

One of a series of articles covering Dover's old buildings

St James's Street Houses

by Joan Liggett

Until 1939, St James's Street ran from the Market Square to old St James's Church and was a fairly prosperous residential and commercial area. Sadly the street was badly damaged by bombing in the Second World War and has more or less disappeared; now only running from Russell Street Car Park across Woolcomber Street to Castle Hill Road. The surviving houses are situated at the eastern end of the street opposite the ruins of old St James's Church (the Tidy Ruin) and "The White Horse" inn, which was built in 1365 as a dwelling for the Churchwarden of old St James's Church.

The three surviving houses were built early in the 19th century and consist of three storeys and a basement in brown brick with a hipped tiled roof though the middle house has been altered. They are no longer residential properties though number 9 appears to still have a separate flat (9A) on the upper floors whilst number 5 housed both a business and a resident until the 1970's. The ground floor of number 9 still has a left side open pedimented door surround with fluted stylized pilasters, semi-circular fanlight and a 6 panelled door. It also still has a foot scraper. All three houses still have many sash windows with some



St James's Street

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9 St James's Street

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glazing bars intact and some wooden cills. You could still see the remains of the steps which led from the former back door to the garden and the place where either a door or window once graced the side wall of number 9. Number 5 still has the remains of a wooden structure in a room on the first floor whose use is no longer obvious and a rather attractive staircase from the entrance hall up to the other floors.

Number 9 St James's Street was a residence until about 1911 when a D Mackinnon was shown as running a drapery business from his home until about 1929. The house then appeared to have been converted to flats as a Mr L Smith took over the business but Mrs Mackinnon still lived there until

1939. Today the building houses the Dover Counselling Centre.

Number 7 St James's Street is now the offices of a Freight Forwarding Group, Transclear. I was unable to gain entrance to this house but it seems to have remained mostly residential until after the war though a Mrs Bayley ran a shop from the premises in 1889.

Messrs Spain Brothers & Co now occupies number 5 St James's Street though until the 1970's a Mrs E Beer also resided there. I was told by a member of staff that the portrait hanging in the entrance hall was of Mrs E Beer but it is more likely to be that of Miss C Beer taken in the late 1800's or early 1900's considering the style of clothes and the age of the woman. The Beer family have a long association with this property as Pikes Directory in 1898 lists 5 St James's Street as being the home of Miss C Beer but by 1934 a Mrs E Beer was resident there. She remained the sole resident until 1937 when a firm of solicitors were also listed at the same property. After the war Mrs Emma Beer is again listed as resident there until the early 1970's, when Spain Brothers took over the whole house (Mrs E Beer died in 1972).

Work has at last started on the development of the St James's Street area with the demolition of many properties though the biggest eyesore still remains. One can only hope that what replaces the old will enhance the remaining listed properties.