

# Townscape Heritage Project

## Building Timeline

### 4 HIGH STREET



## INTRODUCTION

The research to create a timeline of the historic buildings of Stockton has drawn on resources such as trade directories, newspapers and census information. Whilst we have been able to construct some quite detailed pictures, there are gaps which we would like to fill. If you have any further information that could assist us, please contact [Eleanor.blyth@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:Eleanor.blyth@stockton.gov.uk).

We would like to thank volunteers who have worked on the timelines.

## 4 HIGH STREET

The occupancy of the addresses on High Street in the early part of the 1800s is somewhat unclear. The individual premises on the High Street are not numbered in the 1841 Census.

The Langley family, as the first family on the High Street can be taken as a marker for number 1, in the 1841 Census, however there are several families occupying what might have been subdivisions of buildings or an offshoot of the High Street main street (there is, for example, reference to Well Yard).

For this reason the earlier history of 1-5 High Street has been combined until records are clearer about the occupants.

## C 1834 WRIGHTSON

It is believed the building was occupied from 1834-36 by Sarah Wrightson

## C 1839 GIBSON

It is believed that the building was occupied from 1839-41 by William Gibson, husbandman.

## C 1841 STANTON

The 1841 Census indicates that Thomas Stanton aged 29 years, a hair-dresser was at the address with his wife and two sons.

## C 1851 CHILTON

The 1851 Census records William Chilton at the address with his wife and children. He is a Cooper Master. A cooper would make wooden casks and barrels.

## C 1861 WALKER

Thompson Walker is recorded in the directories under the heading Grocer, Provisions, Beer from 1859 to 1868. The 1861 Census records 4 High Street as Beer House and Provisions Shop. Thompson Walker is in residence with his wife Amy and their two sons. By 1871 The Walker family is on Parliament Street and Thompson Walker is still a Grocer.

## C 1870 VITTY

The next business recorded at number 4 High Street is Vitty, Ironmonger. There is no record of number 4 High Street in habitation in the 1871 Census or the 1881 census which records number 4 as “shop only”, indicating there was no habitation of the address at this point.

The Vitty's home base was in Seaton Carew where George Taylor Vitty is recorded in the 1861 Census living with his mother Jane who is recorded as operating a post office and grocer's. The 1871 Census finds George Taylor Vitty, living on the High Street Seaton Carew with his widowed mother, a grocer and general dealer. His occupation is recorded as Furnishing, Ironmonger.

The Northern Echo - Saturday 31 December 1870 records that G.T Vitty's premises on the High Street are now open for business.

Advertisements from the time indicate the vast range of goods on sale- whether ice skates roof felt, jewellery or guns!



**FANCY FAIR.—CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR.**  
G. T. VITTY begs to inform the inhabitants of Stockton and District that his Show Rooms, 4, High-street (facing Bishopton-lane), Stockton, are now open, where a Stock of NEW GOODS, bought specially for Christmas, comprising TOYS, CHRISTMAS GAMES, CHRISTMAS-TREE ORNAMENTS, WORK BOXES, LADIES' COMPANIONS, and Elegant Articles of all Kinds, are on View. All have been bought exceptionally Cheap, and are marked at Low Prices in Plain Figures. A Call is respectfully solicited.

**SKATING.—Skates.** Largest Stock of Newest Kinds of Skates.—G. T. Vitty, Stockton, Wholesale and Retail Ironmonger. Telegraph Address: Vitty, Stockton-on-Tees. Parcels sent next Train. £35

Figure 3 Skating: Northern Echo (19 December 1890)

**LOCAL POLICE REPORTS.**  
**STOCKTON BOROUGH.**  
**MONDAY.**—Ann Clark (the wife of an ex-policeman) and Mary Ellen Clark, her daughter, about ten years of age, were committed for trial on a charge of stealing five brooches, two ear-rings, and four breast pins, from the shop of George Taylor Vitty, High Street, on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> inst. The prisoner Ann Clark and her daughter Mary and another child went into the shop. At the request of the elder prisoner a sales-woman showed her some brooches and other articles, and ultimately she bought two rings. After the customers had left the shop the articles mentioned in the charge were missing. A man named Wilson, who had been looking through the window, saw the woman take up several articles and hand them to her daughter Mary. The police shortly afterwards apprehended the prisoners, and found the property in possession of the child.—*Matilda Carpenter*, a married woman, was sent to gaol for two months for stealing a shawl, the property of the wife of Robert Bellerby, whom she had been visiting on the 24<sup>th</sup> inst.

Figure 2 Local Police Reports: Ripon & Richmond Chronicle (29th January 1870)

**GREAT SALE OF IRONMONGERY.**—The whole of the STOCK of G. T. VITTY, 4, HIGH-STREET, STOCKTON, will be CLEARED OUT at BARGAIN Prices, less than Cost. Selling the whole off. Value SIX THOUSAND POUNDS. Comprising, Electro-Plated Tea Services, Cruets, Spoons and Forks, Bath Trays, Toilet Sets, Table Cutlery Guns, Revolvers, Rook Rifles, Filters, Tools, Locks, Scales, Fishing Tackle, Oils, Varnishes, &c.

Figure 1 Great sale of Ironmonger: The Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough (9 September 1891)

**GUNS, Revolvers.**—G. T. Vitty, Ironmonger, Stockton. Loaded Cartridges, 6s 6d; Ring, 6s 11d; Shultz Ditto, 10s; Double Breech Guns, 35s; Hammerless, £5; Roofing Felt 6s 5d, 3s 11d Roll. k170

Figure 4 Guns: Northern Echo (5 December 1890)





In August 1876 Vitty, Ironmonger is advertising for an apprentice in the Northern Echo. No address is given, however the 1879 Directory records George Taylor Vitty, Ironmonger at the address of 4 High Street, Stockton.

The 1881 Census shows Vitty still living with his mother in Seaton Carew. The premises at Seaton Carew is recorded as a grocer's shop. By this time George's occupation is recorded as ironmonger, Stockton on Tees. Indeed, the 1881 Directory of Stockton and the 1894 Directory of Durham record George Taylor Vitty, Ironmonger at 4 High Street. The 1881 Census shows 4 High Street Stockton as "shop only" and the 1891 Census also records the premises as unoccupied, indicating no one living at the address.

In 1880 there was a fire at Vitty's shop as reported in the Northern Echo - Monday 19 July 1880.

**FIRE AT STOCKTON.**—About ten o'clock on Friday night a fire was discovered to have broken out in the shop of Mr Vitty, ironmonger, 4, High-street, Stockton. Mr Humphrey, assistant with Mr Garbutt, whose shop adjoins that of Mr Vitty, observed smoke issuing from the shop, and immediately gave the alarm at the Police Office, from whence information was conveyed to the Fire Engine Station, and Captain Moore, together with a number of firemen, with hose, reel, &c., were speedily on the spot. They first directed their attention to a quantity of powder which was on the premises, and having removed it, their efforts to extinguish the flames soon proved efficacious. The damage is estimated at between £100 and £500, the greater portion of which was caused by the water. The stock is said to be insured in the London and Lancashire and Alliance Insurance Companies. The origin of the fire is unknown.

There was another fire in 1889. In April that year the press reported a devastating fire. Mr Vitty had locked up his shop in the High Street and was proceeding to the railway station to take the train home to Seaton Carew. Shortly afterwards a police constable saw flames engulf a room in the upper storey of the building, said to have contained kettles, tin cans and other hardware as well as feather beds and flock mattresses. Mr Garbutt, a draper from a neighbouring address ran off to alert Mr Vitty. The fire crew, led by Captain Stephenson and Superintendent Appleby deployed the new steamer 'Florence' to attempt to quench the flames which had taken a firm hold on the upper part of the three storey building. After fighting the fire for about an hour, the roof collapsed. The report stated that the two top storeys and the roof were destroyed.

It was reported that the business was covered by insurance and, indeed Vitty continued in Stockton. The Daily Gazette for Middlesborough 9<sup>th</sup> September 1891 contains an advert for stock clearance at Vitty's Ironmongers. The Whelan's Directory of Durham 1894 records



George Vitty, Iron Monger at 4 High Street and also at Southbank Middlesbrough, his home address being in Seaton Carew.

Mr Vitty was a prominent character in the region and not a stranger to controversy. Mr Vitty's story provides us with some insights into the status of local small business owners at the time. There are news reports over a period of years recounting Mr Vitty claiming his eligibility to vote with varying degrees of success. The Northern Echo 29<sup>th</sup> September 1876 records court proceedings related to the revision of voting in which Mr Vitty of High Street claims the right to a vote in respect of his shop and warehouses owned by him in Stockton. His vote was opposed by the

**UNSUCCESSFUL CLAIMANTS.**  
**Mr George Taylor Vitty applied to have his name inserted in the list of householders. He said he carried on business as an iron-monger at No. 4, High-street, and the annual value of his house was £80; but during a course of examination by the Revising Barrister Mr Vitty admitted that he did not sleep at the shop, nor, in fact, had any sleeping accommodation on the premises. He urged, however, that he often slept "on the opposite side of the street," where his sister carried on business as "The Stockton Furnishing Ironmongery Company;" and also that he sometimes remained at his house at Seaton Carew.—The Revising Barrister informed Mr Vitty that the Act of Parliament required a person to have a *bona fide* residence within seven miles of the house in respect of which he claimed to vote; and, although Mr Vitty occasionally slept at his sister's house, he could not consider it as being the claimant's *bona fide* residence.—The claim was, therefore, disallowed.**

Conservatives on the basis that he was part owner and that there was already another party given a vote. Vitty states he bought the premises in 1873, paying the greater part himself and that he lived approximately 9 ½ miles away. The vote was allowed and it was noted that the Liberals had achieved large gains at this revision.

In 1877, Mr Vitty is again in dispute, as reported by the Northern Echo of 25<sup>th</sup> September. He states that his premises consist of a shop and saleroom only with no living accommodation. A further dispute is reported in the Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1878 in which Mr Vitty was one of 4 Liberal claims to a vote that were disallowed due to his residence being at Seaton Carew, outside the borough. The Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1878 elaborates further.

The Representation of the People Act 1832 introduced major changes to the electoral system, giving the vote to small landowners, tenant farmers, shopkeepers, householders who paid a yearly rental of £10 or more. The effect was an increase in the number of eligible voters though it by no means represented the enfranchisement the working class as the requirement to possess property worth £10 was a substantial sum at the time. Women were also excluded from voting.



One of the motivations for Mr Vitty's insistence on securing his vote may be linked to his political ambitions. George Vitty played a prominent part in local politics mainly the Liberal party. The Northern Echo Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 1892 records the election of George Vitty to represent West Hartlepool on the County Council. There are many references in the press relating to his council roles.

For many middle-class men involvement with the church, public works benevolent societies and institutions devoted to the advancement of education, science and culture provided a way to achieve political influence, power and social status.

Mr Vitty's political career is marked by controversy. George Taylor Vitty features at the centre of a local court case that sparked great interest. The South Durham and Cleveland Mercury 31<sup>st</sup> March 1877 provides an extensive account of what it calls "The Seaton Fracas". This relates to court proceedings initiated by Mr Vitty who claims that he was assaulted by Mr W.H Tilly, Clerk to the Board whilst Vitty and his colleague were attempting to inspect the voters register. There appears to have been strong animosity between the two parties. The circumstances of the assault seem to have been the source of some amusement in court as Mr Vitty recounted being kicked on the leg. The case was found in favour of Vitty and Mr Tilly was fined 10s and costs.

The Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1895 publishes a letter from Sir Christopher Furness who alleges that Vitty approached him to offer his support in the forthcoming election in exchange for gold- which would be untraceable -and also to seek money for a second mortgage on his property. Vitty had declared publicly that he intended to vote for Richardson, a conservative candidate.

There follows a vehement denial from Mr Vitty in the same newspaper date 15<sup>th</sup> July. Sir Christopher Furness was a Liberal Member of Parliament for the Hartlepoons from 1891 to 1895 and again from 1900 to 1910. Councillor Vitty had been reported in the Hartlepool Daily Mail of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1895 as pledging to support a conservative candidate against Sir Christopher. It is notable that Furness was defeated in the 1895 election by Thomas Richardson Commentary in the press attributes the defeat to the public being deluded by promises of a return to industrial prosperity and the prospect of a new shipyard in Hartlepool. The conclusion of the dispute between Vitty and Furness has not been ascertained but it is possible it also had a negative impact.

George's sister Elizabeth also went on to have a prominent political career. The Hartlepool Daily Mail 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1921 records her victory in the local elections to become the first woman elected to West Hartlepool Council. She served as a councillor for 3 years. Elizabeth Vitty featured in a headline "Miss Vitty defeated" in the Hartlepool Northern daily Mail of 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1924, marking her defeat.



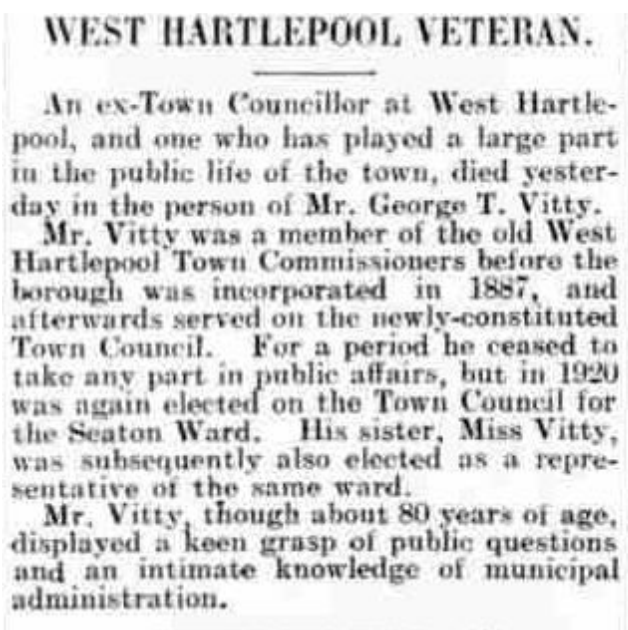


The Vittys were active in the Temperance movement. The Northern 27<sup>th</sup> December 1878 refers to Mr Vitty and Jane Vitty, his sister taking a leading role in a Seaton Temperance event. Jane is referred to as the Temperance Lodge Deputy.

The first temperance societies appeared in the USA in the 1820s and the movement soon took on momentum across the Atlantic. By the end of June 1831 there were 30 societies in England.<sup>1</sup> The early temperance societies were opposed to the drinking of spirits but endorsed the consumption of beer and wine in moderation. They drew significant support from the middle classes, from the established Church, and even from the brewers.<sup>2</sup> It was in the 1830s that Temperance came to be associated with total abstinence following a pledge made in Preston on 1st September 1832. In order to encourage adherence to its aims, the Temperance movement offered food, accommodation and entertainment without alcohol, often in dedicated facilities made possible through fundraising.

In 1860 the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company invested in a building for its employees comprising a library, lecture room, reading room, committee- and class-rooms, together with a refreshment room from which intoxicating liquors were excluded.

George Taylor Vitty died in 1927 aged 83 years, followed a few months later by his sister. The Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail 25<sup>th</sup> January 1927 reports his life story and his death after “many years of public service.” He is described as “an interesting local character” who died aged 83 years on 24<sup>th</sup> January at the Cameron hospital where he had been a patient since November 22. It describes him as a member of the old Seaton board, and how, when Seaton Carew was joined to West Hartlepool, he became one of the West Hartlepool



Commissioners. On the incorporation of the borough in 1887 he was elected on the first Town Council. The article refers to his service on Seaton Ward, South West and South East Wards of Hartlepool. His strong support of the Liberal cause is referenced.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Davison 'Try the Alternative' : the built heritage of the temperance movement  
Brewery History Number 123 Summer 2006

<sup>2</sup> ibid





Elizabeth's death was recorded in the Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1927. The news of her death was reported nationally, reports pointing out that she was the only female member of Hartlepool Town Council.

Miss Elizabeth Vitty, the only woman member of West Hartlepool Town Council, was on Tuesday found dead at her home at Seaton Carew, where she kept a small iron-mongery business.

Figure 5 Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer 25th January 1927

**MISS VITTY FOUND DEAD.**

**WEST HARTLEPOOL'S ONLY WOMAN COUNCILYOR.**

We have to record the death of Councillor Miss Elizabeth Vitty. Miss Vitty, who, since the death of her brother in January last, had resided alone at Seaton Carew, had not been seen about for some days past, and to-day, when the house was entered, she was found dead.

Miss Vitty, who was over 80 years of age, was a native of Seaton Carew. She was first elected to the Council in November, 1921, and sat for three years, being defeated in November, 1924. In November, 1925, she was again elected. The deceased was a member of the Society of Friends.

Figure 6 Northern Daily Mail 15th November 1927

**LEGAL NOTICE.**

**RE ELIZABETH VITTY, Deceased.**

All Persons having any Claims or Demands against the Estate of the late Elizabeth Vitty, of Seaton Carew, Spinster, are requested to forward particulars thereof to the undersigned forthwith.

Dated this 25th Day of November, 1927.

JOS. H. SMITH AND GRAHAM,  
10a Tower Street, West Hartlepool,  
Solicitors to the Administrator.

Figure 7 Legal Notice: Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail (28<sup>th</sup> November 1927)

Elizabeth's death was also reported in the Common Cause a newspaper that supported women's suffrage. Probate records indicate that her estate was valued at £1, 136 2s 10d.



### ***A Veteran Woman Councillor.***

On 16th November, there passed away an aged and well-known character in West Hartlepool and Seaton Carew, Councillor Miss Elizabeth Vitty. In 1921, when she was well over 70 years of age, Miss Vitty stood for and secured a seat on the West Hartlepool Town Council. Three years later she lost her seat. Undaunted by defeat, she came forward again in 1925, and was returned to the Council. Miss Vitty, who was exceptionally active, both in mind and body, took an active part in the work of the Council to the end of her life. Her last public appearance was on 9th November, when the Mayor of West Hartlepool was re-elected.

Figure 8 A Veteran Woman Councillor: Common Cause (9th December 1927)

#### **C 1900 HARRISON**

The Ward's Directory from 1900-1901 through to the 1906-1907 edition shows G.L Harrison, Bootmaker at number 4 High Street.

#### **C 1908 VITTY**

In the Ward's Directory of 1908-1909 4 High Street is recorded as E Vitty, representing the Vitty's return to the High Street after the shop was occupied by Harrison's Bootmakers. E Vitty is also recorded at 4 High Street in the Ward's 1910-1911 and 1912-1913 Directory. There is no reference to number 4 High Street in the 1911 Census, indicating that it was still a commercial rather than residential property. Miss E Vitty is recorded at 4 High Street in the Bazaars section of the 1914 Kelly's Directory for Stockton as well as the 1914-1915 Ward's Directory. There is more information on Elizabeth Vitty in the section on her brother George Taylor Vitty.

#### **C 1914 SHEFFIELD DEPOT**

The Sheffield Depot, ironmonger is believed to have occupied the building from 1914 to 1915.

#### **C 1921 WALLACE AND WEIR**

The Ward's Directory shows Wallace & Weir Ltd, Clothiers at number 4 High Street in the 1921-1922 through to the 1924-1925 edition.

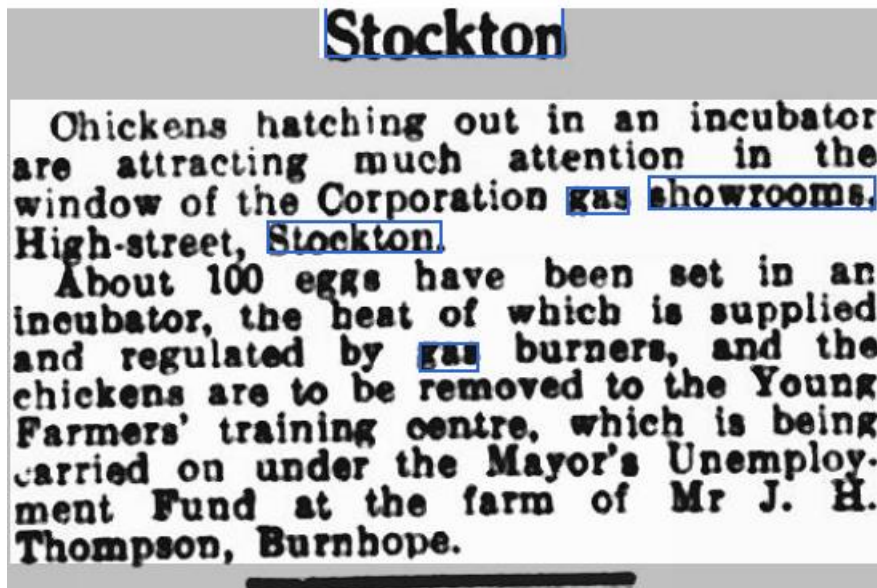
#### **C 1932 GAS SHOWROOMS**

Number 4 is omitted from the subsequent Ward's Directories until 1932-1933 Directory when it is recorded as housing Stockton Corporation Gas Department Showrooms. It also appears in the Directories from 1934-1935 to 1938-1939.



The Gas Showrooms generated great interest when a clutch of chickens was hatched using a gas incubator as reported in the press in 1934.

Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough - Thursday 03 May 1934



C 1958 MORRISONS

Morrisons Assn. Co Ltd is recorded at the address in 1958

C 1981 SLENDOS

The address was occupied by Slendos in 1981

