

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGY

### 4.1 Medieval village (Map 6 & 7)

#### 4.1.1 Buildings



Fig. 11. St Michael's church: early to mid-12<sup>th</sup>-century tower and apsidal chancel.

St Michael's church is the only surviving medieval building in the town. The nave was enlarged then rebuilt in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries so that just the eastern tower and apse remain from the earlier church. The apse has pilaster buttresses, and the tower double belfry openings and a corbel table. Internally, the tower arches have shafts on their inner faces, with scalloped capitals. The church is built of Caen stone ashlar for quoins and rubble that includes ferruginous sandstone. It dates from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4.1.2 Excavations (Map 5)

Excavations at **South Way** in 1971-4 in advance of construction of the ring road and associated development were unusually extensive for a Sussex town, and were as near as 80m to the High Street frontage. The evidence for the medieval period, however, was conclusively for intensely cultivated fields. Pottery of the Saxo-Norman period onwards was found in the medieval ploughwash, or colluvial, that had accumulated up to 1.5m over the Roman levels

on a modest slope of 5°. The only medieval features comprised two shallow pits cut into the alluvium of the Ouse flood plain, with pottery dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were located 10m west of the subway under South Way.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Topographic analysis (Maps 6 & 7)

With no Anglo-Saxon or medieval settlement site discovered in the South Way excavations and an absence of either surviving medieval buildings or detailed documentary records, there remains no certainty as to the location of medieval Meeching or any possible Anglo-Saxon predecessor.

At nearby settlements on the edge of the estuary, at Piddinghoe, Southease and Tarring Neville, church and, respectively, Courthouse Farm, Court Farm and Tarring Court Farm/Manor Farm are grouped together with the small nuclei of their medieval villages. At Meeching the church and Court House Farm (suggestive, as elsewhere, of earlier function as the manor house<sup>79</sup>) are more widely separated (350m), and each is over 300m from the centre of the settlement mapped in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The creation of the new haven of the River Ouse c.1539, the subsequent development of a harbour, and the replacement of the name *Meeching* by that of *Newhaven* provides an obvious context for settlement shift from either of these potential nuclei, though fails to explain why they are so widely spaced. This is countered somewhat by the fact that the population of Meeching/Newhaven only reached a town-like scale after c.1800 suggesting that the creation of a new haven did not give rise to a thriving town for 250 years. Also, the old coast road through village (passing close by the church) led to an important and early crossing of the Ouse, with a ferry at Meeching attested by the 13<sup>th</sup> century and, possibly, used as a crossing point since the Roman period.

Thus it remains possible that the medieval village was focused on this road and river crossing, downhill from the church, broadly as it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is consistent with the evidence of the South Way excavations – which did not reach the edge of the larger town as it was in 1838 (tithe map) – but is no more probable than a village centred on the church or Court House Farm, or, indeed, a polyfocal settlement. The demolition of Court House Farm in 1953 (at which point it appeared to be a purely 17<sup>th</sup>-century house<sup>80</sup>), the engulfing of both it and the church by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century suburbs, and the redevelopment of much of the town centre

mean that while any resolution will be through excavation, it will be challenging.



Fig. 12. The Bridge Inn, High Street, viewed from the island.

## 4.2 Post-medieval port, c.1540-1845 (Maps 8-9)

### 4.2.1 Buildings

Newhaven has eight buildings that date from c.1540-1845, six dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and two from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings include a small concentration near the junction of High Street and Chapel Street. The Bridge Inn, so famously where King Louis of France and his queen stayed after their escape from revolution in 1848, combines several low ranges that, despite no obviously pre-18<sup>th</sup> century features, might well prove to be earlier. Conjoining 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses at nearby 1-5 Chapel Street suggest that the area near the ferry/bridge was built up at this time. Only 80m from the Bridge Inn, 19 High Street is an entirely tile-hung 18<sup>th</sup>-century townhouse that, again, formed part of a continuously built-up street front. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century rectory, now subdivided into two cottages (St Michael's Cottage and the Old Rectory, Church Hill), lies well away from the core of the town, to the west of the parish church. Within the churchyard itself, the (grade II listed) 1785 monument to brewer Thomas Tipper

is well known both for its epitaph and for its depiction of the bridge of 1784 (Fig. 6).

Although Newhaven gained a new gun battery near the site of the later fort in 1759 and appears to have been rearmed at the least at the time of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, no identifiable upstanding remains survive from this period.

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century is marked by two buildings that reflect the expansion of emergent town: the Congregationalist Church, South Way, of 1841 (Fig. 13), and the Newhaven Union workhouse of 1835. The latter lies unused within the site of Newhaven Downs Hospital, and is by the well-known workhouse designer Sampson Kempthorne. Surprisingly, its simple block plan does not show Kempthorne's usual ideas on ventilation (his model plans for square and hexagonal workhouses were issued by the Central Poor-Law Authority in the same year).<sup>81</sup>



Fig. 13. Newhaven Union workhouse, Church Hill (1835).

### 4.2.2 Excavations (Map 5)

The excavations at **South Way** in 1971-4 were unusually extensive for a Sussex town, but, as for the medieval period, there was little evidence for the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: the site lay outside the town until the 1840s. As a result there were no features, but some pottery sherds and clay pipes were found. Pottery included a late 16<sup>th</sup>-century stoneware medallion of a German (probably from Cologne) salt-glazed jug; green-glazed ware similar to that of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-

century date from the Farnham area; and 18<sup>th</sup>-century stoneware, all from this country, with lead-glazed pots probably made locally. Clay tobacco pipes were almost entirely from Sussex (mainly Brighton and Lewes), dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>82</sup>



Fig. 14. 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses at 1-5 Chapel Street.

### 4.2.3 Topography (Maps 8-9)

The survival of maps from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards confirms what the minimal architectural and archaeological evidence suggest: that the centre of the village/town at this date was the area around the lower end of the High Street. As late as 1838 (tithe map), built-up streets were limited to the parts of High Street and Chapel Street now encompassed by the ring road. The northern edge of the town was skirted by what appears to have been a lesser street providing access to the wharves north of the ferry/bridge, roughly along the line of modern North Way. Minor lanes between High Street plots survive as South Lane and St Luke's Lane, while what is now Bridge Street was largely unbuilt and terminated at a large meadow (known as 'Knowles') that occupied the bend in the river to the east and south-east of the town.

In 1838 (tithe map) warehouses were concentrated along the town river frontage, but included one immediately south of Knowles meadow. The customs house was located in the town centre, at the north end of Chapel Street

(now a bank). Bonding yards were located nearer the outfall, on the site of the modern marina. The harbour's shipyard on the northern edge of the town is still a boatyard today, capable of making commercial fishing vessels.

## 4.3 Expansion: c.1845-2004 (Maps 3 and 11)

### 4.3.1 Buildings and topography

The majority of the buildings in Newhaven date from this period, partly as a result of loss of earlier buildings, but also through the considerable expansion of the town. Growth was most concentrated after the railway arrived (1847) and, again, after 1945.

The High Street continues to be the main shopping area in the town. The lower part ceased to be the main thoroughfare, however, when the main bridge was relocated in 1866 and Bridge Street became the new approach road, utilizing an earlier no-through road. Although retaining shops and businesses, since the building of a new bridge in 1974 Bridge Street has declined in importance.



Fig. 15. Bridge Street, a main thoroughfare from 1866-1974.



Fig. 16. South Road: late 19<sup>th</sup>-century terrace housing.

The creation of a shopping centre and multi-storey car park south of the High Street since 1974 have significantly changed the topography of the town centre, with the loss of 19<sup>th</sup>-century schools and terrace housing. The related development of the inner ring road has had a more dramatic effect on the town centre, however, both in terms of demolition (e.g. the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Anglican church) and by removing through traffic from the ancient route marked by the High Street (now pedestrianized). As a result the town centre is a sharply defined island only c.200m north-south and c.300m east-west within the busy ring road.

Outside the town centre, change has been still more dramatic, with the progressive expansion of the town. This began with parallel streets of terrace housing (e.g. Meeching Road and Prospect Place [now South Road] and South Eastern Terrace [now Chapel Street] by c.1875) on the south side of the town, followed by similar developments off the Lewes and (new) Brighton roads (e.g. Elphick Road and Lawes Avenue) by c.1900. Modest terrace housing continued to expand these areas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and there was very little development of detached and semi-detached houses or bungalows typical of the inter-war period. This contrasts with most other south-coast towns of the period and reflects the commercial function of the port. Post-1945 expansion has been the most rapid, tripling the built-up area. With the decline in manual labour at the port the new housing has not been designed to serve the local workforce and, thus, has adopted more typical post-war forms: sinuous roads of housing estates dominated by detached and, especially, semi-detached housing. These have extended the

town westwards up the slope of the South Downs.

Equally dramatic change has occurred east of the River Ouse, with the development of the railway and its wharves from 1847. The 1864 route of the river remains that today, but other harbour-side survivals from this period are limited to the main line of the railway, the western buildings of Newhaven Town station, and, on the railway wharf just south of the 1974 swing bridge, the marine workshops (c.1882), and the carpenters' workshop and paint store (c.1885). Just north of Newhaven Harbour Station, 19<sup>th</sup>-century terrace housing represents survival of housing for workers. At the outfall of the River Ouse the east pier, promenade, and the great western breakwater date from 1879-83.



Fig. 17. Workshops on Railway Wharf from c.1882-5.

Elsewhere, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century wharves and harbour buildings have been lost, not through abandonment or non-maritime redevelopment, but to continuous renewal and replacement as Newhaven has continued to function as a port for passengers and goods. An additional function has also expanded during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the increase in yachting has seen the redevelopment of Sleeper's Hole, on the west side of the Ouse, as Newhaven Marina. To the north of this and also to the south adjacent to the fort, the recent development of housing represents an example of the wider trend of waterfront redevelopment, although here



Fig. 18. Lunette Battery (early 1855), showing gun platform and, beyond, a magazine.

is mostly on hitherto vacant land. Despite such development, and the loss of the western quay railways, the west side of the River Ouse retains the lifeboat station and the landing stages for the commercial fishing boats that continue to use Newhaven.

East of the port area (beyond the EUS study area) light industrial and commercial development of the floodplain has occurred since 1945, so that Newhaven is now linked to the post-war housing that has engulfed the

former modest village of Denton on the eastern slope of the Ouse valley.

The earliest upstanding remains of the successive fortifications at Newhaven are those of the 1855-6 Town Battery (or Lunette Battery) at the cliff base between Newhaven Fort and the harbour. This is ruinous and neglected (despite its status as a Scheduled Monument), but two of three gun platforms are visible, suggesting that the proposed six guns were not installed, or that the battery was modified soon after construction. Between the platforms there are brick walls and a shell recess (or magazine), all forming a half-moon or lunette plan.

Newhaven Fort (also a Scheduled Monument) has also suffered both during substantial modifications in the Second World War and after military use ceased (1962). The eastern edge of the fort, which incorporated the 1856 battery (itself overlying the 1759 battery),<sup>83</sup> was built over by housing in the 1970s, but the remainder has been restored as a museum. Survivals from the 1860s Palmerston fort include gun emplacements, ditches and revetments, the barrack block, magazines, and ancillary rooms. A passage with steep stairs provides internal access to a caponier at the cliff base (the ditch of which is now infilled). This would have allowed defenders to fire along the base of the cliff, and represents a development from open bastions (e.g. at Littlehampton Fort, 1854), and is seen previously in Sussex at Shoreham Fort (1857).<sup>84</sup> The 1860s fort at Newhaven represents the first use of massed concrete in a British fortification.<sup>85</sup>



Fig. 19. Newhaven Fort, with Seaford Bay beyond.



Fig. 20. Newhaven tithing map, 1838 (copy in *East Sussex Record Office*, here a digitally-rectified composite).