

Stephens, 31-35 High Street

31, 33 and 35 High Street are believed to have been all part of the same medieval open hall house with the standard tripartite (or three part) form. The open hall (No. 33) has been dated to 1340 and is the oldest known domestic building in Droitwich. No. 35 is likely to have been the service wing and No. 31, the solar (parlour). The solar, which appears to have replaced an earlier part of the original structure, has been dated to between 1403 and 1428 and was described by F.W.B Charles (1967) as 'the finest solar yet discovered in Worcestershire' for the quality of its roof structure.

 **Its timber mouldings and decorative structural members and wall-plate capping.**



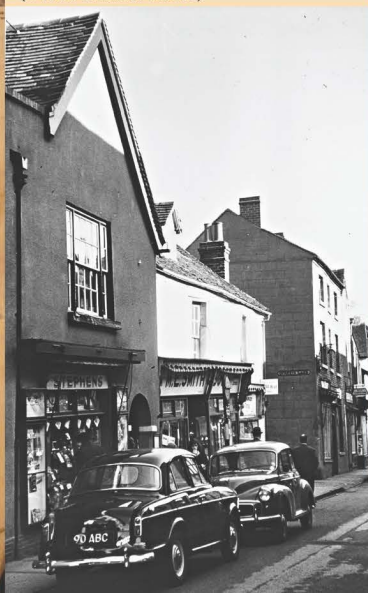
To read more about 31-35 High Street, scan here



Left: Decorative timber mouldings and carvings inside the roof of 31-35 High Street (© WCC Charles Archive)

Below left: Reconstruction drawing of the street front gable of 31 High Street (Stephens) (© courtesy of Nick Joyce Architects)

Below right: 31-35 High Street (Stephens) and the southern end of the High Street (© WCC Charles Archive)



F.W.B ('Freddie') and Mary Charles

Specialising in timber-framed conservation and innovative repair, the Charles practice campaigned to conserve timber-framed buildings from the often ravaging effects of post-war regeneration and educate the public about our built heritage. Freddie was one of the founding members of the Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings, near Bromsgrove.



Many of the photographs, plans and drawings presented in this leaflet are publically accessible at Explore the Past in the Hive, Worcester (www.explorethepast.co.uk/project/charles-archive). Thanks to funding from Historic England, The Charles Archive has been electronically catalogued; a digital photographic archive of important material has also been created and made accessible via the Archaeology Data Service and Worcestershire and Worcester City Historic Environment Records.



To read more about cataloguing the archive, scan here

For more in-depth information why not explore Freddie and Mary's work in more detail in Charles. F.W.B, 1967, *Medieval cruck-building and its derivatives: a study of timber-framed construction based on buildings in Worcestershire* in the Society for Medieval Archaeology's Monograph no 2 and F.W. B Charles & Mary Charles, 1984, *Conservation of Timber Buildings*.

Buildings 1, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have been recorded as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) supported Historic Droitwich – Its Streets and People project, which looks in detail at the architectural history of the buildings and the people who lived, worked and socialised within them. Many thanks to the project group for enabling us to cite this most up to date research.

Explore the Past

To read more about the Historic Droitwich Survey, scan here



Chorley House (© WCC Charles Archive)

Timber-framed Buildings of Droitwich

A walking trail inspired by the life and works of F.W.B 'Freddie' & Mary Charles

www.explorethepast.co.uk/project/charles-archive

Timber-framed Buildings of Droitwich

This short walk around Droitwich, is one of two timber-framed trails, inspired by the life and works of F.W.B 'Freddie' and Mary Charles, whose pioneering architectural practice recorded and conserved many of Worcestershire's most iconic timber-framed buildings from the 1950s to the 1980s.

More details about the Timber-Framed Buildings of Worcester trail can be found at www.explorethepast.co.uk/project/charles-archive/WorcesterTrail. Further details of the project to catalogue the Charles Archive and a number of blog posts featuring some of the buildings you can see on the trails, are available on the Explore the Past blog (www.explorethepast.co.uk) or scan the QR codes to find out more about the buildings themselves, their association with the Charles family practice and the wealth of historic archive material available.

Many of these buildings are open to the public as coffee houses or pubs so the original features can be observed and enjoyed.

This guide includes a few hints and tips on 'things to look out for' as you visit these sites.



Priory House, 36-38 Friar Street

This large, U-plan, timber-framed building was in a state of disrepair when, in 1967, F.W.B Charles published his research on the building's medieval rear wing. As well as drawing attention to its poor condition, and need for preservation, Charles ensured that Priory House was included on one of the first tree-ring (dendrochronology) dating programmes, which dated the street range to 1580. The most recent tree ring sampling of the south-eastern wing produced a felling date range between 1568 and 1593. The building is now owned by the Droitwich Preservation Trust.



Highly decorative chimney stacks and timber-framing. Can you spot the fleur de lis, a stylised lily, with three petals?

Priory House, 36-38 Friar Street, circa 1967
(© WCC Charles Archive)



79-81 Friar Street

Dated to the late 16th century this two bay timber-framed house has its better quality range on Friar Street. Recorded by Mary Charles, in 1960, as part of her 'Survey of Existing Buildings' in Friar Street.



Overhanging or jettied upper storey is supported by decorative curved brackets



79-81 Friar Street (forefront) with 77 Friar Street - 'The Old Cock Inn', dated 1712 (rear).
(© WCC Charles Archive)

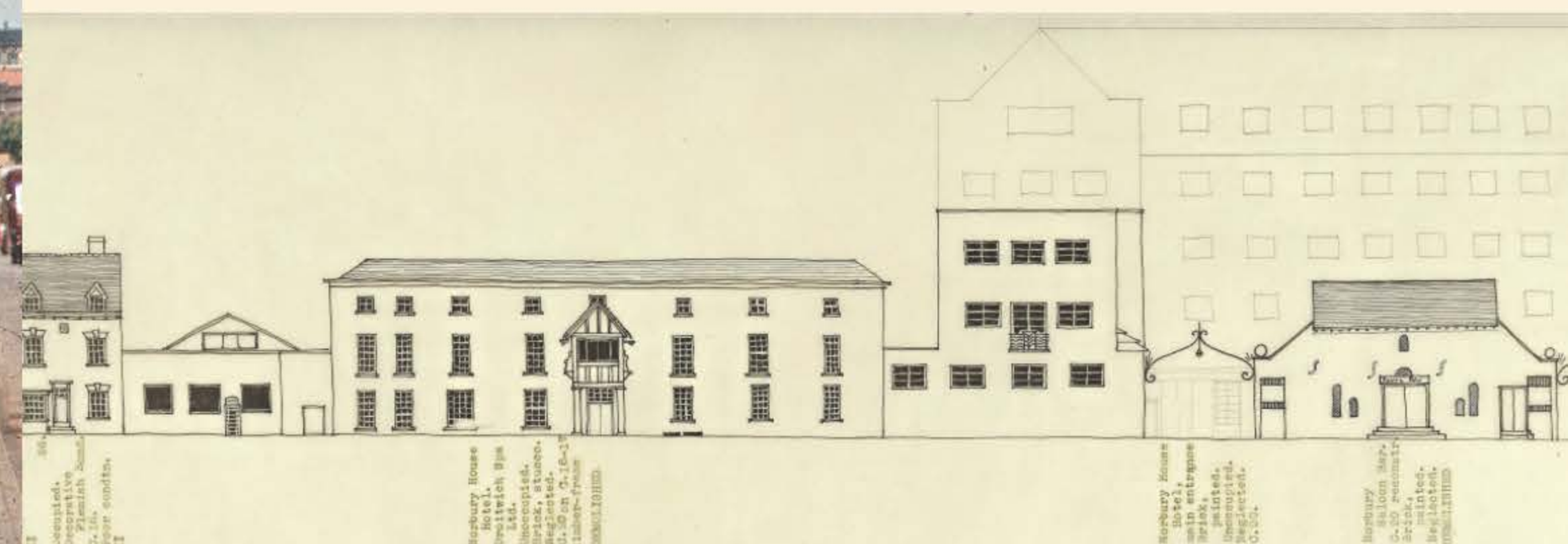


Norbury House Hotel, 1936
(© By permission of Historic England Archive)



Norbury House Hotel

Another building referenced in Mary Charles' survey of Friar Street is the Norbury House Hotel. Built in the 1930s as a spa hotel, the building is recorded as being originally based around a 16th-17th century, timber-framed structure. The hotel was requisitioned during World War II and used as a billet for officer cadets and then as a reception centre for new recruits to the Auxiliary Service. During the 1950s it was used to house families of serving soldiers before being partially demolished in the 1960s, with the main part converted into flats and a theatre.



Part of 1960 survey of Friar Street by Mary Charles (© WCC Charles Archive)



Chorley House (© By permission of Historic England Archive)

4 Chorley House

Dated to the 14th-15th century and reputedly originally part of an Augustinian Friary, Chorley House was described by F.W.B Charles as the finest example of medieval timber-frame construction in the county, excluding Worcester itself. Consisting of an open hall with two-storey additional bays at each end and side wings, forming a U-plan, the building was turned into a grand town house after the dissolution of the monasteries (1536-1541). By 1960 the building was in a serious state of neglect. F.W.B Charles spearheaded a campaign for its restoration and conversion into a public library. Despite considerable local support, the building was sadly demolished in 1962.

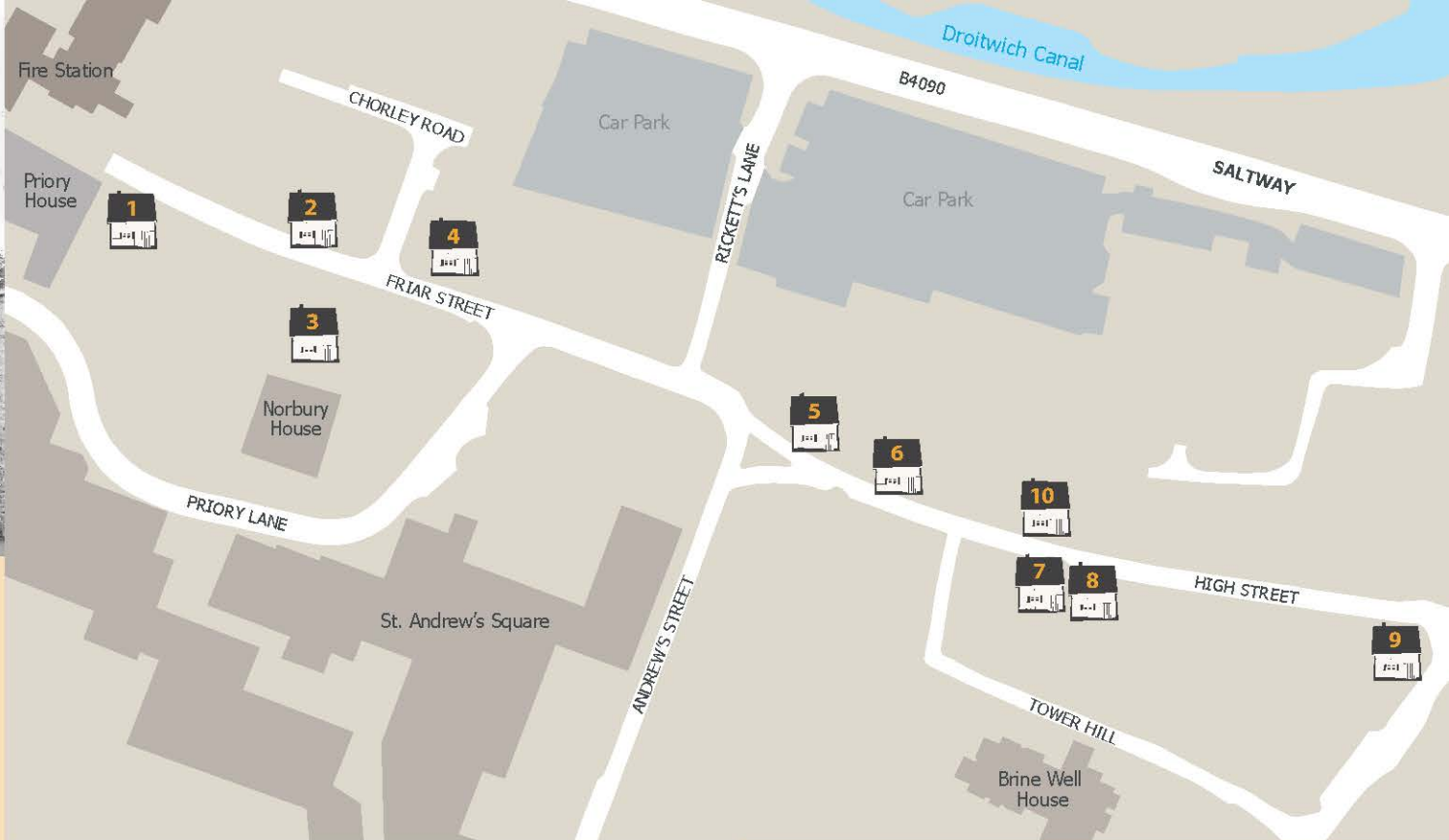
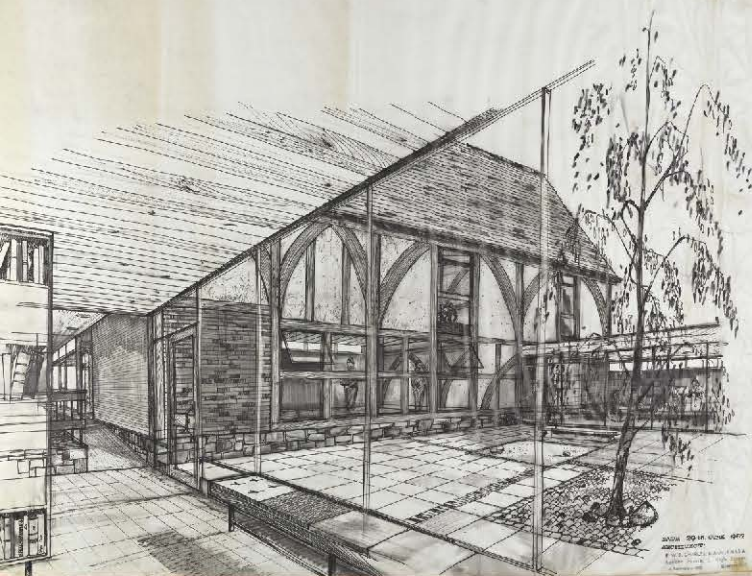


To read more about Chorley House, scan here

Below: Chorley House, prior to its demolition, circa 1960 (© WCC Charles Archive)

Below middle: Vision of Chorley House as a County Branch Library, circa 1962 (© WCC Charles Archive)

Below bottom: Chorley House roof detailing (© WCC Charles Archive)



5 13, 15 and 17 High Street

Concealed behind the early 19th century brick façade of the Star and Garter Public Inn and shops, 15 and 17 High Street, is a large timber-framed building. Tree ring dating of the street range has produced a felling date of 1513. Originally jettied, a fire in the 18th century damaged the frame and led to the rebuilding of the front in brick.

Renovations in 2015 also revealed painted decoration on one of the walls

The Star and Garter Public Inn (© By permission of Historic England Archive)



6 21 and 23 High Street

This late 16th century timber-framed building is the first external example of a timber-frame on the High Street.



21-23 High Street, Droitwich, 2018 (© WAAS)

Its close studding, although replaced, and its substantial timber-framed wing to the rear.

16-46 High Street (© By permission Historic England Archive)



7 20 and 22 High Street

This timber-framed building has been tree ring dated to 1657. Originally jettied, the ground floor front wall was re-built in brick during the mid to late 18th century, to create the street frontage seen today.

8 Hereford House, 24 High Street

The unassuming Georgian street frontage of 24 High Street hides an architectural first for Worcestershire; a Wealden hall house. This type of medieval house is traditional to the south east of England and is characterised by its central open hall flanked by jettied end bays. 24 High Street used to be an inn called the Waggon and Horses, it has also been known as 'The Crooked House' due to subsidence issues caused by underground brine reservoirs. The building has appeared on several vintage postcards, one of which had the statement: 'The place gives the most temperate person the impression of having supped not wisely but too well!' Tree ring analysis has provided a felling date of 1455.

9 Bullocks, 44-46 High Street

The earliest phase of this building has been dated to circa 1550. The High Street frontage, with its decorative timber-framing, has been dated to 1600 and originally had its first and attic floors jettied. Often referred to as Bullocks Café, No. 46 was, from the 1920s to 1980s, a busy tea room and landmark.

Decorative timber-framing