Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

BINNS' MAP OF LANCASTER 200 YEARS AGO

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 123

In Guide No. 66 we looked at Stephen Mackreth's detailed and beautiful map of Lancaster, which was surveyed in the mid-1770s and published in 1778. In this Guide we move forward around 50 years to the mid-1820s. Jonathan Binns' map of the town shows us many of the important changes that had taken place in Lancaster during the Georgian era.

The whole map as one image is hard to make legible in a single image on a small screen but a copy of the map can be found at: https://lancaster.libguides.com/maps/historicmaps#s-lg-box-11473656 and scroll down till you come to Binns' map.

The map is dated 1821 but there were additions up to 1824 and it went on sale in October 1825. The scale is 1:2400 and north is at the top of the map.

Maps at that time usually had an elaborate title and dedication at the top – here is the one on Binns' map.



Much of the interest on the map comes from looking at small areas of the town. Below we see the 'Green Area' as it was then called (now the Green Ayre) – an open area used as Brockbanks shipbuilding yard (roughly where Sainsbury's supermarket is now) and a timber yard running along the River Lune to the southern end of the 'New Bridge' (that is, Skerton Bridge). Part of old Skerton is also shown at the top and St John's Church is at the bottom.



Another area of interest is centred on Dalton Square, the development of which was described in more detail in Guide No. 98. At the top is Stonewell (also called St Mary's Square) and on the left are Cheapside and Penny Street. Dalton Square itself is still an unfinished development, decades after it started, empty plots on three sides. The site of the current Town Hall is a pair of large houses and an empty plot.



The centre of town is recognisable in outline but differs in detail in many ways. Today's City Museum was then the Town Hall; Market Square (then called Market Place) lived up to its name with the 'Fish Stones'; and more food selling (including

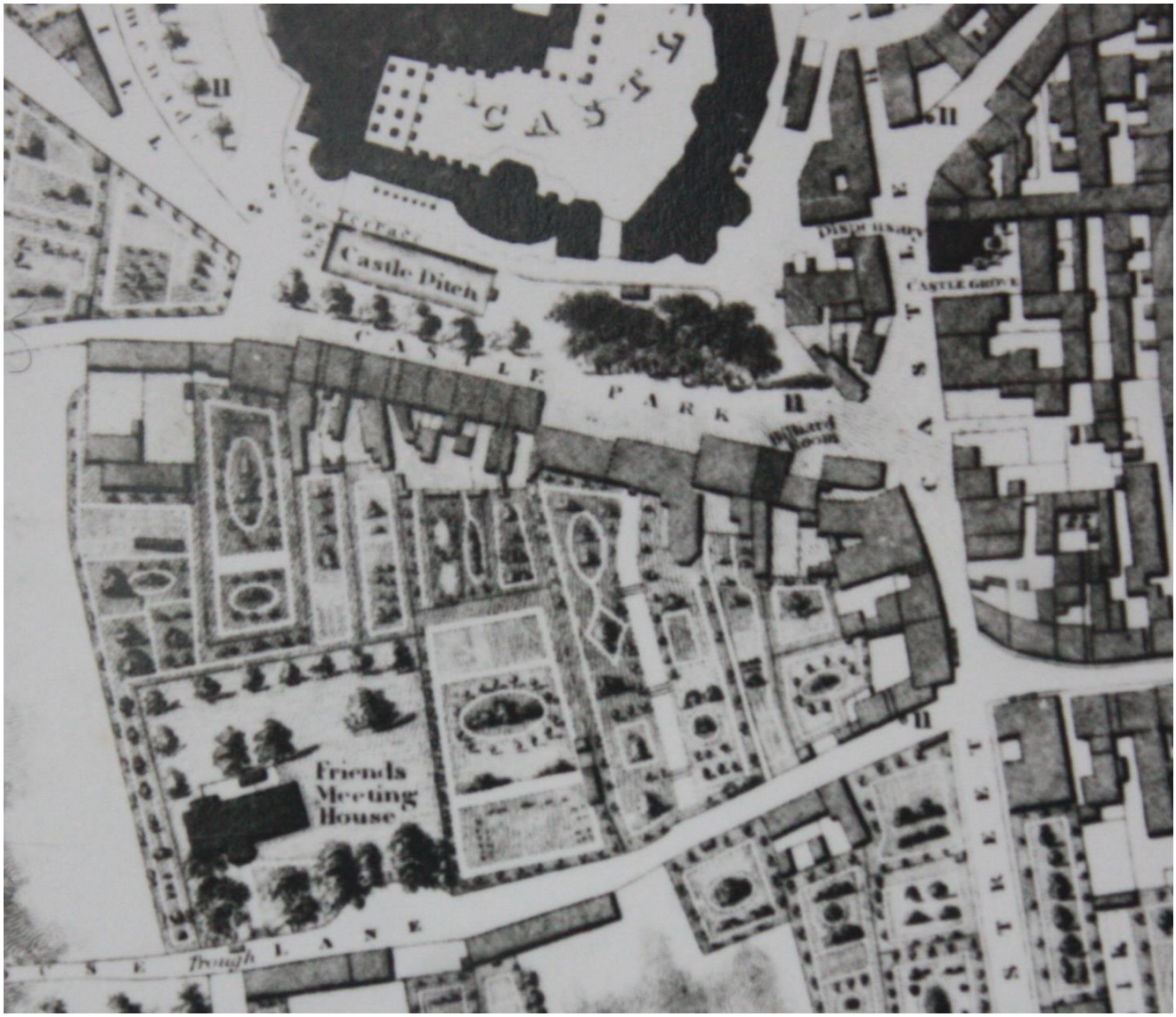
meat) took place in the Shambles area. Top left you can see China Lane (now widened to China Street) but then a lane barely wide enough for a cart. It is interesting how many open areas and gardens there are in the 1820s. Notice how many of the buildings are long and narrow, with a short frontage on Market Street or Church Street, and the building stretching back at right angles to the street – the town's burgage plots.



The image below shows the area south of Lancaster Castle. By the mid-1820s the Castle is coming to the end of its extensive expansion and redevelopment to create a prison fit for the nineteenth century – developments described in more detail in Guide No. 28.

South of the vestigial Castle Ditch is 'Castle Park' with elegant houses and large gardens running down to Meeting House Lane and the Friends Meeting House.

It would be only 16 years before the railway arrived in Lancaster from Preston on the far left of the image.



Elsewhere on the map we can see the recent developments around White Cross, Queen Street, Common Garden Street and Fenton Street.

Binns names several buildings such as the Canal Office, the Pot House on St George's Quay, schools, the Workhouse, churches, inns and the King's Arms Hotel, shipyards,

the ‘soapery’, rope walk, almshouses, theatres, news rooms, banks, brewery and the library. He shows the ‘Ancient Boundary of Frierage Land’.



The Children’s Home (1908) of the former Workhouse, the largest of the surviving buildings on the site. (Source: Author)

From Binns’ map one does get a sense of life and activities in the town. His is the first detailed map of Lancaster to try and show the topography of the town by using hachuring, a form of shading to depict sloping ground. It is a most informative map.

The cartographer, Jonathan Binns (1785–1871), had an interesting life. The son of a doctor, he started as a farmer at Leach House near Galgate, become a land agent and surveyor, and for 37 years was a leading figure in the Lancaster Agricultural Society.

In 1835–6 he travelled around Ireland as an Assistant Agricultural Commissioner attached to the Irish Poor Inquiry.

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Published by Lancaster Civic Vision (2024).
Lancaster Civic Vision is the trading name of Lancaster Civic Society, registered charity no. 258434