**How to write a Street History for Here in the Past – from start to finish**

If you are writing or collaborating in writing or just thinking of writing a history for Here in the Past, this document is intended to help you.

How to write a street history has been reduced to 10 steps or stages.

(Stages 1-4 are preparatory, 5-10 the nitty-gritty).

The 10 stages

1) Visit the area. Walk up & down the street and explore the vicinity. Look up & down. Try & assess age of buildings. Were they all built at same time? 19th century/20th century? Are some more modern? Take pictures & note the house numbers. Draw a sketch map of the street.

2) Look at maps: Start with the 1792 terrier. Familiarise yourself with mapping nomenclature (laine/furlong/leakway/paul pieces). Follow with the “furlongs” map + the ownership chart. You should be able to work out who originally owned the land on which the street was eventually built. Study maps from: 1820’s/1840’s/1860’s.

3) Take notes about street development, i.e., when nothing was there, when it was part built, when it was complete. (Caveat: date on the map may be when it was published not when land was surveyed). There is a fine collection of these maps available at The Keep.

4) Look at James Gray photograph collection. You may strike lucky with early photos of your street (if not you will spend hour after fascinating hour looking at pictures of old Brighton). The collection is available on line.

5) Read Around. You are not working in entirely virgin territory. Try Georgian Brighton by Sue Berry, Encyclopedia of Brighton, ed. Tim Carder or Rose Collis, Street Histories published on the our website (some of the material will be transferable) and the North Laine Association website also contains some brief street histories.

Study the census & directory info. These are the building blocks of your history. Census information is available for years 1841 – 1911. Directories cover a wider period: 1822 – 1970’s/80’s at least. People were obliged by law to provide the census enumerators with the truth about who was living in the house (doesn’t mean they did!). Street information in Directories was provided voluntarily by people either for some commercial reason or merely to indicate that that person lived in that particular house. Therefore the Directory information is not comprehensive so we cannot assume, for example, if a street or house is blank that necessarily nobody lived there. Look for occupation patterns: eg in the 1841Census for Orange Row there were 119 people living there of whom 32 indicated their occupation (all men) There was 1 bricklayer/1plasterer/1shoemaker/2carpenters/1 coal merchant (interesting - a business albeit a dirty one) but the overwhelming fact is that all the other 26 describe themselves as “labourers”) ie amongst the working poor, they were the unskilled, at the bottom of the heap. cf an adjacent stretch of Church St. has a grocer/a coach maker/a tailor/a draper/a shoemaker ie people with skills & crafts. Conclusion: - we should not categorise all of North Laine as homogeneously working class. Analyse the data and look for patterns. The 1851 population of Gardner Street was 493 in roughly 50 houses most of which also contained shops & workshops. A statistic like this can headline a section on what we would think of as chronic overcrowding in a Victorian street.

This data may have been transcribed & checked already. If not you will find census information on findmypast.co.uk

6) Search your street in Access to Archives. You can do this at home and see what documents relevant to your street are held at The Keep. You may strike gold. Also search your street on britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

7) Visit The Keep. Follow up leads, e.g., property documents & wills. You might wish to study the Poll Books/ Cresy Report/Local Newspapers on microfilm.

8) Start writing your history. Bear in mind that your material should be presented in our fixed format with 12 headings: Introduction/Development/Architecture/Ownership/Amenities/Notables/Residents/Trade/Conclusion. Some sections will be much longer than others and some sections may be entirely blank. Ask us for a copy of the ‘Guidelines for writing a Street History’; prepared to assist volunteers.

9) Draft & redraft. You are aiming to write honest, verifiable history. When judgements are made, opinions are offered and conclusions are drawn they should relate to factual and statistical information that has been presented. We are aiming to unearth and present the truth. When there is a lack of certainty we should acknowledge this: phrases like; ‘it seems probable’, ‘it could be argued’ are possibly useful!

10) Get someone to read your copy. Once you are happy with it, send it to us for inclusion in the HitP website

NOTES:

A) The above does not purport to be the definitive or only way of writing a street history. It is a way.

NOTE: You may be able to augment your street history with some oral history. We offer written advice on how to conduct interviews if you find willing and suitable subjects - see:

HitP - Introduction to taking an Oral History.docx

HitP - Interview principles - the basics.docx

HitP - Oral History Consent Form HitP.docx.