



Welsh Row Through the Ages

Introduction

Did you know that Welsh Row was once called Frog Row?

Also known as Frogge Rowe, Froggstreet, Welch Rowe and Welcherowe, there seem to have been many different names for this road!



Formerly an ancient track-way alongside the Frog Channel (which now runs under the road) it was a link between Acton and a ford across the River Weaver and then on to other centres of settlement. Nantwich did not really exist before the Normans came but Welsh Row connected Acton to the salt works alongside the river. The Romans traded salt from here more than 1000 years before Nantwich existed.

Why Welsh Row? Welsh cattle drovers traded for the salt and other goods, as you will see, and some settled in rather rudimentary dwellings around that area.



Once a bridge had been built in the Middle Ages and the east end of the road re-aligned, development could really begin, resulting in the street full of history and interesting buildings that we see today.

This exhibition is laid out in a clockwise circuit starting to your left and finishing to your right, where there is more detailed information.

We also ask for your 'Welsh Row Memories' which will be added to the display.



We hope you find this exhibition both informative and enjoyable.

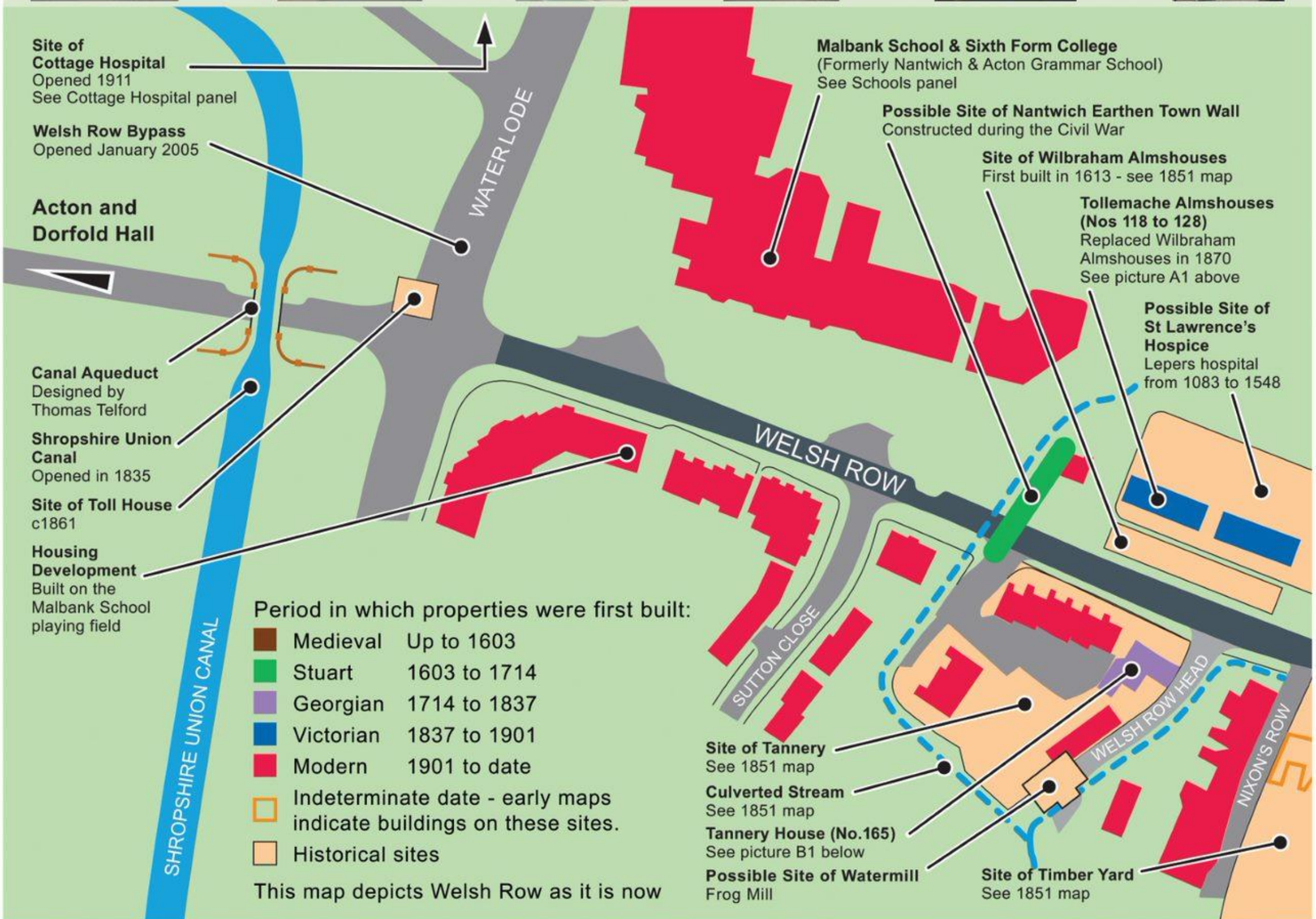
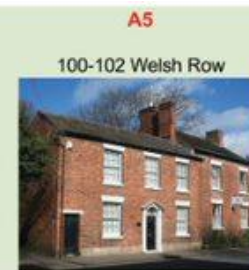
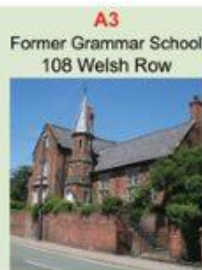
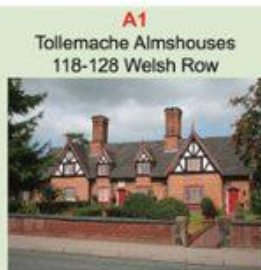


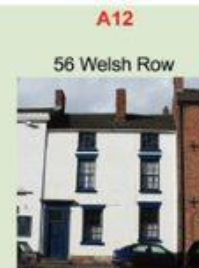
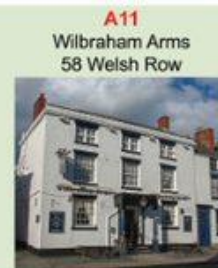
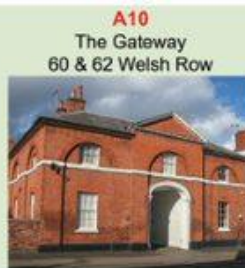
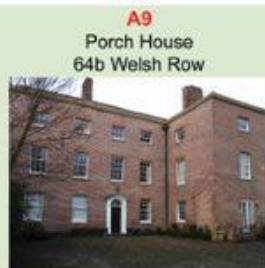
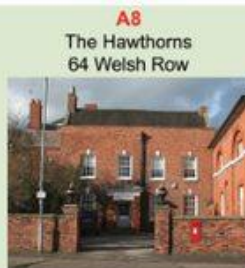
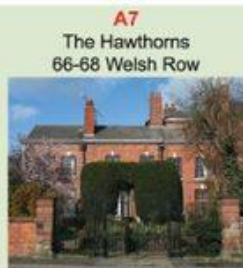
Welsh Row



© Nantwich Museum

See next three pages for enlarged versions of sections of this map





Welsh Row
Primitive Methodist Chapel
B8



99-101 Welsh Row
B9



97 Welsh Row
The Oddfellows Arms
B10



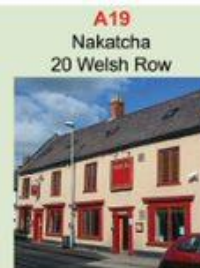
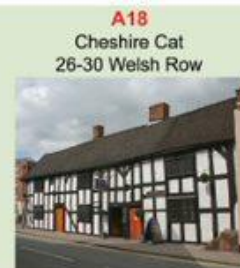
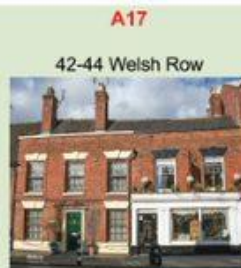
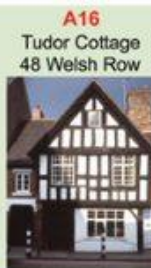
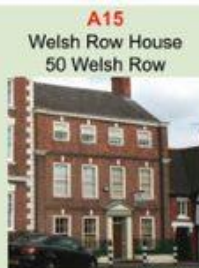
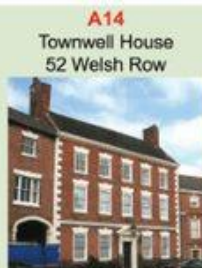
91 Welsh Row
B11



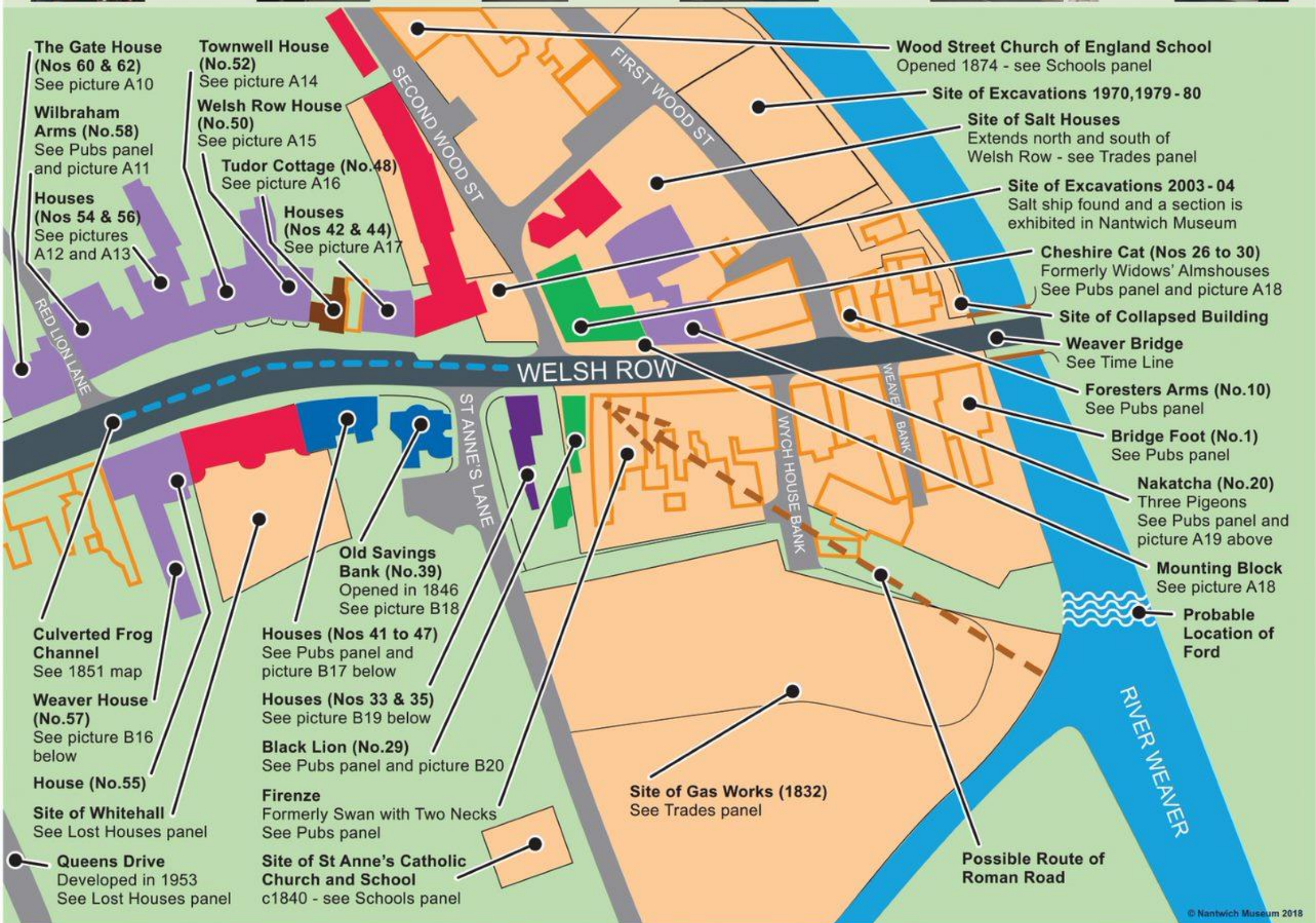
89 Welsh Row
The Coach House Stables
B12



85 Welsh Row
B13



Mounting Block



83 Welsh Row
Welsh House

B14



71-73 Welsh Row

B15



57 Welsh Row
Weaver House

B16



41-47 Welsh Row

B17



39 Welsh Row
Old Savings Bank

B18



33-35 Welsh Row

B19

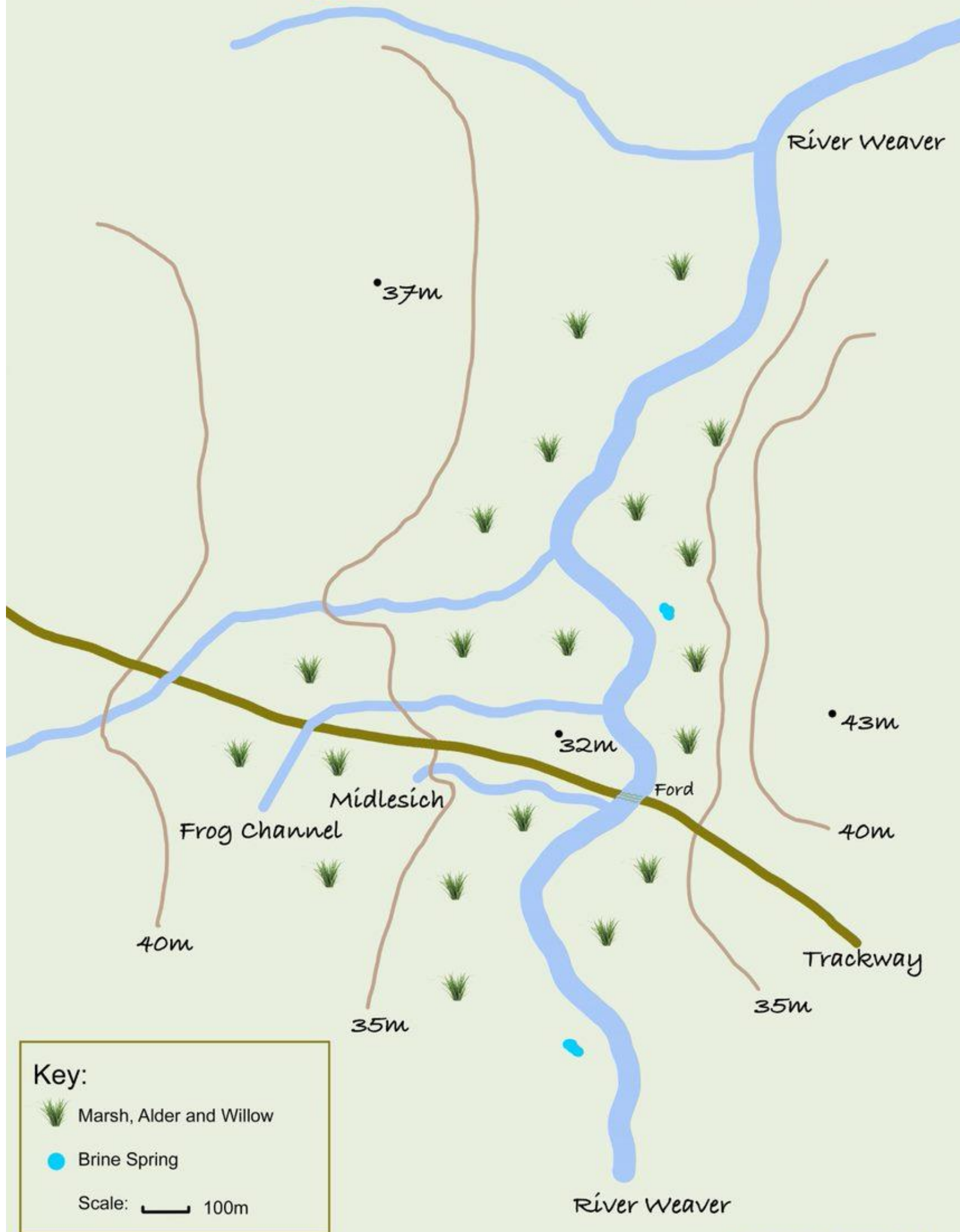


29 Welsh Row
Black Lion

B20

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The Origins of Welsh Row





Playing poo boats in the
Frog Channel

Painting by Les Pickford



Welsh Row Schools

‘Creeping like snail unwillingly to school’ (Shakespeare)

Creeping, running, walking, cycling: school pupils have long been a regular feature of Welsh Row. Today, the Row is dominated by Malbank School and Sixth Form College, located at the top end. But a century ago, the picture was more varied.

The original Nantwich Grammar School, located in Churchyardside, was closed around 1858 and a new school was opened at 108 Welsh Row in 1860. 60 pupils were registered in 1875, including seven boarders and seven free places. This was amalgamated with the better endowed school at Acton in 1886, becoming the Nantwich & Acton Grammar School (NAGS). Some preparatory classes were held at the Primitive Methodist Church on the opposite side of the Row. Girls were first admitted in 1905. The Headmaster from 1902-1932 (A.T. Purcell) aimed to give a ‘rural tone’ to the curriculum and to encourage pupils to find out things for themselves. NAGS moved to its new building in 1921 and became a comprehensive in 1977.

Between 1892 and 1968, St Anne’s Roman Catholic school was located in St Anne’s Lane.



NANTWICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 1860-1921



NANTWICH AND ACTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 1921



St Anne's School
(now a private house)



SPRING TERM 1913

NAGS Hockey Team, 1913



NAGS Preparatory Department, c1923



At the other end of Welsh Row, Wood Street Church of England School was opened in 1874 as a response to the 1870 Education Act. This was a poor area and health affected school attendance. In 1910, 46 children (over a third) received free school dinners and clogs were given to poorer children. The school closed around 1911 but the original building is still standing as a repair garage.



Wood Street School



Cycling from school in the early 1960s

Welsh Row contained several small private schools during the latter part of the 19th century; the best known was located at Porch House, where Mr Orchard ran a boarding school. Later Porch House housed a girls’ school run by Miss Hare and Miss Richardson. Local author Dorothy Vaughan says the girls were nicknamed ‘Miss Hare’s Bunnies’.



Porch House



Welsh Row Pubs



The Queen's Head

In 1765 this opened as an alehouse and was much frequented by barges from the nearby canal. There are stories of some being hopelessly drunk and being wheeled back to Basin End in handcarts!



The Wilbraham Arms

Originally named the Red Lion, this pub was owned by the Wilbraham family of Townsend House. The Rev. Joseph Partridge, who wrote the first history of Nantwich in 1774, was born here.



The Cheshire Cat

Built in the 17th century as almshouses for six Nantwich widows, in 1945 it was restored by Bill Schofield who opened it as the Cheshire Cat Eating House.



The Three Pigeons

This was known as the Angel in the 15th century. In the early 19th century it had a cock-pit and was also an important coaching stop.



The Foresters Arms

This first opened as a small beerhouse in 1844 and around 1900 was nicknamed "the Cloggers". It closed in 1928.



The Oddfellows Arms

This pub opened in 1767 as the White Lion. By 1788 it had been renamed the Boot & Slipper and by 1792, the Boot & Shoe. The pub closed in 1813 but in 1844 reopened as a beerhouse under its current name.



The Globe

This building may have been a pub around 1864. Its licensee was Mary Pace.



The Seven Stars

This pub was open for a short time around 1851 and is only shown on the town map of the same year.



The Cotton Arms

First called the Ring o' Bells in 1749, this pub closed in 1799 but reopened as the Cotton Arms between 1857 and 1869.



The Black Lion

One of Nantwich's oldest inns, the date above the door is 1664. It has had various name changes over the years and in the 1930s was a popular pub for Welsh Row residents. Landlord and landlady, Bridgman and Edith Tilley, provided a variety of entertainment.



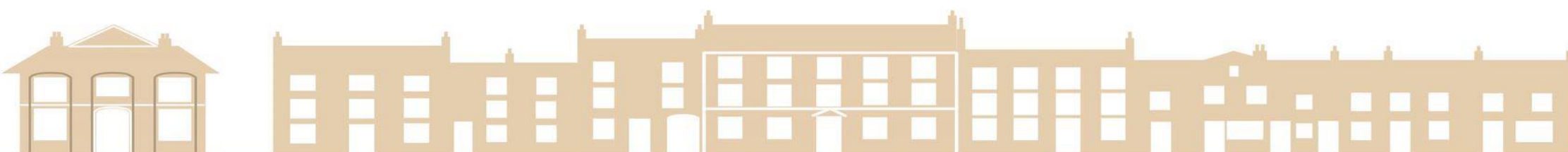
Swan with Two Necks

The first alehouse on this site was called the Punchbowl and it became the Swan with Two Necks in 1822. There are stories of two ghosts here, a Parliamentarian soldier and a servant girl.



The Bridge Foot

This pub opened around 1850. Although attracting a poorer class of clientele, it did provide accommodation for theatrical performers who were appearing at the nearby Town Hall. It closed in 1906.



Welsh Row 'Bar' Chart

Number of pubs over time



Earliest pubs were:
Angel 1602
(now Nakatcha)
Black Lion 1638
Red Lion 1667
(now Wilbraham Arms)

Growth in stagecoach traffic creates demand for new inns

Beerhouse Act 1830 - new pub licences much easier to obtain

Compensation Act 1904 - sweeping powers given to close down "unsavoury" pubs

Although the total number has not changed over this period, some traditional drinks-only pubs have diversified to offer food and entertainment

Townsend House and its Walled Garden

1575-1780

Townsend House, built in 1575-1580 by Richard Wilbraham of Nantwich, was one of the town's most important buildings. It was the family's home until 1780.



Richard Wilbraham's ring, in Nantwich Museum

Richard 1525- 1612	Thomas 1589- 1643	Thomas 1622- 1649	Roger 1623- 1708	Randle 1663- 1732	Roger 1695- 1754	George 1741- 1813
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Contents of Parlour
6 wrought quishons
6 gladden quishons
2 old Dorney Carpettes
One Carpet of Tapestry
One basin and Ewer
One stayned Cupbord clothe
One Iron grate with fyre shovel & tongs
One plate Candlestick
6 greene Buffett stools
5 keyned stools
6 brassen weightes like bolles
6 new Turkie quishons
Tables Formes & Chaires
Bookes
Pictures, one mappe & one table of Armes
2 Cupboardes

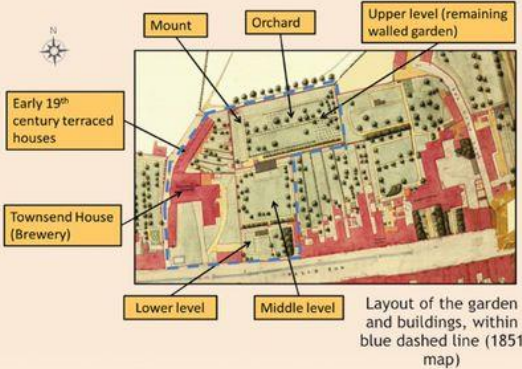
Rooms in Townsend House in 1611, from Richard Wilbraham's Will and Inventory
Hall
Parlour
Chamber
Closet
Maids' chamber
Chamber over maids' chamber
Great chamber
Chamber over parlour
Chamber over buttery
Men's chamber
Gallery and little chambers adjoining
Chamber over kitchen
Cheese Chamber
Dairy house
Brew house
Barn
Storehouse
Kitchen
Chamber over kitchen

Mr. That upon the 25th of August 1617. King James at his returne forth of Scotland came to this Towne of Nantwich, and lay one night at my house, at the same tyme there were with him the Duke of Lenox, D. Howard of the King's household, the Duke of Buckingham master of the horse, the Earle of Pembroke, D. Chamberlaine of the K. household, and divers other Lords, and Knights. Upon the 26th day he went to the Church, where Doctor Dod preached before him, who shortly after was sworn his Chaplaine. At his returne from Church he went to see the Synepitt, and aft. dinner went to Bromley, to my D. Gerard's house.

Extract from the Wilbraham family diary* recording the visit by King James I to Townsend House in 1617



George Wilbraham, the last Wilbraham to live at Townsend House



Layout of the garden and buildings, within blue dashed line (1851 map)

1780-1960s

- Brewery
- Clothing factory
- New house
- Magistrates' court and offices
- Police station
- Commercial garages

In the early 1800s the house was in a dilapidated state and was sold out of the Wilbraham family. By 1818 a brewery had been established on the site, which continued until the 1850s.



Enoch Wood ceramic jug, 1818, with illustrations of Townsend Brewery

In 1855 George Harlock, a clothing manufacturer, opened a new house and opened a sewing factory, employing over 200 people.



The second Townsend House (Herbert St John Jones, 1934)



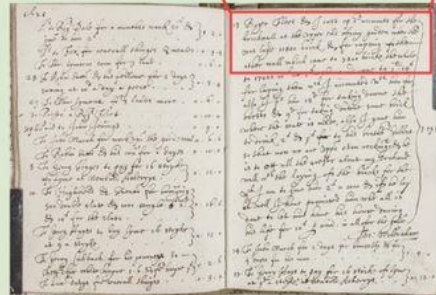
Summer house in the early 20th century



Arthur Bevan, Nantwich solicitor, and his wife Lynette were the last occupants of Townsend House. The house was demolished in the mid-1960s.

Walls and Garden

13 Sept 1628: 11,800 bricks were used for raising the "brickwall at the upper end of my garden".



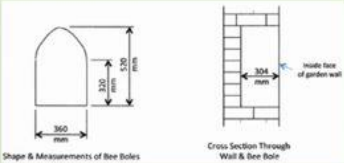
Personal Account Book of Thomas Wilbraham 1613-1642

From the Account Book,* we know that Thomas Wilbraham purchased:

- * "cherrytrees, apricocks and peaches".
- * hundreds of "setts" for trees and bushes, including birch, privet and holly.
- * a garden house, columns, arbour, well, carved stone lion and much more!



There are three bee holes in the south wall. They housed straw bee skeps (predecessors to bee hives).



400 year old gateway, destroyed in the 1990s



James Hall, in his 1883 History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich states: "A stone gateway...which formerly stood in this [Townsend House] garden, now adorns the grounds of Dorfold Hall".



Section of the Grade II listed wall

The garden is not open to the public.

Nantwich Walled Garden Society

Founded in 2004 to prevent the site from being used for housing and to restore the walls and garden. For further information, see the display in the Museum foyer.

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*Images from Wilbraham records held at the Cheshire Record Office are reproduced with the permission of Cheshire Archives & Local Studies and the owner/depositor to whom copyright is reserved.



The Cottage Hospital



Hospital frontage showing the two wings housing the male and female wards

Known as the hospital with a homely touch, Nantwich Cottage Hospital is remembered with great affection by local residents who passed through its doors.

Founded by public subscription to the sum of £3,470 in 1911, it provided a vital service to the community over the ensuing 61 years.

At the 22 bed hospital there was a male ward, a female ward, a children's ward, an operating theatre and nurses' quarters.

Operations were carried out daily in the latter years by Doctors Knowles and Lipscombe and in those days the staff consisted of a matron, two ward sisters, one full-time and one part-time theatre sister, one full-time and one part-time sister for night duty, four state enrolled nurses and seven nursing auxiliaries. In the first seven months of 1969 there were over 600 admissions and 580 operations.



Miss Mary Duncalf, matron for 19 years until its closure



Rear view of the hospital



June Edge, theatre sister



Trainee nurses c1956:
Miss Duncalf with (back row left to right) Sister Pam Harding, Nurse Dale, unknown, Nurse Tew; (front row, left to right) Nurses Mary McMath, Eva Stephenson, Violet Wilson, Julie (Bridget) O'Riordan, Elaine Cheadle



Dr Lipscombe with Miss Duncalf and ward sisters



A chance to relax in the nurses' home: nursing auxiliaries (left to right) Dora Crump, Mary Woodbridge, Ivy Barber and Melis Seymour are served lunch by Doris Horton (left) and Lilian Tomlinson (catering assistants)



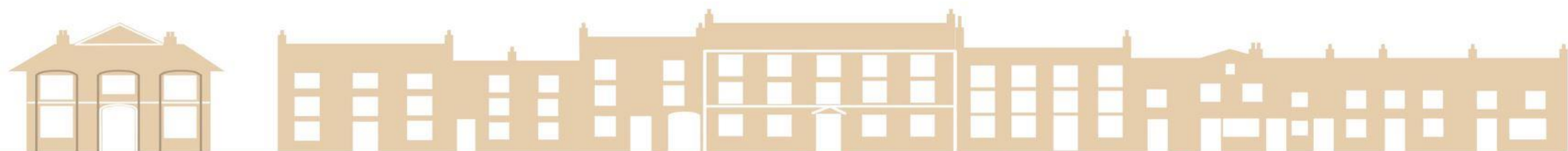
On the wards



Wing Commander Grant-Ferris (MP for Nantwich 1955-1974) visiting the children's ward



Nantwich citizens were a lucky, healthy bunch, thanks to Matron Duncalf and her staff. In 1972 its doors were shut for the last time when the nearby Leighton Hospital opened.



Where were these buildings in Welsh Row?



49 Welsh Row



111-123 Welsh Row



75 Welsh Row

1. Whitehall

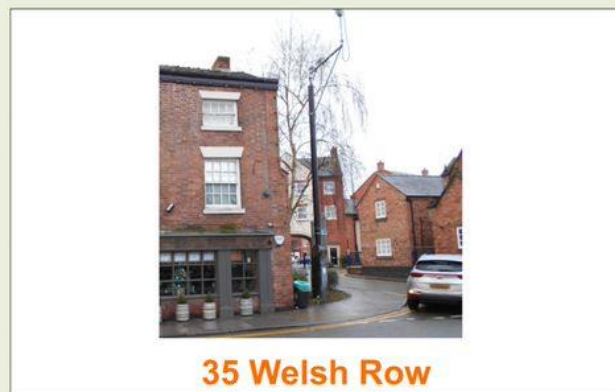
This mansion was the town house of the Wettenhall family who lived there for some 300 years. In 1601 in his will Gabriel Wettenhall bequeathed the house and its contents to his son William. The house was sold out of the family in 1798. Later, Dr William Kent lived there followed by Dr Richard Hughes. In 1896 it was the headquarters of Nantwich Liberal Club. In 1913 it was in the possession of Edward Bayliss, antique dealer, whose son Augustus continued the business until his death in the 1950s, after which the building was allowed to decay. Shamefully, in 1965 it was demolished.

2. Row of Seven Cottages

Five of these nearest Marsh Lane were black and white, thatched and typical of the poorer residences in the street.

3. Widows' Almshouse

This almshouse was founded by Roger Wilbraham in 1705 and was intended for two Nantwich widows. It was extremely small, with just two rooms, one up, one down, one fireplace, a cold-water tap and an earth closet in the yard. With no back entrance, coal deliveries and night-soil collections had to go through the house. In 1953 it was demolished to make way for Queen's Drive.



35 Welsh Row



19 Welsh Row



Cross Wood Street

4. Heath's Shop

Ancient salt houses occupied this site in the medieval period. In 1887 it was the clothier's shop of A.J. Howard who was succeeded by J.R. Heath, who continued the business until its closure in the early 1980s. There are items from this shop on permanent display in the Museum.



5. Boyer's Bakery

This building was occupied by the Boyer family for some 200 years. The first recorded baker was John Boyer, born c1742. Matthew Boyer (1834-1906) was a prominent Liberal and a member of the first Nantwich Urban District Council. His son Joseph carried on the business until it closed in the 1940s.

6. Old Cottages

These were built on the site of old salt (or "wich") houses, which may have been converted into cottages. In 1792 there were 35 properties in First Wood Street and 43 in Second Wood Street, indicative of the overcrowding which, along with extremely poor sanitary conditions, inevitably led to the deadly cholera outbreak in 1849. Several buildings were still standing in the 1940s but were demolished about 10 years later.



© Nantwich Museum

Welsh Drovers come to Nantwich

Painting by Les Pickford



Welsh Row to c1600

A Roman trackway and a medieval timber causeway lie along the line of Welsh Row.

c60 - The Roman army conquered Cheshire; there was a road to salt workings next to the River Weaver.

c410 - The Roman legions left Britain and life continued within the former Cornovii tribal area.

642 - Following the battle of Maserfelth, King Penda consolidated the rule of Mercia in Cheshire.

1066 - Welsh Row in the Parish of Acton and the Hundred of Warmundestrou; wealth increased through salt making.

1086 - The Domesday Book does not mention Nantwich. Salt making within Acton was at 'Wych'.

c1100 - Norman castle constructed within Wyche of Acton.

1120 - Hugh Malbank founded Combermere Abbey.

1260 - A leper hospital was recorded at the western end of Welsh Row, which later became an infirmary for the poor.

1350 - A stream named Frog Channel (after Froggemulne, a watermill in Acton) flowed down the middle of the Row, which led to its being called Frog Row.

1450 - Frog Row was known as Welshman's Row, later Welsh Row, as traders from Wales brought lime and other goods to exchange for salt.

1549 - Froggstreet and Frogge Rowe both continued to be used as names.

1583 - The Great Fire of Nantwich.

1596 - Outbreak of the plague resulted in 165 deaths in Nantwich.

1600-1650 - The names Welcherow, Welch Row or Welche Rowe all became more widely used.

The wooden bridge over the River Weaver was replaced by a stone bridge between 1600 and 1660.

Welch Row was used for the name of the road in the **1841** census, whilst Welsh Row was used from **1861** onwards.





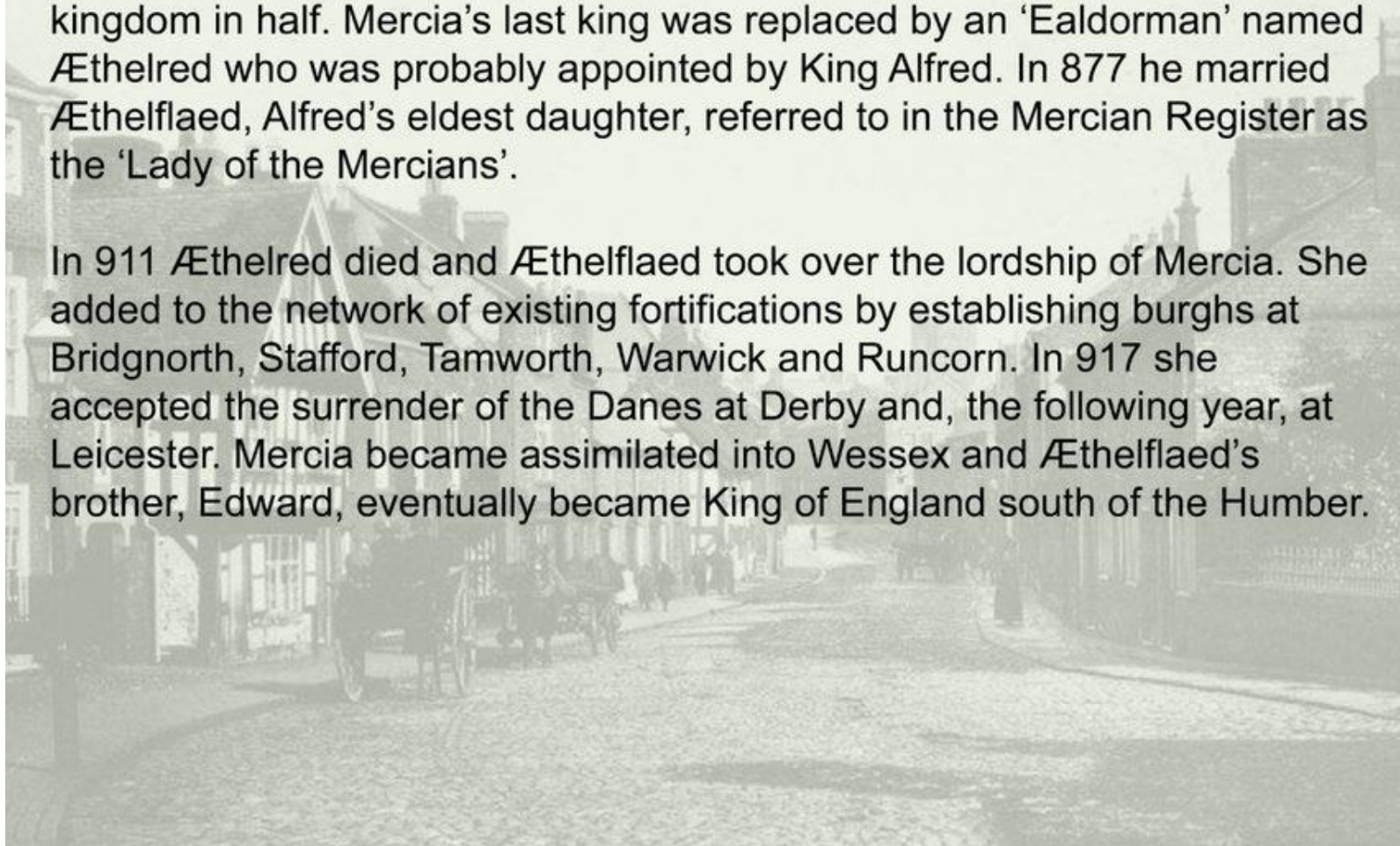
Welsh Row in late Mercian times

The salt houses near the River Weaver were administered and managed by the settlement at Acton. By 1086, tax was being paid on eight salt houses and one salt pit. It is likely that these would have existed in Mercian times (6th - 9th centuries).

During the late Mercian times the Danes invaded Britain, occupying the east and north of England. Although this was an uncertain and dangerous time, in the far west of Mercia the area around Nantwich remained relatively safe.

In c886, the treaty between King Alfred and the Danish King Guthrum established Danelaw, with the boundary probably running along Watling Street to Tamworth before turning north. This essentially split the Mercian kingdom in half. Mercia's last king was replaced by an 'Ealdorman' named Æthelred who was probably appointed by King Alfred. In 877 he married Æthelflaed, Alfred's eldest daughter, referred to in the Mercian Register as the 'Lady of the Mercians'.

In 911 Æthelred died and Æthelflaed took over the lordship of Mercia. She added to the network of existing fortifications by establishing burghs at Bridgnorth, Stafford, Tamworth, Warwick and Runcorn. In 917 she accepted the surrender of the Danes at Derby and, the following year, at Leicester. Mercia became assimilated into Wessex and Æthelflaed's brother, Edward, eventually became King of England south of the Humber.





The Bridge on Welsh Row

The original bridge over the River Weaver was made of wood and there are records of fights at the bridge and wrestling contests between boys living in Welsh Row during the early 1400s. Around the time of the reign of James I (1603-1625) the wooden bridge was replaced by a stone bridge.

In 1622, in his book *The History of Cheshire containing King's Vale-Royal*, William Webb wrote of "a strong timber bridge over the stream the Weever is maintained by the town, which requires no little care and cost, by reason of the monstrous carriages of the wood in carts which is brought thither for the boiling of their salt".

In 1635, at the Spring Assizes at Chester, the inhabitants of Nantwich were ordered "...to repayre and amende their Bridge, and to make [the] same sufficient for Carts and Horses at all Seasons, upon pain of [the] forfeiture of £100".

On 5 November 1636, Thomas Wilbraham recorded in his journal "The River Weever was so high [that] the water touched the planks of the wych bridge".

The wooden bridge was rebuilt the following year "...this summer the wych bridge was new built of tymber...".

In 1663 a new stone bridge was built, at the county's expense. The stone bridge was replaced by the current bridge in 1803.



Timeline from 1600

Early 1600s and Civil War

James I stayed at Townsend House and visited the brine spring in 1617.

There were over 150 salt-houses in Nantwich, with about 80 near Welsh Row.

The Wilbraham almshouses were erected in 1613 (now replaced by the Tollemache almshouses).



Post-Civil War recovery

Nantwich resumed its role as a market town and major centre for cheese and salt production, with a wide range of craftsmen and traders serving its rural hinterland, local gentry, and stagecoaches and other traffic passing along Welsh Row on the London-Chester-Dublin route. A new stone bridge across the River Weaver was built in 1663.

Trade in late 17th century

Salt-making declined in Nantwich due to the discovery of rock salt at Marbury and the availability of cheaper coal supplies at the north Cheshire salt towns via the River Weaver. This was compensated for by the growth of the leather trades of tanning, currying and particularly glove- and boot-making, to serve both local and London markets.

18th century prosperity

Several properties were refronted or rebuilt in the fashionable Georgian style.

Artisan trades and retailing grew in line with increasing national prosperity.

Opening of turnpikes led to improved stagecoach and wagon services, with a toll gate near the end of Welsh Row.

Construction of canals helped trade to develop.



19th century trade and transport

After a stagnant period during the Napoleonic wars, artisan boot-making grew rapidly in mid-century to serve the Manchester market, but declined later due to the opening of factories.

The Weaver bridge was rebuilt by William Lightfoot in 1803. Stagecoach services expanded until arrival of the railway at Crewe in 1837.

19th century institutions

Gas works 1832; Primitive Methodist and Catholic churches c1840; Savings Bank 1846; Grammar School, County Court and Police Station c1860; Tollemache almshouses 1870; Townsend House and its outbuildings converted to a brewery in early 1800s and to a clothing factory in the late 1850s.

Mains water and sewerage installed following cholera



19th/20th century education

Private schools were established in the early 1800s. Nantwich Grammar School moved to Welsh Row in 1860 and merged with Acton School in 1886.

Wood Street National/Church School opened in 1874.

The Grammar School expanded in the 20th century and changed its status, first to a county secondary and then to a comprehensive.

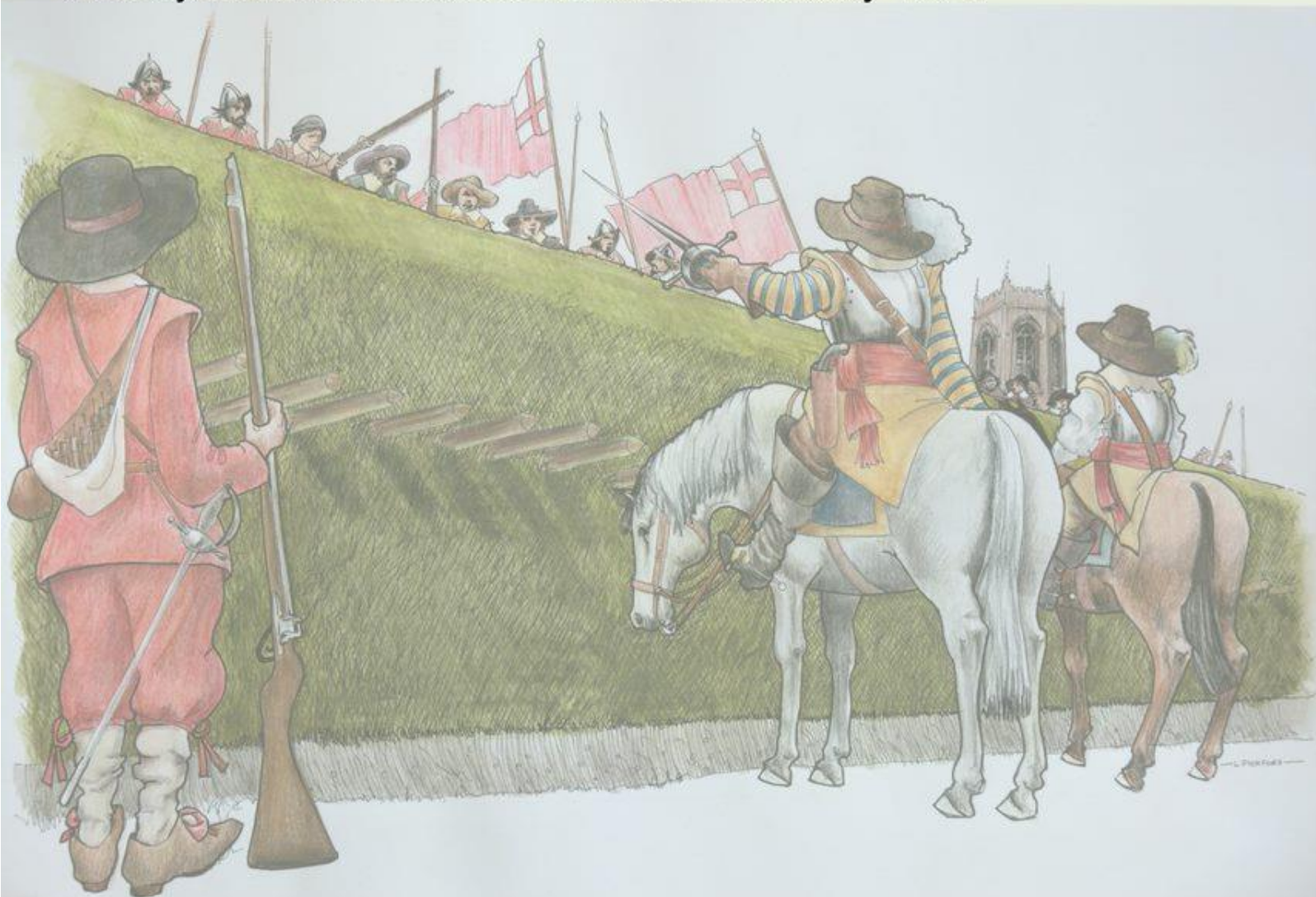
20th/21st century developments

The Cottage Hospital opened in 1911 and was demolished in 1999; Nantwich UDC took over the gas works; Queens Drive was built in 1953; Whitehall and Townsend House were demolished in c1965; a sewer tunnel was constructed under Welsh Row in the 1980s; the tannery closed and new houses were built between the tannery site and the aqueduct, together with other developments.

● Civil War

Nantwich was a significant Parliamentary garrison town during the war, housing a substantial number of troops that roughly doubled the town's population. By late 1643 it was the last Parliamentary stronghold in Cheshire, posing a threat to Royalist troops, whose numbers were swelled by soldiers coming from Ireland via Chester. Most of Welsh Row was enclosed within the town's defensive earthen wall and there were many movements of troops and supplies to provision the garrison.

The Royalists besieged the town in December 1643 and it was subjected to cannon fire but sustained little damage. The siege was lifted by Parliamentary forces under Sir Thomas Fairfax who defeated the Royalists in the Battle of Nantwich in January 1644.



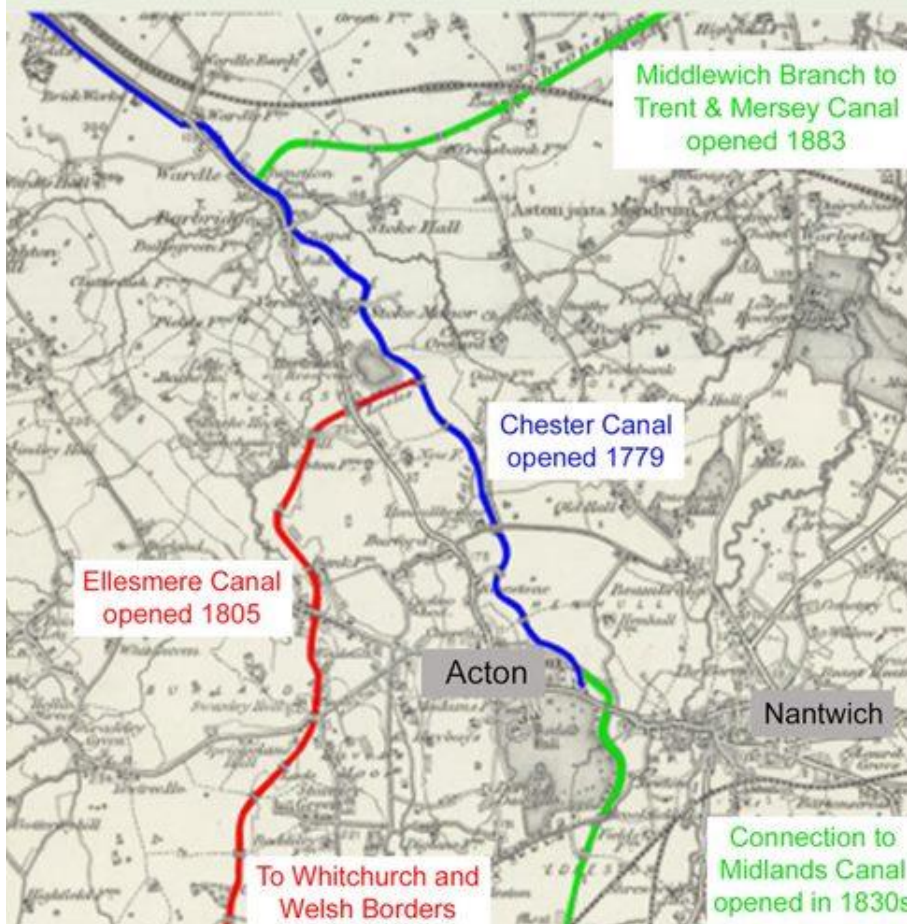


Canals

The Chester Canal opened in 1779, terminating in a basin near the Chester road, just beyond the end of Welsh Row. It was not successful initially because it was not connected to any other waterways and due to silting of the River Dee.

Its fortunes changed from around 1800 when it was linked with the Mersey and the Welsh Borders via the Ellesmere Canal. This made coal, slate, iron, lime and timber more easily available and also provided an export route for local produce, increasing traffic along Welsh Row.

More direct canal links opened to Manchester and the Midlands in the 1830s, at which time the aqueduct and embankment at the end of Welsh Row were constructed. The various canal developments are shown on the map below.





Nantwich Aqueduct

- Designed by Thomas Telford
- Completed c1828
- Opened to traffic 2 March 1835
- 1991 Grade II* listed (Historic England)
“Special architectural/historic interest”
- Restored 2015 at a cost of £125,000



To extend the canal from Nantwich Basin End to the Midlands, it had been planned to take it straight through Dorfold Park; however, permission for this route was refused. To avoid the Park, a substantial embankment and aqueduct were constructed to carry the canal across the turnpike road to Chester.

Thomas Telford declared the masonry and ironwork of the completed structure to be “**of the most perfect workmanship**”.



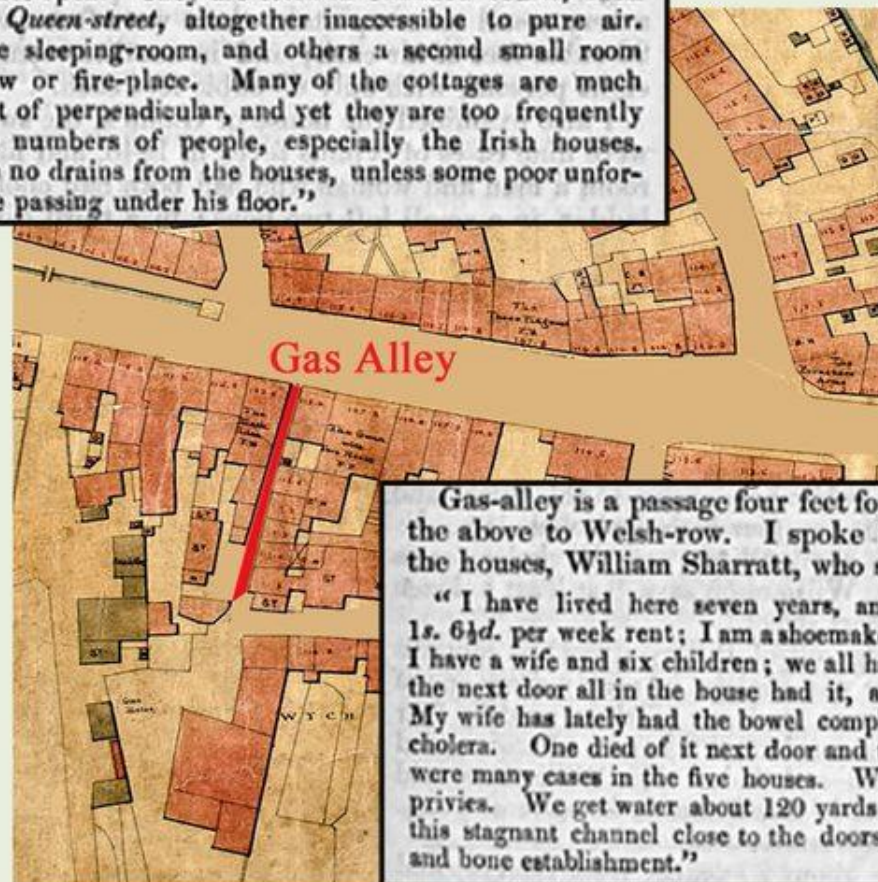
● Health and Sanitation

The first cholera outbreak, in which 14 people died, was in September 1832, mainly in Wyche House Bank and the Wood Streets. Another outbreak in 1849 resulted in 181 deaths in the Nantwich Hundred, the disease spreading rapidly as a result of poor, overcrowded housing and bad sanitation, with the Wood Street area again figuring prominently. Many inhabitants were using the River Weaver for drinking water and for the disposal of sewage.

During the epidemic, neither weekly markets nor the September Fair were held; even country milk-sellers refused to come into the town, and grass grew in the streets!

The epidemic led to the Lee Report (see extracts below) and the first detailed map of the town in 1851, followed by the provision of water mains and sewerage, including culverting of the Frog Channel.

"There are many houses in Nantwich without any doors or windows at the back; others that have the sleeping rooms in the roof, with windows that will not open. They are often in confined courts, such as *Gas-alley* and *Queen-street*, altogether inaccessible to pure air. Some have only one sleeping-room, and others a second small room without any window or fire-place. Many of the cottages are much dilapidated and out of perpendicular, and yet they are too frequently occupied by large numbers of people, especially the Irish houses. Generally there are no drains from the houses, unless some poor unfortunate man has one passing under his floor."



Gas-alley is a passage four feet four inches wide leading from the above to Welsh-row. I spoke to one of the occupants of the houses, William Sharratt, who said,—

"I have lived here seven years, and pay for house and chamber 1s. 6½d. per week rent; I am a shoemaker, and earn 8s. or 9s. per week; I have a wife and six children; we all had fever two years since, and at the next door all in the house had it, and the man and his wife died. My wife has lately had the bowel complaint; but we have escaped the cholera. One died of it next door and two others in the alley. There were many cases in the five houses. We have no back doors, nor any privies. We get water about 120 yards off. There are no drains, but this stagnant channel close to the doors. One of the houses is a rag and bone establishment."



Cholera

Cholera struck Nantwich in 1849 with nearly 1,000 cases and 180 deaths in just over four months.

The Rector of Nantwich, Andrew Fuller Chater, provided the leadership not only in combatting the disease but also in the subsequent recovery and modernisation of the town.

Reverend Chater is reported as “rising before daybreak each morning, to stand upon the bridge and conjecture, from the course of the fog that hung over the sluggish Weaver, in what court he should be wanted that day.” He thought deeply about the epidemic and must have wondered why, in the reign of Queen Victoria, he found Nantwich stuck in near medieval conditions. There was no piped running water and the sewers were open ditches draining into the River Weaver. This exposed the poorer residents, especially those living in the Wood Street area and near the gas works, to any water-borne disease such as cholera.

A General Board of Health inquiry, chaired by William Lee, was held in 1850 and recommended the supply of clean piped water. The contract was awarded to a company run by Lee and Stevenson of London. Thus, the chairman of the inquiry became the main financial beneficiary from the engineering works – the building of a reservoir and water works at Baddiley and water mains entering the town down Welsh Row.

The original 1855 plans provided by Lee and Stevenson are on display but they hide the pantomime of the string of fountains produced by the first failed attempts at supplying water to the town. The water shot up to six feet in the air from the leaking joints in the earthenware piping down the length of Welsh Row. This problem was only solved when Lee and Stevenson were sacked and the new contractor substituted cast iron pipes.



Welsh Row Through the Ages

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More information about Nantwich Museum can be found at:

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