

building across the street, and the polite frontage of the Assembly Rooms with its tiny walled garden, assisted by some intelligent modern landscaping around the Burma Star memorial opposite, conspire to create a rare moment of enclosure and 'hereness'.



North Road (above); Church Square (below)



- 46 The smaller lanes that run at right angles to these main thoroughfares have a different character again. Narrower and more tightly constricted, they have their own sense of intimacy, even of mystery – especially where, as in Lions Road and the upper part of West Street, they turn a corner or describe a curve, ending somewhere out of sight. Some yield considerable surprises: the unexpected eruption of the distant past in the form of the Priory ruins of Ashford Road, the sudden presence of the great Norman tower at the end of Church Approach. In the narrowest, mere alleyways like Church Close, the little town comes closest to possessing a truly 'urban' grain. Others, like the gently undulating Victoria Street, are more relaxed. Together with such modern creations as the tree-lined walkway that links High Street with Mabledon Close, they give permeability to the townscape, as well as a variety of scale that relieves what might otherwise be the tedium of the grid-plan.



Church Close (above left) and West Street (above right)



Lion's Road

- 47 Cannon Street and its immediate environs constitute a quite separate character area. Situated on the edge of the settlement, and separated from the town centre by a tract of undistinguished suburban housing, this smaller historic enclave is far more informal, even rural, in feel. Turning off the rather bleak highway of the A259 by the Blue Dolphin Hotel, one suddenly finds oneself in a narrow country lane, bordered by high hedges and overhung with dark trees, amongst which can be glimpsed a cluster of old houses. Moving up the road, one arrives at the junction where Oak Lodge Road crosses Cannon Street, which resembles the centre of a remote rural hamlet. The irregularity of the crossroads, and the dense foliage all around, restricts visibility to only a few yards in each direction, intensifying the impression of an isolated settlement; it is rather a disappointment to follow the roads to north, south or west and find oneself amid suburban housing again.



Cannon Street looking south-west

Key views & vistas

- 48 Due to the flatness of the terrain, there are few long vistas either into or out of New Romney. The church tower is a landmark across the Marsh, but little can be seen of the town itself until one reaches the top of the High Street; from here, where it meets Church Road and Station Road at the junction opposite the Ship Hotel, there is a fine view down the whole length of the main street, on the left of which the Shell garage unhappily imposes itself. The Town Hall, with its flagpole and projecting cartouche, can be glimpsed in the distance. There is a similar, reversed view from the opposite end of the street outside the Cinque Ports Arms.



High Street looking north west

- 49 These vistas along the High Street are lengthy but undramatic. More eventful are the glimpses to be gained down the side-streets to north and south. Of the latter, the view down Church Approach is the most striking, with the great west tower of St Nicholas' – not much visible within the town – abruptly looming up at the end of the narrow street, the Georgian red-brick frontage of the Assembly Hall providing a splendid foil for its craggy Romanesque stonework. (Other good views of the tower can be gained over the garden wall at no. 43a High Street, and from the western end of Church Road.) The view down Church Close is made dramatic by the extreme narrowness of the street, and that along Ashford Road by the sudden appearance of the Priory ruins on the left and, further along, the equally unexpected vista across St Martin's Field on the right.



Views towards St Nicholas' Church

- 50 This broad green expanse is one of the few vantage-points from which the town centre can be seen at a distance, and provides some key views back towards the High Street. The same is true of St Nicholas' churchyard, although the high boundary wall restricts visibility, and the raw tarmac car park behind the Assembly Rooms spoils the view. Church Lane offers an even rarer vista: a view right out of the town into open fields, the transition made more pronounced by the drop in level across what was once the harbour wall. Comparable glimpses of the surrounding countryside can be obtained from the top of West Street and Ashford Road.
- 51 Canon Street provides a gradually unfolding vista of its own, with more and more of its houses coming into view as one moves along the lane. The short view south along Oak Lodge Road is satisfyingly closed off by the house known as Millside.



*Top: View across St Martin's Field towards High Street;
Middle: Church Lane looking south-east;
Bottom: Oak Hall Lane looking south-east.*

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity, uses & influence on layout & building types

- 52 New Romney's dual history as a seaport and an agricultural market town have shaped its current form, albeit in ways that are now difficult to discern. With the diversion of the river and the gradual recession of the sea-shore, the place of the once-thriving harbour within the layout of the town has become less and less obvious. The river flowed east into the sea, and its higher northern bank – upon which the town once stood – ran north-east as the estuary widened. This, as we have seen, accounts for the overall alignment of the town, and in particular for the course of Church Road, which would have lain just inland from the harbour wall. The latter ran a little beyond the outer boundary of the churchyard, perhaps where the drainage ditch known as the Main Sewer now flows. Church Lane, which now runs a mile out into open country, must once have led straight to the docks. A drop in level is still evident as it crosses the old shoreline; this, like the way in which the west door of the church is set two or three feet below street level, may in part be the result of sand and shingle piled up during the storm of 1287.



c.1910 photograph showing the former shoreline with St Nicholas' Church behind

- 53 Market activities were, at least from the C18th, concentrated around two locations: the open loggia beneath the Town Hall, and (for the livestock markets) St Martin's Field. The former was blocked up in the C19th to create additional office space for the town's burgeoning administration. The latter, which may have originally been the churchyard of St Martin's Church, survives, albeit in a much reduced form and surrounded by housing on all sides.
- 54 In the absence of a central square, commercial activity must always have been strung along much of the length of the High Street, as it still is today. Although it was probably never quite so densely built-up as the 1611 map suggests, we still find pre-C18th timber-framed buildings all the way from the Ship Hotel in the north-

east right down to the Cinque Ports Arms in the south-west, suggesting that the great length of the main street is a long-standing feature of the town. The original function of most of these buildings is impossible to ascertain. Most are now shops, and shop-fronts do survive from the C19th (e.g. at no. 16) but the elaborate door cases on several of the properties built or refronted in the Georgian period (e.g. nos. 29-31) suggest that these at least were once houses of some standing. There is also a proliferation of pubs and inns: the High Street boasts three, plus the Plough on Dymchurch Road and the Prince of Wales on Fairfield Road.



Georgian door-cases at 29-31 High Street

- 55 Specialised building types are another legacy of the town's role as a commercial and administrative centre. The Town Hall, already mentioned, is the most prominent – and also the only one still serving something like its original function, being the seat of the present-day Town Council. Older at least in parts are the Assembly Rooms, a complex which as we have seen housed the grammar school and the assemblies of the Cinque Ports, and which retains medieval fabric as well as the schoolroom dated 1676. Another C17th foundation is Southland's Hospital, whose almshouses, rebuilt in 1711, still stand in West Street. C19th social provision is represented by the former National School on Church Lane.
- 56 Of the town's five ancient religious buildings, only two survive above ground. St Nicholas' Church is by far the most prominent, surrounded on three sides by its extensive graveyard, dominating the southern side of the town as it would once have towered over the harbour. As the principal church of the town, its function was never purely religious: certain civic activities such as the mayor-making ceremony took place within its spacious three-aisled interior, and its mighty west tower is supposed to have served as a beacon for shipping. St John's Priory is a much more fragmentary survival, with only one complete building of uncertain function still standing; the long wall to the right of this is at least in part a reconstruction. There are also two Nonconformist chapels, both of 19th-century origin and much humbler in form and scale.



School buildings of the 17th and 19th centuries

Architectural & historic qualities & contribution to special interest

[All buildings mentioned in this section are Grade II listed unless otherwise stated.]

- 57 By far the largest and most architecturally important building in the town is St Nicholas' Church (Grade I), built in the years following the Norman Conquest on what was then the harbour-side. The surviving Norman work is of the late C12th, and consists of a four-bay nave with heavy Romanesque arcades and the massive west tower. The eastern part of the church was rebuilt and extended in the early C14th, in Decorated Gothic style.



St Nicholas' Church from the south, showing Norman tower and nave (left), and Decorated Gothic aisle and chancel (right)

- 58 What remains of St John's Priory (Grade II*) is only a tiny fragment of the original complex, consisting of one small building of uncertain function and a length of boundary wall. Both are embellished with a variety of architectural ornament of various periods – pointed doorways, window tracery, corbel heads – but much of this is believed to be antiquarian salvage from other buildings, possibly including the nearby ruined church of Hope All Saints.



Remains of St John's Priory c.1900

- 59 A few domestic buildings with apparent medieval origins also survive. All are small hall-houses of the C14th-15th, probably residences of the town's merchant and governing classes. That at 3-4 West Street (Grade II*) is stone-fronted, with its original C14th two-centred Gothic doorway still in place; it has seen many alterations including a jettied C15th crosswing and C18th fenestration. Oak Hall at 41-43 High Street was completely refronted in the C18th, but displays a similar outward form and is probably of around the same date. Frogs Hall on Cannon Street incorporates the service wing and part of the hall of a jettied hall-house of the C15th, though again wholly re-fronted and re-fenestrated. Finally, Mittell House on Church Road, externally of the early C19th, incorporates an even smaller fragment of another hall-house, this time of the C16th.



Medieval hall-houses: 3-4 West Street and Frogs Hall

- 60 Post-medieval houses in the town are not easy to date, mainly because of the very thorough programme of re-fronting that went on in the C18th and 19th. Most are on the High Street. On the north side, nos. 16-22 and 26-30 make up a row of timber-framed houses with frontages of various dates, nos. 46-48, 78-80 and 86-88 furnish similar examples.
- 61 On the south side, two of the three pubs – the New Inn and the Cinque Ports – are probably timber-framed buildings with later brick fronts, whilst the Ship Inn incorporates part of a similar structure in its left-hand wing. Next door to the latter at no. 85 is a house of the mid-to-late C17th which is still in something resembling its original state: its combination of a symmetrical seven-bay brick front with small leaded casement windows and a steep hipped roof make it an interesting transition-point between earlier vernacular styles and the classicism of the century to come.



C17th house at 85 High Street (left); Southland's Hospital (right)

- 62 That new classicism arrived in a surprisingly accomplished form in the early 18th-century rebuilding of the Assembly Rooms. This has a simplified temple-front in red and grey brick, with four giant pilasters rising up into an attic stage, above which is a sharply-projecting cornice and a broad pedimented gable set with a big central roundel. The use of a giant order with (in the central pilasters) two sets of capitals, and the projecting keystones over the windows and doorway, give the façade a mildly Baroque flavour. The frontage of King's House at 26 High Street is of a similar date, the six 16-light sash windows on the first floor showing the thick glazing bars typical of early Georgian buildings.
- 63 A more refined example in a similar style is Priory House at 44 High Street (grade II*). The proportions of this surprisingly grand Georgian town-house are much taller and more elegant, giving a harmoniousness that even the two inserted shop-fronts cannot destroy. West Lawn on Lydd Road is a similar house of 1715 with later alterations. A rather more eccentric building of the same period is Southland's Hospital, dated 1734. Here, the windows are set in a curious star-shaped or *quincunx* configuration. The Town Gaol is of 1750 but looks old-fashioned for that date; its high-security function may have dictated the use of small windows with heavily-leaded casements.



Early Georgian buildings: the Assembly Rooms (left) and King's House (right)



Georgian door cases at 44 High Street (left) and Westlawn House (right);

64 Buildings with later Georgian features include most of the timber-framed structures already mentioned, as well as many on the northern side of the High Street (nos. 17-33), which appears to have seen much rebuilding around this time. Typical features include brick modillion cornices at roof-level, sash windows of 9, 12 or 16 lights with slender late C18th glazing bars, and modest Classical door cases embellished with pilasters, pediments, cornices and scrolls. Away from the High Street, Mulberry House presents a less urban example of the type. Set back in its own grounds behind high walls, it is peculiar in presenting two strongly contrasting façades: a 'polite' and wholly regular stucco front to the driveway on Lion's Road, and to the rear on Church Road a more 'rustic' one with tile-hanging and an outsize central 'Gothick' window. Other houses of the period include Little Gables on North Street and Gun House on Cannon Street.



The two faces of Mulberry House, above.



Gun House

- 65 The process of refronting carried on into the C19th. The Town Hall, originally of 1702, received a new front in a 'Regency' style, the lower part being added in a matching idiom in 1884. The upper windows have round-arched heads, a device mirrored in the semicircular tympana on the ground floor at 2 George Lane. The latter forms part of a small early-C19th group, including its neighbours nos. 1 and 3, and the Prince of Wales pub round the corner in Fairfield Road. Another such group, albeit rather more disparate, is to be found in Cannon Street, consisting of the small villa known as the Governor's House, and the more modest dwellings on either side: Page House, Page Cottage and Millside. Also of this period, and showing the typical low-pitched slate roof with overhanging eaves, is the front part of Stone House on Dymchurch Road. From later in the century come such houses as Delapre in West Street, nos. 1 and 2 Rome Road and 24 High Street.



The Town Hall (left) and Stone House (right)



Early 19th century houses in Cannon Street: Governor's House (left) and Page House (right)

- 66 Buildings of the late C19th and C20th are generally unlisted, and are discussed in more detail in the section below. Such Victorian buildings as the Broadacre Hotel and the Baptist Chapel on North Road, the Post Office on High Street and The Elms on Dymchurch Road show little development in architectural terms from the late-Georgian examples already discussed: sash windows tend to have fewer glazing bars, and in some cases self-consciously vernacular features like bargeboards and ornamental tile-hanging are introduced, but the basic vocabulary remains constant.
- 67 In the early C20th, the vernacularizing tendency is strengthened with the emergence of the Arts and Crafts movement, whose influence can be seen in the inter-war buildings between Church Approach and Tritton Lane on High Street: Lloyds TSB Bank with its diminutive Dutch gable, nos. 59-61 with their projecting semi-dormers, and the Methodist Church with its kneelered gables and 'Tudor'

window tracery. The influence extends even into the post-war period: the 1950s/60s Spar store at 32-34 High Street has panels of tile-hanging on its upper floor, as do more recent buildings like the two new 'cottages' on Sussex Road, Endeavour and Holly House. More successful is the plainer but still evidently vernacular treatment of the row of modern shops at 60-76 High Street, which combine traditional materials and massing with low-key modernist details like the projecting surrounds to the first-floor windows.



Late Arts and Crafts: the Methodist Church on High Street

Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

- 68 Amongst the many unlisted buildings in the historic town centre, some three or four would appear to be of listable quality. The most prominent is the former Blue Dolphin Hotel on Dymchurch Road in the Cannon Street CA. The older part of the house may be of the C16th or C17th, while the remainder (including the tile-hanging) looks Victorian.
- 69 Still more enigmatic is the diminutive building known as Magpies, which stands on Church Road opposite St Nicholas'. This one-storey structure, which looks to be of considerable age, has a tiled roof and is walled in rough chequerboard stonework three different colours, the quoins and gable-ends being in brick. It has three shuttered windows along the street front and another high up in the eastern gable. It was apparently once an abattoir and butcher's shop, and now belongs to the District Council. This has been identified on the Historic Environment analysis map as a potential for statutory listing.
- 70 Finally, at the far south-western end of the town at nos. 1-2 Lydd Road is a substantial late 18th-century house with original sash windows and panelled doorcase, of similar or superior quality to other Georgian houses in the town but somehow omitted from the statutory lists. This too has been identified as a potential for statutory listing.



Blue Dolphins Hotel (left) and Magpies (right)



1-2 Lydd Road

- 71 Apart from these, the best group of unlisted buildings is the attractive C19th *ensemble* on North Street, consisting of the Broadacre Hotel and its various outbuildings, the long two-storey building marked on the map simply as 'Hall', Clapton Cottages, and the Baptist Chapel beyond. The first, also possibly of listable quality, is a large early-Victorian villa once known as The Gables. It has a five-bay sash-windowed brick front and a tiled roof topped by tall brick chimneys with complicated corbelling; a later, taller extension to the north-east features elaborate barge-boards and a strongly projecting eaves cornice.
- 72 The 'Hall' building must once have been part of the same complex; it has two-light casement windows with diamond-paned glass (matching those in the hotel outbuilding), a modillioned brick string-course between its ground and first floors, and a huge barn-like sliding door into the hotel courtyard. Clapton Cottages form a simple early-Victorian terrace of three small houses, with chimneys of oddly varying heights. The Baptist Chapel, dated 1886, has a vestigially Classical front with two round-headed windows flanking a door of similar shape, and the gable-end treated as a simplified pediment.