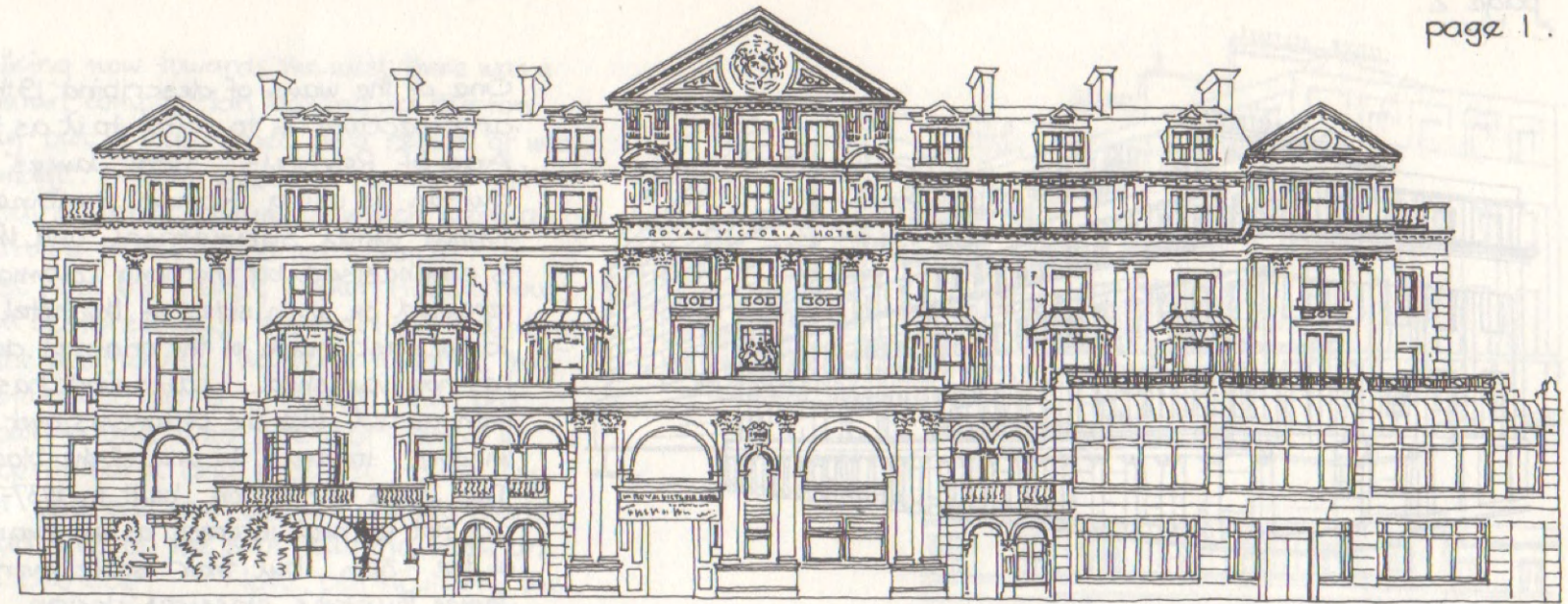


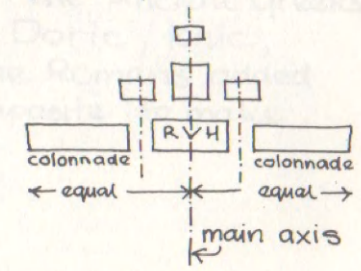
# A WALK ROUND BURTONS' ST. LEONARDS

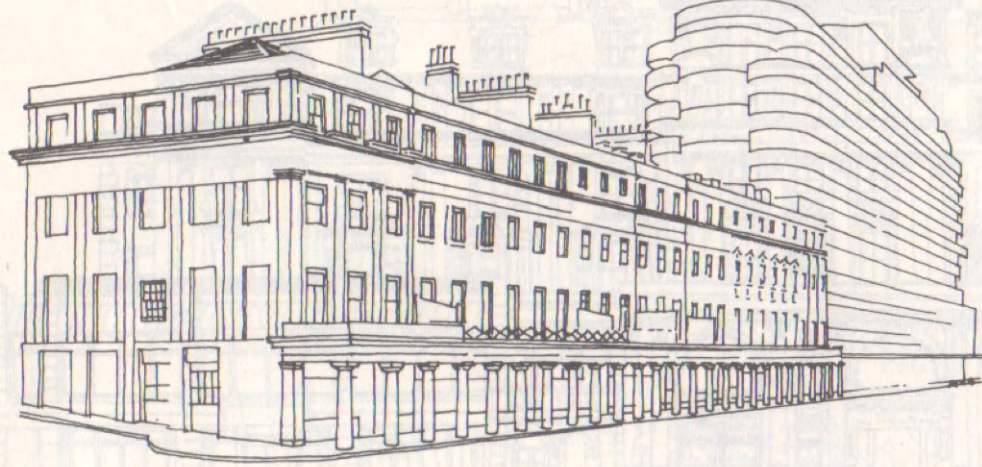




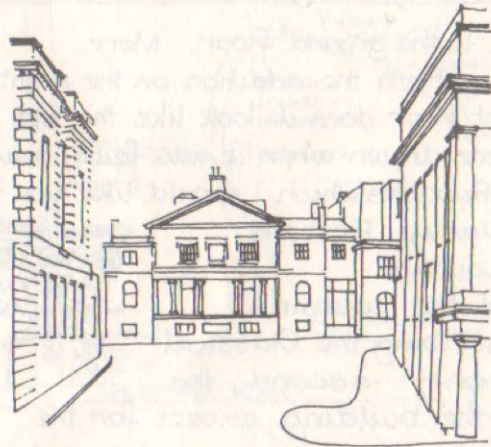
Towards the western end of the seafront at Hastings is the Royal Victoria Hotel. You may have passed it, perhaps several times, and assumed that it is just another seaside hotel, rather grand, perhaps a little old fashioned, hardly worth a second glance. In fact it is well worth another glance, not only at the building itself but also at the remarkable piece of town planning of which it is the central feature. A book about Sussex published in 1835 calls this area the new town at St. Leonards. The architect and planner was James Burton and the present day name is Burton's St. Leonards. In this Walk I hope to share with you some of the interesting and surprising features of the town started here on the seafront in 1828. First, let us take a closer look at the hotel. I think it is rather doubtful if James Burton would recognise much of his design! Someone has put a new roof and attic on it and in 1903

someone added to the ground floor. More recently there has been the addition on the right. Only at the first floor does it look like the old prints which were drawn when it was fairly new. There are two features which I should like you to look at particularly: First, the Corinthian Capitals at the tops of the columns (I shall be describing the "Classical Orders" later on); second, the symmetry of the building, except for the extension on the right. This symmetry extends beyond the hotel and is part of James Burton's 'Town Plan'. It is based on Roman principles while much of the architectural design follows details first used by the Ancient Greeks.





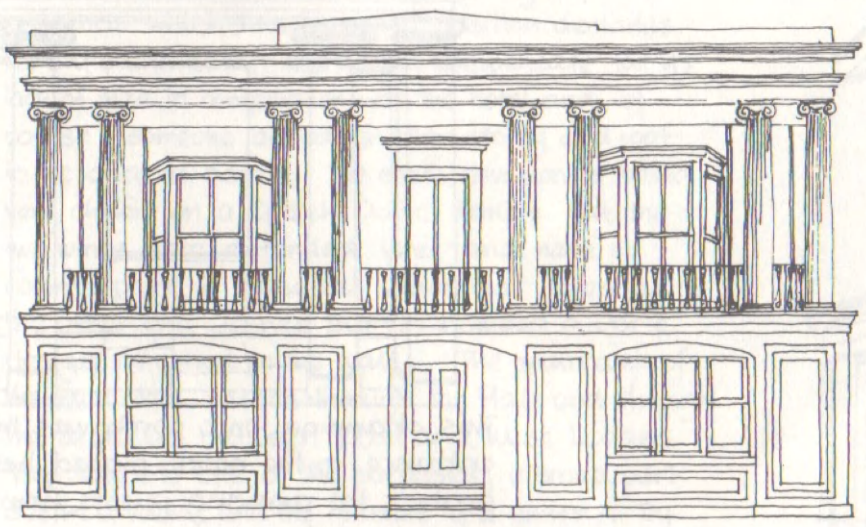
One of the ways of describing 19th C. architecture is to refer to it as the Age of Revivals. Here James Burton is using Roman planning formal axial symmetrical and this is emphasised by the long colonnades repeated on both sides of the hotel. To the east much of the original detail has now vanished. Later work has been added like the pediments over the windows towards the end of the block. The flats further on built in 1937-38 are not without interest as an example of the '30's' but their scale overwhelms James Burton's classical design.



ionic capital

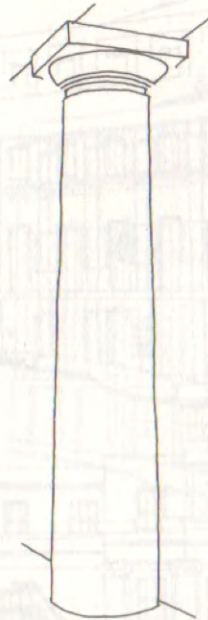
Looking up the road, Gardner Way, between the terrace and the hotel, we see another aspect of the classical approach - a symmetrical building framed by the two buildings on the seafront emphasised by a strongly marked feature, the triangular pediment over ionic columns.

Walking now towards the west there was a similar composition looking up Burton Way but it was ruined as a result of war damage. This western terrace still retains Ionic columns which were a feature in the original design. Just past the flats, Crown House now well restored was the earliest building in the new town. We tend to think that prefabrication is a recent idea but Crown House was prefabricated in Regents Park and brought round by sea and erected so that James Burton could live on the spot during work on his project. Note particularly the wrought iron balustrade and the pairs of Ionic columns.

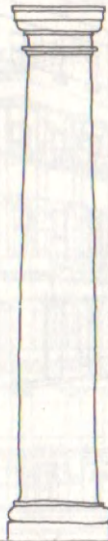


Crown House

The Walk now turns back towards the central features of the town plan. On the way there is an opportunity to consider the classical Orders of Architecture. The Ancient Greeks designed three - Doric, Ionic, Corinthian. The Romans added Tuscan and Composite to make five in all.



The colonnade



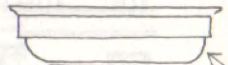
Tuscan for comparison



Masonic Hall Doric



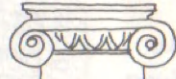
Greek Doric



Roman Doric



Ionic - the porch

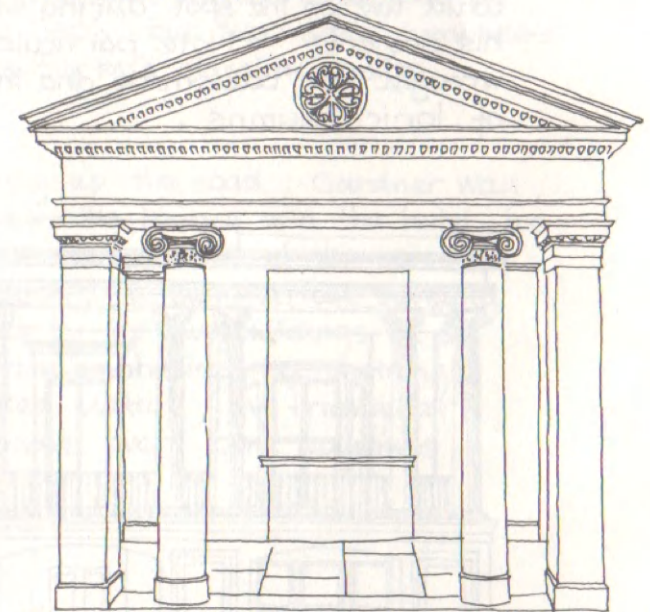


Roman Ionic for comparison.



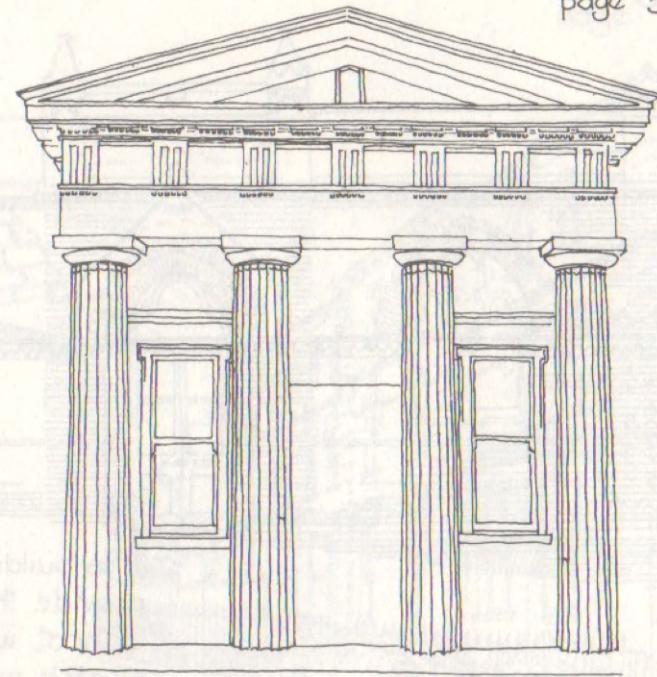
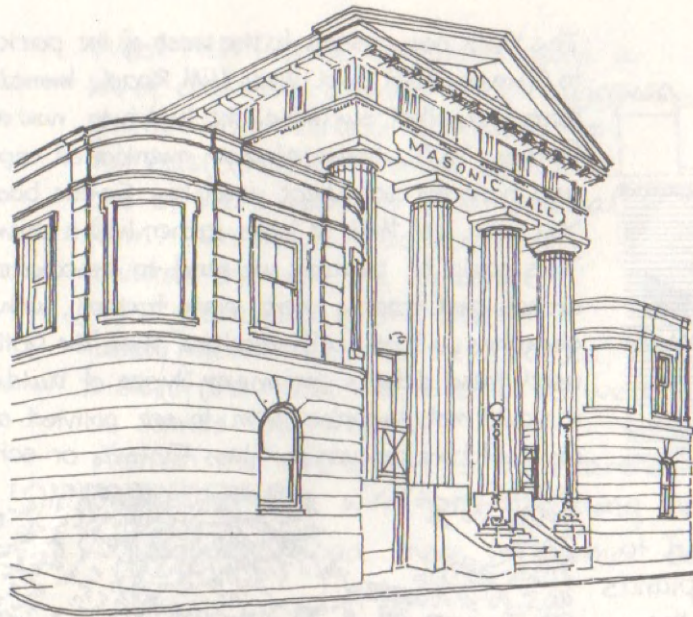
typical Greek ornament.

One authority has described the colonnade as having Tuscan columns, others say Doric. For comparison I have sketched a 'copy book' version of Tuscan and you can see that it has a base and a different shape of capital. At this time in our history architects used copy books or their own sketch books for details and in St Leonards James Burton seems to have based his designs on Greek originals. I have sketched some of the clues but I must warn that exceptions can be found.



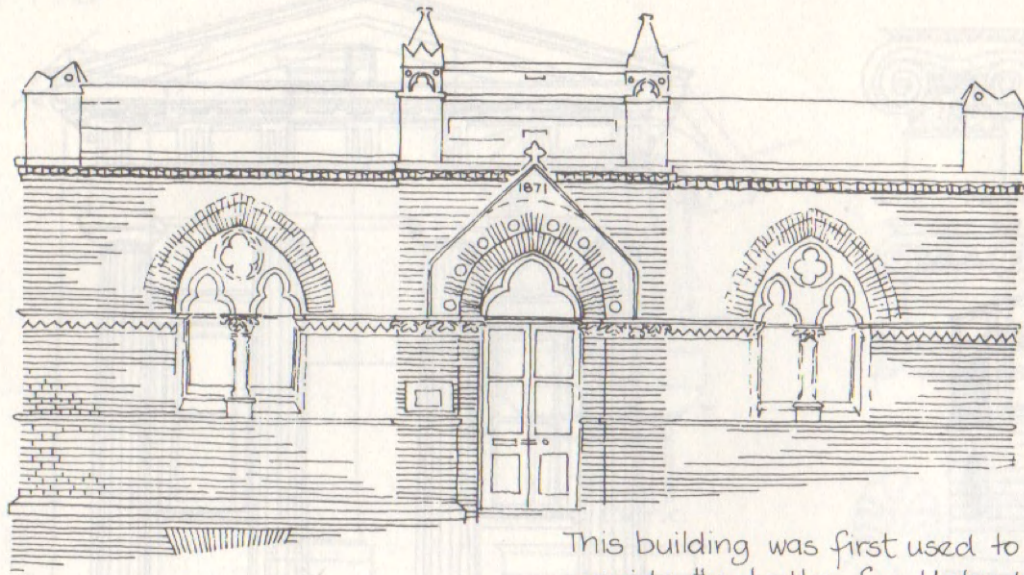
This charming Ionic porch was the original entrance to the hotel, placed here to protect the arriving guests from the seaside gales.

In West Ascent these houses were part of the original town plan.



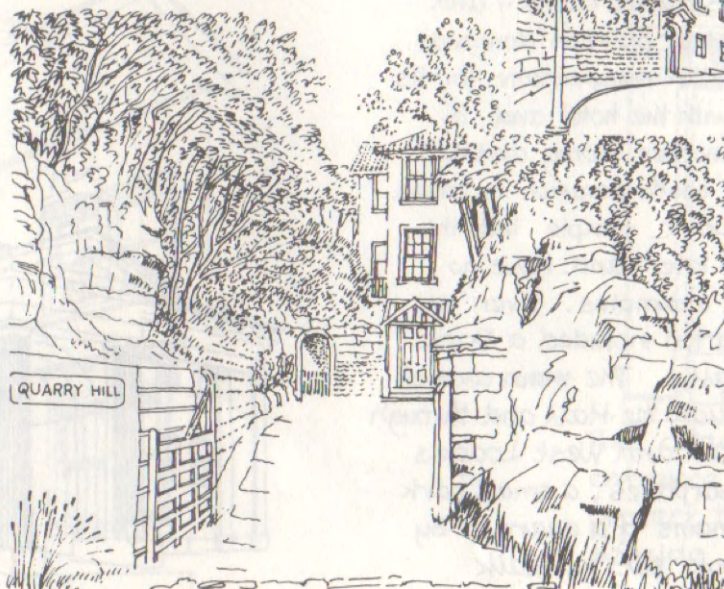
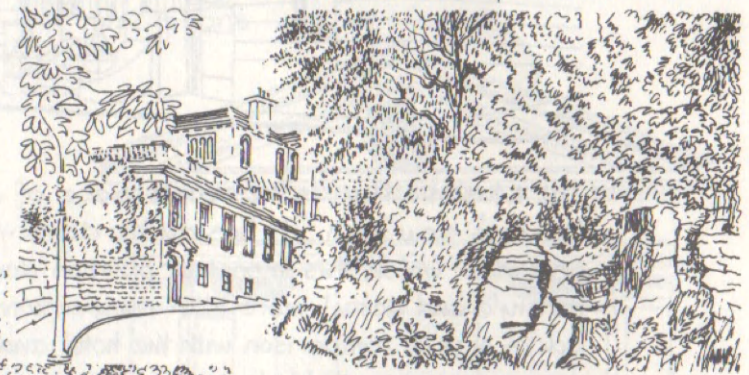
The Masonic Hall is the centre-piece of James Burton's new town. It has all the dignity and presence which this important position demands. Its style and detail more than compensate for its lack of size in comparison with the hotel and, of course, someone added another storey and roof to the original hotel. The south elevation is based very closely on a Greek Doric temple but the two wings were extended later and have no counterpart in classical examples. Even at the other end James Burton included a Doric design attached to the wall. The main axis of the town plan passes through the Hall and through the archway between East and West Lodges. This leads to one of the surprises, a small park set in a valley and the remains of a quarry. By all means have a quick look but this walk returns to the park later.





This building was first used to provide the baths for Uplands School which is seen in the sketch on the right →

The Walk now passes to the west of the park to Quarry Hill and West Hill Road. Immediately there is another 'surprise' the Institute, now a glass factory, 1871. I have already mentioned copy books and here the architect used his Gothic book. You may feel that it looks rather like a church. This could be because we tend to associate pointed arches and tracery, here plate tracery, with medieval churches. It is worth recalling that the Gothic masons used these details for many types of building and it would not surprise them to see pointed arches in an Institute or even a Glass Factory or school baths

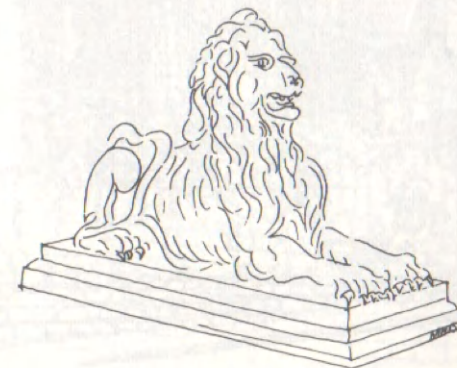
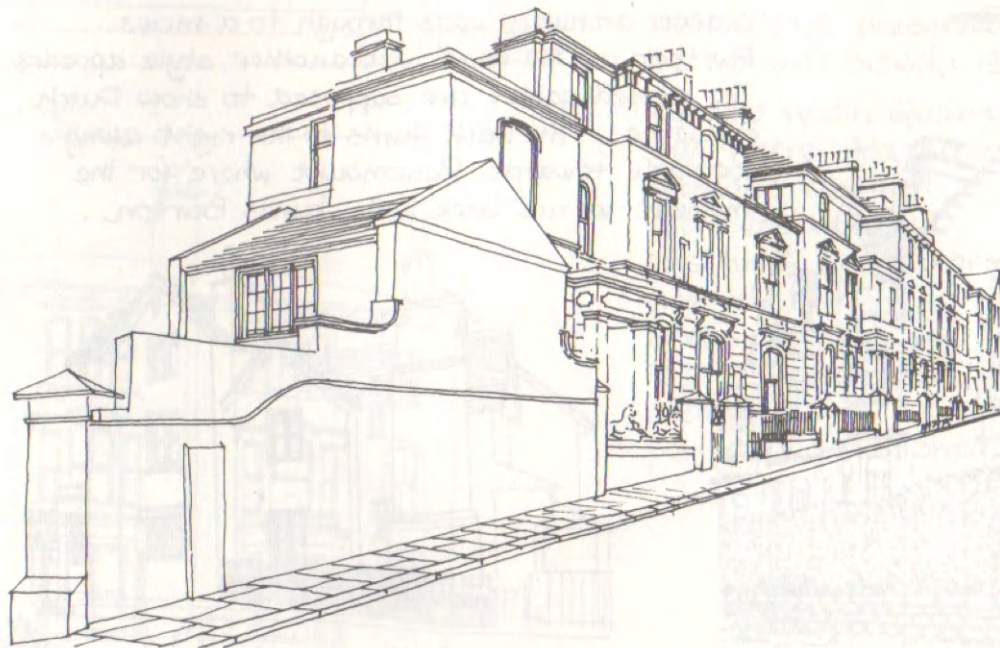
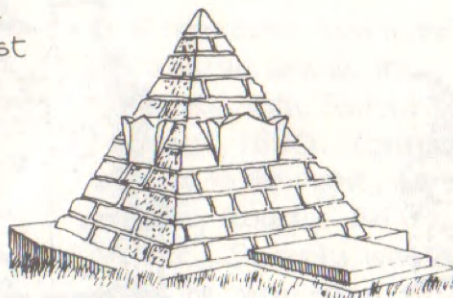


In Quarry Hill James Burton departs from his plan and seems intent on creating a 'garden city'. From the road we see just glimpses. At some stage James was joined by his son Decimus and perhaps we are seeing his influence here. The complete walk takes in West Hill and Boscobel Roads. If you wish to take a shorter route continue up Quarry Hill and turn to page 10

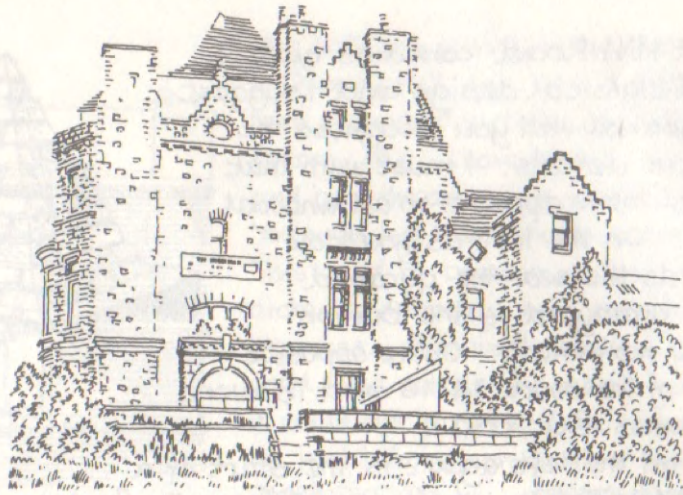
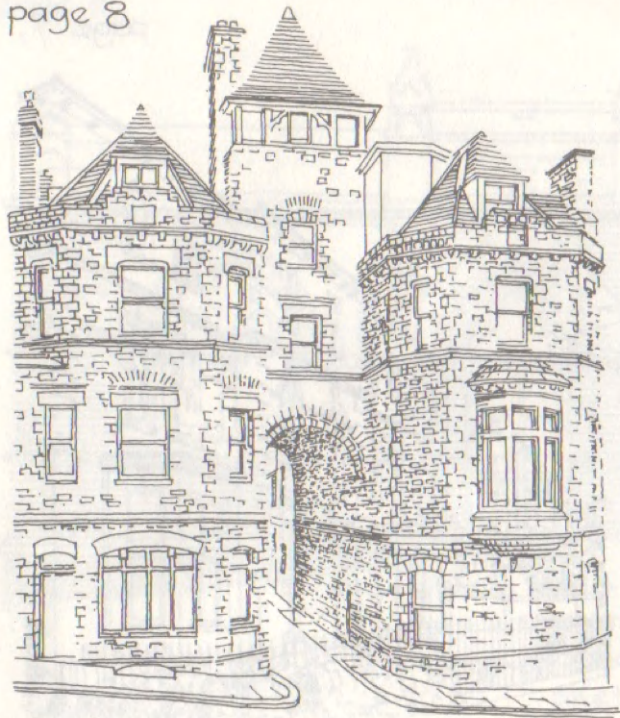
West Mill Road contains quite a lot of classical design and I suggest you see how well you recognise the various details. I must warn that one of them appears in an unusual form. On the left as you look towards the sea the pyramid in the graveyard is the Burton family monument. On the opposite side of the road 14, 16 and 18 were by James Burton.

Then on the left again is the start of a longer terrace with lions guarding the front door.

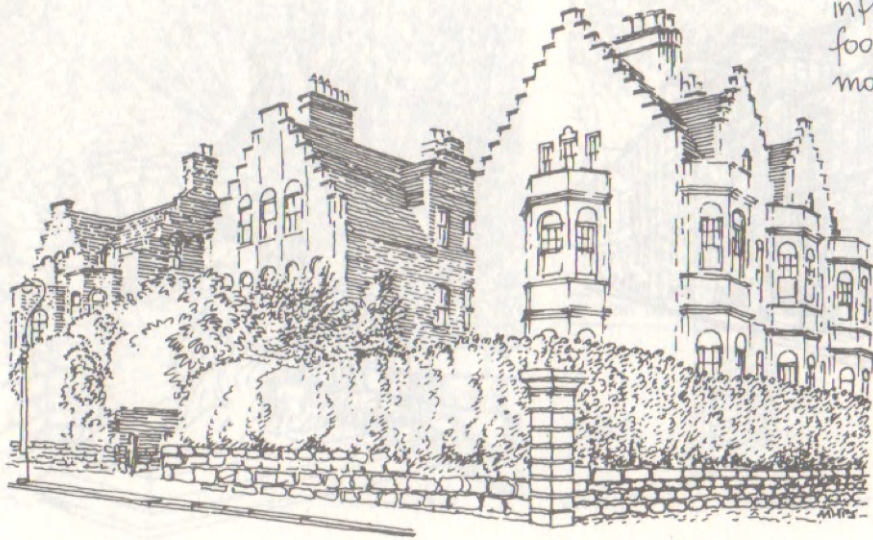
At Boscobel Road there is another surprise.....



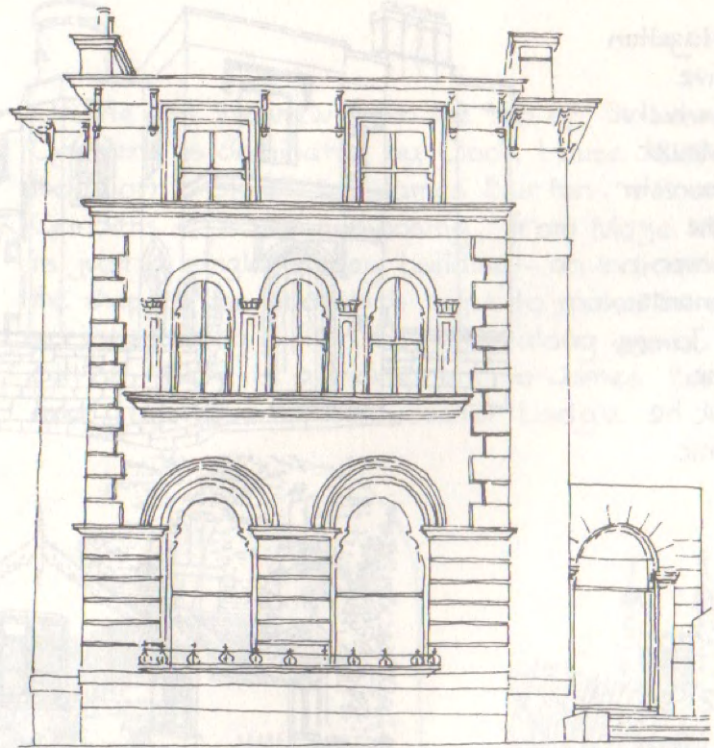




.... from classical we change to a stern northern Gothic in stone, appropriately the Highlands Hotel, 1874. Round the corner an oriel window projects from a first floor room and a deep archway leads through to a mews. Further up the road yet another style appears. The stepped gables are supposed to show Dutch influence. The walk turns to the right along a footpath towards Rosemount where for the moment we are back with James Burton.



Rosemount



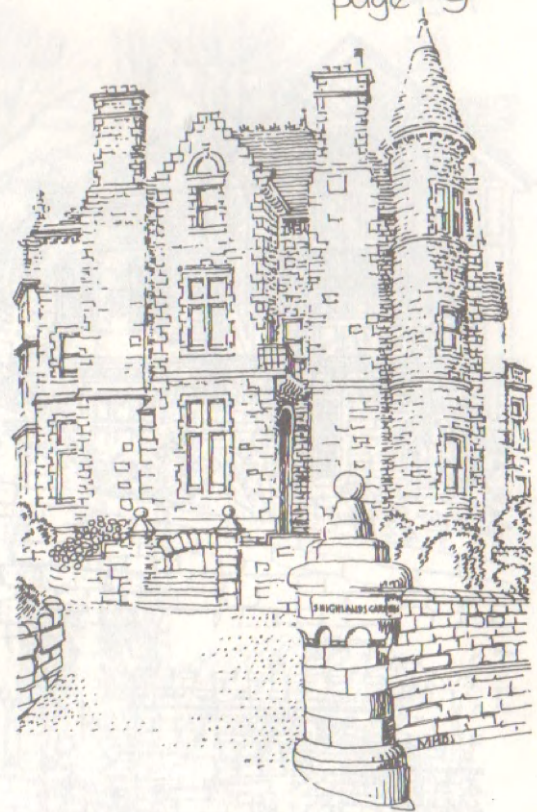
The Mount

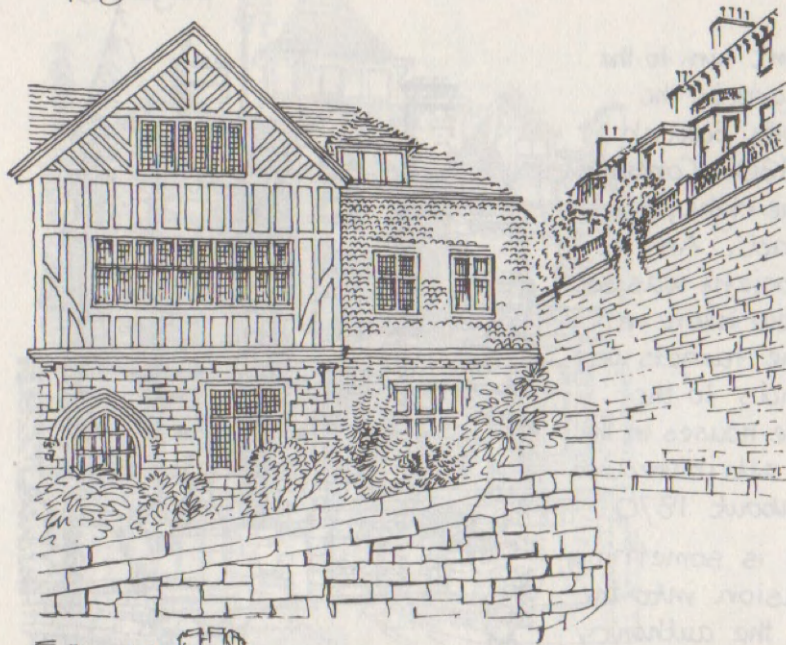


At Rosemount turn to the left and we are in the Highlands with Scottish Baronial 1880. Continue, bearing to the right, in Archery Road. An Archery Society was set up in the new town in 1833 and the targets were in the grounds to the right. The houses in The Mount are attributed to Decimus, about 1870.

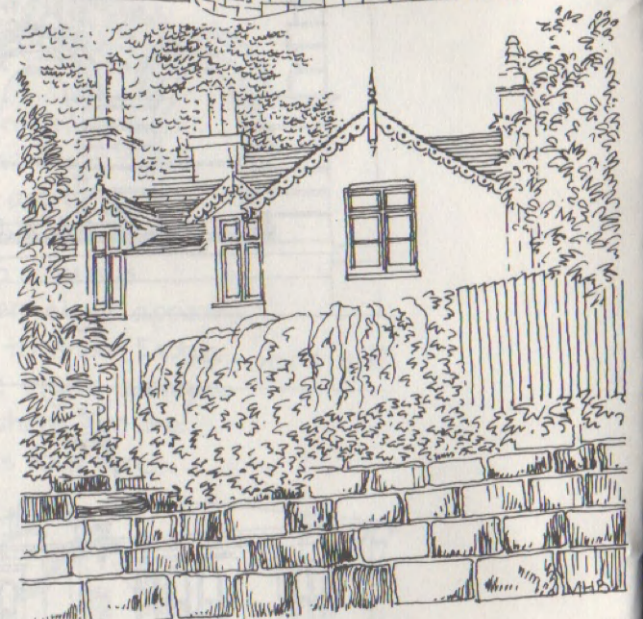
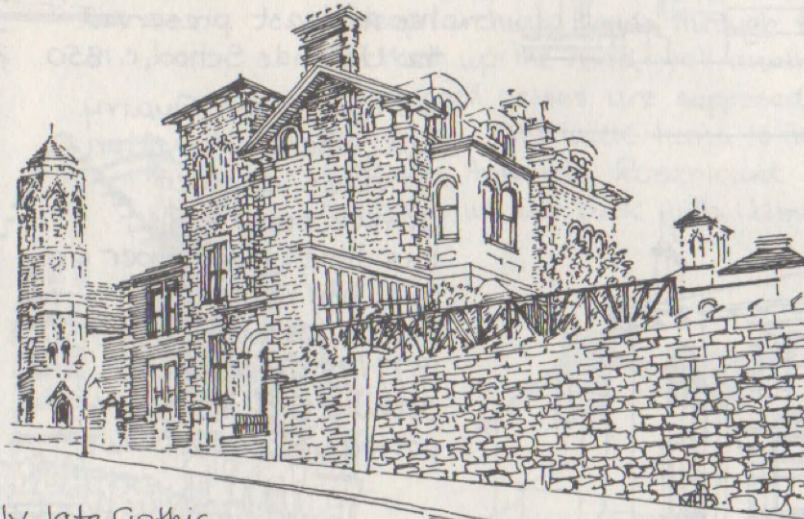
The College is something of an intrusion into the scene but the authority has at least preserved the Uplands School, c.1850.

We now rejoin Quarry Hill where Hazelton provides another architectural style, this time half timber and tile hanging. It was designed in 1877/79 by a noted architect of the period Norman Shaw.





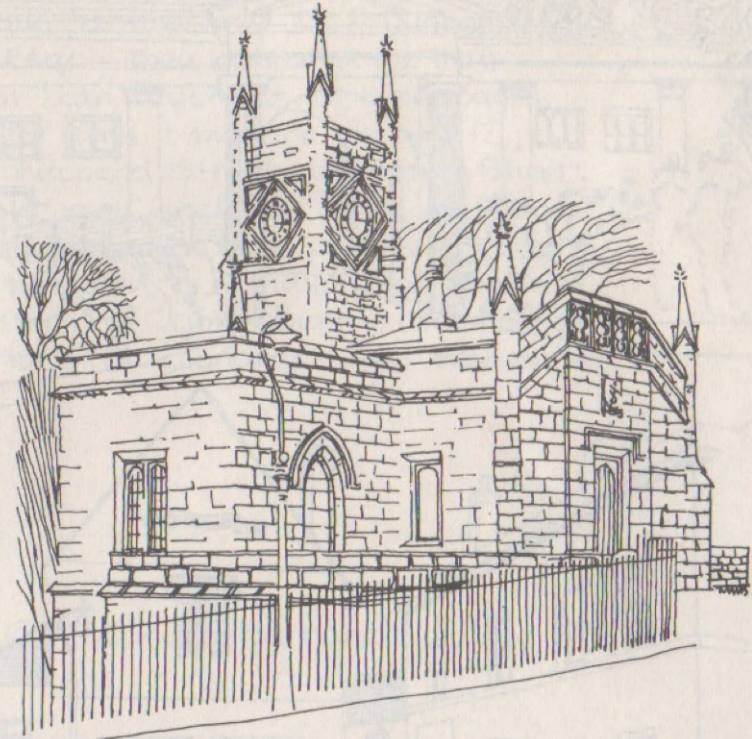
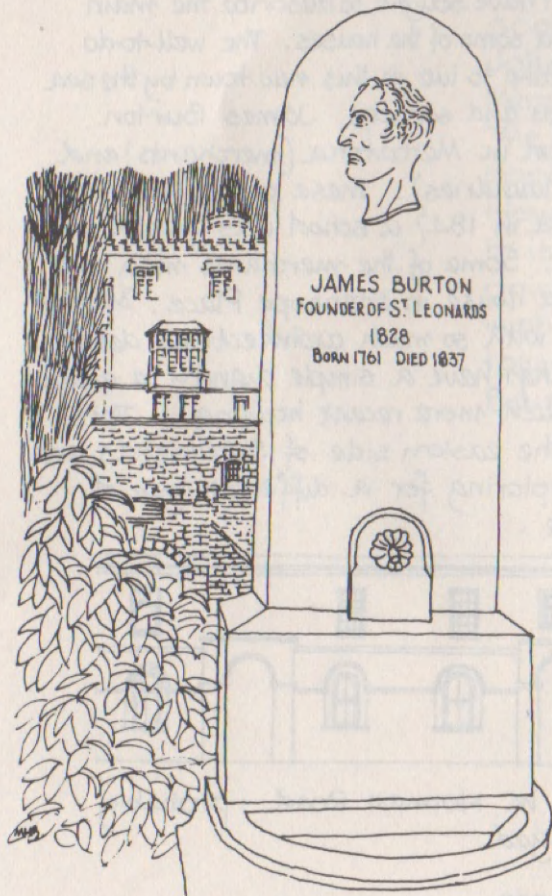
Walking past Hazelton and the massive retaining wall which supports The Mount we come to Gloucester Lodge, one of the larger houses overlooking St Leonards Gardens. By James Burton, the details suggest he used late Gothic models.



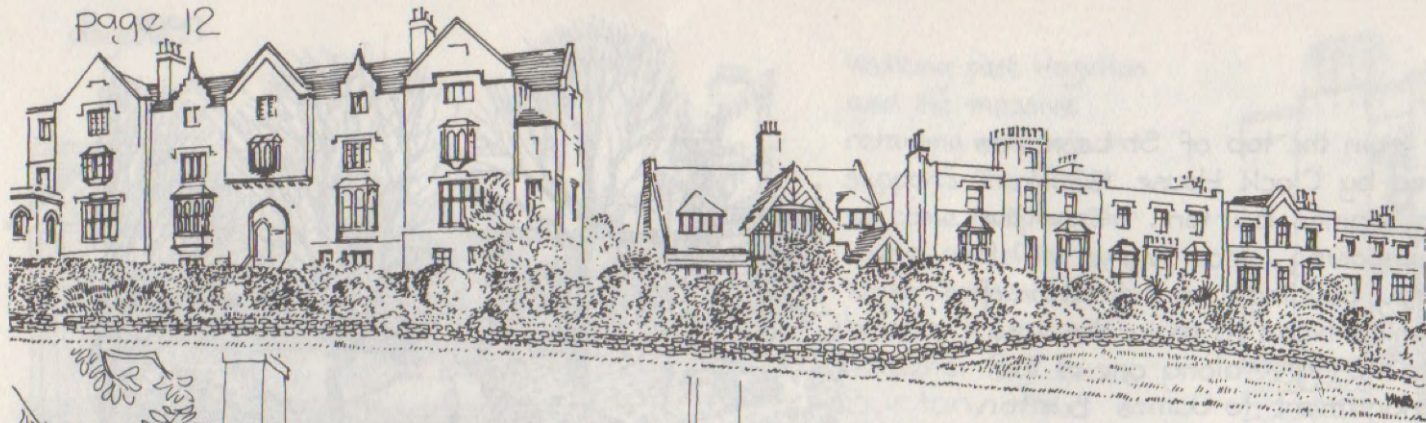
North Lodge is more obviously late Gothic or Tudor as the rather flat arch indicates - by James, 1830. Through the archway Baston Lodge, Decimus 1850, has an Italian quality. The church tower belongs to St John's and is all that remains of Sir Arthur Blomfield's design 1881, the rest being rebuilt after war damage.

As a change from streets I suggest you walk back through the Gardens but first have a look at the fine bargeboard on the eaves of the "cottage ornée" next door to North Lodge by James Burton.

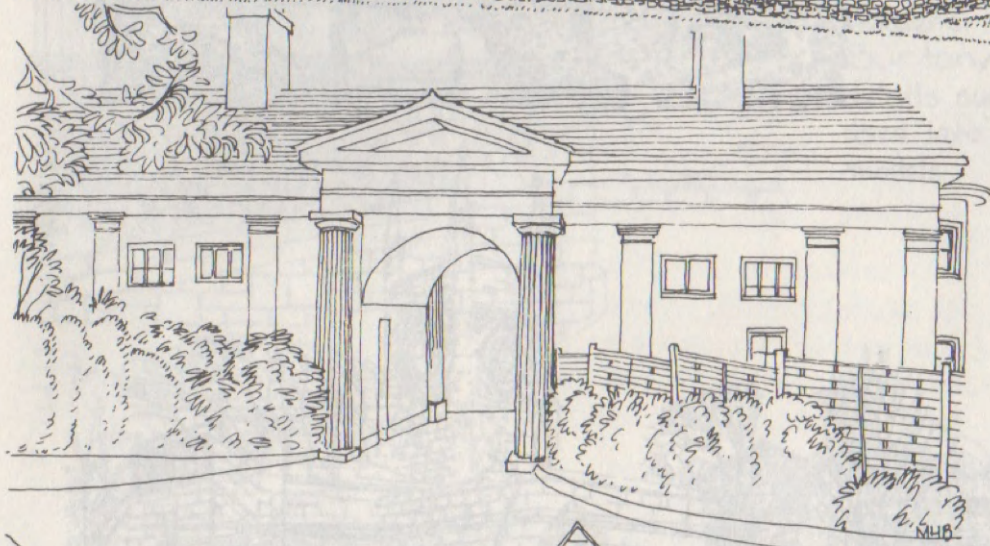
On the left the view from the top of St Leonards Gardens is dominated by Clock House 1828 in the 'Gothic Style' by James Burton. From the Gardens it is very imposing, from Maze Hill it is just a single storey building - an indication of the shape of the land which helps to make the area so interesting. On the right along one of the paths there is a monument to James Burton and a glimpse of Gloucester Lodge.



Clock House from Maze Hill.



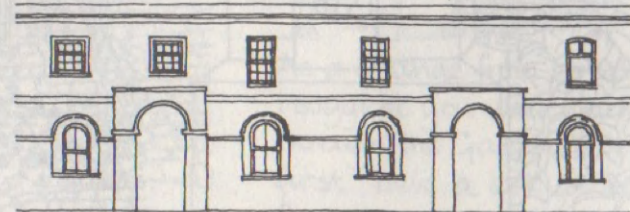
Further down the Gardens there is this prospect of the houses in Maze Hill, Tudor in inspiration and mostly by James Burton. Then we are back again at South (or East/West) Lodge(s).



In this Walk I have sought to describe the main buildings and some of the houses. The well-to-do people who came to live in this new town by the sea needed shops and services. James Burton provided them in Mercatoria (merchants) and Lavatoria (laundries). These people had their families and in 1847 a school was opened in Mercatoria. Some of the merchants may have aspired to a house in Stanhope Place. Although not treated with so much architectural detail these buildings have a simple dignity a quality lost in so much more recent housing. This area is on the eastern side of St Leonards and is worth exploring for a different type of architecture.



A terrace house in Stanhope Place



Lavatoria in Norman Road - probably much changed.

## Postscript

A booklet like this must depend very much on the work of others for its historical background - from Thomas Walker Horsefield F.S.A. who wrote of St. Leonards "This Parish, though small, is very important, from the fact of the new town of the same name having been built partly within it" (The History Antiquities and Topography of the County of Sussex, 1835) via Kelly's Directories to the contributions of people to whom I have spoken or written. I must thank particularly Dr P. Dunbar Johnson J.P. and Barry Funnel Esq. They reminded me that there is a lot more to be seen than I can illustrate on twelve pages, The Uplands, The Lawn as well as the area I mention on page 12, particularly in Alfred Street Sheppard Street and North Street. However the responsibility for text and sketches is all mine. It is a sobering thought that as I prepare these pages for the printer I cannot even plead a misprint! Finally, for those who wish to read more about the history of James Burton and his new town I would commend "Burton's St. Leonards" by J. Manwaring Baines (Hastings Museum, 1956)

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JAMES BURTON  
FOUNDER OF ST. LEONARDS  
1828  
BORN 1761 DIED 1837

1871

ST. LEONARDS COMMON

