every 4th stall to allow passage to the shops.⁴⁶ In 1617 vegetable sellers were moved from the High Cross to High Street south of the Ship inn and only wool and fruit was sold by the cross, where in 1619 apple sellers blocked the way.⁴⁷ Glovers and shoemakers often held stalls and a glover's house in the market place in 1748 may have been a former

³⁵ SHC, T/PH/win 1412—13, 1472—3; TNA, E40/9690; E326/5081.

³⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1505—6, 1509—10, 1521—2.

³⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1548—9, 199—203; 1549—51, 120—2.

³⁸ SHC, DD/DP/8/2, 66/14, 76/2; DD/SP/1639/11; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 40.

³⁹ E. H. Bates, *Gerard's Survey of Somerset, 1633* (Som Rec. Soc. 15), 55.

⁴⁰ SHC, DD/SP/23/20; 48 (Oct. 1572), 49 (Oct. 1587).

⁴¹ BL, Add. Ch. 71738; SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/1; DD/SAS/C795/M/16.

⁴² SHC, T/PH/win 1305.

⁴³ SHC, DD/MT/1/29; T/PH/hps/1.

⁴⁴ TNA, C2/ELIZ/W15/3.

⁴⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C112/9; DD/SP/358.

⁴⁶ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Apr. 1613).

⁴⁷ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Oct. 1617, Oct. 1618, Apr. 1619), 52 (Oct. 1632).

stall site.⁴⁸ By the 18th century bakers, hosiers, ropers and broom sellers had areas of standings around the outside of the market.⁴⁹

In the early 17th century rural bakers brought bread and a couple from Wedmore brought two horseloads of butter weekly in the summer.⁵⁰ The poor had access to the market before it opened for general business and to prevent traders buying for resale craftsmen and hucksters, licensed by the constables, were forbidden to buy food in the market before 2p.m.⁵¹ A yarn market opened at 8 in summer and 9 in winter in 1629.⁵² Theft was a regular problem and in 1629 two men were accused of plotting to assault and rob people in Chip Lane on their way to market.⁵³ There was unrest when wheat sold at 6s. a bushel in March 1634 and market traders refused to accept the farthings with which the weavers and labourers had been paid saying they were illegal.⁵⁴ Saturday was the main market day, although there were markets most days especially Wednesday, which gave Taunton an advantage.⁵⁵ In 1668 the Saturday market was ordered to close at 10 p.m. to prevent drunkenness and disorder on Sunday morning.⁵⁶ In the 1690s the bell was rung twice creating a two hour market for the poor alone but dealers would not open their bags until the 2nd bell, which led to hardship and violence. The portreeves tried to charge people selling foodstuff without a stall despite the manor jury having declared in 1684 that the market was and must remain free.⁵⁷ By 1721 the bean market was at Cornhill, which had its own keepers as did the shambles. The former opened the market with the bell and hired out tubs and bags, stored under the Guildhall, and the latter oversaw slaughtering and the cleaning of stalls. By 1700 they were accused of

⁴⁸ SHC, DD/SP/1668/56, 1683/25, 1691/57; DD/SAS/C112/20/12.

⁴⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3, 5; DD/DP/44/7.

⁵⁰ SHC, DD/SP/49 (Oct. 1587, Apr. 1588), 50 (Apr. 1613); Q/SR/6/81.

⁵¹ SHC, DD/SP/49 (Nov. 1586, Oct. 1587, Apr. 1597, Oct. 1600); 60 (1711).

⁵² SHC, DD/SP/51 (Sep. 1629).

⁵³ SHC, Q/SR/118—19, 18/108, 49/72, 46/62, 52/14—16, 59/27—8, 62/141.

⁵⁴ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1631—3, p. 159; 1633—4, 539; 1634—5, p. 32.

⁵⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, p. 142.

⁵⁶ M.C.B. Dawes, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1666—76* (Som. Rec. Soc. 34), 134.

⁵⁷ SHC, DD/MT/15/1; DD/SF/13/2/51; DD/SP/18/75, 22/20.

failing to prevent abuses in the market and weigh bread.⁵⁸ In the 1750s the cheese market lay south of the fixed stalls.⁵⁹ A large area in the shambles, described as the Kitchen in 1742, was possibly for cooked food.⁶⁰

The market place was a public arena for events such as the proclamation of Monmouth in 1685 and the election hustings despite the limited open space by that date.⁶¹ Inns like the Antelope were extended by 1700 narrowing the passages into the market.⁶² In the 1750s about half the market place, known as the Island, was occupied by stalls, shambles, 11 alehouses and shops, many owned by private investors because they were profitable like the Antelope rack rented for up the £31 10s. in 1769 when repair costs may have been inflated to reduce compensation.⁶³

In 1763 a Market House Society was formed to obtain an Act of Parliament for improvements. The members, including wealthy tradesmen were probably influenced by the 1752, the need to open up the town centre to traffic and the violent election of 1754 when the market and its alehouses in narrow passageways had been a focus of disorder.⁶⁴ The subscription list was headed by £2,000 from Nathaniel Webb M.P., reputedly saved in unpaid bribes in the uncontested 1768 elections. The 1768 Act empowered trustees to clear the old market buildings as far as the Tone Bridge to create an open market with one new building. The trustees secured the consent of the bishop of Winchester and the portreeves in return for annual rents, raised money and bought buildings. The market house trustees became the most powerful body in the town. The market had the monopoly of sales of provisions and livestock within 1,000 yards of the market place and anyone with a food shop needed to buy a licence

⁵⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/2 (1721), 3; DD/SP/61/5.

⁵⁹ SHC, DD/SF/2/52/3/7.

⁶⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3.

⁶¹ Below, rel. hist., local govt.; *Cal. SP. Dom.* Jul.—Sep. 1683, 278—9, 358.

⁶² SHC, DD/SP/18/85; 21/1.

⁶³ G. H. Kite and H. P. Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust* (Taunton, 1926), plan f. p. 4; SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3, 5; DD/BD/27; DD/DP/71/5; DD/SF/2/52/3/1—6.

⁶⁴ J. Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, rev. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), 572; SHC, Q/SR/356/1/6; TNA, PROB 11/1138/242.

although in the 1780s the sale of cake, pies and fruit in the passage into Hunts Court ‘as has always been accustomed’ was allowed.⁶⁵ Under an Act of 1840 the monopoly was to continue only until the debt on the market was paid, which never happened. A clerk of the market was appointed but the constables remained responsible for weighing, which they ‘bought’ for £5 and farmed for £50, on scales in the new arcades. New weights and measures made by Liberty of Gillingham, Dorset were bought in 1824—6 and copper ones from Bristol in 1864, weighing from 2 lb. to ½ cwt.⁶⁶

Within a year of their first meeting in January 1769 the trustees had demolished most of the buildings and started building a new market house with arcades. Moveable standings with roofs were designed and charges fixed from 1*d.* a horseload for vegetables to 1*s.* 3*d.* for a butcher’s standing on Saturdays. Meat and fish would be sold north of the new house and bakers, glovers, pedlars and others would be sited south, the fowl market would be held from 8 a.m. until noon, the corn market from noon until 3 p.m. and the rest of the market from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Cornhill keeper remained responsible for the market bell. The market area and arcades were to be lit and bounded by posts and chains.⁶⁷ In 1772 there were 80 standings compared with 113 in 1769 but they were wider at 8 ½ ft.⁶⁸ Ten more were bought in 1778 and two sheds to hold the table planks. In 1785 the trustees rented a yard in Great Magdalen Lane. lost in the creation of Hammet Street in 1788. to store and clean the numbered stalls.⁶⁹ In 1772 the forecourt was paved in stone, and the entire Parade in 1797.⁷⁰ The desire to have a fashionable feature for social interaction when the market was not being held and the

⁶⁵ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 567, 571—8; below, local govt.; SHC, PAM 429: *The Taunton Town and Market Acts* (1768); DD/TAC/6/1/1; D/B/ta/31/5/3, 5; DD/PRY/1/9.

⁶⁶ SHC, DD/AY/31 (1840); A/DIF/44; D/B/ta/31/1/7, p. 226; DD/SP/453. Given to the Archaeological Society in 1926: PSANHS LXXXII (1926), 90.

⁶⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 1, 3, 5, 17, 19, 41, 67, 69, 125, 127, 129, 138, 142, 144—5, 147.

⁶⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 129, 167; Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, plan f. p. 4.

⁶⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 309, 371, 378; D/P/tau.m/23/37.

⁷⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 168, 183, 462.

substantial nature of the stalls meant that by 1819 putting up and taking down the stalls cost £200 a year, probably one reason for building an indoor market with permanent stalls.⁷¹

The Market House, which combined the functions of assembly rooms and guildhall, was completed in 1772 to the designs of amateur architect and market trustee Coplestone Warre Bampfylde. It is a three-storey, five-bay building of red brick with basement and attics. The cruciform arcades, considered a nuisance by 1924, were replaced by two-storey extensions in 1930—1 and a full width pediment replaced the central clock feature.⁷² The cellars were let out, various offices were located in the building and from 1793 the south-west of the ground floor was a public house but the north-east portion was retained as the guildhall.⁷³ The building was a focal point for Royal jubilees and accession proclamations. A plan to replace it 1897 came to nothing for lack of funds after much acrimonious dispute.⁷⁴ In the late 20th and early 21st century it was occupied by various organisations, including the tourist information centre and a public house.⁷⁵

In 1791 Taunton's Saturday market reputedly provided plentiful cheap provisions, because women brought farm produce to sell directly to the public, poultry, cheese and bacon under the arcades and fish, meat, vegetables and fruit on Wednesdays.⁷⁶ Sales of earthenware probably including local Donyatt pottery were a feature of the market from at least 1793 and in 1799 a Staffordshire man had a stall.⁷⁷ In 1808 butchers came to market six days a week and paid 2s. 6d. on Saturdays in 1881 but as little 6d. on other days, 8d. or 9d. on Wednesdays and 6d. on other days. Saturday charges for bakers, glovers, pedlars, ropers, confectioners, hatters, chandlers, hosiers and tobacconists were up to 1s. 1d., sellers of fish,

⁷¹ 5th Rep. Com. Char. 534.

⁷² Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 2; SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1924); T/PH/rea/3/27; A/DIF/101/10/206; DD/X/STONE, folder 1' J. Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 619.

⁷³ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, p. 183; 4, acct. 1843; Q/RLa/19/10., 12, 15; DD/SAS/C2402/48.

⁷⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/9, pp. 377, 515, 577—8.

⁷⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/13.

⁷⁶ SHC, A/CPT/15/5, p. 372—3; W. Marshall, *Rural Economy of West of England* (1796), II, 190.

⁷⁷ SHC, Q/SR/361/4/46; 368/1/69.

pork, earthenware, scythes, hooks, turned ware and shoes paid 8d., gardeners 8d. a week and sellers of brooms, butter cheese, poultry, grain, fruit and vegetables usually paid 1d., as they did not use standings. Poultry sellers had to cease trading at midday to make room for corn dealers. The market was short of space and half stalls were proposed.⁷⁸ Butchers' stalls occupied 12,000 of the 21,088 square feet on the Parade and the trade was worth £60,000 a year in 1824.⁷⁹ The tolls were let for £600 a year in 1785 rising to £1,374 in 1821 although only £18 was paid to the portreeves and 24s. 8d. to the manor to compensate for the loss of market profits and building rents.⁸⁰ Servicing the £12,000 capital debt took a very large share of the income and with other expenses reduced the annual profits to c. £120.⁸¹ The market trustees used any surplus income to buy back debt.⁸²

Five houses west of Fore Street were bought and demolished in 1821 for an indoor market with underground cellars built by Thomas Norman to the design of William Burgess. The upper floor was let to the literary institution, later also to the archaeological society, with accommodation for the librarian. The market opened daily except on Sundays from 8a.m. to 8p.m.⁸³ In 1833 the building was extended into Bishops Hull parish with a large butchery providing 17,472 square feet for 127 fixed standings but the charge of 4s. for a Saturday stall upset those who only brought a few carcasses.⁸⁴ The 1820s building housed 254 stalls for poultry, butter and pork in 1834.⁸⁵ In 1894 a large arched market entrance area was built on the new Corporation Street.⁸⁶ The Parade market was reorganised for non-food items with the arcades being used for the sale of corn and hemp on Saturdays only.⁸⁷ In 1843 the trustees had 132 tubs, 423 stalls and boards of various types and sizes, 29 tables and three waggons,

⁷⁸ 57 Geo. III c. lxxv; SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/2, pp. 39, 244, 292, 307, 327, 362, 428, 436.

⁷⁹ SHC, DD/DP/43/6; DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

⁸⁰ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 586.

⁸¹ *5th Rep. Com. Char.* 534.

⁸² SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, pp. 253, 290, 343; 31/1/6, accts. 1862, 1865.

⁸³ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/3, pp. 5, 17, 40, 61, 78; 31/1/4, acct. 1842; 31/5/4; DD/X/BFD/3.

⁸⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/3, pp. 14, 17, 21, 49; DD/DP/43/6; DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, pp. 56, 60.

⁸⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/7/2.

⁸⁶ SHC, SANHS Tite Colln, Taunton Scrap Book; Bishops Hull, intro.

⁸⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/3, pp. 120, 214.

presumably for carrying stalls.⁸⁸ In the 1880s some produce and non-food items were sold on small stalls or from tubs and baskets.⁸⁹

In 1796 the fish market was moved to the east end of the market house and a pump was installed.⁹⁰ In 1822 the trustees bought the freehold of the new market site from William Kinglake for £2,000 and apparently leased part of the Old Bank by Castle Bow c. 1824 for a single-storey fish market, behind a saddler's shop. In 1831 William Kinglake sold the Old Bank and adjoining premises to the market trustees who demolished the front shop to extend the fish market and rebuilt the adjoining milliner's shop in three storeys.⁹¹ In 1836 the fish market's front section with its Doric portico was let to a tailor with the proviso he spent £300 converting it into a house and shop. The fish market was rebuilt behind the portico by Richard Carver in 1853, presumably reopening the entrance from the street.⁹² It provided at least 14 stalls but there were problems with drainage and competition from at least five fish hawkers.⁹³ A telegraph company leased part of the building and complained of the stench although only two fishmongers used the market by 1865. They were moved into the main market in 1867 and the fish market became a corn exchange.⁹⁴ A new fish market was built in the eastern arcades of the Market House in 1904 but by the 1920s had moved to the indoor market.⁹⁵

From 1835 licences for butcher's shops were issued but cost up to £50 a year.⁹⁶ Licensees were required to take a market stall as the butchers' market was worth over £1,300 to the trustees by 1843.⁹⁷ In 1850 the butchery tolls were farmed for c. £1,100 and the fish and pork tolls for £536, although toll farmers complained that shops reduced income and the

⁸⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, p. 317.

⁸⁹ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 268.

⁹⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, p. 440.

⁹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/4, 11; DD/DP/8/21 (1824), 43/6; A/EAM/1—2; *Pigot Dir.* (1830); above, this section.

⁹² SHC, T/PH/rea/3/31; DD/DP/74/1; D/B/ta/31/5/14.

⁹³ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, pp. 324, 339, 335, 343, 368, 493, 495, 500.

⁹⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/6, pp. 261, 295—6, 299, 419—20, 425.

⁹⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/10, p. 85.

⁹⁶ Each licensee had to negotiate the fee: *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), II, p. 199.

⁹⁷ Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, 46, 60; SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, acct. 1843.

beadle was ordered to prevent people selling in the street.⁹⁸ Small sums were earned from auctions held in the covered market and shows on the Parade including Wombwell's wild animals.⁹⁹ The market competed with itinerant sellers of fruit, vegetables and fish, sometimes from carts in the main streets, and many fresh food shops from the 1850s despite the costs of licences and fines. In the open market it was permitted to sell from a cart for 2s. 6d.¹⁰⁰ There were continued complaints about itinerant hawkers of produce like potatoes undercutting and in 1870 vegetables could be sold in the arcades or from carts.¹⁰¹ By 1896 fruit and vegetables were sold in both the indoor market and the arcades every day.¹⁰²

In 1893 51 country butchers petitioned for lower stall rents as they had to compete with shops but as they only came on Saturdays trustees lost revenue.¹⁰³ Income fell until in the 1920s expenses exceeded income, c. £500 was still spent annually on interest and shop licences accounted for nearly a quarter of general market income.¹⁰⁴ In 1927 a report suggested replacing the indoor and butcher's markets with shops but the market and its monopoly continued. Outdoor stallholders objected to being moved to the indoor market in 1930 to improve the Parade.¹⁰⁵ In 1936 sales from barrows and trucks in the main streets were banned on Fridays and Saturdays. That was extended to the whole town centre six days a week in 1947.¹⁰⁶ In the early 21st century trading was allowed from pavement stalls in certain areas.

The new town council, with public support, wanted to take over the markets, but it was not until 1926 that The Market House Trust ceased. Its duties and powers passed to the

⁹⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, pp. 161, 253, 275, 387, 473; DD/DP/5/1.

⁹⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, pp. 296, 369.

¹⁰⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, p. 60; D/B/ta/31/1/5, pp.437, 489, 494, 369; 31/1/6, p. 465; D/B/ch/7/2/2.

¹⁰¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/7, pp. 15—16, 26, 30, 39.

¹⁰² *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897*(Taunton, 1896), 127.

¹⁰³ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), II, pp. 245, 274; SHC, D/B/ta/31/7/2.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/9, p. 389, 577—8; D/WB/t/11/1 passim.

¹⁰⁵ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 254; SHC, D/B/ta/3/25/1, pp. 27—9, 38—9, 53, 112—14, 230.

¹⁰⁶ SHC, A/EOB/1 (Dec. 1947).

town council, confirmed by an Act of 1931 repealing the Taunton Market Acts.¹⁰⁷ By that date the large market hall was divided between butchers and greengrocers and florists.

Fishmongers and itinerant traders used the small hall.¹⁰⁸ The upper storey was known as the Victoria Rooms with the name and initials VR added to the façade before 1883. The five-bay frontage comprised three large and two small arches alternating on the ground floor, partly glazed for shops. The central arch was set forward to carry the first-floor colonnade of four Ionic columns surmounted by pediment similar to that on the 18th-century market house. The first floor had five sash windows each above a low balustrade and topped by an elaborate pediment.¹⁰⁹ Only the ground floor was solid stone most of the upper floor was plastered and derelict by the 1920s.¹¹⁰ It was restored and reopened in 1934 as the Town Hall, but continued to be known locally as the Victoria Rooms, used as an assembly room and cinema.¹¹¹ Four shops were installed in the front of the building and in 1941 the upper rooms became a British Restaurant. The ground floor was requisitioned until 1949 when despite a petition the indoor market was not reopened. Part was rebuilt for the electricity board and the rest let out. In 1963—5 it was demolished and replaced by row of shops and offices.¹¹²

Corn exchange

Corn was sold on the market in the Middle Ages but by the late 18th century corn dealers sold in long two-bushel bags on Saturday afternoons and held trays for sampling.¹¹³ In 1821 ten men and one woman were licensed to sell corn and given space in the new market called the Free Exchange Room to sell by sample only between 10a.m. and 4p.m. on Saturdays. The

¹⁰⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/7, p. 408; 31/1/8, p. 322; 31/1/11, p. 384; A/DIF/95/37; PAM 2563, p. 18; Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, 75; below, local govt.

¹⁰⁸ *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 109.

¹⁰⁹ SHC, A/DIF/101/11/216.

¹¹⁰ *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); SHC, A/DIF/95/37.

¹¹¹ SHC, A/BRP/1/6 (1934).

¹¹² SHC, D/B/ta/3/25/3 passim; 31/1/13, p. 6; A/DVY/1 (1933); A/EHA/8/1; D/DC/tau.d (M/1239), box 3; Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 623; below, soc. hist.

¹¹³ Marshall, *Rural Economy of W. of Eng.*, II, 190.

arrangement was unsatisfactory and in 1825 they were moved back to the arcades after the poultry sellers moved indoors.¹¹⁴ Large quantities of corn and malt were sold but corn merchants like the Kingsbury family and Richard Matthews had shops by the 1840s and more were licensed in 1858.¹¹⁵ In 1867 the fish market was converted into a corn exchange with 40 desks besides tubs for retail sales. Fees and tolls were high and a stall cost up to £95 a year by 1921 but selling even by sample elsewhere in the borough incurred a £5 fine. By 1925 the exchange was also a cinema.¹¹⁶ In 1929 the corn exchange moved to the new market hall off Canal Road.¹¹⁷ The old building was demolished in 1937 to build the borough electricity offices.¹¹⁸ The 1770 Market House became the sole relic of Taunton's market.

Livestock markets

Taunton supplied the bishop of Winchester with 111 oxen and 159 pigs in 1244—5.¹¹⁹ Animals for butchery were probably sold at the north end of the market between Cornhill, where there was a bullring, and the bridge. The area was later encroached on and divided into Horse and Groping Lanes.¹²⁰ Welsh sheep and Irish cattle sold at Taunton market were probably driven from Minehead and Bridgwater.¹²¹ A pig market was held possibly outside the Three Cups in East Street as before 1586 the innkeeper had had the market moved to Paul Street.¹²² A 'great' market for livestock on the first Saturday of the month from November to April was held on Castle Green in 1788 and in East Reach from 1789.¹²³ In 1819 it was moved opposite Tancred Street, disrupting traffic, and in 1823 was confined to the north side

¹¹⁴ SHC, Q/RLc/1; D/B/ta/31/5/3, 214; Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, 90.

¹¹⁵ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, p. 496; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 52, 66. Matthew's East Reach shop still bears the legend 'English and Foreign Corn Warehouse'.

¹¹⁶ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), II, p. 202; SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/6, pp. 419—20, 425, 427, 449; 31/1/7, p. 44; DD/X/BFD/3; D/WB/t/11/1, pp. 58—9, 60, 88.

¹¹⁷ SHC, D/DC/tau.d (M/1289, box 1); D/B/ta/24/1/71/1441.

¹¹⁸ Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 623; SHC, D/DC/tau.d unlisted box 19 (1938—9).

¹¹⁹ SHC, T/PH/win 1244—5.

¹²⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/1, pp. 3, 19.

¹²¹ Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, 17.

¹²² SHC, DD/SP/49 (Apr. 1586), 50 (June 1614).

¹²³ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 586; SHC, DD/TB/23/32.

of East Reach. In 1827 it was moved to the last Saturday of the month and relocated in a field off East Reach.¹²⁴ A short-lived cattle market on the second Saturday was introduced in 1833.¹²⁵ There was a sheep market on the corner of East Reach and Tancred Street in 1840.¹²⁶ The field off East Reach was unpopular and outside the trustees' authority, which only extended for 1,000 yards from the market place. The market returned to Castle Green and from 1841 the cattle and sheep markets, the great markets, horse sales and livestock shows were held there except during cattle plagues. The green was also used for cart parking.¹²⁷ By 1852 the livestock markets were farmed out.¹²⁸

In 1821 a pig market was established adjoining the brewery in Jarman's Court, later Pig Market Lane and the marking of raw skins was moved there from the arcade. The trustees bought and demolished the brewery to extend the market in 1831.¹²⁹ By 1871 it was again inadequate and pig sales moved to Castle Green, except between 1883 and 1904 when they were held in Tangier.¹³⁰

In August 1884 5,326 cattle and sheep and 858 pigs were sold and in 1888 up to 40 truckloads of cattle were dispatched from the station on a Saturday.¹³¹ The growing popularity of livestock auctions outside traditional markets saw fewer than 3,000 animals sold in August 1901. Swine fever and the outbreak of war caused further falls.¹³² In 1921 the council took over and planned a new livestock market, which opened in 1929 on Jarvis Field (6 a.) in Canal Road with accommodation for 1,320 cattle and calves, 6,500 sheep and 1,500 pigs and buildings for a Saturday corn exchange, Tuesday produce market, three firms of

¹²⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/2, p. 466, 31/1/3, pp. 145, 264, 273.

¹²⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, pp. 12, 35

¹²⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C212/map148.

¹²⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, pp. 246, 246—7, 253, 260, 266—7; 5, pp.327—8, 334, 337; DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, p. 100; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

¹²⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/5, p. 290.

¹²⁹ SHC, DD/CH/82/8; D/B/ta/31/1/3, 21, 102, 116, 347; D/P/tau.m/4/3/9—10.

¹³⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/6, p. 93, 31/1/8, p. 87; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/12/424; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

¹³¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/8, pp. 199, 560; *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 257.

¹³² SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/9, pp. 577—8, 585; 31/1/10, pp. 625; 31/1/11, pp. 182, 372, 418—9.

auctioneers and several agricultural implement merchants.¹³³ In 1944 three cattle sales were established, livestock on Saturdays, fatstock on Tuesdays and tuberculin tested cattle on Thursdays and by 1954 each had its own sale ring and accommodation. It was one of the most important markets in the west, housed a Christmas fatstock show, auctions and other sales, was served by bank branches and by the 1960s had general market of c. 30 stalls for non-food items.¹³⁴ Further sale rings were built in 1962 and in 1963 the market handled c. 240,000 animals, rising to 370,314 in 1986. The town centre site became inadequate and large transporters had to negotiate congested streets. In 2008 the livestock market moved to a site south of Bridgwater. Apart from the produce market the old site was cleared for redevelopment, which had still not taken place by 2022.¹³⁵

FAIRS

There were presumably fairs by the late 12th century when non-burgesses were allowed to sell cloth retail.¹³⁶ Most major Somerset fairs were held in spring or autumn so Taunton's summer dates may relate to the wool trade as they followed shearing, cartloads of goods could be moved more easily in summer and with little competition became important for summer sales of horses and cattle.

The Botolph or Borough fair (17 June), in existence by 1287, produced £1 10s. 4d. in 1310, almost as much as the annual market tolls.¹³⁷ A piepowder court was held by the 14th century and to protect the fair traders opening their shop windows in fair time had to pay a toll by 1334.¹³⁸ Despite the plague St Botolph's fair was held as usual and although tolls were

¹³³ SHC, A/DIF/95/37; D/B/ta/24/1/57/993; A/BMG/5/2.

¹³⁴ SHC, D/DC/tau.d (M/1289, box 1); DD/X/AP/1; A/AQN/64; PAM 61.

¹³⁵ SHC, A/BIV/5; D/B/ta/31/1/13; A/DIT/1, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/15 (7 Dec.).

¹³⁶ Hunt, 'Some notes on the cloth trade', *PSANHS* CI—II, 100.

¹³⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1286—7, 1309—10.

¹³⁸ Below, local govt, courts; SHC, T/PH/win 1334—5.

nearly halved they soon recovered and were usually over 20s.¹³⁹ In 1409 six Taunton men attacked the toll collectors and reportedly raised 400 supporters.¹⁴⁰ Tolls continued to be collected but fell to less than 5s. by the 16th century and 3s. 4d in 1630.¹⁴¹ The Tolsey or tollbooth was south of the Guildhall and the manor bailiff had an extra load of firewood for each fair, possibly for a kitchen.¹⁴²

The bedels of the manorial hundreds manned the entrances to the town and fair to prevent animals leaving without a ticket. Theoretically all cattle and horse sales were recorded for 4d. with a detailed description of the animal, any owners' marks and the names of buyers and sellers to prevent the trading of stolen animals. Animals came from as far as Glamorgan and Ireland. A good mare or an ox could sell for £5. Sheep were usually sent to specialised fairs like Ham Hill and Weyhill nearer the chalk counties of Wiltshire and Dorset where the demand was greatest. Fairs facilitated the improvement of breeding by drawing cattle and horses from a wide area and horses came from the Somerset Levels where many heavy horses were bred. Horse buyers travelled furthest to get good stock and regulars included two men from Cornwall buying for onward sale. Several women sold stock and leather. Recorded sales peaked at 269 animals in 1630.¹⁴³ Tolls belonged to the clerk of the castle and the bishop's bailiff took the remaining profits. Fairs were not held regularly in the 1640s due to plague and war.¹⁴⁴ Tolsey receipts for pitching goods and skins were over £3 in several years before 1640 but halved in the 1650s.¹⁴⁵

Fairs provided entertainment and the authorities found them useful for public announcements and recruiting but the fair never recovered its regional importance. Local

¹³⁹ SHC, T/PH/win 1348—50, 1363—4, 1377—8.

¹⁴⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1408—13, 179.

¹⁴¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1430—1, 1462—3, 1482—3. 1509—10, 1528—9, 1544—5; Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/10.

¹⁴² SHC, DD/SP/71; D/B/ta/31/5/3.

¹⁴³ SHC, DD/SP/338.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/16, 149—50; DD/SP/325/190—3.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, DD/SP/329.

sales dominated, mainly of cattle but transactions within the fair or illegally outside its limits went unrecorded.¹⁴⁶ By the mid 18th century it was a pedlary fair although graziers bought lean cattle in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when the fair was held along the length of East Street.¹⁴⁷ By the 19th century town-based dealers bought directly from farmers for resale and horses were bought by local horse breakers who sold privately or at horse sales on Castle Green.¹⁴⁸ In 1899 the fair comprised a few sweet stalls on the Parade and Irish horses for sale by the gypsy community and was last recorded in 1916.¹⁴⁹

In 1256 the king granted to his brother Amaury, bishop of Winchester a yearly four-day fair in Millane tithing around the Translation of St Thomas (5 July).¹⁵⁰ In 1268 it produced 29s. 5 ¼d. and, although only 8s. 5d. in 1302, income was usually over 20s. during the Middle Ages but fell to 1s. by 1545.¹⁵¹ In the early 17th century the fair regained popularity, cutpurses were active in 1625 and receipts rose to over £3 in 1639 and were often higher than at the borough fair.¹⁵² Cattle sales predominated and fairs were not held every year mid-century.¹⁵³ In the late 17th and 18th centuries ribbons and jewellery were sold and a Welsh cutler and his wife who had stock stolen at the George inn were probably attending this fair in 1761.¹⁵⁴

By the 18th century North Town fair, as it was then known, was reduced to three days, 7—9 July, the first day for graziers to buy cattle and the others for the general public.¹⁵⁵ It was noted for garlic, sold from barges in the river, and cattle. In 1817 589 cattle were

¹⁴⁶ M.C.B. Dawes, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1666—76* (Som. Rec. Soc. 34), 218; M. Siraut, *Trevelyan Letters* (Som. Rec. Soc. 80), 135; SHC, DD/SP/338.

¹⁴⁷ SHC, Q/SR/343/3/48; DD/SP/338; *Fairs in Eng. and Wales* (1767), 69; J. Billingsley, *Gen. Views of Agric. of Som.* (1798), 245; Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 586; M. Miles, *Perfectly Pure*, 84.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, HO107/972; RG10/2374—5; RG11/2366—8; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

¹⁴⁹ *Taunton Courier*, 21 June 1899, 12 July 1916; BNA accessed 15 Aug. 2022; SHC, DD/TBL/59 (1916).

¹⁵⁰ *Cal. Chart.* 1226—57, 242.

¹⁵¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1267—8, 1301—2, 1328—9, 1348—50, 1334—5, 1353—4, 1509—10, 1528—9, 1544—5; DD/MT/1/16, 28.

¹⁵² Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/10; SHC, Q/SR/52/32; DD/SP/329 (1639).

¹⁵³ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/16, p. 150; DD/SP/33, 329 (1640—55), 325/197 (Staplegrave 100), 325/203.

¹⁵⁴ SHC, Q/SR/93/109; 115/7, 14; 313/45; DD/SP/338.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, DD/SP/338; *Fairs in Eng. and Wales* (1767), 69; J. Billingsley, *Gen. Views of Agric. of Som.* (1798), 245.

offered for sale but the fair was mainly for pedlary, confectionary, sack races and greasy pole competitions.¹⁵⁶ A nominal payment of 6s. 8d. from each fair was apparently fixed in the 1670s but sometimes less was paid.¹⁵⁷ In the late 18th and early 19th century up to eight tolsey keepers continued to be appointed and North Town fair was held at the junction of Bridge Street, Station Road and Staplegrove Road, possibly on Elms Parade off Staplegrove Road, which necessitated the fencing of building sites to keep horses out.¹⁵⁸ Stock were auctioned in 1860 but by the 1880s the market trustees and the poor-law Guardians wanted fairs suppressed as a useless nuisance and responsible for much absence from school.¹⁵⁹ Innkeepers objected to abolition, although they led to filthy streets and poor business as people stayed away from the town centre, the pleasure fairs having already ceased.¹⁶⁰ By the 1890s North Town fair had ceased.¹⁶¹

A July horse show was held from 1882 until 1949 except during the wars and probably involved sales in its early years.¹⁶² From the late 20th century fun fairs and markets were allowed in Castle Green and on a limited number of days in the year in some town centre streets.

COAL and TIMBER MERCHANTS

¹⁵⁶ SHC, DD/MT/3/4/35, 5/15, 11/36; DD/DP/43/4/13 (1817); Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 559; Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 8; Shillibeer, *Ancient Customs of Taunton Deane*, xxvii.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, DD/MT/3/4/35, 5/15, 11/36; DD/DP/43/4/13 (1817); Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 559; Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 8; Shillibeer, *Ancient Customs of Taunton Deane*, xxvii.

¹⁵⁸ SHC, DD/DP/90/2; A/ADR, vol. 1 (1870—1); N. Chipchase, *Taunton Remembered*, 30.

¹⁵⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/7, p. 538; D/G/ta/8a/28; C/E/4/367/1, p.377; D/P/tau.m/18/11/1 (1873, 1880); *Taunton Courier*, 12 July 1848, 11 July 1860, 15 July 1885: BNA accessed 15 Aug. 2022.

¹⁶⁰ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 269.

¹⁶¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/8, pp. 58, 199; *Taunton of Today* (1896), 11.

¹⁶² *Taunton Courier*, 14 July 1886, 23 July 1949: BNA accessed 11 Aug. 2022.

There was a charcoal store on the manor in 1301¹⁶³ but firewood was the main fuel until the later 17th century, from the manor or imported upriver.¹⁶⁴ Coal was available by the 15th century and was brought from Ham mills south of the Tone in North Curry in 1628 for boiling saltpetre.¹⁶⁵ By 1698 coal from Coal Harbour north of the river in Creech St Michael cost 1s. 8d. a bushel and was resold in Taunton for 2s. and there was a constant traffic in coal on the road.¹⁶⁶ Improved navigation resulted in coal coming upriver to Tone Bridge where the south-east bank was known as Coal Orchard by 1744.¹⁶⁷ In 1717 800 boatloads of coal and 200 tons of general cargo paid toll at Coal Harbour to pass up to Taunton.¹⁶⁸ Coal merchants and coalyards were recorded from the early 18th century and in 1815 a coal merchant paid over £800 for a house, coalyard and wharf in Coal Orchard where there were at least eight coalyards by 1842.¹⁶⁹ Some cloth workers traded in coal in North Town in 1769 followed by John Weeks and Company recorded in 1784.¹⁷⁰ By the early 19th century coal was increasingly required for foundries, steam-powered mills and later for gas and electricity generation. By the 1820s c. 28,500 tons of coal came upriver annually, which required a great many labourers and carts and merchants often employed up to 15 men. In the 1840s it took a ton of coal to produce 12,000 cu. ft of gas.¹⁷¹ A coal yard let in 1849 had a large house, cottages, a counting house with fireproof chest, engine and weighing houses, a weighbridge and a wharf with a crane.¹⁷² After the opening of the railway goods sidings many of the c.15

¹⁶³ M. Page, *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1301—2* (Winchester, 1996), 32.

¹⁶⁴ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* VII, p. 259; BL, Add. MS 30289 (45); SHC, T/PH/win 1500—1; TNA, PROB 4/8674.

¹⁶⁵ E. H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39* (Som. Rec. Soc. 24), 73.

¹⁶⁶ BL, Add. MS 30289 (45); C. Fiennes, *Through England on a side saddle* (2009), 63.

¹⁶⁷ SHC, Q/SR/73/313/45; above, intro.

¹⁶⁸ *VCH Som.* VI, 26.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, PROB 11/659/254; SHC, A/CHM/5; D/P/tau.ja/13/1/1; DD/SP/1744/24; DD/AY/2, 6; DD/HR/3—4; DD/DP/box 103; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 48—52.

¹⁷⁰ SHC, DD/CH/78/5; *Bailey's British Dir.* (1784), 455.

¹⁷¹ SHC, T/PH/gdl/2; DD/TC/36.

¹⁷² SHC, DD/CH/81/7.

coal businesses moved near the station but some were sited in residential areas.¹⁷³ In 1882 a coal merchant paid for an advertising hoarding at the station.¹⁷⁴

Probably the largest coal business was that of the Goodland family who in the mid 19th century took over the premises and coalyards of the Youngs of Bridge House and of the Kingsburys and Troods at Tone Bridge House, each with wharves. and acquired adjoining shops and warehouses.¹⁷⁵ In 1828 William Goodland from North Petherton started the business and in 1830 formed a company with his brother Charles. Most of their sons and grandsons joined the business bringing coal, culm and anthracite from Gloucestershire and south Wales through Bridgwater. From Taunton they dispatched coal and salt into east Devon, where they had two canal wharves and a second business at Tiverton. They later opened depots at stations in west Somerset and east Devon and bought 70 waggons to move their coal. From a depot in Shuttern they sold to the poor in small quantities.¹⁷⁶ In 1920 they formed the Taunton and West Somerset branch of the Coal Traders Association with four out of 11 Taunton coal firms. In 1926 coal was rationed and 1,100 tons was needed every six weeks to supply Taunton. In the later 20th century as gas replaced coal and traditional industries and coalyards closed, Goodlands traded as builders' merchants.¹⁷⁷

During the Middle Ages old building timber was sold by the manor presumably to local carpenters but timber was also imported.¹⁷⁸ John Hare (d. 1785), timber merchant, was a prime mover in the new market house scheme in the 1760s and the Wilment family were timber merchants in the late 18th century when there were timberyards in Silver and High

¹⁷³ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); SHC, DD/CH/111/2; DD/HS/1/2; A/BMG 3/1; TNA, HO 107/1922—3; RG 12/1875, 1877.

¹⁷⁴ Wilts and Swindon HC, 2525/210, box 40/15.

¹⁷⁵ SHC, DD/CH/78/5; DD/X/WBB/371; DD/CWC/ta/G/2468; DD/GND/8.

¹⁷⁶ SHC, A/ARG/7; A/BMG/3/1; DD/GND cat.; Devon HC, 2062/B/L/6.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, A/SDJ/1/1; DD/GND cat.

¹⁷⁸ SHC, T/PH/win1399—1400, 1421—2, 1454—5, 1462—3; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* VII, p. 259.

Streets, East Reach and by the river.¹⁷⁹ Tree trunks were unloaded north-west of the town bridge for the sawmills in the early 19th century.¹⁸⁰ There were up to five firms during the mid 19th century and 18 merchants and their workers were recorded in 1891 reflecting the extent of building work and there were timberyards by the hospital and at Union Gate for most of the 19th century.¹⁸¹ Timber merchants also imported Welsh slate and operated as hauliers including the Govier brothers in Belvedere Road in the early 20th century.¹⁸² Colthursts and Reeves had large yards by the river or at Priorswood but closed in the 1980s.¹⁸³

RETAIL SERVICES

Shops

In 1242—3 eight men were accused of selling cloth and wine illegally.¹⁸⁴ The name le Chapman was common in Taunton from the 13th century.¹⁸⁵ Taunton chapmen were trading with London in the early 15th century presumably bringing goods for local traders to sell although wealthy retailers dealt directly with suppliers.¹⁸⁶ In 1310—11 the wife of William le Taverner had seven shops.¹⁸⁷ There were bread shops by the market and near the cross in 1320,¹⁸⁸ shops with solars over were recorded in and around the market and a widow was granted a chamber with garret and shop on East Street in 1344.¹⁸⁹ Shops were a popular

¹⁷⁹ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 572; SHC, Q/SR/356/1/6; TNA, PROB 11/1138/242; London Met. Arch., MS 11936/357/550567, 11936/385/598298; SHC, D/P/tau.m/4/3/7 (1796); Q/Rup/192; A/ADR, box 4.

¹⁸⁰ SHC, A/DAS/2 (12290); above, this section, industry, wood and building.

¹⁸¹ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); Morris & Co., *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA RG12/1875—7; OS Map 1:500, SOM. LXX.12.18; SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/28 (1389, 1434).

¹⁸² *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, A/EDR/1.

¹⁸³ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/18 (11 July).

¹⁸⁴ C. E. Chadwyck-Healey, *Somersetshire Pleas c. 1200—1256*, (SRS 11), p. 296.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, E326/4963, 5094; F. Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest etc* (Som. Rec. Soc. 3), 127; *Cal. Misc.* I, p. 397.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, CP40/618, 636, 656, 664, 685, 724, 768, 776: www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40 accessed May 2021.

¹⁸⁷ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1307—46* (SRS 12), 22—4.

¹⁸⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1305, 1320—1.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, E 326/4965, 49, 86, 4989; T.B. Dilks, *Bridgwater Corporation Records* (Som. Rec. Soc. 48), pp. 118—19, 131, 182.

investment as they could be sublet profitably and 29s. 6d. rent was charged for seven shops in 1335.¹⁹⁰ Shopkeepers paid to open their drop windows on fair days. Some shops, including in Shuttern, had pentices to shelter customers and goods.¹⁹¹ The oldest surviving shop is 14th-century 15 Fore Street, a café since the mid 20th century, but for most of its history a mercer's and then a grocer's shop. A late 14th-century addition was recorded as a 24ft by 15ft pentice rented for 1s. a year.¹⁹² That was superseded by a large timbered façade of 1578 almost certainly built for Thomas Trowbridge, mercer, and his wife Joan. Their son John had a woollen draper's next door by the early 17th century.¹⁹³

Spicers, drapers, silk drapers, mercers and haberdashers were recorded in the 15th and 16th century.¹⁹⁴ In 1585 a bookseller owed money in London, presumably to his supplier.¹⁹⁵ Merchants sued local shopkeepers in the borough courts for non-payment mainly for bulk groceries including jars of olives and two and a half cwt of raisins and for haberdashery including one delivery of 6,000 pins.¹⁹⁶ By the early 17th century there were many well-stocked non-food shops including the 1619 shop of a wealthy merchant tailor and his son or the hatter who sold men's and children's clothes, caps, scarves, bands, boot hose and handkerchiefs.¹⁹⁷ Twelve drapers, mercers and haberdashers petitioned against abuse of the aulnage c. 1623 and claimed sealed cloth was seized in their shops until they paid c. 7s. and agreed to pay an annual charge.¹⁹⁸ In 1634 24 mercers and four woollen drapers were

¹⁹⁰ SHC, T/PH/win 1334—5; TNA, C1/311/40.

¹⁹¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1338—9, 1353—4, 1409—10, 1409—10; T/PH/hps/1; above, this section, fairs.

¹⁹² SHC, T/PH/win 1409—10.

¹⁹³ R. Bush, 'The Tudor Tavern, Fore Street, Taunton', *PSANHS CXIX*, 1975, 15—21.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, CP40/656, 664, 685, 724, 732, 748, 768, 776, 807, 841, 871, 887, 890, 893, 907, 959, 983, 1298, 1352, 1437—8: www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40 accessed May 2021; SHC, DD/SF/2/52/2; DD/SP/348 (1593).

¹⁹⁵ TNA, CP40/1439, image 62d: www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40 accessed May 2021.

¹⁹⁶ SHC, DD/SP/63.

¹⁹⁷ E. H. Bates Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1607-1625* (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 72, 343; TNA, PROB 11/135/439; SHC, Q/SR/29/30, 95; DD/SP/1645/18; S.W. Bates Harbin, *Somerset Enrolled Deeds* (Som. Rec. Soc. 51), p. 260.

¹⁹⁸ SHC, DD/PH/216/57.

recorded, mostly in Fore Street, which was also home to goldsmiths and merchants.¹⁹⁹ They probably served a very wide area as in the 1640s Minehead church bought cloth in Taunton.²⁰⁰ A haberdasher's shop stock was worth over £200 in 1634 and in 1645 another had over 750 yards of c. 30 types of woollen and linen cloth, ribbons, threads, spices, dried fruits, sugar, liquorice, tobacco, papers, primers and horn books.²⁰¹ That was a common mix of wares; a woman stocked threads, laces, tapes, spices and dried fruits in 1666 and in 1676 another shop sold spices, sugars, candles, salt, oatmeal, starch, tobacco, playing cards and frankincense.²⁰² Some early 18th-century haberdashers were also hatters.²⁰³

Tobacco was supplied by 1620 and sold in general shops by 1645.²⁰⁴ Andrew Pitts issued a token in 1652 bearing an image of tobacco.²⁰⁵ Many barbers, drapers and grocers sold tobacco but it was not apparently sold in public houses in pipes probably until the 18th century.²⁰⁶ In 1674 a man had tobacco worth £34, a press and a knife and was presumably preparing it for sale.²⁰⁷ A tobacco maker and a tobacconist took apprentices c.1721.²⁰⁸ Two tobacco manufacturers were recorded c. 1798 and the trade was worth £3,000 a year in 1824.²⁰⁹ Four tobacconists were four recorded in 1864 and cigar manufacturers were recorded in the 1880s in East Street and one was still at work in 1901.²¹⁰

A wealthy mercer's business in goods, bills and bonds was worth £1,000 in 1667.²¹¹ John Meredith from Stogursey was apprenticed to a Taunton mercer and by 1677 described himself as a gentleman and left at least c. £2,500, endowed two clothing charities and gave

¹⁹⁹ SHC, DD/SP/339 (1634).

²⁰⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.m/4/1/1 (1643).

²⁰¹ SHC, DD/SP/1634/20; DD/SP/1645/35.

²⁰² SHC, DD/SP/1666/57, 1676/14.

²⁰³ SHC, DD/HS/4/2; d/b/ta/31/5/2 (1759).

²⁰⁴ SHC, SHC, DD/SP/63 (1620); DD/SP/1645/35.

²⁰⁵ G. Williamson, *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century*, (1891), 990.

²⁰⁶ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/13 (1391).

²⁰⁷ SHC, DD/SP/1674/9.

²⁰⁸ TNA, IR1/47, p. 76; SHC, D/P/tau.ma/13/6/1.

²⁰⁹ *The Universal British Directory* (c. 1798), IV, 587—9; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

²¹⁰ *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 81, 106; TNA, RG 11/2368; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); TNA, RG13/2278.

²¹¹ TNA, PROB 4/4454.

money to those from whom he may have taken unfair advantage including a Salisbury supplier.²¹² Unlike those of other towns Taunton tradesmen rarely put livery company arms on their tokens.²¹³ Many issued farthing tokens between 1652 and 1667 including George Treagle, erroneously said to have been Taunton's first bookseller but possibly its first publisher in the 1630s and 1640s.²¹⁴ In 1676 a stationer was forced to make a public apology for slandering the diocesan bishop.²¹⁵ Most late 17th century inventories include books²¹⁶ and several booksellers sold prints and music.²¹⁷ Like silver and gold smiths, upholstery and mercery shops they also served the rural gentry.²¹⁸ A great deal of capital was required to stock a high-class shop such as that kept by William Chase between 1662 and 1676 with a range of cloths costing up to 4s. a yard, gold and silver lace and buttons, silk ribbons and fine worsted worth nearly £900 and a further £250 of goods had been sold but not paid for.²¹⁹ Many drapers and haberdashers were owed large sums for goods bought on credit.²²⁰

The stock of a bankrupt grocer and draper in 1775 was worth up to £1,000 including cloth, tape and ribbon, groceries, saltpetre, seeds, spirits and tobacco, probably explaining the number of spittoons in the house, tea priced from 3s. 6d. a lb for bohea to 13s. for hyson, 70 cwt of lump sugar beside loaf, powdered and other sorts worth up to £3 4s. a cwt. The shop fittings included a coffee mill and glasses with covers for sweetmeats. He dealt with suppliers in London, Bristol, Exeter and Gloucester.²²¹ In 1774 34 retailers were on the electoral register and by the 1820s and 1830s there were more than 50.²²² Dressmaker and milliner Elizabeth Goodchild set up a haberdashery shop with Mary Alford in 1814 selling some

²¹² TNA, PROB 11/356/385.

²¹³ H. Symonds, 'Taunton Tokens of the Seventeenth Century', *PSANHS*, LVII (1911), 55; LXI (1915), 121.

²¹⁴ G. Williamson, *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century*, (1891), 987—92.

²¹⁵ M.C.B. Dawes, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1666—76* (Som. Rec. Soc. 34), 191.

²¹⁶ SHC, DD/SP/1681/50, 1683/41, 1685/44, 100, 1691/57, 1695/35.

²¹⁷ SHC, Q/SR/177/9, 225/8; DD/WO/59/4/4, 6; A/CTP/16/12; DD/X/WLM/1; Siraut, *Somerset Wills*, 40.

²¹⁸ SHC, Q/SR/151/18, 152/3, 292/8; N. Devon RO, 1142 B/L70/396; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 68—9, 233—4; A. Webb, *Somerset Wills* (Som. Rec. Soc. 94), 234—5.

²¹⁹ *PSANHS*, LXI (1915), 121; SHC, DD/SP/1676/12.

²²⁰ SHC, DD/SP/1681/50, 59.

²²¹ SHC, DD/DP/76/2.

²²² SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; D/P/tau.ja/4/1/4; D/P/tau.ma/23/16, 29.

ready-made clothes. Her stock rose in value to £1,150 in 1816 when she was in financial difficulties, owed over £800. She sold lace costing up to £2 a yard and ribbons up to £3 15s. a yard, more than three months wages for mill hands.²²³ By 1824 the retail drapery and grocery trades in Taunton were valued at £155,000 slightly more than silk manufacturing.²²⁴

In 1801 an enterprising ironmonger published a list of his stock from stoves to backgammon tables, man traps to umbrellas.²²⁵ Some ironmongers invented and made their own kitchen ranges, grates and stoves.²²⁶ Other manufacturing retailers included tailors, hatters, glovers, shoemakers, milliners and cabinet makers, notably the Steevens family. For the poor there were marine or second hand stores and bargain bazaars. In 1830 a salesman on the corner of Silver Street advertised a sale of cheap new and second-hand clothes.²²⁷ By the late 19th century there were several clothes dealers and rag sorters, usually women.²²⁸ In 1940 a man was accused of giving goldfish to children in exchange for rags.²²⁹

In the 1820s many shops installed gas lamps and a Fore Street grocer had 13 gas burners in his shop and a gas stove in his counting house in 1831.²³⁰ In 1830 c. 80 shops were recorded and shop porters were a discrete trade in the 1832 Reform festival.²³¹ Errand boys and porters rose in number from 28 in 1841 to 122 in 1851 when there were c. 180 shops and to 479 by 1911.²³² By the 1860s the main streets were lined with shops with large glass windows, replacing the small square panes of the early 19th century, and increasing display space. Shops gutted their interiors and extended retail space to upper floors also with display

²²³ SHC, DD/HC/44/15, 46/15, 147/4; D/P/tau.m/9/1/5.

²²⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

²²⁵ SHC, DD/HC/4/18/1.

²²⁶ *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 238.

²²⁷ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 18—19; SHC, DD/CN/28/17; above, industry.

²²⁸ TNA, RG12/185—7; RG14/2276—8.

²²⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/3/8/12, p. 226.

²³⁰ SHC, T/PH/gdl/1; DD/CH/111/6.

²³¹ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); SHC, DD/SAS/C2402/52.

²³² *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, HO107/972, 1922—3; RG14/14234—45, 14249.

windows.²³³ Purpose-built shops appeared, including The Bridge, and a monumental mason and a photographer created glasshouse shops in Station Road, since demolished.²³⁴ At the same period manufacturers invested in large warerooms to display products to buyers.²³⁵ Sunblinds were common by 1900 but only two shop installed permanent glazed verandas, since removed.²³⁶

In 1841 c. 300 people were employed in retailing in 1841 and that figure rose steadily to 730 in 1891. Most assistants were employed in drapery and grocery but there were booksellers and stationers, music and piano warehouses, jewellers and watchmakers, furriers, toys and fancy goods, chemists, ironmongers, china dealers, furnishers, wine and spirit stores, confectioners and sweet shops.²³⁷ In the later 19th century butchers, fishmongers, poulterers, pork butchers, butter and cheesemongers and greengrocers took shops paying a licence fee to the market trustees and grocers also sold dairy produce and processed meat.²³⁸ From 1860 51 people were licensed to sell fruit and vegetables in shops for 10s. a year and by 1868 seven classes of produce shops were licensed but only 3 butchers out of 90 food shops.²³⁹ An unlicensed butcher, convicted nine times, sold behind drawn blinds. It was said in 1888 confining butchers to market stalls kept the town cleaner. One butcher imported frozen meat from New Zealand but it was reputedly unpopular. A fishmonger supplied hawkers as well as shops in Chard and Minehead and obtained salmon by telegraphing suppliers.²⁴⁰

The later 19th century saw the rise of oil and colour shops who also sold paraffin and lamps, florists, newsagents, jewellers, furniture stores, sweet shops, tobacconists, art dealers

²³³ SHC, Pigot Colln, Fore Street by Buckler (1832); A/BMG/5/2; D/B/ta/24/1/9/272, 275, 277, 280, 24/1/10/312, 317—19, 328, 340; 24/1/11/374; A/ADR, vol. 1 (1875).

²³⁴ e.g. SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/9/272, 275, 277, 280; D/B/ta/24/1/10/312, 317—18, 325, 328, 340, 344, D/B/ta/24/1/11/374; above, intro.

²³⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/9/287; D/B/ta/24/1/10/317.

²³⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/22/941.

²³⁷ TNA, HO107/972, 1922—3; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—45, 14249.

²³⁸ Above this section, markets; SHC, D/P/stapg/4/1/6 (1845); A/AGR/1; DD/X/BFD/3; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), passim.

²³⁹ Kite and Palmer, *Taunton: its history and market trust*, 63; SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/6, pp. 300—1, 465; 31/7/2.

²⁴⁰ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, pp. 245, 272—4.

and retail shoe shops, one of which was run by Henry Massingham who pioneered electricity and provided public toilets and a restaurant at his new store at the bridge by 1890.²⁴¹ Oil and colour men George Spiller and Charles Webber began business in 1890 and became the most important ironmongery and hardware business in Taunton. It was noted for its 1937 black granite and glass fascia and George's penny farthing bicycle but closed in the early 21st century and became a public house.²⁴²

Most shops operated on a cash basis but the more expensive shops still allowed credit.²⁴³ Shops stayed open late and there was concern over the hours staff worked. From 1907 shops were required to close between 8 and 9 p.m., except on Saturdays when they might remain open until 11 p.m. and Wednesdays when they had to close at 2 p.m.²⁴⁴ Fewer shopkeepers lived on the premises and upper floors were used as stock and work rooms but some banks still had resident caretakers in the 1920s and later.²⁴⁵ In 1911 more than 1,200 shop workers were resident in the town.²⁴⁶ The Taunton Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1919 as the Taunton Traders Association.²⁴⁷ The market still controlled food shops and in 1927 63 licences were issued for greengrocery, 56 for grocery, 13 for butchers and six for fishmongers, although many butchers and others opened in areas outside the market limit where a licence was not required.²⁴⁸

Large drapery stores had resident male and female assistants in the care of a housekeeper. Drapery continued to employ many female assistants but other stores like

²⁴¹ SHC, DD/X/HSTH/1—3; TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), passim; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 235.

²⁴² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/100/2409; PAM 2831.

²⁴³ TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 237—8; SHC, DD/CH/80/8.

²⁴⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/4/6/2 (June 1907).

²⁴⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/13/3/1 passim.

²⁴⁶ TNA, RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—40, 14243—5, 14247, 14249.

²⁴⁷ *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 95.

²⁴⁸ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 254; SHC, D/B/ta/3/25/1, pp. 27—9, 38—9, 53, 112—14, 230.

grocers' became exclusively male employing very young boys.²⁴⁹ Drapers employed at least 235 people by 1891 and many travelling drapers, often from Scotland, were resident.²⁵⁰ One of the leading drapery firms run by the Newberry and Hatcher families was established in 1775.²⁵¹ Matthew Coleman, draper, created a new store at 12 High Street, formerly Clitsome's stables, and sold it in 1799 to London draper Robert Newberry whose daughter and her husband Rice Blake ran the business after 1827. They were joined in 1860 by their niece's husband Demas Hatcher. As Blake and Hatcher the store expanded to cover 11—16 High Street and from the 1870s to 1890s they also had a large furniture shop in Hammett Street. After Mr Blake retired in 1883 the business was run by the Hatchers family and incorporated as Hatcher and Sons Limited in 1898. Only one member of the family remained in the company by 1927.²⁵² In 1894 the company built a new furnishing store on the site of 54—6 High Street, now a supermarket, with a fully glazed façade on all three floors and furniture workshops separated from the showrooms.²⁵³ In 1893 they acquired a coachhouse in the Crescent for their waggons, before 1898 Mountway House and a warehouse in Billetfield, presumably as depositories and in 1908 a rival drapery in Fore Street. They ran a removal business and built a large depository in 1920 on Kingston Road, now flats.²⁵⁴ In the 1920s the shop opened for ten hours five days a week and also Thursday mornings, had a hairdressing salon and held mannequin parades.²⁵⁵ The independent department store remained in business in the 2020s.

Chapmans, begun in 1864 at 20 North Street by William and Arthur Chapman from London, gradually expanded to supply furnishings and furniture, flooring, ladies and

²⁴⁹ TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; SHC, A/DIX/1.

²⁵⁰ TNA, RG12/1875—7; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887).

²⁵¹ Various founding dates are given from 1775.

²⁵² SHC, A/BVO/1—3; DD/AY/75; D/B/ta/24/1/11/354; D/B/ta/24/1/12/403, 424; DD/CH/30; Companies House, reg. 05594571.

²⁵³ SHC, DD/CH/30, 118/5; date on building.

²⁵⁴ SHC, DD/CH/118/5; D/B/ta/24/1/50/802.

²⁵⁵ Hatcher and Sons, *Shopping in Taunton* (Taunton, 1928), 10—12.

children's clothing, fabrics and haberdashery. By 1890 the store covered 20—2 and 26 and later they acquired 23—5 and built over all the back land, a former coalyard and stables They created a continuous frontage and rebuilt 25 in four storeys with large windows designed by Charles Samson in the mid 1890s. They acquired a large yard in St James Street c. 1882 and built several warehouses there from 1896, now a small shopping precinct. Chapmans also had funeral and removal businesses including warehouses for overseas removals in Wood Street in 1914. In the mid 20th century the main store was rebuilt in two sections in plain Art Deco style starting with the south end in 1938 when they took over 19 North Street. The rest with the 1880s back showrooms were replaced in the 1960s in matching style and a canopy was built to unite the frontage. The clearance of the brewery and mills and the filling in of one leat allowed the firm to build a new four-storey extension with a restaurant overlooking the river. In the early 1970s the store became a branch of Debenhams, whose corporate finance, printing and computing departments were on Park Street until store and offices closed in 2021.²⁵⁶

Other large stores developed in north-east Fore Street and East Street. John Pottenger Sibley took over Tozer's drapery at 4—6 Eastgate in 1878 expanding into Harmony Row, Tancred Street and as Sibley and Co. the business survived until the late 1930s. Like Clements and Brown it had a fixed canopy over the pavement encouraging people to linger at their windows.²⁵⁷ Further west in Fore Street were a branch of Marks and Spencer and Clements and Brown both with long through retail floors.²⁵⁸ The former took the site of the County Club and after several moves settled in new premises on the site of the former County Hotel opposite. Clements and Brown, who also had a branch in Bridge Street, succeeded

²⁵⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/10/317; 24/1/22/948; 24/1/23/859; 24/1/28/1812; 24/1/102/2622; A/DIF/47; DD/X/SOM/53; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 239; SHC, D/DC/tau.d M/1289), box 2, album; Orbach S. & W. *Som.* 626.

²⁵⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 24 Aug. 1878: BNA accessed 20 Sep. 2021; SHC, DD/FIV/4/105; DD/IR/T/26/1, p. 1; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914—31); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 25; (1937), 25; (1939), 25.

²⁵⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 49.

Martin and Towell c. 1900, a business started in the 1860s. They expanded to cover 47—50 Fore Street but in 1965 the store was sold to Colmers, later part of the Owen Owen group, and closed in 1979.²⁵⁹ In 1901 Chapmans and Clements and Brown still had resident staff; a total of 28 young assistants lived above the two stores cared for by five servants.²⁶⁰ By the late 20th century most large stores belonged to national chains and only Hatchers and Marks and Spencer remained open by the end of 2021.

One of the most prominent grocers was the family firm of Barter and Duder at 52 North Street, which later took the name County Stores. The business of tea dealers, coffee roasters, grocers, cheese factors, Italian warehousemen and dealers in British wines was begun c. 1832 by John Christopher Easton. They had one of Taunton's first telephone numbers, 11 and opened seven rural branches in the early 20th century. The business closed in 2018.²⁶¹ The Devon and Somerset stores on the corner of Fore and High Streets in a former furniture store incorporated the former White Hart Hotel. It ran from c. 1870 for nearly a century on co-operative principles, sold household goods including sewing machines and provided price lists and delivery services.²⁶² John Horniman a tea dealer in North Street in the 1830s founded one of the most famous tea businesses.²⁶³ The Taunton Co-operative society started in 1889 with a shop at 1 Magdalene Street, which was rebuilt in 1893.²⁶⁴ The society issued tokens for bread and milk delivery services and assessing dividend entitlement.²⁶⁵ A large part of their sales of c. £20,000 a year in the 1920s came from bread,. Branches opened in Greenway Avenue, in 1901, East Reach in the 1920s and later in Leycroft, Cheddon and Roman Roads, a tailoring department in Hammet Street and a coal business in St James Street

²⁵⁹ PO Dir. Som. (1866); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—99); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 185; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 8; SHC, DD/X/ROW/1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 383.

²⁶⁰ TNA, RG13/2278.

²⁶¹ *Shopping in Taunton at the County Stores* (Taunton, 1950s), 5—11; SHC, DD/CH/80/8.

²⁶² *Taunton Courier* 11 Apr. 1877; BNA accessed 18 Feb. 2020; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 237.

²⁶³ SHC, Q/REI/35/24 (1832); *Taunton Courier*, 6 Mar. 1833; BNA accessed 24 Aug. 2022.

²⁶⁴ Date on building, now Bank House.

²⁶⁵ S. Minnitt and D. Young, *Tickets, Checks and Passes from the County of Somerset* (Taunton, 1990), 8, 78—82.

with a wharf by the 1920s. The main shop opened till 7 p.m. on Fridays and 8 p.m. on Saturdays. The society ran a clothing club and provided annual treats for members' children.²⁶⁶ In the 1920s it acquired a shop and former photographer's studio in East Street for drapery and shoe departments. In 1937 a new two-storey department store opened on the East Street site and the old store became a warehouse with garage adjoining. By 1970 the main store covered 25—30 East Street, the former Deller's café was an electrical store and there were a baker's shop and a fuel office in Bridge Street.²⁶⁷ The main store closed in 1999 and was rebuilt internally for Primark but the 1893 store survives as studios and new branches opened from the 2010s in suburban areas and Station Road.²⁶⁸

In the later 19th century shops spread away from the traditional areas. In the 1880s a town centre shop cost up to £80 to rent.²⁶⁹ So small shops opened in Upper High and Bridge Streets and along Station Road to Kingston Road where houses like Rock House were converted to shops. Pearse's furniture shop expanded into a large store in the 1910s later adding a garage with showroom and petrol sales on the site of the Rowbarton smithy.²⁷⁰ By the 1950s Kingston Road was a thriving secondary shopping centre with over 30 shops, a post office, hairdressers, public houses and a garage.²⁷¹ Pearse's was demolished for road widening c. 1984 and most shops in Rowbarton have closed.²⁷² Shops in Cheddon Road were widely dispersed and a few survive.²⁷³ The large houses in Station Road were gradually converted to shops by the 20th century. The street's mix of independent shops and restaurants

²⁶⁶ SHC, DD/CRS.sw/16; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927).

²⁶⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/34/325—6, 24/1/79/1670; 24/1/95/2126; DD/BSO/1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929, 1957).

²⁶⁸ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, pp. 5, 78, 418; D/B/ta unlisted, inspections.

²⁶⁹ *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 269.

²⁷⁰ SHC, A/DAS/2 (12384—5); D/B/ta/24/1/41/549—50, 24/45, 649, 653, 24/1/99/2274, 24/1/129/6590—1, 24/1/132/7589.

²⁷¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 75—7.

²⁷² SHC, DD/X/SML/6, p. 42.

²⁷³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/69/1362, 24/1/77/1605, 24/1/129/6587.

survived into the 21st century notably Calvert's furniture store established in 1944, which has expanded to fill numbers 94—108. In the town centre shops were created during the 19th century in Bath Place, Canon Street, Hammet Street and St James Street and by the 1900s purpose-built lock-up shops were being built.²⁷⁴ Residential terraced streets were provided with a purpose-built corner shop from the mid 19th century selling food, household items, newspapers, tobacco and sometimes alcohol, now closed and or converted to other uses.²⁷⁵ In older streets tiny shops were created in front parlours of built on side yards as at 11 and 38 King Street, 30 Westgate Street, in Kingston Road and Wood Street, many short-lived.²⁷⁶ A large corner shop at Priory Gate in the 1880s was demolished to widen Priory Avenue.²⁷⁷ Small independent shops were built in side streets like Magdalene Lane in 1969 and later in St James Street and in Billet Street but the last were demolished to enlarge a department store and many of the others have become services rather than retail. Large housing estates like Holway and Priorswood and later Blackbrook were provided with rows of shops some including a post office. Although half of the nine centres had closed by the late 20th century several local shopping centres survive dominated by small supermarkets.²⁷⁸ Further afield a shop at Shoreditch was recorded between c. 1714 and the 1920s when it adjoined the post office. Pyrland still had its grocer's shop in 1957, probably because of nearby housing development.²⁷⁹

By 1964 there were 731 retail establishments, including public houses, of which 508 were in the town centre including 12 department stores and 82 food shops. There were only

²⁷⁴ Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1894, 1899); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), passim.; SHC, A/DIF/101/15/301; D/B/ta/24/1/19/797; 24/1/25/1674; 24/1/27/1762—4, 1790; 24/1/31/205, 224, 235; 24/1/45/649, 653; 24/1/99/2274; DD/CWC.ta/unlisted box 2.

²⁷⁵ SHC, DD/HS/1/2; D/B/ta/24/1/18/711, 740; 24/1/21/888.

²⁷⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

²⁷⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C2401/69.

²⁷⁸ SHC, A/DAS/2 (123081); D/B/ta/24/1/9/280, 24/1/11/391, 24/1/18/744, 24/1/26/1711, 24/1/28/1832, 24/1/70/1390, 24/1/131/7004; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1902—3), 193.

²⁷⁹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/159/4; *Exeter Flying Post*, 15 Jul. 1858; BNA accessed 21 Sep. 2021; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1957), 374.

37 empty premises throughout the borough.²⁸⁰ More chain stores opened in the later 20th century, especially supermarkets and fashion stores, but local clothes shop New Look opened in 1969 went on to become an international business.²⁸¹ In the early 1970s 456 town centre shops covering 580,000 sq. ft had a turnover of £21,658,000. Half of people in a 12-mile radius did their shopping in Taunton but it attracted people from all over the county and in 1978 c. 186,500 people shopped in Taunton. Between 1961 and 1978 54 food shops closed as supermarkets grew larger and East Reach had become a street of antique shops, garages and takeaways, six out of 15 food stores having recently closed.²⁸² A public enquiry in 1979 into a proposed edge of town superstore was told that three supermarkets and two large stores recently built in the town centre had increased shopping activity and that there would shortly be nearly 4,000 parking spaces. Of 20 food stores in the central area in 1971 only eight remained open in 1979 and a new supermarket had been built. The enquiry found for the company and since then a number of large edge of town supermarkets and retail warehouses have been built. Large stores were built on an infilled river channel north-east of Priory Bridge Road in 1985, were rebuilt as permanent buildings when the land stabilised, and a large complex of stores was created at Hankridge, West Monkton in 1992. Supermarkets, furniture, carpet and decorating stores in the town centre have closed including all but two of those recorded in 1979.²⁸³ In 1982 a new covered shopping mall, the Old Market Centre since renamed Orchard, was built behind the south side of Fore Street partly on the old pig market site. Smaller ones were built called County Walk south of East Street and Crown Walk west of High Street both involving the destruction of listed buildings.²⁸⁴ In 1997 it was said that

²⁸⁰ SHC, A/BWX/5, pp. 13, 97; D/B/ta/3/22/9, pp. 246—7.

²⁸¹ bbc.co.uk/news/business-43486521: accessed 22 March 2018.

²⁸² SHC, C/ENPR/9, 40; D/PC/stapg/7/3, pp. 28, 30, 36—7.

²⁸³ SHC, DD/X/MSN/1—6; C/ENPR/15/8—11.

²⁸⁴ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/8 (19 Dec. 1979); A/EFY/1; DD/X/SML/6, p. 44.

the central area dominated by large chain stores enjoyed enhancement but not streets occupied by independent retailers.²⁸⁵

In the late 20th century local convenience stores opened largely for the sale of alcohol but in the early 21st century supermarket companies opened small stores in residential areas, some attached to petrol stations and one in a former public house. Financial crises and changing shopping habits caused closures in the early 21st century, especially on the west side of North and Fore Streets but only a few shops were empty for many years. In 2018 in the primary shopping area the largest category were clothing retailers (33), food stores (21), jewellers (14) and hair salons (12). Many ethnic food stores, mainly east European and south Asian, opened in the early 21st century but traditional bakers, greengrocers and butchers closed. Vacant units accounted for three per cent of the 112,210 sq. m. of retail but the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020—1 severely affected the town's economy as shops were closed for most of the period leading to permanent closures and job losses. By the middle of 2021 there were 14,505 sq. m. of vacant space in large town centre shops alone of which the former Debenhams store accounted for 6,815 sq. m.²⁸⁶ New stores opened in the town centre in 2022 but department stores and clothes shops have been lost permanently.

Post Offices

During the Civil War post horses between London and Taunton cost 14s. a day.²⁸⁷ In 1666 a foot post went from Taunton to Minehead twice a week and a letter service to Bridgwater three times.²⁸⁸ The woman who ran the Taunton post office was accused of overcharging when in 1667 she charged 3d. for a London letter sent on to Minehead.²⁸⁹ By the 1690s there was a frequent and reliable service for letters from London and intermediate towns enabling

²⁸⁵ SHC, A/EPF/201.

²⁸⁶ VCH office, Taunton, *Taunton Town Centre Retail Survey 2018*, 99—101.

²⁸⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1645—7, 507.

²⁸⁸ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1665—6, 445, 546; 1666—7, 40

²⁸⁹ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1667, 149, 279.

regular correspondence.²⁹⁰ In 1700 there was a twice weekly postal service to Exeter and Chester,²⁹¹ in 1749 the London service operated six days a week and letters took two days, postal services to Bristol and Wellington ran four days a week and to Exeter and Minehead on three days.²⁹² Post for rural areas was reportedly left at a public house in Silver Street.²⁹³

In the early 19th a woman ran a post office in North Street opposite the Castle Hotel and daily mail services went to London in the morning and to Exeter in the afternoon.²⁹⁴ In 1824 the service earned £4,000 a year.²⁹⁵ Letters from west Somerset to Taunton cost 2d. in 1823 but a penny post to parishes east of Taunton was introduced by 1829. In 1827 the mail cart to Minehead was replaced by a mail coach, by 1830 there were mail services to and from Bath, Bristol, Barnstaple, Minehead and Bridport and by 1837 to Sidmouth.²⁹⁶ A postmistress moved the post office to 1 Hammet Street c. 1839 and established a night mail service to London by rail by 1842. She employed two female assistants and by 1851 also two clerks and six carriers and messengers.²⁹⁷ Her male successor employed no women and the office was moved to 9 Hammet Street to whose Church Square frontage a large single-storey extension was added providing money order and savings bank services from 1864 and from 1870 a telegraph service.²⁹⁸ The first telegraph reputedly gave its name to a public house in Bridge Street by 1859 but telegraph services were provided by the Bristol and Exeter Railway at the station and in the 1860s their electrical engineer at Taunton built telegraph systems for south

²⁹⁰ SHC, DD/X/WHI/1a—f.

²⁹¹ *Lond. Gaz.* 6 Sep. 1700 cited in A. Humphries, *Som Parishes*, 672.

²⁹² SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/170.

²⁹³ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 32.

²⁹⁴ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 589.

²⁹⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

²⁹⁶ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); SHC, DD/WY/7/2/16; PAM 1003, p. 15.

²⁹⁷ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); TNA, HO107/972, 1922—3.

²⁹⁸ SHC, T/PH/rea/3/14; TNA RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; E. Jeboult, *A Popular History of West Somerset* (1893), 190; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 41; *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); above, market.

Wales railway companies. The Electric and International Telegraph Company was based in the fishmarket building in the 1860s.²⁹⁹

The first pillar letter boxes had been set up on 23 May 1856 but in the 1870s were replaced by wall boxes, one of which survived until 1990 on Staplegrove Road. By 1883 there were four town deliveries every day and one on Sunday and the same number of collections from letter boxes. By 1895 post was collected from offices and most boxes seven times a day and once on Sundays. Edwardian and later wall and pillar boxes, including double boxes, survive in the town centre and in residential areas.³⁰⁰ Shoreditch post office opened before 1858 was replaced in the 1930s by a sub post office on the corner of Mountfields Road, which remained open in the early 21st century.³⁰¹ Sub post offices were established at Rowbarton in 1876, North Town in 1880 and in East Reach and Shuttern in 1881, half kept by women, and by 1891 the postal service employed at least 65 people mostly collecting, sorting and delivering and a further 14, including two women, operated the telegraph service.³⁰² By 1894 a Taunton branch of the Postmen's Federation, later Union of Post Office Workers, was established with its own monthly magazine by 1923.³⁰³ In 1901 c. 120 Taunton residents were employed by the post office including 33 postmen but by 1911 that had risen to 162 including 66 postmen.³⁰⁴ In 1911 a large new post office designed by John Rutherford was opened in North Street. Letters were dispatched 14 times on weekdays and twice on Christmas Day and parcels 11 times a day. There were five town deliveries daily and one on Sundays.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/2/1/3, p. 9; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 23; RAIL382/75, 679/72.

³⁰⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); *Taunton of Today* (1896), 23; R. Berry, *Taunton Post Boxes* (Industrial Heritage of Taunton Deane no. 4).

³⁰¹ *Exeter Flying Post*, 15 Jul. 1858; BNA accessed 21 Sep. 2021; TNA, RG9/1617; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/98/2219; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923).

³⁰² www.ukpostofficesbycounty: accessed 21 July 2017; TNA, RG12/1875, 1877.

³⁰³ SHC, A/AVV/1—3.

³⁰⁴ TNA, RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—45, 14249.

³⁰⁵ J. Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 626; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

In the 1930s post offices opened in Cheddon Road, Hamilton Road, Mountfields Road, Roman Road, Station Road and Holway Road. Priorswood opened c. 1958. In the late 1940s 24,000 letters a day were posted in Taunton rising to 100,000 at Christmas when 114 extra staff were employed and post was sorted at the market.³⁰⁶ Offices closed in the 1980s and 2000s leaving only four town sub post-offices although some outer suburbs, former villages, retain theirs. In 2007 the head post office closed and services were provided in shops and part of a garage.³⁰⁷ Rutherford's stone and brick three-storey building with prominent stone quoins and keystones and a large clock was converted into a shop and later a restaurant. A parcel post depot built at the railway station before 1888 was extended in the 20th century as a sorting office. It was demolished in 1991 and replaced by a new sorting office west of the station in Chip Lane.³⁰⁸

In the 1890s a telephone exchange was established in Hammet Street and up to 30 stores and factories installed a telephone rising to over 200 by 1914. In 1919 wires were laid under or over streets.³⁰⁹ In 1935 a large exchange was built behind the post office in North Street on the old Half Moon Court.³¹⁰ In 1938—41 Telephone House, a neo-Georgian block probably designed by Reginald Hewlett of Stone and partners, was built on the sites of 12—16 The Crescent. It was enlarged c. 1954 and later closed in the late 20th century and was converted to flats.³¹¹ In 1978 a fully automated exchange opened in Wood Street and was extended in the 1980s.³¹² The North Street exchange, after use as a telephone museum from c. 1962, was also converted into flats.³¹³ A neo-Georgian red brick ancillary exchange was

³⁰⁶ www.ukpostofficesbycounty: accessed 21 July 2017; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), A9; SHC, D/B/ta/3/25/2, p. 2; A/DIF/114/12; A/EOB/1 (Dec. 1947).

³⁰⁷ www.ukpostofficesbycounty: accessed 21 July 2017; Bishops Hull and Norton Fitzwarren, econ. hist.

³⁰⁸ SHC, A/BVU/2.

³⁰⁹

³¹⁰ SHC, DD/HCK/6/2/20.

³¹¹ SHC, A/AFU/14/53; D/B/ta/24/1/123/5732, 24/1/15400; Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 624.

³¹² SHC, D/P/stap/7/3, p. 77.

³¹³ *SDNQ*, XXVIII, 224.

built in Hamilton Road in 1935, replacing a 1920s telephone repeating station, but was a church and community centre by the 21st century.³¹⁴

Banks and financial services

Until the later 18th century credit depended on professional moneylenders, merchants, goldsmiths and private individuals, Traders lent small sums on bond or pawned goods but although the church tried to limit interest rates 10 per cent or more was often charged. In the 1600s merchant James Reynolds lent money throughout west Somerset.³¹⁵ The poor depended on pawning until the 20th century. There were two pawnbrokers in High Street in the early 19th century and ten were resident in 1891.³¹⁶ In 1902 there were two pawnbrokers' shops in East Reach and eight pawnbrokers were recorded in 1911.³¹⁷

In the 1770s Edmund Trowbridge Halliday acquired the old Fountain Tavern in Bishops Hull and the site of the King's Arms adjoining on Fore Street for a bank. In 1777 he entered a partnership with Matthew Brickdale and others.³¹⁸ It was known as the Taunton Bank until Matthew and John Brickdale changed the name c. 1814 to the Taunton Old Bank, presumably to avoid confusion. In 1816 it suspended payments after some of its notes were refused and collapsed in 1819 but its affairs were not settled until the 1850s.³¹⁹ In 1789—90 the firm of Hammet, Jeffries, Woodforde and Buncombe was established, later Kinglake and Company's Somerset Bank, drawing on Esdaile and Company of London. It operated in Fore Street until taken over by Stuckey's Somersetshire bank in 1838.³²⁰ Thomas Young ran the

³¹⁴ Kelly's *Dir. Taunton* (1929), 9; Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 633; below, rel. hist., nonconf.

³¹⁵ TNA, C6/27/1/51; SHC, D/D/Ca 184; DD/TOR/154.

³¹⁶ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 9; SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/14; Slater's *Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, RG12/1875—7.

³¹⁷ Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 182; TNA, RG14/14234—45, 14249.

³¹⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/12; DD/SAS/C795/TN/19.

³¹⁹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/155/4; DD/DP/6/12—13, 7/2, 5, 7; DD/WY/10/27; DD/SF/17/5/3; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

³²⁰ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 586—7; Pigot *Dir.* (1830); T. E. Gregory, *The Westminster Bank Through a Century* (Oxford, 1936), II, 92; SHC, DD/AY/33B; DD/SAS/C795/TN/19; DD/DP/91/8.

Milverton and Taunton Bank between 1805 and 1817.³²¹ The Taunton Bank founded by the Badcock family in 1800 issued banknotes and had premises in Fore Street by 1830. It merged with Stuckey's in 1873 with the Badcocks becoming managers of the latter.³²²

Stuckey's Banking Company opened as Stuckey and Woodland in 1812 and was trading in Fore Street by 1830. They took over Kinglake and Company in 1838 and moved into their Fore Street premises.³²³ C.E. Giles was designed a new building in 1857 and, after taking over Badcocks bank in 1873, a large banking hall lit by overhead glass lanterns was added. Additional strong rooms were built in 1900 against Corporation Street but after acquiring and demolishing Lipton's a large extension was built in 1906 by George Oatley with a new corner entrance.³²⁴ It became Stuckey's head office, they had become a limited company in 1892, but in 1909 they were taken over by Parr's Bank. By 1921 Parr's had merged with the London County and Westminster.³²⁵ The Westminster Bank had several branches in Taunton and in 1983 the building passed to the Trustee Savings Bank and in the 2000s became a large shop and later two cafes.³²⁶

By 1839 the West of England and South Wales District Bank had opened in 3 Hammet Street but built a new bank in 1865—6 at 40—1 Fore Street in palazzo-style.³²⁷ The banking hall was designed to impress with high walls partly wainscoted and partly stencilled in a striking pattern under a carved ceiling.³²⁸ The bank failed 7 December 1878 and the building became the Somerset County Club.³²⁹

³²¹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/155/4.

³²² SHC, A/EMQ/2/1; *Pigot Dir.* (1830); Gregory, *The Westminster Bank*, II, 93; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889).
³²³ Gregory, *The Westminster Bank*, II, 90, 92; *Pigot Dir.* (1830); SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

³²⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/9/269, 24/1/26/1730, 24/1/27/1754; A/CAE/1/60; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889—99);
Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 623.

³²⁵ Gregory, *The Westminster Bank*, II, 91—2; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, A/BCC/2/1/2—4;
D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 13; A/BMG/5/1 (1938—9).

³²⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/54/919.

³²⁷ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 41; *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); SHC,
DD/SAS/2016/51; T/PH/rea/3/119

³²⁸ SHC, T/PH/rea/3/120.

³²⁹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; DD/BR/mks/1.

The Wiltshire and Dorset Bank bought 4 Fore Street in 1864, converted it and built a new façade. In 1873 the bank moved into the former Taunton Bank, letting their old premises to the Inland Revenue.³³⁰ The ground floor was remodelled after the company sold the building to James Drayton, jeweller in 1892.³³¹ Meanwhile the bank moved to North Street but c. 1890 took over and rebuilt a former draper's store at 7 Fore St.³³² In 1915 the bank was taken over by Lloyds, which ran the branch until the late 1950s.³³³ It later passed to Barclays, who held it until the late 20th century, and the Royal Bank of Scotland who closed it c. 2020.³³⁴

Fox, Fowler and Company took over 32 Fore Street and 1 Hammet Street c. 1880 when they put a new frontage at ground level but c. 1890 they built west and south stone façades three storeys high adding an attic floor.³³⁵ In 1921 they amalgamated with Lloyds who moved to 31 and the District Bank occupied 32.³³⁶ Lloyds also acquired 30 and 32 Fore Street and 2—3 Hammet Street in 1959 and destroyed all the buildings, causing the collapse of an adjoining W.H. Smith store. The plain 1960 building has ground floor shops. The bank remained in business in the 2020s.³³⁷

By 1888 the Devon and Cornwall Bank rebuilt 54—5 North Street with a new Ham Hill frontage and a strongroom.³³⁸ In 1906 it was taken over by Lloyds who rebuilt it in 1910 but had closed it before 1922.³³⁹ The National Provincial Bank, later National Westminster, of 21 Fore Street moved c. 1912 to 50—1 North Street built to designs of the bank's architect

³³⁰ SHC, DD/X/CMG/1; Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 624; Morris & Co, *Dir. Som.* (182) SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

³³¹ Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 624; SHC, T/PH/rea/3/118; DD/X/CMG/1; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

³³² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1914).

³³³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/48/750; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), p. 48

³³⁴ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 9; A/BMG/5/1 (1938—9); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), p. 370.

³³⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; DD/CMY/404; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 1; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1914).

³³⁶ SHC, A/BMG/5/1 (1959).

³³⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889, 1914); Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 623; SHC, A/DIF/79/1.

³³⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/22/944; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889).

³³⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/42/555; D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 13.

Charles Brodie.³⁴⁰ In 1972 the bank also ran the former Stuckey's, 32 North Street and 67 Station Road and rebuilt its main branch destroying 48—51 North Street, despite an undertaking to preserve the façade of listed 48. In the early 21st century the business, then called NatWest, moved into a large store across the road as its sole Taunton branch.³⁴¹ In 1914 the London, City and Midland Bank built a branch on the site of the Nag's Head in North Street but in the 1970s moved across the street into 14—16 where it remained in business as the HSBC Bank in the 2020s. Between 1970 and 1983 it had a branch in East Reach.³⁴² Barclays had opened at 46 North Street by 1921 and before 1938 expanded into 45, and later had branches in Fore Street and Station Road since closed. The bank remained in business in North Street the 2020s.³⁴³ In c. 1916 Prudential Insurance took over 21 Fore Street from National Provincial and rebuilt it with an open octagonal turret on the roof.³⁴⁴ By 1938 it was occupied by Martin's bank but closed after being taken over by Barclays in 1969.³⁴⁵

In 1817 the West Somerset Savings Bank was established in North Street to serve the poor and friendly societies. It had 19 trustees, 43 managers and two treasurers but was operated by an actuary with two assistants in 1847.³⁴⁶ Unlike other banks they opened on Saturday evenings.³⁴⁷ In 1831 Richard Carver altered the three-storey 1829 building of John Wilcocks by Vivary park for the bank. It was stuccoed, the ground floor incised to imitate ashlar, and the main three-bay front with central doorway and triangular pediment faced west. After the installation of Vivary Park gates obscured the entrance a public door was inserted in

³⁴⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); Orbach, *S. & W. Som.* 626, SHC, A/CAE/1/14; D/B/ta/42/585; D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 13.

³⁴¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 370; SHC, DD/BSO/1; D/B/ta/3/37/3 (Mar. 1974); 24/1/15271; DD/HWN/11.

³⁴² SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/3 (1912); D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 13; D/B/ta/24/1/47/715, 24/1/211/11963; A/BMG/5/1 (1938—9); DD/BSO/1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 370; *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 7.

³⁴³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/52/858; DD/HCK/6/2/20A/BMG/5/1 (1938—9); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 370.

³⁴⁴ SHC, A/DIF/101/3/55; DD/TBL/59 (14 Oct. 1916).

³⁴⁵ SHC, A/BMG/5/1 (1938—9); A/DIF/114/12, 116/218; D//DC/tau.d (M/3252), box 1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 370.

³⁴⁶ SHC, Q/RSb/8

³⁴⁷ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 41.

the east bay of the street frontage, which had a large clock in the rounded pediment.³⁴⁸ By 1904 there were 9,343 depositors limited to £50 a year. Home savings boxes were distributed, 846 by 1915, allowing people to save small sums at home.³⁴⁹ The bank amalgamated with the Wells saving bank in 1909 and later with that of Warminster to become the Somerset and Wiltshire Savings Bank with a branch in Kingston Road, Rowbarton by 1931.³⁵⁰ The Trustee Savings Bank group took on the business and c. 1970—83 also had branches in Station Road and on the corner of Corporation Street, since closed.³⁵¹ The 1831 bank closed and was turned into flats in the 1980s but retained its clock.

The 1929 livestock market generated business for bank branches in Station Road, Barclays, Lloyds, National Provincial and Westminster, and four bank offices in the market. The closure of banks on Saturdays led to the loss of the latter in 1972 and the Station Road banks also closed later.³⁵² In 1938 Barclays, Lloyds, Martins, Midland, National Provisional, Westminster and Somerset and Wiltshire Savings banks had a total of 13 branches.³⁵³ Mergers and closures reduced the number although several building societies became banks in the late 20th century. In the 2020s most major banks maintained a branch in the town centre and another was based at Blackbrook business park.³⁵⁴

The Second Taunton Benefit Building Society in 1847—8 implies the existence of an earlier one.³⁵⁵ The Taunton and Bridgwater Building Society, the Taunton and West of England Building Society, the Western Counties Permanent Benefit Building Society and the Taunton Loan Discount and Deposit Company were in existence by 1864, mostly managed

³⁴⁸ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/2/8; A/DAS/2 (12356); T/PH/cwc.ta/1; Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 624; SHC, A/DAS/2 (12356).

³⁴⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906); SHC, DD/TBL/71.

³⁵⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889); TNA, NDO20/18, 76; *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 363; SHC, A/BMG/5/1 (c. 1938—9).

³⁵¹ SHC, DD/BSO/1; A/DBL/128/1; A/DIG/1.

³⁵² *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 82—3; *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 63; SHC, D/DC/tau.d (M/1289, box 1); A/BMG/5/1 (c. 1938—9).

³⁵³ SHC, A/BMG/5/1 (c. 1938—9).

³⁵⁴ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 33.

³⁵⁵ Devon HC, 5982/B/L/7—9.

by the same actuary from an office in Hammet Street.³⁵⁶ The Taunton and West of England Perpetual Benefit Building Society began in 1857 and the Equitable Benefit Building Society in 1867 both still in existence in the 1890s.³⁵⁷ The latter survived until 1914 or later despite an absconding manager in 1899.³⁵⁸ During the 20th century local societies were taken over by national ones and by the 1970s 11 building societies, none local, had branches in the town. Several of the major societies or their successor banks had branches in the 2020s.³⁵⁹

Financial and estate services were often provided by lawyers until the mid 19th century when the number of accountants rose from six in 1841 to *c.* 20 by 1891.³⁶⁰ There were 41 practices in 1972.³⁶¹ Commission agents were recorded by 1861 and stockbrokers from 1871.³⁶² Financial services probably employed some of the many commercial clerks whose numbers rose from 11 in 1851 to 96 by 1891, when female bookkeepers were also recorded.³⁶³ By 1839 there were agents for 22 insurance companies but by 1861 there were 60. Most worked part-time but by 1891 it was the sole occupation of 34 men.³⁶⁴ In the early 20th century insurance brokers and companies had offices and there were nine by 1978.³⁶⁵

Auctioneers originally sold the stock of bankrupt farmers and some firms continued to specialise in livestock with three having offices in the livestock market until its closure.³⁶⁶ Five firms were in business by 1822 rising to seven by 1859 including Maynards established before 1840 with offices in Hammet Street.³⁶⁷ One of the oldest surviving estate agencies is

³⁵⁶ Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1864), 42—3.

³⁵⁷ SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/3 (*Taunton Mail* 1 Jan. 1896, pp. 1, 4).

³⁵⁸ SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/6 (*Taunton Mail* 21 June 1899, p. 5); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

³⁵⁹ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 33 *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1972—3), 375.

³⁶⁰ TNA HO107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

³⁶¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1972—3), 366—7.

³⁶² TNA RG9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/3 (*Taunton Mail* 1 Jan. 1896, p. 1).

³⁶³ TNA, HO107/1922—3; RG12/1875—7.

³⁶⁴ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); TNA, RG12/1875—7.

³⁶⁵ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 33.

³⁶⁶ SHC, D/WB/t/11/1, pp. 36—7; PAM 2563, p. 30.

³⁶⁷ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 52.

that founded by Richard Greenslade in 1843.³⁶⁸ Watermans, established in 1850, were still in business in East Street in 1929.³⁶⁹ There were five house and letting agents in business by 1859, ten firms of auctioneers and estate agents by 1938, 15 by 1972 and c. 24 by 2020.³⁷⁰

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

In 1466 a married man was allowed to work as a notary public and was still at work in 1477.³⁷¹ In 1690 scrivener John Morse died with writing materials, blank bonds and deeds and had earned enough to lend money and buy plate.³⁷² With increased literacy the 12 scribes and writers in business in 1841 were probably law writers and by 1871 shorthand writers presumably worked in the courts.³⁷³

Only three lawyers were recorded on the 1774 electoral list, presumably most lived outside the borough, but several took apprentices from the mid 18th century including attorney John Southey who trained William Kinglake from 1785.³⁷⁴ Lawyers served town offices and as trustees of the market, charities and chapels. A close-knit group they were reluctant to give evidence against a solicitor prosecuted for perjury in 1820.³⁷⁵ Some like William Kinglake were also bankers although he sublet his law practice with its offices and clerks in 1815 to a fellow attorney.³⁷⁶ In 1858 William's son planned to extend Laburnum Cottage in Canon Street to provide at least three offices and two waiting rooms.³⁷⁷ Fourteen lawyers were on the 1820 poll but 26 were recorded in 1839.³⁷⁸ Barristers, solicitors and their

³⁶⁸ SHC, PAM 2563, p. 30; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

³⁶⁹ Devon and Somerset Stores, *Views of Taunton* (Taunton, c. 1903), unpag.; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1929), 30.

³⁷⁰ Harrison, Harrad & Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); SHC, A/BMG/5/1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1972—3), 387—8.

³⁷¹ *Cal. Papal Letters XII*, p. 525; *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C1786.

³⁷² TNA, C6/27/1/51; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 164.

³⁷³ TNA, HO 107/972; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5.

³⁷⁴ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; TNA, IR1/24, p. 213; IR1/52, p. 109; IR1/63, p. 160; IR1/67, p. 114; IR1/71, p. 41.

³⁷⁵ SHC, A/ADGC/3.

³⁷⁶ SHC, DD/AY/33A—B.

³⁷⁷ SHC, DD/RI/C1660/25.

³⁷⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29; *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839).

clerks rose in numbers from 36 in 1841 to 52 in 1891 but law clerks predominated in Taunton as their employers usually lived out of town and not at their offices.³⁷⁹ Increasingly solicitors worked in partnerships and by the later 20th century in large practices sharing offices and staff. There were 31 solicitors' practices in 1972 many in Hammet Street where they had been since the 19th century. Several remained there in the 2020s although others moved to Blackbrook for ease of parking.³⁸⁰ Many early 21st-century firms could trace their origins to family practices like Porter Dodson and Foot Anstey of Blackbrook Avenue successors to the early 19th-century Beadons of Church Square and Pinchards of The Mount respectively.³⁸¹ Barristers' chambers were established in Melville House, Middle Street c. 1978.³⁸² In the 2020s there were four sets of chambers, three in the town centre and one at Blackbrook Avenue.

One of the earliest recorded Taunton architects was George Hare in 1786 but it is possible that Benjamin Hammet designed at least some of the properties he built.³⁸³ Resident 19th-century architects included Richard Carver (1782—1862), his short-term partner and son-in-law Charles Edmund Giles, Charles Samson and John Houghton Spencer.³⁸⁴ Richard Carver was trained by Jeffry Wyatt, took several apprentices between 1840 and 1856 including Giles and local builder's son Edward Shewbrooks (1842—1910), designed Holy Trinity church, houses and public buildings and was county surveyor.³⁸⁵ Charles Edmund Giles (1822—81), pupil of Carver and Henry Shaw, designed 21 Somerset churches, Kings College, Taunton and the Huish almshouses.³⁸⁶ Charles Samson (1837—1925) designed the former St James' vicarage near his own house The Laurels, Staplegrove Road and the first

³⁷⁹ TNA, HO 107/972; RG 12/1875, 1877.

³⁸⁰ SHC, DD/CH/128/2; *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 421—2.

³⁸¹ Pigot, *London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); SHC, DD/AY cat; DD/DP cat.

³⁸² SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/5 (23 Aug. 1977).

³⁸³ SHC, DD/SP/178 (1800).

³⁸⁴ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG 9/1618; RG 10/2374; RG 11/2366—8; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887).

³⁸⁵ SHC, DD/DP/52/2; below, rel. hist.; VCH Office, Taunton, R. Lillford, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Somerset Architects and Surveyors' (2022), 103—11.

³⁸⁶ Below, soc. hist.; Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 218—24.

Viney Street collar factory and was followed by his son Harold (1873—1956).³⁸⁷ John Houghton Spencer (1844—1914) built St Andrew's church and schools, St James' almshouses, the Nursing Institute and several churches in Somerset and Devon.³⁸⁸ The Weston-super-Mare architect Hans Price had an office in Taunton in 1864.³⁸⁹ In the 1880s Edwin Howard (d. 1920) of Middle Street designed houses at French Weir and Kilkenny and the eastern shops on The Bridge.³⁹⁰ From the 1890s Frederick Roberts designed middle-class terraces in Wilton and the Eastleigh Road.³⁹¹ Henry S.W. Stone, started work in 1909 after studying with Roberts and then in London and Birmingham. He created arts and crafts houses including 72 Trull Road and in the 1930s with Eric Francis built the International moderne-style houses at Highlands, Wilton and the former electricity showroom building at Castle Bow. Stone and Partners was the oldest architectural practice in Taunton in the 2020s.³⁹² Francis worked with builders Stansells and designed St Teresa's church and Leycroft almshouses.³⁹³ There were eight practices from 1957 to 1972, including Michael Torrens, and c. 20 in 2022, but firms like Steel, Colman and Davis founded in 1953 and Smith Gamblin founded by Richard Shirley-Smith have moved out of Taunton.³⁹⁴

Bill posters were recorded from 1861 and signwriters from 1881.³⁹⁵ The Great Western Railway let hoardings to a Taunton signwriter and rented advertising space in the 1880s.³⁹⁶ Permanent hoardings increased and by the 1920s, when the Taunton Bill Posting Company was based in Priory Avenue, they were subject to rates.³⁹⁷ Commercial photographers were at work by 1859 when there were four in Bath Place, rising to nine in

³⁸⁷ Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 465—72; above, intro.

³⁸⁸ Below, soc. hist., almshouses; rel. hist.; Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 501—3.

³⁸⁹ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 75.

³⁹⁰ VCH Office, Taunton, Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 284—6; D/DC/tau.d/25/12 (1884, 1921).

³⁹¹ SHC, A/AUS uncat.; D/RC/ta.g/2/5/1 (1933); D/U/m/22/1/129, 131, 133, 192, 260, 287—8; Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 454—7.

³⁹² Wilton, intro.; Lillford, 'Som. Architects and Surveyors', 4, 517—19.

³⁹³ Below, soc. hist, almshouses; rel. hist.

³⁹⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (19570, 335, (1972—3), 368.

³⁹⁵ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 77; TNA, RG 9/1617; RG 10/2370—2; RG 11/2368.

³⁹⁶ Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/210, box 40/6, 15, box 50/12.

³⁹⁷ SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 471; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 68.

1864 and 14 in 1891. It was often a family business pursued by men and women, notably members of the Blizzard and Chaffin families.³⁹⁸ Henry Montague Cooper had large premises in East Street from 1889 and in partnership with local newsagents created postcards of working class streets with their occupants and disasters, often available within a day, in the early 20th century.³⁹⁹ In 1957 there were three commercial photographic studios and three firms of signwriters.⁴⁰⁰ The 21st century saw a growth in computer and digital services but there were still c. 20 photographic businesses in the 2020s. An unusual service was taxidermy often specialising in birds and several taxidermists were at work between 1841 and 1902.⁴⁰¹

In 1682 a woman left 10s. to each of the women who prepared her for burial.⁴⁰² An 18th-century draper in Fore Street advertised a new mourning coach and hearse and at least two other drapers were undertakers in the 1760s.⁴⁰³ Several tailors and drapers ‘furnished’ funerals in the early 19th century, in 1824 a draper was prepared to travel anywhere with his hearse and mourning coach and another with a coachhouse opening onto Church Square in 1831 was undertaker to Huish’s almshouses.⁴⁰⁴ In the late 19th century two drapers had glass hearses but specialist undertakers were also in business, five in 1872 and c. 14 in 1887.⁴⁰⁵ The carriage building Smith family of Haydon Road were undertakers by 1929 and remained in business in the 1950s.⁴⁰⁶ There were at least six firms by 1972 most still in business in the 2020s, one with a horse-drawn glass hearse.⁴⁰⁷

Registry offices for domestic servants were established by 1841, three were in business in 1864 and six in 1887. Harriet Woolaway’s registry in Magdalene Street, later

³⁹⁸ Harrison, Harrad & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1859); *Goodman’s Dir. Taunton* (1864), 95; Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RG 12/1875, 1877; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 44.

³⁹⁹ *Kelly’s Dir. Som.* (1889—1814) N. Chipchase, *Taunton Remembered* passim.

⁴⁰⁰ *Kelly’s Dir. Taunton* (1957).

⁴⁰¹ *Taunton Courier* 13 Jan. 1841; BNA accessed 16 Aug. 2022; *Goodman’s Dir. Taunton* (1864), 77; (1902—3), 176, 182; SHC, A/EJF/2/1 (1887).

⁴⁰² SHC, DD/SP/423.

⁴⁰³ *PSANHS CXXXII* (1988), 113; SHC, DD/HC/13/1—2.

⁴⁰⁴ e.g. SHC, DD/CH/87/1 (London Cloth Hall, Taunton, 1828; Clulow 1831); DD/TBL/64/5; DD/DP/58/8.

⁴⁰⁵ Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); *Goodman’s Dir. Taunton* (1887); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 24.

⁴⁰⁶ *Kelly’s Dir. Taunton* (1929), 46; (1957), 64.

⁴⁰⁷ *Kelly’s Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 392; *Living*, Oct. 2021, 58.

Staplegrave Road, was open from 1864 to 1899 or later.⁴⁰⁸ Another was in Billet Street in the 1920s.⁴⁰⁹ By the early 20th century drapery stores and specialist firms provided removals and travel arrangements, notably Pickfords who arranged passage abroad.⁴¹⁰ There were two travel agents in the town in 1957, five by 1978 and despite the rise in home based internet booking four remained in business in the 2020s.⁴¹¹

Hairdressers

A barber was recorded in 1401.⁴¹² Two were accused of working on Sundays in 1606 and another kept an alehouse in 1621.⁴¹³ In 1666 a barber's shop was equipped with three barber's chairs, razors, scissors, bottles of oil and a tobacco press and in 1679 another had 10 washbasins, 20 washballs, aprons and napkins for customers and powder boxes.⁴¹⁴ Until the mid 18th century barbers often sold beer and some made wigs.⁴¹⁵ A girl was apprenticed to wigmaking in the 1740s.⁴¹⁶ Wealthy peruke maker Gilbert Bluett held the Lamb coffee house and established one son as a grocer and another was ordained.⁴¹⁷ In 1774 eight peruke makers were voters but the last was recorded in 1804.⁴¹⁸ A wigmaker recorded in 1851 was presumably making human hair wigs for women.⁴¹⁹

In 1792 Joseph Ludlow was a hairdresser and perfumer and Joseph Wilkins took an apprentice hairdresser in 1804.⁴²⁰ Eleven barbers and hairdressers were recorded in St Mary's

⁴⁰⁸ TNA, HO 107/972; SHC, DD/CPHS/50; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); Goodman, *Dir. Taunton* (1864, 1887); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1814).

⁴⁰⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 6.

⁴¹⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); N. Chipchase, *Taunton Revisited* (Stroud, 1998), 26.

⁴¹¹ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1957); SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p.33.

⁴¹² TNA, CP40/561, image 392: at waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021

⁴¹³ SHC, D/D/Ca/151; Q/RLa/1.

⁴¹⁴ SHC, DD/SP/1666/72, 1679/25.

⁴¹⁵ SHC, DD/SP/60 (1696), 1695/37, 1731/26, 1737/42.

⁴¹⁶ SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/6/1.

⁴¹⁷ TNA, PROB 11/366/397; IR1/41, p. 325; IR1/41, p. 325; IR1/45 (1718); IR1/46, p. 137; IR1/49, p. 216; IR1/63, p. 178; SHC, D/P/tau.m/2/1/2; Q/SR/315/313; D/B/ta/31/5/1; DD/X/HKR/2; A/APS/8/5.

⁴¹⁸ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; D/P/tau.m/13/10/4.

⁴¹⁹ TNA, HO107/1923.

⁴²⁰ London Metropolitan Archives, MS 11936/387/603965; TNA, IR1/71, p. 133.

in 1820 by which date the latter term appears to have been preferred.⁴²¹ Hairdressing was an exclusively male occupation for most of the 19th century with a single female hairdresser recorded in 1841 and 26 men.⁴²² A hairdresser was appointed keeper of the court house in 1844 and later of Shire Hall.⁴²³ Changes in fashion may account for fluctuating numbers but 13 businesses were recorded in 1887 with at least one having baths for customers in 1900.⁴²⁴ In 1911 of 28 hairdressers and barbers only two were female and even in 1957 most of the 20 ladies' hairdressers recorded were male and all the 18 men's hairdressers.⁴²⁵ By 1948 there was a Taunton federation of master hairdressers and in 1972 there were 46 businesses.⁴²⁶ In the early 21st century there were at least two hairdressing training academies in Taunton and 58 hair salons in shopping streets which primarily employed women although the traditional male barber enjoyed a revival. Large numbers of beauty and tattoo parlours opened in the 2010s but some were short-lived.⁴²⁷

Laundry

Agnes le Lavender was recorded in 1316.⁴²⁸ The Vicerys were clear starchers who took a girl apprentice in 1792.⁴²⁹ An early 19th-century drawing shows a laundress by the river at Obridge.⁴³⁰ In 1841 111 laundresses were recorded and for the rest of the century there were 200—250 besides c. 50 in Bishops Hull. The Applin family laundry at Holway had seven resident laundresses, mainly family members, between 1871 and 1894 when the couple who

⁴²¹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

⁴²² TNA, HO107/972;

⁴²³ SHC, A/DGU/1.

⁴²⁴ TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG12/1875—7; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887), (1900), 160.

⁴²⁵ TNA, RG14/14234—45, 14249; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

⁴²⁶ SHC, A/EOB/1 (Jan. 1948); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 394—4, 400—1.

⁴²⁷ VCH office, Taunton, *Taunton Town Centre Retail Survey 2018*, 37—99.

⁴²⁸ SHC, A/BFA/4.

⁴²⁹ TNA, IR1/35, p. 107.

⁴³⁰ SHC, A/DIF/44

ran it died.⁴³¹ Shirt and collar factories had their own laundries as did hotels like the London, whose laundry was burnt down in 1830, and commercial laundries were attached to public houses like the Royal Marine in 1895 and the Prince Albert, which had a large drying room in 1939.⁴³² A 'laundry factory' was recorded in the 1890s and The Somerset Sanitary Steam Laundry was built in Gladstone Street, Rowbarton c. 1899 and extended several times.⁴³³ It employed some of the 167 laundresses and laundry staff recorded in 1901 and 56 people worked there in 1911.⁴³⁴ It had a carpet beating facility and outdoor drying lines, collected and delivered laundry within two miles c. 1928 and invited ladies to inspect the premises.⁴³⁵ In 1964 it took over a steam-powered dyeing and cleaning business in High Street but the business was given up in the 1970s and the laundries were demolished.⁴³⁶ The Taunton Priory Steam Laundry, at the former Gloucester Street mission halls from 1923, built an engine with a 40 ft chimney.⁴³⁷ It expanded eastward and was rebuilt after 1926. By 1957 it had become the South Western Co-operative Laundry but closed before 1972 and after use as warehousing it was demolished.⁴³⁸ By 1957 the first self-service launderette had opened.⁴³⁹

HOSPITALITY SERVICES [PUBLIC HOUSES AND HOTELS]

Five men in the borough sold wine in breach of the assize in 1242—3.⁴⁴⁰ William le Taverner was recorded in 1310—11 and a vintner in 1425 was also a merchant, brewer and hosteler.⁴⁴¹

⁴³¹ TNA, HO/972/1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG12/1875—7; *West Somerset Free Press*, 17 Feb 1894; BNA accessed 18 Feb 2019.

⁴³² SHC, PAM 2160; R. Bush, *The Story of the County Hotel*, 18; Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396SHC, Q/LIC/1/4.

⁴³³ TNA, RG 12/1877; SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/3 (*Taunton Mail* 25 March, 24 June 1896, p. 4); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897—1914); SHC, A/EMA/2; D/B/ta/24/1/36/341, 24/1/38/438, 24/1/47/720; 24/1/48/749.

⁴³⁴ TNA, RG13/2276—8; RG14/14234—40, 14243—5, 14247, 14249.

⁴³⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/24/1641; 24/1/66/1256; A/BMG 5/1.

⁴³⁶ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/15 (167); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 401.

⁴³⁷ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/18 (1389); D/B/ta/24/1/53/907, 24/1/54/930; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1928), 138; below, rel. hist. nonconf.

⁴³⁸ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/18 (1389, 1598); D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 386; D/DC/tau.d/2/2/4 (17 Dec. 1975); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 401.

⁴³⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

⁴⁴⁰ Chadwyck-Healey, *Som. Pleas c. 1200—1256*, p. 296.

The Corner inn in Fore Street was recorded in 1427—8, rent was paid for a ‘wine post’ in Fore Street in 1508—9 and taverners outside the borough were fined for using unsealed measures in 1517—18.⁴⁴² The 25 vintners recorded in 1570 may have been wholesalers or than retailers but licensed vintners included women.⁴⁴³ In 1550 an innkeeper imported a tun of wine, Thomas Pope shipped 37 tuns of sack through Bridgwater c. 1541 and his son sold wine before 1597.⁴⁴⁴ Vintner Richard Carpenter bought c. 7,000 gallons of sack, Malaga and canary wine from Exeter and Lyme merchants between 1617 and 1621 presumably to supply taverns like that stocked with sack, canary and gascon wines in 1626.⁴⁴⁵ Taunton traders shipped sack, malmsey, canary and madeira through Bridgwater. One man shipped 108 tun of wine in 1627—8 and in 1633 three tun and three hogsheads of French wine came upriver.⁴⁴⁶ William Lantrowe (d.1644) had a licence to retail wines throughout the borough, which he left to his second wife Joan for life.⁴⁴⁷ In 1634 he had been accused of selling wine above the maximum prices, which varied from 8*d.* to 2*s.* a quart. He rebuilt the Castle Tavern, where the magistrates were meeting by 1668, probably creating the long room over the inn and two adjoining houses still recorded in 1783.⁴⁴⁸ Before 1639 clothier Henry West converted a house in North Street into a tavern for which he held a wine licence.⁴⁴⁹

In 1587 unlicensed tipplers were threatened with a 20*s.* fine, in 1588 16 were presented in the borough and in 1589 there were eight unlicensed alesellers on the north side of East Reach.⁴⁵⁰ In 1588 all tipplers had to bring their vessels to be measured at the guildhall. Ale was sold in a hooped quart pot for 1*d.* and wine for ½ *d.* for home

⁴⁴¹ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1307—46* (SRS 12), 22—4; TNA, CP40/656, image 1737, 685, image 240, 732, image 835: at waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021.

⁴⁴² SHC, DD/SP/325/4, 71; Hants. RO, M11/59/C1/19/3.

⁴⁴³ TNA, E176/1/43, 133; 176/2/16, 54, 61, 181—2; *SDNQ* VIII, 88—9.

⁴⁴⁴ SHC, D/D/bw/1446, 1448; TNA, PROB 11/90/115.

⁴⁴⁵ TNA, E 134/2Jas1/Mich31 [Total assumes standard measures]; SHC, DD/SF/11/1/34.

⁴⁴⁶ SHC, D/B/bw/1439, 1448—9, 1460—2, 1480, 1508, 1512.

⁴⁴⁷ TNA, PROB 11/206/38.

⁴⁴⁸ *Cal. SP. Dom.* 1634—5, p. 32; SHC, DD/X/MDT/393, p. 17; D/P/stapg/13/3/1; DD/CWC/ta/unlisted acc. no. G/2468.

⁴⁴⁹ TNA, PROB 11/179/424.

⁴⁵⁰ SHC, DD/SP/36 (1589); DD/SP/49 (1587—8), 44.

consumption, but ale had risen to 4*d.* by the 1660s.⁴⁵¹ In 1593 tipplers who allowed journeyman and servants to drink in their houses faced 24 hours in prison and a fine.⁴⁵² There were 26 licensed tipplers *c.* 1608⁴⁵³ but of 14 people licensed in 1609 at least three had another occupation possibly because their wives kept the alehouse.⁴⁵⁴ Twelve people held licences in St James parish in 1630 and 38 in St Mary's in 1633 but there were also unlicensed alehouses.⁴⁵⁵ In 1639 an innkeeper paid for permission to erect an inn sign in North Street.⁴⁵⁶ During the Interregnum the authorities were reluctant to issue licences even for an alehouse burnt in the war or another used by Wellington people coming to market.⁴⁵⁷ The parishioners of St James objected to a baker with an alehouse becoming constable as both trades were open to abuse and only six tipplers were licensed in 1657 including the parish clerk.⁴⁵⁸ In 1677 the poverty of St James parish was blamed partly on 'unnecessary alehouses'.⁴⁵⁹

Larger inns accommodated travellers, at least one had a resident carrier in 1666, and several brewed their own beer, sold in flagons, pints, quarts, 1*d.* and ½ *d.* cups. The Three Cups, the London from the 1790s, had a shuffleboard chamber and others had musical instruments and substantial cellars.⁴⁶⁰ In 1695 31 innkeepers, including three women, thanked Edward Clarke M.P. for his help getting soldiers' debts paid.⁴⁶¹ Public houses ranged from the basic, whose keepers had a second trade such as sergeweaving, to luxurious houses providing coffee or pasties, fine dining and little luxuries like a rabbit fur bolster in the best

⁴⁵¹ SHC, DD/SP/49 (1587—8), 44.

⁴⁵² SHC, DD/SP/49 (Oct. 1593).

⁴⁵³ SHC, Q/SR/3/115—16.

⁴⁵⁴ SHC, Q/RLa/1 (1609).

⁴⁵⁵ SHC, Q/RLa/1 (1621), 3; DD/SP/339 (1634); Q/SR/63/111, 73/137—8.

⁴⁵⁶ SHC, DD/SP/325/185c.

⁴⁵⁷ SHC, Q/SR/89/32, 94/101.

⁴⁵⁸ SHC, Q/SPet/1/150; Q/RLa/7.

⁴⁵⁹ M.C.B. Dawes, *Quarter Sessions Records* 1666—77, 224.

⁴⁶⁰ SHC, DD/SP/1666/14, 23, 43; 1667/4; 1670/53, 1672/66, 1683/63.

⁴⁶¹ SHC, DD/SF/13/2/51.

chamber.⁴⁶² By the 1720s, when there were 96 public houses in Taunton, billiard rooms appeared in small alehouses.⁴⁶³ Although at times of economic uncertainty they were less valuable, it took several months to let the Bell in 1727, inns were investments and two beerhouses cleared from the market in 1769 were owned by clergyman and one by a doctor.⁴⁶⁴ A surprising number belonged to the town charity trustees.⁴⁶⁵ The Saracen's Head, a coaching inn, was bought by a tailor for £1,600 in 1809.⁴⁶⁶ The town's wine and spirit trade was worth £20,000 a year in 1824.⁴⁶⁷

The names of early inns were rarely recorded but those like Salutation, several Angels, Bishop Blaise, patron saint of woolcombers, Noah's Ark, Rose, Rose and Crown, Lamb, where the church courts were held in 1663, Blackamoors, Saracen's and Turk's heads, Katherine Wheel, The George and Green Dragon may indicate medieval origins.⁴⁶⁸ Inn chamber names, possibly reflected their furnishings as Rose, Swan, Queen's Arms and Half Moon.⁴⁶⁹ The Butchers Arms, Bull, Plough, Wheat Sheave and Sugar Loaf were found in the market place before 1769.⁴⁷⁰ Beerhouses called the Ring of Bells stood outside both St Mary's and St James's churches but only the latter survives.⁴⁷¹ Armorial symbols included the Antelope and Unicorn in the market, the Cornish Chough, the Spread Eagle, lions of various colours, and the White Hart.⁴⁷² Trade names were the Press and Shears, Painters or Weavers Arms, Wool Pack, the Brassfounders, Gardeners, Cogwheel or Waterwheel, Packhorse and Waggoners. In the mid 19th century there were three public houses in East

⁴⁶² SHC, DD/SP/1666/43, 1683/63, 1684/148, 164.

⁴⁶³ SHC, DD/SP/1723/50, 1729/58.

⁴⁶⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C2548/2; TNA, PROB 11/179/424; 11/276/680, 11/342/85, 11/362/341; 11/383/359; 11/659/254; SHC, DD/SP/61/9; D/B/ta/31/5/1.

⁴⁶⁵ SHC, D/PS/tau.b/3/1

⁴⁶⁶ SHC, A/AZK/1; below, this section, transport services.

⁴⁶⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

⁴⁶⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/1; Q/RLa/19/10—12; D/D/Ca/338; W. Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gough (1806), I, 96.

⁴⁶⁹ SHC, DD/SP/61/9; DD/SF/11/1/34.

⁴⁷⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/1—2.

⁴⁷¹ SHC, Q/RLa/19/10—11.

⁴⁷² SHC, DD/DP/71/5; Q/RLa/19/10.

Reach called the Waggon and Horses.⁴⁷³ Despite the reputed lack of royalist sympathy there were alehouses called the King George, Queen Caroline, King and Queen, Victoria, Crown, Crown and Angel, Crown and Mitre, Crown and Tower, Crown and Sceptre, Prince Albert and Princess Royal as well as the Alma, Duke of Wellington, Naval and Military, Nelson, Royal Marine and Waterloo.⁴⁷⁴

Despite complaints and a fall in the town's population there were 73 licensed houses in 1793.⁴⁷⁵ The following year there were convictions for selling alcohol without licence, watering spirits and brewing without declaring for excise duty.⁴⁷⁶ It was said in 1797 that a tenth of houses had a sign and drunkenness was a problem.⁴⁷⁷ Licences were reduced to 58 in 1809 and 1820 and apart from the George and the London they were beerhouses on annual licences.⁴⁷⁸ In the 1830s millowners said male workers could not be kept out of beer shops and the Guardians complained of the proliferation of public houses, some held by people of bad character, who harboured criminals and were not inspected.⁴⁷⁹ In 1894 there were 76 public houses, 20 beer houses and 10 wine and spirit retailers and a growing number of private hotels, temperance hotels and coffee taverns, many catering for railway travellers.⁴⁸⁰

The main coaching inns were the Duke William in East Reach, Angel, Castle and White Hart in Fore Street, the London in East Street, and the Bell, George, and Saracens Head in High Street.⁴⁸¹ The White Hart belonged to the Sampsons of Devon and in 1635 it had a tennis court and the main rooms were elaborately wainscoted.⁴⁸² It was used for judicial hearings in the late 17th century and Colonel Kirke is said to have hung a Monmouth rebel

⁴⁷³ SHC, Q/RLa/19/10; SHC, DD/SP/61/9; DD/SAS/C795/TN/41(Extra Portam); D/DC/tau.d/25/13 (1366); T/PH/up/1; *Pigot Dir.* (1842).

⁴⁷⁴ SHC, Q/RLa/19/12—13, 15; A/CHM/5; *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RG12/1877.

⁴⁷⁵ SHC, Q/RLa/19/10.

⁴⁷⁶ SHC, Q/SR/362/3/2—7, 362/4/35, 363/4/50.

⁴⁷⁷ W. G. Maton, *Observations on the Western Counties of England* (1797), 38—9.

⁴⁷⁸ SHC, Q/RLa/19/10—13, 15, 30.

⁴⁷⁹ *Royal Com. on employment of children in factories* (1833), 72; TNA, HO73/8.

⁴⁸⁰ TNA, RG 9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 74—5; RG 12/1875—6; DD/TBL/42/9/1 (*Taunton Mail* 29 Aug. 1894, p. 5).

⁴⁸¹ *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830).

⁴⁸² North Devon RO, 1142B/FP71.

from the inn sign.⁴⁸³ It achieved further notoriety when it was briefly held by Frederick and Maria Manning in the 1840s and was rebuilt as furniture shop in the 1860s.⁴⁸⁴ Run since the late 18th century by the Sweet family, the Castle was a substantial business and in 1801 was insured for £1,300.⁴⁸⁵ It changed hands for £3,000 c. 1810 and soon after entertained the exiled Queen Maria II of Portugal.⁴⁸⁶ In 1830 carriers used the Old Angel in Fore Street, the Bristol, Spread Eagle and Nags Head in North Street, the London and New Angel in East Street and the Bell, Crown, George, Full Moon and Saracen's Head in High Street but in 1914 they also used the Half Moon in North Street, which had 35 stalls and 5 loose boxes, the Swan in East Street, the Saracen's Head and Star coffee tavern in High Street, the Black Horse in Bridge Street and the Racehorse in East Reach.⁴⁸⁷ In the 1850s and 1860s omnibuses used the Angel, Castle, Nags Head, Saracens Head and White Hart.⁴⁸⁸

Many central public houses provided a meal for those attending the market in large 'market dining rooms' and in 1842 26 North Street shopkeepers complained that victuallers allowed carts and waggons to block the street on market days.⁴⁸⁹ Public houses also hosted auctions and sales, advertised events and distributed handbills, provided newspapers, facilitated carrying services, and hired out vehicles and horses.⁴⁹⁰ Some were involved in gambling and several licensees were convicted of brothel keeping.⁴⁹¹ Beerhouses provided take-away or jug and bottle services, skittle alleys, clubrooms and cheap lodgings in Paul Street, Mary Street, Upper High Street and Westgate Street.⁴⁹² Older public houses on the main roads included the Halfway Inn, later the Harp, on Shoreditch Road, the George on Staplegrove Road, the Ball, later Cottage, on Kingston Road and the Crown and Sceptre on

⁴⁸³ SHC, T/PH/vch/39; Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, rev. J. Savage, 541.

⁴⁸⁴ North Devon RO, 1142B/EC97; above this section, shops.

⁴⁸⁵ J. H. Thomas, 'Economy and Society in 18th-century Somerset', *PSANHS CXLI* (1998), 72.

⁴⁸⁶ SHC, DD/AY/29; Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 12n.

⁴⁸⁷ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, DD/HCK/6/2/20.

⁴⁸⁸ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861).

⁴⁸⁹ SHC, DD/DP/117; DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, pp. 55, 100; DD/X/MIS/1.

⁴⁹⁰ Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396.

⁴⁹¹ Taunton Courier, 10 June 1868, 29 March 1882; BNA, accessed 16 Mar. 2017.

⁴⁹² SHC, D/PS/tau.b/3/1; Q/LIC/1/5; A/BUG/1/28/59.

the lower Kingston, now Station, Road. Only the last survived into the 21st century, rebuilt c. 1900.⁴⁹³

During the 19th century beerhouses were opened in residential areas like the Oak and Acorn and Cherry Grove in Rowbarton, the New inn in Trinity Street, the Robin Hood in Somerset Place, the Dolphin between Duke and King streets or the Gardeners Arms in Plais Street, rebuilt on Priorswood Road in 1895.⁴⁹⁴ Some were part of residential terraces like the New Inn, later Gardeners Arm then Victoria Gate, East Reach,⁴⁹⁵ or the Denmark Inn, Cheddon Road.⁴⁹⁶ The Sun in Canal Road of c. 1847 and the Railway Inn, Railway Tap, later Wheeltapper, and Royal Mail built in 1861, now the Alehouse, and others in Station Road served the canal and railway.⁴⁹⁷ In the 20th century public houses like the Dolphin, later the Flying Horse,⁴⁹⁸ Oxford and Waggon and Horses moved from clearance areas to housing estates but others notably the Master Thatcher on Lisieux Way were new businesses.⁴⁹⁹

Apart from a few family businesses such as the Scarlett family's Nag Head, the Tite family's Spread Eagle in North Street and the Handel's New inn in Trinity Street, public houses changed hands frequently. The Coach and Horses in East Street had ten licensees in twelve years in the early 20th century and the Boot six in six years.⁵⁰⁰ Tied houses grew in number with breweries prepared to pay high prices like the Charlton Brewery, which bought the Harp in 1897 for £2,700 in 1897 from a family that paid less than £1,000 for it with several other houses c. 1860.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹³ SHC, tithe awards St James and St Mary; TNA, RG 9/1617—18.

⁴⁹⁴ SHC, T/PH/up/1; DD/CWC/ta/unlisted box 5; TNA, RG 9/1617; RG 12/11877; date on building.

⁴⁹⁵ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/19(581)

⁴⁹⁶ TNA, RG 12/1877.

⁴⁹⁷ TNA, RG9/1618; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7; D/PS/ta.b/3/1; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1914); *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 50.

⁴⁹⁸ Named after the relief of a flying black horse, which Starkey's breweries attached to their tied houses.

⁴⁹⁹ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/25, 25/7; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton.* (1972—3).

⁵⁰⁰ SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/3/2; DD/DP/43/17; D/DC/tau.d/25/13 (1391); Q/LIC/1/5.

⁵⁰¹ Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396; SHC, A/BUG/1/26/2—3; D/PS.ta.b/3/1; DD/TBL/42/9/4 (*Taunton Mail* 7 March 1897, p. 4).

By 1903 there were 98 on and 14 off licences in the borough, one for every 188 people.⁵⁰² In 1906—7 many were in poor condition, difficult to police, adjoined other licensed premises or took as little as £4—6 a week and depended on lodgers. At least one was out of bounds to the military and in 1915 only 85 licences were renewed.⁵⁰³ After the First World War consumption in public houses doubled and some like the Queens Arms in East Reach sold a large quantity of cigarettes and tobacco. Suburban houses had the highest sales.⁵⁰⁴ In 1937 of 99 licences in the borough 79 were for ale and beer houses.⁵⁰⁵ Many lost customers through slum clearance and sold well under 50 barrels of beer annually whereas before the war 140 barrels was regarded as poor trade.⁵⁰⁶ Town centre beerhouses closed or became licensed restaurants such as the Clarence, Bear and Beresford Arms.⁵⁰⁷ Others provided games rooms, meals and women's toilets to increase trade.⁵⁰⁸ There were still c. 75 public houses in 1953.⁵⁰⁹ The 20th century saw an increase in off-licences, private bars in clubs and hotels, applications for full licences and brewery taps.⁵¹⁰

The Castle and London, later County, were increasingly run as private hotels each with 13 resident staff in 1881.⁵¹¹ The London expanded eastwards over adjoining shops and its facade with its 1856 porch and a few internal features, serve as frontage to two large stores. In the 1920s the Castle was absorbed into the hotel on Castle Green retaining only a vestigial entrance on North Street.⁵¹² Most older inns have been demolished or rebuilt like the

⁵⁰² SHC, Q/SR/810/2.

⁵⁰³ SHC, Q/LIC/1/5; A/DIF/95/32.

⁵⁰⁴ SHC, Q/LIC/1/5; DD/HCK/6/2/20.

⁵⁰⁵ *Taunton Courier*, 3 July 1937; BNA, accessed 27 Sep. 2016.

⁵⁰⁶ SHC, Q/LIC/1/3—5.

⁵⁰⁷ SHC, Q/LIC/1/3; A/BUG/1/24/18; DD/TBL/42/9/6 (*Taunton Mail*, 4 Oct. 1899 p. 1).

⁵⁰⁸ SHC A/BIL/52/1; A/BUG/1/28/61.

⁵⁰⁹ SHC, C/PL/2/25, p. 6.

⁵¹⁰ SHC, Q/LIC/1/3.

⁵¹¹ TNA, RG 11/2366.

⁵¹² SHC, A/DAS/2 (12336—8, 12364); A/DIF/101/1/2; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

Phoenix, which had galleried courtyards onto which bedrooms opened until the mid 19th century.⁵¹³ Its rebuilt street frontage survives like that of the George in High Street but the Old Angel was demolished completely.⁵¹⁴ Some former East Reach inns preserve their carriage entrances and the Racehorse is a rare survivor of a long narrow burgage inn. The Green Dragon, High Street, a converted 16th-century dyehouse and now an estate agency, preserves some original timbering inside but was refronted c. 1924.⁵¹⁵ Taunton had no 'gin palaces', although there were three gin shops in 1840, and its licensed premises were modest in appearance.⁵¹⁶ However, in the late 20th century there was a move towards larger public houses such as the Coal Orchard and the Perkin Warbeck converted from retail stores and others opened in the old library, old art and technical colleges.

Hotels

In the later 16th century a goldsmith provided or obtained lodgings for visitors but most people found overnight accommodation at inns.⁵¹⁷ By the late 19th century for inns like the Castle and London accommodating guests, hosting dinners and private functions were more important than selling alcohol. In 1891 eight licensees described themselves as hotelkeepers and employed porters, chambermaids and boots.⁵¹⁸ Temperance hotels were opened from the 1840s in Hammet Street and Station Road, including The Royal Ashton, which took over the adjoining Baker's temperance hotel after 1902, the Drayton, formerly North Town House, and the Burlington.⁵¹⁹ The Great Western Hotel at the station with adjoining tap and station refreshment rooms, divided between 1st, 2nd and 3rd class, were let in 1882 for £468.⁵²⁰ The

⁵¹³ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 7. 11.

⁵¹⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1927); D/Dc/tau.d (M/1289), box 2, album.

⁵¹⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/4.

⁵¹⁶ SHC, DD/X/WBB/27 (map 1840).

⁵¹⁷ M. Siraut, *The Trevelyan Letters* (Som. Rec. Soc. 80), 33.

⁵¹⁸ TNA, HO107/1972; RG9/1817—18; RG10/2370—2, 2370—5; RG12/1875, 1877.

⁵¹⁹ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 205; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/26/1702, 1725, 24/1/27/1777; DD/DP/63/2.

⁵²⁰ *Pigot Dir.* (1842); TNA, RG12/1877; SHC, DD/CH/118/5.

Parade Hotel in North Street opened in the 1890s and in the 20th century there were several hotels that had never been public houses like the Salisbury, now Taunton Hotel, in Billetfield, the Bloreng in Staplegrove Road and the Corner House in Park Street still in business in the 2020s. By the later 20th century most accommodation was on the major roads and near the motorway leading to the closure of town centre hotels closed including the Great Western, Parade and County.⁵²¹

Private lodgings varied from respectable houses with servants in Station Road to overcrowded dosshouses in East Reach. By 1881 20 lodging houses were used by commercial travellers, entertainers, itinerant hawkers and tinkers.⁵²² In the early 20th century it was difficult to distinguish between lodgings for workers and visitors but there were several lodging houses in Belvedere Road, near the station and popular with travelling drapers.⁵²³ Later guesthouses catered for motorists especially on Wellington Road.

Coffee and eating houses

In 1683 Thomas Williams had a lavishly furnished inn also known as a coffee house, boasting nine maps, fine bed and table linen, embroidered cushions, silk fringed chairs and a coffee chamber equipped with coffee pots, boiler and dishes.⁵²⁴ In 1731 a barber ran a coffee house.⁵²⁵ Two coffee houses, the Plough on Cornhill by 1698—9 and the Lamb in the North Street island, were demolished in 1769 and the successor Market House coffee room was for subscribers only.⁵²⁶ Coffee stalls in the Market House arcades annoyed neighbouring victuallers in 1845.⁵²⁷ There were two coffee houses in 1822 but eight by 1872.⁵²⁸ In 1877 the

⁵²¹ TNA, RG13/2278; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/118/4992, 24/1/128/6468; DD/HWN/11.

⁵²² TNA, HO107/1972; RG9/1817—18; RG10/2370—2, 2370—5; RG11/2366—8.

⁵²³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

⁵²⁴ SHC, DD/SP/1683/63; *Cal. SP. Dom.* Jul.—Sep. 1683, 77.

⁵²⁵ SHC, DD/SP/1731/26.

⁵²⁶ M. Siraut, *Som Wills*, 54; *Lond. Gaz.* 6 Oct. 1699 cited in A. Humphries, *Som Parishes*, 680; SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/1; A/CPT/15/5, p. 104.

⁵²⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, p. 404.

⁵²⁸ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

Taunton and West Somerset Coffee House Company was created. In 1880 it opened the Paul Street Coffee Tavern with billiard and smoking rooms and in 1881 the Taunton Coffee, later King Alfred, Hotel at 2 Fore Street with dining and ladies rooms. By 1885 they had been joined by White's and Star and later the British Workman coffee tavern, all in High Street.⁵²⁹ In the late 20th century coffee shops became popular again especially in the main shopping areas.

Cooked food was provided by the 18th century, often at tripe shops, which were exempt from the market's meat monopoly.⁵³⁰ By the later 19th century eating houses and refreshment rooms were important for people working or shopping, especially women as there were no female public toilets. The number of such premises rose from four in 1852 to c. 15 in 1891 and waiters and waitresses from six to 23.⁵³¹ Confectioners also provided catering services supplying cooks and waiters, dressed turtles and ball suppers and by 1872 one had a luncheon room.⁵³² Maynard's, who succeeded Wickenden's in the confectionery business before 1852, also ran a restaurant and catering business until the mid 20th century at 19 North Street.⁵³³ The West of England Boot and Shoe Company on the bridge advertised a cheap fixed price dinner and lavatories for both sexes in 1890⁵³⁴ and by the 1900s there were tearooms with ladies toilets in the principal streets.⁵³⁵ One of the best known cafes was the 1922 art deco Deller's, in the rebuilt Tone Bridge House, which had a dance floor with terrace and galleries and a supper room upstairs.⁵³⁶ It became a night club in the late 20th century but some of the elaborate plasterwork reputedly survives. In 1972 only 25 cafes and

⁵²⁹ S. Minnitt and D. Young, *Tickets, Checks and Passes from the County of Somerset* (Taunton, 1990), 19—20; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1993); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/19/765; A/DIF/101/10/198; D/DC/tau.d/25/15 (1685).

⁵³⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/22; *Royal Com. On Market Rights and Tolls* (1888), III, p. 253.

⁵³¹ SHC, DD/CH/81/7; *Slater Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, RG9/1817—18; RG12/1875, 1877.

⁵³² *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 80; *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

⁵³³ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); SHC, A/DWX/5/14; D/PC/b.hl/5/3/15; A/DIF/101/1/12; D/DC/tau.d (M/1289), box 3; above, this section, bakers.

⁵³⁴ *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 237.

⁵³⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/27/1798, 24/1/65/1234.

⁵³⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/53/890. There were also Deller's cafes in Exeter and Paignton: Devon HC, 4261Z/1.

restaurants were recorded but it is not clear if that included those in stores.⁵³⁷ From the late 20th century there was an increase in ethnic restaurants and many cafes and restaurants opened in the early 21st century in former shops and banks. Although some closed during the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020—1 fast food shops and cafes have fared better than shops.

In 1890 there was an oyster saloon in North Street in 1890 and fried fish and chip shops opened. By 1914 there were at least five chip shops and more opened in the 1920s.⁵³⁸ Some, notably in St James Street, survived into the 21st century despite competition from other take-away food businesses.⁵³⁹

ROAD TRANSPORT SERVICES

Coaches

Stage coaches operated between Taunton and London by the later 17th century.⁵⁴⁰ They usually travelled between inns called the Saracen's Head at each end for £1 16s. inside and a free luggage allowance of 14 lb. In contrast a private hire coach from Salisbury to Taunton cost £6 in the 1690s. John Whitmash and Thomas Lilley operated 'flying machines' in the early 18th century taking two days to London via Salisbury.⁵⁴¹ In 1770 the Exeter to Bristol coach broke its two day journey at Taunton.⁵⁴² By 1786 daily diligence services to London, Bristol, Bath, Exeter and Plymouth, set down and picked up passengers at the Duke William in East Reach and by 1809 there was also a thrice weekly coach to Bridgwater and Barnstaple.⁵⁴³ In the late 1790s a five-seater and Whitmash's 'long coach' went to and from London daily. The Whitmash left at 6 a.m. every day except Saturday arriving in London

⁵³⁷ Kelly's *Dir. Taunton* (1972—3).

⁵³⁸ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 47; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 108; Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1914); SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/3 (Apr. 1921); D/B/ta/24/1/52/863, 865.

⁵³⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/69/1369; DD/AY/159.

⁵⁴⁰ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 603; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1680—1, p. 492; A. Humphries, *Som Parishes*, 672.

⁵⁴¹ SHC, DD/X/WHI/1c; DD/X/WBB/1100.

⁵⁴² Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 603; BL, 1881.c.6 (93).

⁵⁴³ SHC, A/DAS/2 (12366); DD/HC/8/19/2, 96/8.

early the following morning and returning at four in the afternoon for £2 2s. inside and £1 5s. outside.⁵⁴⁴ By 1814 there was a Bath and Taunton coach house in Aldersgate Street, London.⁵⁴⁵ In 1822 the *Royal Mail* came from London via Bath every day, Whitmarsh's *North Devon Telegraph* with four inside seats came via Salisbury and Wincanton and the *Devon Freemason* also called at Taunton. There were three coaches to Bristol, four to Exeter and one each to Bath and Bridport every day except Sunday and a caravan to Bath three days a week. The *Traveller* set off every night on the arduous journey to Liverpool via Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester.⁵⁴⁶ By 1824 stage coaches and posting were worth £20,000 a year to Taunton.⁵⁴⁷ Lighter coaches, such as those made by James Jacobs of Taunton, cut journey times. In 1827 *Accommodation*, a light coach for 11 passengers, began a thrice weekly run connecting Minehead passengers with the London and other coaches at Taunton. In 1833 the Bath Coach Company retimed its Bath to Exeter coach to take ten hours with a ten minute break at Taunton. The Whitmarsh coach reached London within a day by 1834.⁵⁴⁸ By 1836 the *Magnet* ran daily between Taunton and Southampton and in 1840 *The Little Wonder*, from the George inn to Exeter took four hours each way.⁵⁴⁹ The railway reduced coach services and Edward Whitmarsh offered a coach called the *Railway* to meet the line as it progressed to Bridgwater then Taunton when he gave up coaching.⁵⁵⁰ In the 1850s one of the last coaches, *The Fairy*, linked Taunton with Langport and Yeovil.⁵⁵¹

Carriers

⁵⁴⁴ *The Universal British Directory* (c. 1798), IV, 585—6; Devon, HC, 3321M/3.

⁵⁴⁵ London Met. Arch., MS 11936/462/889996.

⁵⁴⁶ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 606—8; SHC, Q/SCS, loose advert, missing 2019; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3).

⁵⁴⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

⁵⁴⁸ SHC, DD/DP/54/3 (2); D. Gerhold, 'The Whitmarsh family, carriers and coachmasters of Taunton and Yeovil, 1685—1848', (SANH, 143), 127.

⁵⁴⁹ SHC, , A/BQG/4/11; DD/X/WBB/688.

⁵⁵⁰ Gerhold, 'The Whitmarsh family', (SANH, 143), 128; *Pigot Dir.* (1842); SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, acct. 1843.

⁵⁵¹ *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *VCH Som.* III, 19; *PO Dir. Som.* (1861).

Trade could not have functioned without a network of trusted carriers such as the carter who carried £500 in gold ‘pistoles’ to a Taunton trader in 1699.⁵⁵² Two loaders were recorded in 1420, one with debts in London, and carriers from the later 16th century.⁵⁵³ In 1606 and 1617 four carriers to London were accused of starting work on Sundays.⁵⁵⁴ Most early 17th-century carriers used packhorses for cloth and luxury goods but carts were used on the Bridgwater road until river navigation improved.⁵⁵⁵ In the mid 17th century John Bobbett, carrier, issued tokens.⁵⁵⁶ In 1666 a large inn had a carrier’s chamber and 14 horses, which with their tackle were worth a third of the innkeeper’s inventory, and another inn had a carrier’s chamber in 1695.⁵⁵⁷ By then caravans were on the roads regularly and in the mid 18th century there was a weekly waggon service to London.⁵⁵⁸

From 1758 until 1842 or later the Parsons family and later the Brices had a yard west of Paul Street with warehousing and horses for whom they bought large quantities of beans.⁵⁵⁹ William Cockeram, proprietor of stage waggons between Taunton and London, went bankrupt in the 1770s.⁵⁶⁰ A waggoner based at the Bristol inn gave a driver seven guineas a year, a frock and accommodation expenses for carrying between Taunton and Exeter up to three times a week in the 1790s.⁵⁶¹ By then 10 carriers operated carts, waggons and caravans on the major routes and in 1820 three carriers and 21 drivers were registered to

⁵⁵² SHC, DD/DN/463 (1699).

⁵⁵³ TNA, CP40/636, images 33, 1342; 1352, image 977; 1374, image 413: www.waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 89.

⁵⁵⁴ SHC, D/D/Ca/151, 206.

⁵⁵⁵ SHC, D/D/Ca/151, 206, 342a; Q/SR/300/120; D/B/bw/1429.

⁵⁵⁶ G. Williamson, *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century*, (1891), 987.

⁵⁵⁷ SHC, DD/SP/1666/14, 1695/19.

⁵⁵⁸ Toulmin, *Hist. Taunton*, rev. Savage, 606—8; BL, 1881.c.6 (93).

⁵⁵⁹ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/15 (1200); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); M. Siraut, ‘A farming account book’, *PSANHS CXXIX* (1985), 167.

⁵⁶⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/22.

⁵⁶¹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/3/5.

vote.⁵⁶² Some services were slow; in the early 19th century an overnight waggon from Crewkerne to Taunton (28 miles) took eight hours.⁵⁶³

The most famous Taunton carriers were the Whitmash family. In 1685 John Whitmash acquired premises east of North Street with a large yard stretching back to Whirligig Lane, where the business remained until the 1840s when the Congregational church was built on the site. He also had a warehouse in London. John (d. 1724) left a plough waggon and hackney horses to his wife and to his son John three waggons and up to 30 horses.⁵⁶⁴ John the son (d. 1769) started coaching, took over carrying from Yeovil and bought a country house.⁵⁶⁵ In 1782 his sons John and Henry bought the Saracen's Head.⁵⁶⁶ During the early 19th century the family entered into partnerships notably with the Brown family of Wincanton where they established a bank.⁵⁶⁷ Maria Whitmash ran the business from Tangier House, Bishops Hull in the 1820s and 1830s, sending waggons and fly vans to London on alternate days and also to Yeovil, west Somerset and north Devon but she had competitors.⁵⁶⁸ In 1828 Snell and Company's flying wagons left London for their office in High Street every Friday and their light vans from Bristol to Exeter called at Taunton.⁵⁶⁹ By 1841 Edward Whitmash ran the family business but the company was last recorded in 1842.⁵⁷⁰ In the later 19th century c. 20 carriers ran once or twice a week to all the surrounding villages and into Devon and Dorset or took goods to and from the station.⁵⁷¹

Buses

⁵⁶² *The Universal British Directory* (c. 1798), IV, 586; SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

⁵⁶³ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 29—30.

⁵⁶⁴ SHC, DD/DP/9/1 (1726); D/P/tau.m/4/3/10 (1839); DD/AY/75; DD/X/WHI/1c—d; TNA, PROB 11/600/18.

⁵⁶⁵ D. Gerhold, 'The Whitmash family, carriers and coachmasters of Taunton and Yeovil, 1685—1848', (SANH, 143), 119; Trull, land., Batts.

⁵⁶⁶ SHC, DD/X/HOR/1.

⁵⁶⁷ Gerhold, 'The Whitmash family', (SANH, 143), 123.

⁵⁶⁸ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/PR/463/2; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.; *Pigot Dir.* (1830).

⁵⁶⁹ SHC, A/DZE/7.

⁵⁷⁰ Gerhold, 'The Whitmash family', (SANH, 143), 128; *Pigot Dir.* (1842); SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/4, acct. 1843.

⁵⁷¹ *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); Goodman, *Dir. Taunton* (1864), 45—7; *Taunton of Today* (1896), 21—2.

The first buses in the 1840s were probably owned by hotels but were not exclusively for hotel guests. By the 1860s the Taunton Omnibus Company had an office in Cheapside.⁵⁷² Omnibus drivers and conductors were recorded from 1851 and linked the railway station with the town centre collecting passengers at the main hotels and inns timed to connect with trains. There were weekly omnibuses from Williton and Wiveliscombe on Saturdays.⁵⁷³ In 1876 the proprietor of Clarkes hotel objected to buses being kept on Castle Green and in 1878 the bus company agreed to stop the practice.⁵⁷⁴ Town buses were expensive, the 6d. fare to the station in 1890 was only half that of a cab. They were enclosed with seats rather like an elongated hansom. Rural omnibuses were open wagons with side benches and travelled extremely slowly. In 1887 the Bishops Lydeard bus 'Punctuality' took an hour for the five mile journey, which cost 6d.⁵⁷⁵ The council licensed 16 omnibuses in 1897.⁵⁷⁶

The Parade Hotel's *Klondyke* of 1898, a short-bodied double decker in the style of a stage coach only ran for a few years but in 1908 the Castle hotel still had three buses and the London had two.⁵⁷⁷ Trams put buses out of business as they were cheaper, quicker, carried many more people and followed the same route.⁵⁷⁸ Taunton's first motor bus, similar to a large car, was built by Marshalsea Brothers for the London Hotel in 1913, licensed in 1914 and by 1918 the only bus in the borough. Other early motor buses resembled their horse-drawn predecessors and horses were retained for hilly routes.⁵⁷⁹ The closure of the tram service in 1921 led the National Omnibus Company to run several services in and out of town but they were subsidised and only held 16 to 21 people. In 1922 the council ran two from Greenway Road to East Reach at a loss and after considering electric buses and rail-free

⁵⁷² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/18/714.

⁵⁷³ TNA, HO107/1972; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861).

⁵⁷⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/7, pp. 346, 406.

⁵⁷⁵ BL, Add MS 30293, Parade c. 1850; SHC, A/DIF/79/2; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887), 73; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 110, 129.

⁵⁷⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/4/6/1 (Jan. 1897).

⁵⁷⁷ SHC, A/DIF/101/14/271; D/B/ta/4/6/2 (Jan. 1907).C/E/1/162, 14 Jan. 1908.

⁵⁷⁸ SHC, D/DC tau.d/24/4/4; above intro.

⁵⁷⁹ SHC, A/DIF/101/5/102; D/B/ta/4/6/2 (Jan. 1914); D/B/ta/4/6/3 (Jan. 1918); DD/S/FRI/12, no. 74035.

trams, probably trolley buses, in 1923 the council abandoned running buses.⁵⁸⁰ National Omnibus had a ticket office near the Old Angel in Corporation Street, the start of five routes, and a garage in South Street but from 1929 used the depot in Hamilton Road, built by Dunns Services of St James Street. Substantially enlarged in 1934, it remained in use by First Bus in the 2020s.⁵⁸¹ In 1933 three bus companies were offered the former Dunns office in the Market House, as their buses used 11 bays round the perimeter of the Parade. Town services only went to the station but single decker buses served all the towns and many of the villages of west Somerset, Bridgwater, Burnham, Langport, Yeovil and Chard and Honiton and Sidmouth in Devon.⁵⁸² In 1926 Cosy Coach Services was created to provide services between Taunton, Watchet and Minehead.⁵⁸³ In 1934—5 Associated Motorways established a coach park in Billet Street adding a waiting room and café in 1938.⁵⁸⁴

In the 1950s the town was served by double deckers but single deckers were more common by the late 20th century. There were frequent services from 36 buses each way to Wellington to nine each way to Kingston St Mary.⁵⁸⁵ By the 1970s the county council subsidized bus services by £300,000 annually as services started disappearing, there were few evening or Sunday services and some town routes halved their frequency in four years. The route along Kingston Road had 52 buses on weekdays in the early 1970s but only 28 in 1977 and only four each way in 2021.⁵⁸⁶ Town shuttle buses were introduced in the 1980s after further cuts to services but were soon replaced by standard single deckers.⁵⁸⁷ Remaining routes had their numbers changed from triple to double digits, single for town services.

Following de-regulation several companies provided public, college and school services

⁵⁸⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/3/16/2, p. 257, 4/6/3 (Apr. 1921); D/B/ta/3/16/4, pp. 128, 134.

⁵⁸¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 18, 73; SHC, DD/HCK/6/2/20; D/B/ta/24/1/51/825, 834; 24/1/70/1394; 24/1/89/1970.

⁵⁸² SHC, A/DVY/1; A/BMG/5/2; Bishops Hull, intro.; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 26, 36; *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 65; SHC, DD/S/FRI/12, no. 86822.

⁵⁸³ SHC, DD/AY/237

⁵⁸⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/92/2050, 24/1/94/2089; DD/cwc.ta/16.

⁵⁸⁵ SHC, map of bus services 1962—3 inserted in Somerset Regional Report; DD/X/ROW/1.

⁵⁸⁶ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, pp. 68—9.

⁵⁸⁷ SHC, D/DC/tau/2/2/3 (Aug. 1975); 2/2/13 (3 Oct. 1985).

including First, through its subsidiary Buses of Somerset , Hatch Green, Webbers and Berry's as well as National long-distance services. By the early 21st century many estates and villages had no service, although a park and ride service connected car parks on the western and eastern outskirts with the town centre.⁵⁸⁸ When the bus station closed in 2020 buses stood on the Parade, Corporation Street and Castle Way.

Private hire

Innkeepers had a long tradition of hiring out horses and by the 18th century private vehicles. The Castle hotel's posting yard employed postboys, horse keepers and chaise washers who worked up to 17 hours a day in summer in 1826.⁵⁸⁹ The need to connect railway passengers and their luggage with the town centre and further afield led to a growth in private hire vehicles and the numbers employed in all forms of horse transport increased from c. 90 in 1841 to over 170 in 1891 and 1901, mainly waggoners, coachmen, bus and cab drivers and stable staff.⁵⁹⁰ There were livery stables and carriage hire businesses in Paul Street, East Reach, Silver Street, and Castle Green.⁵⁹¹

James White started c. 1850 as a furniture remover and horse keeper in Silver Street, possibly in succession to Bleachley's wagon business of 1840, and in 1871 he built a 15-horse livery stable off Silver Street behind the Alma Street houses.⁵⁹² The firm provided horses, carriages and hearses for hire and ran omnibuses.⁵⁹³ By 1899 they had premises in North Town and at the station. The business passed c. 1900 to the Thomas Posting Establishment of Corporation Street, which supplied 40 horses for the council, gas and

⁵⁸⁸ SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, pp. 68—9.

⁵⁸⁹ SHC, DD/X/BRO/2/3.

⁵⁹⁰ TNA, HO107/972; RG12/1875, 1877; RG13/2276—8.

⁵⁹¹ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

⁵⁹² SHC, DD/X/WBB/1827 map 1840; D/P/tau.m/4/4/1; D/B/ta/24/1/8/236.

⁵⁹³ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 40; *Taunton of Today* (1896), xxxi; Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

electricity works in 1918, hired out motor vans and charabancs and provided taxis at the railway station.⁵⁹⁴

A farrier was bleeding horses in 1595.⁵⁹⁵ By the early 19th century a veterinary practice had been established in Bishops Hull, by 1839 there was another in East Street and by 1852 Joseph Gibbs was practising in Bridge Street.⁵⁹⁶ Joseph was succeeded c. 1870 by Robert Gibbs who had an equine infirmary and a shoeing forge and was the county veterinary inspector in 1899. Joseph Gibbs the younger, a retired horse artilleryman, briefly practiced in the same street.⁵⁹⁷ The Bridge Street practice continued until the early 21st century and by 1972 there was a second practice in the town although for small animals rather than horses.⁵⁹⁸ By the 2020s there were eight practices.

Eleven sedan chairs were available for public hire in 1822 and were still in use in the 1840s.⁵⁹⁹ Sedan chairmen were not recorded in the 1841 census although a sedan was said to have been used in 1859 to take an elderly man to vote.⁶⁰⁰ They were presumably superseded by the wheel and bath chairs for hire from the mid 19th century.⁶⁰¹

Carriages and cabs stood for hire around the Parade and by 1880 waited on the east and landaus or broughams on the west.⁶⁰² The number of resident cab drivers rose from 13 in 1881 to 23 in 1891.⁶⁰³ In 1895 22 cabmen petitioned for a shelter and one was installed at the station c. 1896 and later another at the Parade.⁶⁰⁴ The borough licensed 42 cabs in 1897 and

⁵⁹⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/1 (1918).

⁵⁹⁵ SHC, DD/SP/49 (May 1595).

⁵⁹⁶ Bishops Hull, econ. hist.; *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

⁵⁹⁷ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 34, 42; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1899).

⁵⁹⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 428.

⁵⁹⁹ Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, rev. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), 608; Dr H. Alford, *Olden Taunton, a Cycle of Change* (Taunton c. 1921), 5; SDNQ, XXXIII, pp. 86—7. The whereabouts of 11 are unknown but an unnumbered similar chair is in the Museum of Somerset.

⁶⁰⁰ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 9; SDNQ, XXXIII, pp. 86—7.

⁶⁰¹ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); TNA, RG9/1671; RG11/2366—7; Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1887).

⁶⁰² SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/7, pp.412, 414, 438, 457, 533; T/PH/rea/3/33; A/DIF/101/3/53.

⁶⁰³ TNA, RG 11/2366—8; RG 12/1875, 1877.

⁶⁰⁴ SHC, DD/TBL/42/9/2 (*Taunton Mail* 18 Dec 1895, p. 4); Wilts and Swindon HC, 2515/210, box 89/4.

36 cab stands were authorised, in addition to the station.⁶⁰⁵ The tram service probably led to the fall to eight licensed hansoms and 12 landaus in 1908, half operated by owner drivers.⁶⁰⁶ In 1909 the first motor taxicab was licensed and by 1916 there were 13 and only four horse cabs. From 1920 all cabs had to have meters and use the cab stands. In 1941 23 taxis were licensed and there were women drivers.⁶⁰⁷ There were at least eight taxi and car hire firms in business in 1972, and 28 cabs were licensed in 1976. Ranks or stands remain in use mainly at the station and in Corporation Street served by several firms and independent drivers.⁶⁰⁸

DOING here

Motor services

By 1881 there were three petrol merchants and in 1896 16 petrol licences were issued.⁶⁰⁹ In 1908 the council licensed 21 dealers including a store in Canal Road owned by British Petroleum.⁶¹⁰ Shell-Mex had an oil store in Canal Road c. 1925—53, National Benzole had a depot in Belvedere Road between 1930 and 1962 and Anglo-American installed additional facilities for rail deliveries in 1935.⁶¹¹ By 1941 72 business held licences to store between 100 and 50,000 gallons.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/4/6/1 (Jan. 1897), D/B/ta/4/6/2 (Feb. 1897).

⁶⁰⁶ SHC, C/E/1/162, 14 Jan 1908.

⁶⁰⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/3/13/13, p. 199.

⁶⁰⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/4/6/2 (Feb. 1909), 4/6/3 (Jan. 1916, Jan. 1920); D/DC/tau/2/2/4 (10 Dec. 1975); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 377, 418.

⁶⁰⁹ TNA, RG 11/2366; D/B/ta/4/6/1 (Jan 1896).

⁶¹⁰ SHC, C/E/1/162 (14 Jan 1908); D/B/ta/24/1/55/954, 24/1/57/1022, 24/1/71/1463.

⁶¹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/3/25/4, p. 126, 24/1/61/1106, 24/1/73/1485, 24/1/94/2083; A/EHL/1.

⁶¹² SHC, D/B/ta/3/13/13, pp. 200—1.

Although most delivery vehicles were still horse-drawn in the early 20th century private motor car use was increasing.⁶¹³ Stones' in Staplegrave Road hired out and repaired cycles and cars from c. 1903 but their extensive premises were destroyed by fire 31 December 1907 and never rebuilt.⁶¹⁴ Cycle shops and car salerooms opened, often selling on commission, although some went bankrupt during the 1930s.⁶¹⁵ Carriage builders, livery stables, founders and blacksmiths either moved into the motor trade or sold their premises for garages. The Taunton Motor Company, founded in the 1900s, and Somerset Motors, established in 1927, combined showrooms and repair garages.⁶¹⁶ In 1929 Thomas Motors opened a garage and showroom at 151—2 East Reach, sold in 1938 to the White brothers who expanded into 154—6.⁶¹⁷ Dunns large showroom and garage on the site of Popes almshouses, East Street, was in business from the 1950s to 1980s.⁶¹⁸ Small garages opened in inn yards including the Bell, High Street and the Harp, Shoreditch Road and the former Canon Street brewery from the 1920s. In the 1960s Blanche and Victor Pulleyn bought garage workshops and houses in Canon, Middle and St James Streets to create a large garage.⁶¹⁹ Companies like Power Petroleum hired out pumps and storage tanks to garage owners.⁶²⁰ From the late 20th century petrol stations closed as the major supermarkets built fuel stations and car dealers and workshops moved to arterial roads leaving only one near out of the town centre by the 2020s. However, several many small independent repair garages survived.

⁶¹³ SHC, DD/IR/T/26/1.

⁶¹⁴ SHC, A/CAE/1/18, 26, 28, 42, 53, 61; *Taunton Courier*, 8 Jan. 1908 4 Mar. 1908; BNA accessed 2 Sep. 2021.

⁶¹⁵ SHC, D/CC/ta/7/52, 96.

⁶¹⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1931, 1939); above, this section, industry.

⁶¹⁷ SHC, A/CHM/1—3, 8—9.

⁶¹⁸ SHC, DD/TBL/75; DD/X.SML.8, p. 19.

⁶¹⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 48, 75; SHC, DD/CWC.ta/unlisted box 2.

⁶²⁰ SHC, DD/AY/131

Early car dealers gave rudimentary lessons but by 1957 there were four driving schools and five by 1972.⁶²¹ In the 2020s there were about 15 ranging from individual instructors to large businesses. The driving test centre was at Belvedere Road until 1988 and eventually moved to new premises in Crown Close where it remained in the 2020s.⁶²²

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⁶²¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957),398; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3), 409.

⁶²² SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/16 (6 Sep.), 18 (30 Oct.), 19 (19 Sep.).