

5 GENERAL APPRAISAL OF THE EXISTING CONSERVATION AREA

Appraisal of the Conservation Area of Falmouth is not something that can be achieved without acknowledging its geographical context within its immediate surroundings, its regional context and its national context. It is also the recognition of those other qualities that make it special, aspects of character, historical interest and of local flavour. The sheer diversity of architecture from the polite neo-classical of the Custom House to the rubble warehouses over historic quay walls, plus the contrast between the random evolved architectural diversity of the historic core of the town with fine planned terraces, and the special relationship that much of the built environment has with green spaces and amenity spaces, all added to a spectacular location and setting, give Falmouth a distinctive character of its own that is unlike that of any other town in Cornwall, or for that matter, in Britain.

5.1 Setting Of The Conservation Area (Views In And Out)

5.1.1 The general character and importance of Falmouth is fundamental to the particular character and interest contained in its individual parts, many elements of which are represented in the present Conservation Areas. Falmouth enjoys a remarkable and unrivalled geographical and climatic situation. It is sited adjacent to the mouth of the third largest, and one of the most beautiful, natural harbours in the world. It also enjoys a beautiful dual distant aspect, being able to overlook the estuary, its headlands and their historic settlements on the one side, and the open sea and along the coast beyond the Helford River towards the largely rural Lizard Peninsula on the other. The town itself is built on the neck and shoulders of a hilly promontory and peninsula (see figure 24) terminating in the relatively undeveloped Pendennis Headland. The headland is surmounted by the nationally important and visually stunning sixteenth century coastal fort of Pendennis Castle (see figure 2). This relates functionally and visually to the similar sister fort of St Mawes Castle (see figure 33), situated on the end of one limb of the beautiful Roseland Peninsula. Beyond this is the other limb of the Roseland that terminates in the important St Anthony Lighthouse. All these elements combine as an historic and visual framework and setting to Falmouth that help to explain its "raison d'être". The forts were built to protect the internationally important deep natural harbour of Carrick Roads, an estuary that has as its principal river the Fal but includes the Penryn River, the Truro River and many others. The lighthouse was built later to make access to the harbour safer, particularly for its function as a Packet Port.

5.1.2 The views looking out of the town are rivalled by those looking towards the town, including of course those from the waters of the estuary or from the open sea. The appearance of the historic core of Falmouth seems smaller than its actual considerable physical scale by the way that it fits its immediate landscape and also by the way that this integrates with its wider landscape. This is because the waterfront and the neck of the peninsula as far as Berkeley Vale was largely developed by the end of the nineteenth century so that the more interesting historic parts of the town relate more visually to their maritime landscape, whereas the very extensive later and generally less visually pleasing development folds over the brow of the hill, or is hidden by hollows in the topography. In this way the historic integrity and setting of the old town is preserved.

- 5.1.3 From the northern end of the Conservation area, Flushing and Trefusis Point provide a very high quality setting just across the Penryn River. From the southern end of the Conservation Area it is a view up the Carrick Roads, promising worthwhile exploration of its creeks, and across to the Roseland (a particularly inaccessible and beautiful part of Cornwall that matches up to its name) that provide the visual amenity. From the Woodlane Conservation Area it is possible to see a broad expanse of sea and the unspoilt headland that is within the also beautiful, rural and remote parish of St Anthony in Meneage. These outward views are an essential part of the character of the area.
- 5.1.4 The sister port of Flushing might well have expanded instead of Falmouth had its history provided such commercial opportunities as those that Falmouth enjoyed, particularly the opportunity provided by Falmouth's adoption by the Post Office as a Packet Station. It might well have been Flushing that now spread over Trefusis land, probably covering the Trefusis headland and absorbing Mylor as it developed, almost certainly failing to conceal the inevitable obtrusive later development in the way that Falmouth has. It is therefore to the benefit of all the settlements, and the landscape in which they nestle, that history ran the way it did. The outward views from Falmouth are virtually completely unviolated by inappropriate development, providing a visual context that is both beautiful and interesting, whilst at the same time providing views of itself from the surrounding landscape that show off much of its best face, a face also of considerable beauty and character.
- 5.1.5 From Flushing, itself largely a conservation area, the considerable length of central Falmouth is foreshortened. Immediately opposite though is the impressive view of the very high quality of the terraces that form the backdrop of the north-western approach to the town, including: Dunstanville Terrace (see figure 64) with its exciting articulated facades; Stratton Place with late eighteenth century and early nineteenth elegance; Stratton Terrace with detached Regency and Victorian villas, and the notable architectural harmony of Tehidy Terrace (see figure 26). Behind these are the parallel refined stuccoed terraces of Prospect Place and Harriet Place; behind the present Conservation Area there is the more varied Penwerris Terrace; and set higher up the steep hillside is the late nineteenth century bay-windowed Frobisher Terrace. The growth and evolution of residential Falmouth is displayed on these slopes with simple early nineteenth century flat frontages giving way to more three-dimensional later nineteenth century terraces of "belvederes". These differences reflect the changing attitudes of society and the wish for a greater visual involvement with the surrounding landscape. The relationship of all these terraces to the waterfront are key elements of the character and setting of the Conservation Area
- 5.1.6 In front of Dunstanville (or Greenbank) Terrace, is the Greenbank itself, a low cliff-like bank that forms a natural green band, together with Greenbank Gardens, in front of the historic buildings. Projecting forward in front are the historic quays of the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club and Greenbank Quay (see figures 27, 45 and 66).
- 5.1.7 Looking at Falmouth from Flushing and Trefusis Point there are a number of key elements that make up its general character. The centre of Falmouth (see figures 28, 29 and 42) is seen as a crowded waterfront backed up by horizontal terraces stepping up the hill. The visual base is formed by the historic seventeenth century quay walls, immediately behind which are Falmouth's older stone, brick and slate-hung buildings

with their characteristic undulating stepped roof lines bristling with chimneys. Behind this is a band of what visually appears to be a generally wooded or green area (not at present within the Conservation Area) and above is a more regular and tonally lighter composition created by the residential nineteenth century stuccoed terraces built parallel to the contours. The irregularity of the older waterfront area, plus the seventeenth century parish church, provides an interesting contrast with the planned ranks of terraces higher up, the whole surmounted by the Observatory Tower (see figures 7 and 28). On the narrow neck of the peninsula are the attractive planned terraces of Bar Road, and beyond there is evidence of the seafront, particularly with the very prominent and impressive Falmouth Hotel (see figure 21) (grade II).

- 5.1.8 The effect of the tiered backdrop along the considerable length of Falmouth, with planned terraces alternating with garden space, and hard outlines softened by mature trees, is to offer the slopes of the town as a kind of grandstand with the best seats embellished with design qualities that emphasise their status and from which promise the best view of the performance. The stage is the harbour and the show takes place both by day and by night, and the backdrop is real. The public stands are the green open spaces, vital for both amenity and balance (see figures 28-31, 47 and 50).



Figure 26. Tehidy Terrace



Figure 27. Royal Cornwall Yacht Club from Flushing



Figure 28. Falmouth from Flushing (Church and Observatory)



Figure 29. Falmouth from Flushing (Church Street and beyond)



Figure 30. Falmouth from Flushing (Packet Quays)



Figure 31. Dunstanville Terrace from Flushing

- 5.1.9 The generally rural appearance of the Pendennis Peninsula itself is greatly enhanced by Pendennis Castle and its associated buildings. However, on a slightly negative note, some rather indifferent light-coloured housing on the town side slope of the peninsula is more prominent in this position than one would wish, and the leisure centre of “Ships and Castles”, though recessive in tone because of the extensive use of special glazing, is unfortunately a visual distraction from the otherwise high quality and unspoiled appearance of the peninsula beyond.
- 5.1.10 From the various vantage points along the central waterfront the views out of Falmouth are of the highest order with always an opportunity to survey some of the wonderful coastal landscape, either up the river or across to the Roseland, its far headland punctuated by the St Anthony Light(house). The closer proximity of the Docks (see figures 32, 33 and 35) screens some of this view but it is also a visual treat in itself, not necessarily beautiful but always interesting and stimulating.
- 5.1.11 From the Roseland, Falmouth’s scale is disguised by the prominence of the beautiful Pendennis Headland, and the centre of the town is also partly screened by the Docks. This particular view emphasises the importance of the Pendennis Headland as a key element in the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 5.1.12 The Pendennis Headland itself affords marvellous views of Falmouth, clearly displaying how it is bounded on its two longest sides by water (see figures 4 and 24), the sea on the left and the estuary on the right. These historic and natural boundaries are a very important aspect of the overall character of the town. Also, from this view, its generally steep, and considerably wooded, topography allows its historic planning and growth to

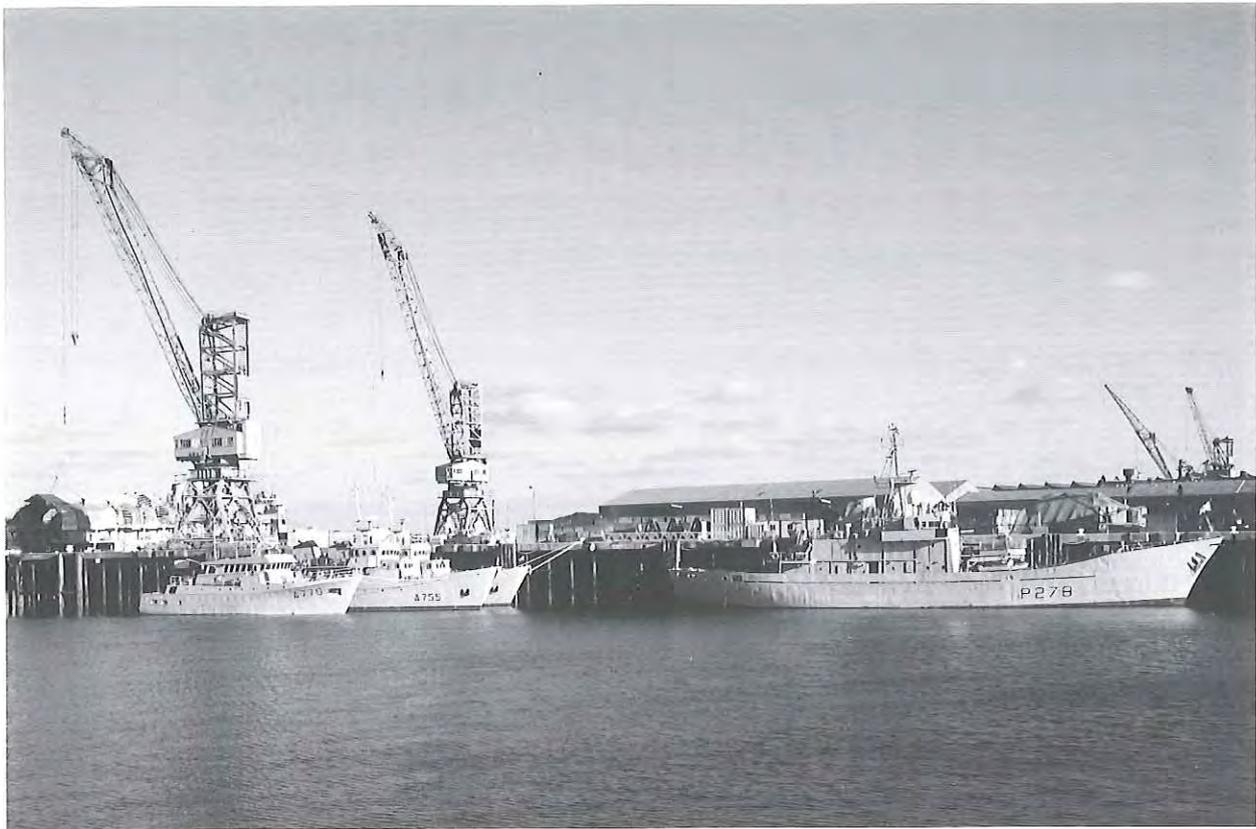


Figure 35. Falmouth Docks from Grove Place



Figure 36. North Quay



Figure 37. North Quay with North Quay House (before demolition)

5.2 Character Areas

As designated pre-1999, the Conservation Area can be easily subdivided into 3 general categories of clearly definable individual character:

The Waterfront

The historic harbour, quay walls and maritime atmosphere, including Grove Place and sixteenth century Arwenack House (see figure 1), stretching along in front of the shopping streets and beyond to the residential area of Greenbank.

The Town Centre

The linear area of the High Street, Market Strand, Market Street, Church Street and Arwenack Street (see figures 46, 54, 55, 59 and 62), a very long enclosed narrow corridor that forms the core of early Falmouth development, containing buildings dating from the seventeenth century, but predominantly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Moor area as the largest central open space, bounded by civic and, what are now, predominantly commercial buildings.

Residential Areas (Greenbank and Woodlane)

Mainly stuccoed, early and mid nineteenth century terraces, most built on sloping land parallel to the contours and **stepped up from the core of the town like the pleasure decks of an ocean liner.**

5.3 Character of the Waterfront

- 5.3.1 The historic quays of Falmouth provide an unrivalled platform for watching the maritime activity of the port, or from which to take part. From Town Quay or the Prince of Wales Pier it is possible to go on a cruise up the River Fal, or to join a fishing trip. The interesting old boats providing these services are an important part of the character of Falmouth. From Greenbank Gardens and Winchester Gardens in front of Dunstanville Terrace there is a panoramic view across the Penryn river to historic Flushing and Trefusis Point. From Greenbank Quay there are views up the river towards Penryn. The seventeenth century quays themselves and the buildings to which they relate are part of the story of the early rapid growth of Falmouth, an interlinked blend of merchants houses and commercial premises, all historically dependant upon their strategic location for survival and all now offering this special evolved character to present-day Falmouth and its visitors.
- 5.3.2 **From Bar Pool to Custom House Quay** there are no historic quay walls visible because the foreshore has been infilled and built forward (much of this in the 1920s and 30s when the Docks were being enlarged and the excavated material reused as infill material) obliterating and extending beyond the seventeenth century tide millpool walls (see also paragraph 3.4). Water used to reach almost to the forecourts of **Grove Place** and **Bank Place**. Much of the infilled area is used for parking cars, but the seaward section is earmarked for the **FIMI** (Falmouth International Maritime Initiative) development.
- 5.3.3 Except for the loss of the tide-mill buildings themselves (the last one closed 1862, and remained until about 1900) the principal historic buildings survive, including Arwenack (grade II*) (now Arwenack House and Arwenack Manor, see figure 1), The Killigrew Monument (grade II), Nos. 1-7 Grove Place (see figure 34) (grade II), Nos. 1-3 Bank Place (grade II*) (formerly a barracks) and No 4 (Bank House) Bank Place (grade II). To the east, beyond the Conservation Area there is the large late twentieth century residential “luxury” development of Port Pendennis, north and east of which is the Docks complex incorporating the “Old Grain Store” (grade II) warehouse. Within the Conservation Area in front of **Bank Place** is a large retail store (Trago Mills), mostly late twentieth century, and contrived to give a warehouse “feel”, but incorporating an inter-war building of some interest at the town end.

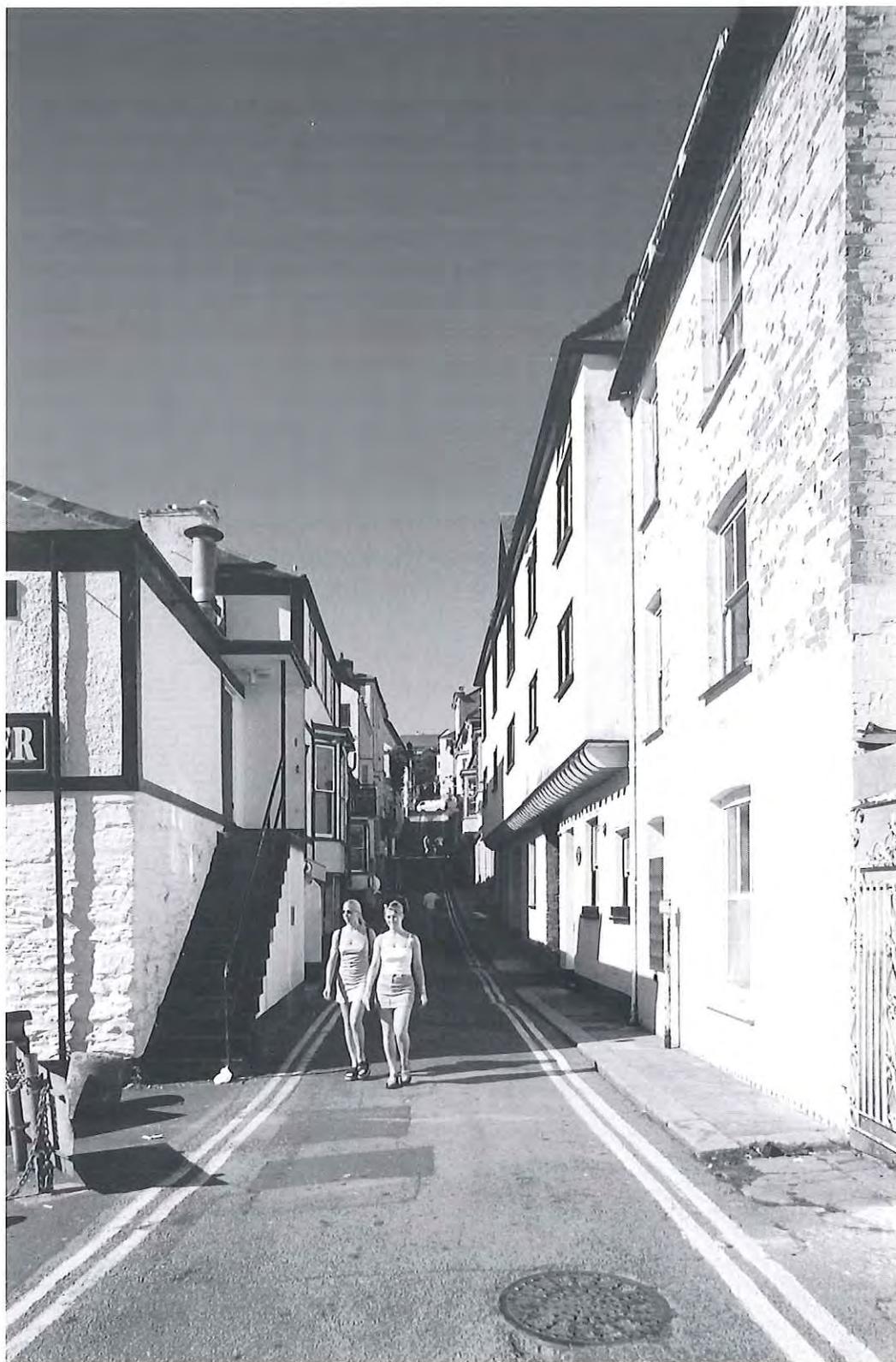


Figure 38. Quay Street (before windows replaced in Tocapilla Cottage)

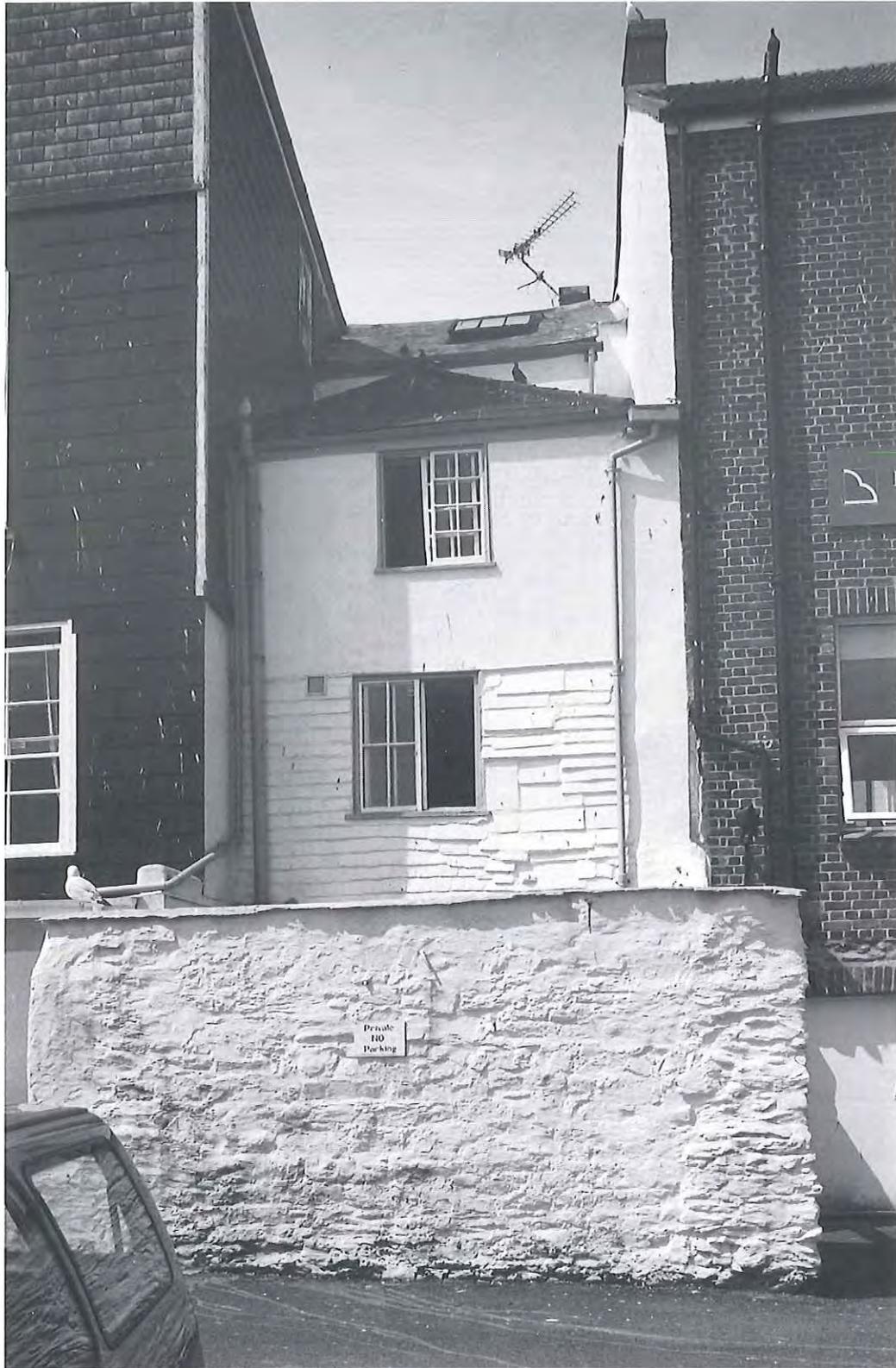


Figure 39. Rear wing of No. 59 Church Street

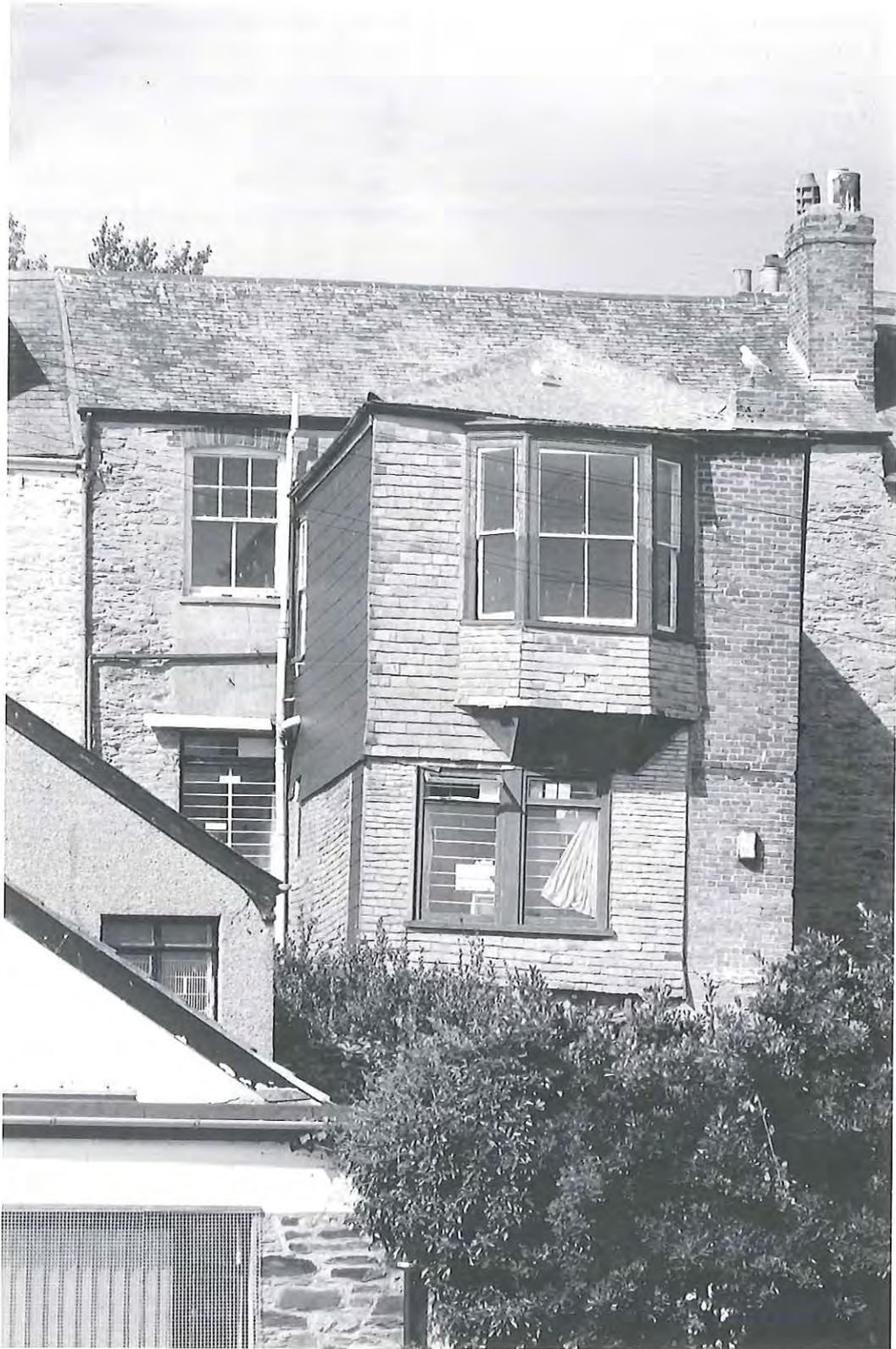


Figure 40. Rear wing of No. 52 Church Street

- 5.3.4 The character of this part of the Conservation Area depends heavily on the historic buildings themselves, that are some of the most historic and important in the town. Arwenack House (see figure 1) is the oldest building in Falmouth and retains some important historic features including, set back, the former Great Hall wall (now just a screen wall) with its large mullioned windows and terminal stair turrets; also, at the front an oriel window, and, set back at the right, a round turret. The Killigrew Monument (see also paragraph 3.5) may be on its third site but it has lost none of its impact when seen close to the other historic buildings. It is a steep pyramid, built of granite ashlar. The seven-house terrace of Grove Place (see figure 34) is one of the best terraces of stuccoed town houses in the county, and one of the most prominent of the Falmouth terraces, a town notable for its inventive use of stucco and its fine planned terraces. The houses are three storeys over basements with moulded parapets and distyle porches accessed by stepped bridges set back from deep forecourt gardens. Stucco detail includes mid-floor strings, quoin strips and hooded architrave's framing original sash windows. As well as being a high quality group when seen close-up this terrace enjoys a commanding position looking across to the Carrick Roads and forms one of the most powerful architectural statements when seen from across the water or from Pendennis (though this relationship is likely to be compromised by the proposed development across the road in front!). Nos. 1-3 Bank Place have a pedimented symmetrical Palladian "palace" front of fine red brick (considered a high quality material in the eighteenth century in Cornwall, a county where stone is the abundant building material). The houses are set back from the road behind deep forecourts, and originally must have commanded magnificent coastal views, but these are now to a great extent blocked by the Trago Mills store on the waterfront side of the road. Between these two powerful architectural entities is the once very important eighteenth century Bank House (grade II), modified in the nineteenth century after a serious fire in 1868 (Gilson), and savaged on the ground floor in more recent times.
- 5.3.5 The character here also depends on its relationship with the water and particularly on the atmosphere of the working Docks and other maritime activities. The Docks have two nearby old grey-painted steel cranes that (with the more distant ones) punctuate the skyline, like the picture on the front of an old box of Meccano. These skeletal structures have a character of their own that helps to present Falmouth as a working port. At night, the Docks take on a different character, with strong reflections in the water emanating from the shapes lit by working lights.
- 5.3.6 This area also benefits from the views across to the Roseland and up the estuary towards Truro, the sort of view usually only accessible from a boat or ship. "From the very heart of Falmouth one can see fields of pasture, corn and cattle" (Dunstan). This gives the impression that Falmouth is in a completely rural coastal setting, providing a very strong sense of space and with constantly changing light.
- 5.3.7 Viewed from the water, the historic buildings of Grove Place and Bank Place take centre stage, but behind is the neck of the Pendennis headland and this includes some fine prominent buildings and groups of buildings, most notably the Falmouth Hotel (see figure 21) (grade II), at present beyond the present Conservation Area. This area viewed from the town end has the Pendennis Headland itself as a spectacular backdrop, including a large scheduled site and the historic Pendennis Castle (grade I, see figure 2). Looking from Grove Place, past Bank Place, towards the town, is the beginning of the

very long and winding historic shopping street of Falmouth, starting with Arwenack Street.



Figure 41. Slatehanging at rear of Church Street (next to Upton's Slip)



Figure 42. Waterfront relating to Market Street

- 5.3.8 **The waterfront from Custom House Quay to the Church Street Car Park** is arguably the most important length of harbour and quay walls in Cornwall. The characteristic vertically-set killas rubble construction, said to be a structural technique brought over by Dutch engineers in the seventeenth century, is exemplified here probably better than anywhere else in the county. The harbour construction here provides a seaward projection of the town, with very important historic buildings standing just behind historic quay walls. The plan of the harbour is interesting in itself, with the Custom House Quay (see figure 49) forming an L-shape plan and North Quay with a hammer-head end (see figure 37), the two overlapping in such a way as to enable sheltered access to the otherwise completely enclosed harbour. At low tide it can be seen that the walls against the town side are built on bedrock, the whole construction probably the result of a cut-and-fill quarrying operation to the original foreshore, funded by Peter (later Sir Peter) Killigrew in about 1670 and one of the innovations that enabled Falmouth to prosper for the next three centuries. King Charles Quay extends towards the north-west, built in front of the remainder of Arwenack Street. This group of quays is often collectively known as “Town Quay”, a name suggesting the importance of the relationship of the town with the waterfront at this part of the town. The granite steps that lead down from the quays to allow embarkation are an important part of the visual interest of the quays themselves, as well as providing a very useful facility, are as essential now for the use of predominantly ferries and pleasure craft as they were when used only by working boats. The enclosed area of water provided by the plan form of the quays is the only such space in Falmouth, enabling this beautiful part of Falmouth to have a focal point, and, together with the boats that it contains, to be reflected in it.
- 5.3.9 A recent loss of interest on North Quay (see figures 36 and 37) was brought about by the demolition of North Quay House, a building that had complemented many old pictures of this part of Falmouth. The building punctuated the end of the quay in a similar way to that provided by the shelter at the end of Custom house Quay (see figure 37). It must be hoped that the new Harbour Master’s Office soon to replace it will provide an equally harmonious relationship at this very important and strategic site.
- 5.3.10 Historic buildings relating to the harbour include, the King’s Pipe (grade II), the rear of the Custom House (grade II*), the rear of the Harbour Master’s Office (grade II) and the rear of the Quayside Inn (grade II). Overlooking the gap beside the Custom House is the very fine and historically important brick-fronted No 48 Arwenack Street (grade II*), built for George Croker Fox circa 1770s, the first member of the distinguished and successful Quaker family to settle in Falmouth. The single-storey stone-walled and scantle-slate roofed building that is now the Working Boats Office (grade II) was for many years used as a studio by the notable local artist, Henry Scott Tuke (Gilson, page 107). The interesting and varied buildings of Lower Quay Hill (or “Quay Street”) (see figure 38) that step down towards North Quay (see figures 36 and 37), include a number of picturesque listed buildings. One that is not listed but visually very important is the jettied former Seamen’s Bethel of 1893, now called Tocopilla House (see figure 38) (named after the new room of 1905, “the Tocopilla Room”, donated by the benefactor, Mr. W. H. Williams). Unfortunately, the “Tocopilla Cottage” part of this block has been the recent victim of inappropriate window replacement..
- 5.3.11 The opportunity that these quays present to the visitor and resident alike to enjoy the views of the surroundings, including Trefusis Point, the Roseland, the Docks and

Pendennis Headland, plus the views of Falmouth's own waterfront and its activities, is unrivalled.



Figure 43. Detail of quay wall (Packet Quays)



Figure 44. "Mystery" cellars at Greenbank

- 5.3.12 The buildings at this part of the town present rear elevations that are of similar interest and importance as the elevations that front onto the town, a situation that changes for much of the remainder of the waterfront where the town appears to turn its back onto the water. This visually exciting part of the Conservation Area arguably contains a greater concentration of historic character than any other similarly-sized part of the town. This is partly because it contains much of the essence that is the individual character of Falmouth. These qualities include the working character of the waterfront combined with the survival of historic buildings of real quality and interest, plus the particular character of this part of Falmouth with varied roof levels, varied use of local materials and historic detail, and a real link between the enclosed narrow shopping street and the open views from the waterfront.
- 5.3.13 The buildings of Arwenack Street (originally predominantly merchants' housing, but most now fitted with shops) backing onto **King Charles Quay** demonstrate the relationship of rear elevations with the quayside very well. Fortunately, these rear elevations, both individually and collectively, have a character of their own that contributes to the overall interest of the town and gives the waterfront its own particular flavour. Here, it is possible to see the varied roofscape of the street, the interesting grouping and spacing of the chimney stacks and the varied use of building materials including stucco, rubble, brick, and slate hanging on studwork. This particular stretch has long rear garden plots, many of them accommodating warehouses (some of which were formerly used for coal storage) that stand right next to, or over, the quay walls. The warehouses are generally built of stone but there is also some weather boarding on studwork. Some of these are at right angles to the waterfront, but a good example of one that is parallel to, and built over, the waterfront, and still retaining its old scantle slate roof, is the Bosun's Locker.
- 5.3.14 Right of the Bosun's locker is one of the most interesting of Falmouth's "opes" (alleyways) known as **Upton's Slip** (named after a certain Captain Upton). This is a particularly narrow ope that runs down steeply from a fan-lit doorway in Church Street. The character and interest of the rear of the buildings (mostly listed grade II) along this stretch of the waterfront is particularly high, with hipped and gabled roofs, a wealth of old slatehanging and many original sash windows (see figure 41). Above the rear of the ope is a rare late eighteenth century three-light bowed casement window. Behind the Bosun's Locker are eighteenth century cottages known as Upton's Cottages (grade II).
- 5.3.15 **Church Street (Gasworks) Car Park** runs from Upton's Slip to **Fish Strand Quay**. This forms another major projection from the original foreshore. This was infilled to create a large site for the town gasworks, that had existed since 1819 and its buildings weren't demolished until the mid 1960s (Gilson, page 111). The present granite ashlar walls fronting the car park are the result of extension to the area, but adjoining to the right is Fish Strand Quay, one of the oldest quays in Falmouth, the seaward end extended in 1871. This was the site of the landing of Lieutenant Lapenotiere R. N. with news of the success of the Battle of Trafalgar, and Nelson's death.
- 5.3.16 The "**Gasworks Quay**" is the longest stretch of Falmouth waterfront where the seventeenth century walls of the original town are hidden from view, the later walls having minor visual quality in comparison. So, it is to the buildings themselves, set well back at the rear of the quay, that one must look to for examples of Falmouth's more

historic character. Fortunately, this is a particularly good length of rear elevations, made more interesting by some very picturesque rear wings (see figure 40) with slatehanging, brick and rubble providing a rich and varied palette of colour and texture. Of particular interest are the rear elevations of Nos 51-55 (grade II and grade II*) and the narrow and relatively low No 59 (see figure 39) (grade II) that has a small rear courtyard and some horizontal-sliding sash windows. The rear of this building is a reminder of the changes of scale that have taken place during time and it seems especially exquisite in this context with its later, and taller, neighbours. It is fortunate that all these buildings can be admired from both close-to as well as more distantly from across the water.

- 5.3.17 Because of the depth of the quay, it is the best place along the waterfront to observe such a stretch of Falmouth's historic character, and also one of the best places from which to enjoy the sights and sounds of the waterfront activities and the views across the water. Pedestrian access to the quay is either from the narrow Upton's Slip, or by sharing the entrance for motor vehicles through a carriage ope, or by sharing the vehicle exit of **Fish Strand Hill**. It is a great pity that the original part of historic interest can only be seen from one side, the other side buried under carriageway! It is also a pity that the domination of this area during busy periods by the motor car detracts from the sense of open space and opportunity.
- 5.3.18 **From Fish Strand Quay to Prince of Wales Pier** (see figure 94) is another stretch of the seventeenth century quay (or sea) walls with their characteristic vertically-set masonry. A warehouse building (cover photograph) about midway along here, built at right angles to the quay, is one of the most picturesque of Falmouth's waterfront buildings, standing right over the quay wall and harmonising with it perfectly. There is another attractive warehouse wing a little way from this but generally the rear elevations of this stretch of water frontage provide a lower level of older character and interest than elsewhere, no doubt partly because of the re-development of Market Street on this side following the Market Street fire of 1870, but also due to some modernisation since then to this most commercial stretch of the town centre. However, when viewed from the distance the generally dark colour of the brick and stone elevations present this section of the waterfront as dark and blending, the buildings with larger general massing than in some other parts of the waterfront but still offering a variety of scale and interest (see cover picture and figure 42).
- 5.3.19 The **Prince of Wales** (see figure 94) **Pier** provides a dramatic change of direction for the waterfront, projecting at right angles to the older quay walls and extending deep into the estuary. It is constructed of vertically-set rubble at its seventeenth century neck, then granite ashlar for its 1873 and 1905 extensions, and terminates with a skeletal reinforced concrete construction of 1951. The open construction of the seaward end and the busy movement of its vintage passenger craft give the pier a considerable seaside holiday atmosphere. The multi-coloured kiosks at its landward end do much to reinforce this effect, as does sharing a bench with a band of hopeful gulls! Also, it is the only place that allows a wide link with the town centre, from the pier looking in to the varied two and three-storey eighteenth and early nineteenth century buildings of inner Market Strand (see figure 62) and from the town centre looking out at the estuary and across to the other side. Views up and down from the outer end of the pier give an unrivalled opportunity to enjoy the general character of the waterfront plus the promise of trips to destinations up the River Fal, with access to the boats down magnificent flights of stone

steps. The Prince of Wales Pier is one of the best places in Falmouth for soaking up the maritime atmosphere of sounds, smells and colour. The throbbing diesel engines of the “steamers”, the sound of flapping canvas, the shrieks of seagulls and the laughter of naturally uninhibited children (or inspired adults returning from a river party). It can be a sun-trap at the landward end and a howling gale at the seaward end, such is the localised effect of either shelter and enclosure at the one extreme, or open exposure to the bracing salt air at the other. Railings offer security tempered with awareness of the height of the pier above the water, with the clear water on a still day shows its own alarming depth. This is perhaps the one place in Falmouth that best displays the function of the town in all its variety and diversity, as both a working place and as a holiday resort, the dress of the people ranging from over-dressed office workers, clutching some baker’s goodies for a lunch in the fresh air, to exhibitionist sun-worshippers cooling down with Cornish ice cream.

- 5.3.20 The old quay walls partly enclosing a small harbour beside Prince of Wales Pier are all that remain of the former **Smithick Harbour**, Smithick being the settlement that grew to become present-day Falmouth. The stone steps in the angle with Mulberry Quay are one of the strong character elements that suggest a working waterfront.
- 5.3.21 Adjoining the small harbour is the similarly historic **Mulberry Quay**, the seventeenth century quay walls themselves with considerable character and interest but the late twentieth century development above and within, on the site of the former Mulberry Square (now called Mulberry Court), failing to excite or inspire but being of a scale and general appearance that allows it to fit in reasonably well. There are, however, some old converted warehouses here that do much to redress the balance, plus the attractive, but rather hidden, nineteenth century Seaview Cottages. Mulberry Square (first shown on a 1691 map) was the site of Falmouth’s first custom house, built through the efforts of Sir Peter Killigrew in 1650 (removed 1785).
- 5.3.22 Mulberry Quay and on to include the **Packet Quays** (named after the ships of the former Packet Service) (see figure 30) and finally **Admirals Quay** (formerly called Laundry Quay) is a very indented and historic length of waterfront with its seventeenth century quay walls (see figure 43) providing the foundations for both historic warehouses and some high quality and imaginative late twentieth century residential development. Much of the new development reflects the character of the historic waterfront buildings and is even roofed in scantle slate. This length of waterfront has the picturesque rear elevations of the historic sloping High Street as their backdrop, providing a varied roofline and with a variety of building materials and historic detail.
- 5.3.23 There are a number of opes that give access from the High Street to the foreshore (including Jackett Steps, Tregonning’s Yard, Mulberry Passage and Free Steps Ope) but most are now only access to private properties or residential developments. The most interesting of these opes is Barracks Ope, between Nos. 50 and 51 (Ludgate House), a steep flight of steps that gives access to both Jane’s Court and the Packet Quays proper, one of the buildings forming the latter development being the reconstruction of an eighteenth century warehouse. Less successful is the way that the development that links Packet Quays to the High Street as seen from the road approaching Falmouth towards the High Street. This development steps up the steep slope displaying little interest on its way only to make a rather controversial statement where it bridges across the entrance

to the High Street itself, the bridge link building surmounted by a poorly detailed embattled parapet that presumably is supposed to make some visual reference to Pendennis Castle (or perhaps Penwerris Church).

- 5.3.24 Between the Packet Quays and Admiral's Quay is a rare unaltered slipway built of cobbles and having timber runners for sliding the keels of boats over.
- 5.3.25 Admiral's Quay itself is in appearance arguably the most modern of the waterfront developments, being to a great extent glass for its rounded seaward end. However, it is an exciting design that punctuates a very important angle where the historic quay walls end and Greenbank begins. It is a pity that so much of the upper part of the quay walls has so obviously been rebuilt to support the structure.
- 5.3.26 **Greenbank** itself provides a valuable stretch of green vegetation. Part of its length is however the stone masonry of two pairs of rare barrel-vaulted cellars of unknown function (see figure 44). This structure is not listed (and possibly unable to be listed until a precise original function can be identified). There is a similar structure at the foreshore end of No. 17 Arwenack Street. In front of this is a proper sandy beach, unfortunately not a public place.
- 5.3.27 The next Quay is the historic quay on which the **Royal Cornwall Yacht Club** (see figures 13 and 27) building stands. The building itself is a fine Regency period former house with its back facing the water. This is a stone-built structure with good slate roofs. It is in an unrivalled position as a clubhouse both locally and (in the opinion of a certain recent Royal visitor) also nationally.



Figure 45. Greenbank Quay

- 5.3.28 Right (north-west) of the Yacht Club is **Greenbank Gardens**, a useful public amenity space and a good vantage point for activity on the river. The planting here is minimalist but perhaps this is appropriate, the principal function of this open space is to be “open” as a viewing platform for observing the water and the activities that take place on it.
- 5.3.29 The next feature of real quality on the waterfront is the seventeenth or eighteenth century promontory quay called **Greenbank Quay** (see figure 45) (grade II), a beautiful and unaltered quay that provides a visual statement announcing a change in the direction of the river and a change of backdrop from fine terraced housing on the left to the elegant detached villas (or pairs of villas) of Stratton Terrace to the right.
- 5.3.30 At the neck of the quay is the historic **Greenbank Hotel** (see figure 45) (formerly Selly’s Hotel), an eighteenth century and later building on the reputed site of **Pennycomequick** (Pen y Cwym Gwic, meaning Headland in the Valley of the Creek). Much of Kenneth Grahame’s famous book “Wind in the Willows” was written at the Greenbank Hotel.
- 5.3.31 Right of the Quay and the Greenbank Hotel the waterfront in front of Stratton Terrace continues as a stone sea wall giving way to a steep vegetation covered bank.

5.4 Character of the Town Centre

- 5.4.1 The town centre really comprises Falmouth’s very long shopping street (see figures 46, 54, 55, 59 and 62), from the High Street to Bank Place, plus the arm that is linked by Killigrew Street and Webber Street to the Moor.
- 5.4.2 Falmouth is a place full of surprises and contrasts, from the intimate enclosed nature of its main shopping street to its narrow alleys and breathtaking spaces beyond. In fact it is actually possible to visit the main shopping street of the town without realising its relationship with its historic waterfront. Equally it is possible to come ashore from a boat and be unaware of the range and interest of its predominantly linear shopping centre. It is certainly difficult, even for regular visitors to the town, to appreciate the diversity of buildings and spaces of the residential areas within and beyond the present Conservation Area unless they probe these opes linking the town centre to the rewarding higher ground beyond.
- 5.4.3 Once within the main Conservation Area, and being willing to explore, the exciting bustle within its narrow shopping streets can easily be relieved by exploring the alleyways and narrow streets leading off such as Hull’s Lane, Swanpool Street, Quay Hill, Somercourt, Well Lane (see figure 47), Fish Strand Hill (see figures 48 and 58), Fountain Ope, Bell’s Court (see figure 9), Smithick Hill and Jacob’s Ladder to more tranquil open spaces such as Lawn Steps (see figure 50) and the Old Cemetery land, then on to the polite architecture of its residential areas. On the waterfront side there are opportunities to leave the main street at Prince of Wales Pier (grade II), Fish Strand Quay (grade II), the Old Gasworks ope, Upton’s Slip, Quay Street (see figure 36) and Custom House Quay (see figure 49) (grade II*), possibly to take a ferry, or to watch the action at Falmouth Docks from Grove Place (see figure 35). These alleys and opes, some secret, some obvious, offer intimate glimpses or sudden and dramatic transition between the canyon-like shopping street to tantalising vistas or open seascape beyond.



Figure 46. Church Street from roof of No. 26

They also provide a challenge in character from the bustle of the central street to a more intimate, quieter atmosphere.

- 5.4.4 The principal characteristic of the shopping street is its sheer length. It is also very narrow, and flanked by predominantly three-storey buildings, giving a strong feeling of enclosure. Within this long street are significant changes of general character that have a lot to do with the age and style of the buildings and their relationship with the street. The disastrous fires of 1862 and 1870 (see also paragraph 3.6) that affected the High Street and Market Street respectively brought about a more planned kind of development to one side of each of these streets in the late nineteenth century, plus some of the quirky variations in street width as a result of some widening that accompanied this redevelopment.
- 5.4.5 The character of the main street may be generally an effect of enclosure but this is varied by exciting opportunities to get glimpses or gain access to the water through alleys, narrow streets, or by the wide access to Prince of Wales Pier projecting from the waterfront. These provide valuable links to the historic waterfront off the main street that enhance its pedestrian character. This character is reinforced and strongly varied also by the valued opportunities offered by alleys and narrow streets on the other side of the street. These give access to residential areas or to green amenity spaces like “Lawn Steps” (see figure 50) accessed through Well Lane (see figure 47), or the Old Cemetery land above the Church. These routes are essential pedestrian links for residents but also provide a considerable amenity for visitors who can if they wish emerge out of the enclosed street to rise quickly to a higher level and the open vantage points that are then



Figure 47. Well Lane and beyond



Figure 48. Fish Strand Hill

available to enjoy and appreciate the wonderful and spectacular setting of the town and again the change from the bustle of the centre to a sense of tranquillity provided by the open spaces and residential character.

- 5.4.6 The general character of the street is also in the quality and detail of its buildings. To fully enjoy these it is sometimes necessary to look up, above a plain, or even ugly, modern shop front. Fortunately, there are also many old and interesting shop fronts, including some rare examples from the early nineteenth century with small panes or with bowed fronts. A good example of this is Nos. 54 and 55 Church Street (see figure 51), one that has been carefully restored to retain its essential character. There are also many good later nineteenth century shop fronts. Many of these old shop fronts have their signage where it should be, as good painted lettering on the shop fascia enhancing the design of the shop front itself and announcing a promise of quality to the customer. Unfortunately, there are also some with planted-on signage boards disrupting the design of not just the shop front itself but of the whole building, and with an adverse effect on the neighbouring properties and also to the integrity and harmony of the street. Looking along the street emphasises the great variety of frontages, with roofs at different levels, plus the articulation provided by some buildings being recessed whilst others project. The architectural detail on offer ranges from a rich variety of sash window designs to moulded or incised stucco and terracotta extravagance. There is both classical simplicity and Baroque splendour (see figure 52), the whole linked by a vernacular theme of local materials and design. Typical classical architectural detail includes columns, pilasters, quoin strips, moulded hoods, moulded architraves, string courses, rustication and keyblocks. Vernacular interest is provided by late nineteenth century shopfronts inserted to earlier buildings, and to the juxtaposition of slatehanging and stone rubble with the smoother stucco and ashlar. There are some roofs hidden by moulded parapets, others with their eaves expressed by modillions or some other classical architectural device, many benefiting from the survival of cast-iron ogee-section gutters, providing the impression of a simple cornice. Where some roofs are hidden from street level, they are usually very visible and important from the waterfront or from the rising land on the landward side. Chimneys and old clay chimney pots survive in profusion, punctuating the roofscapes and providing tremendous visual variety (see figure 54). Whilst the beautiful old grouted scantle slate roofs are now fewer in number, the fast colonisation by lichen growth in the clean sea air of Falmouth has helped the intruding substitute materials to at least blend better than one might have feared. A worrying trend is the increasing number of rooflights disrupting the visual harmony of the general roofscape, both with their crude appearance and their unfortunate tendency to reflect strong lighting.
- 5.4.7 The physical character of the centre of Falmouth is complemented by its functional character, the uses of the buildings being generally appropriate to their location and to the overall function of Falmouth as a port and seaside resort. The function of these various places provides part of the town's atmosphere and interest. Commercial diversity and character is also provided by the architects practices, solicitors and other service businesses dotted around the town. Some essential cultural and educational requirements are also catered for at some of the best locations in town including the Passmore Edwards Free Library and Art Gallery (grade II) on the Moor, the Art Centre at the Polytechnic (see figure 53) (grade II*) in Church Street and the Maritime Museum in one of the seventeenth century buildings (grade II) in Bell's Court (see figure 9), the