

# ALDWINKLE'S YARD IN 1809

By Pam Aucott

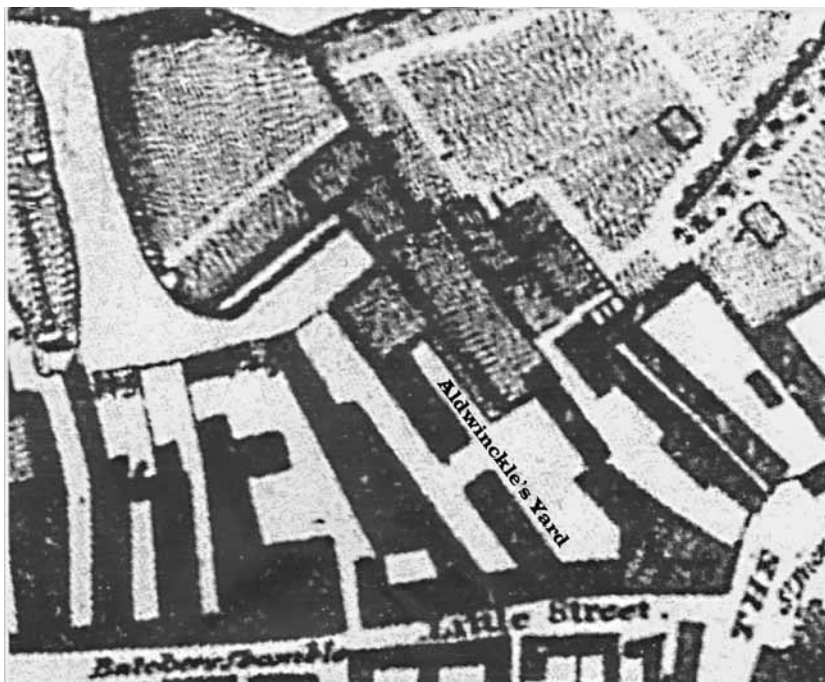
**B**ehind the frontages of the streets of Harborough lie a series of yards. The origins of these yards can be traced back to medieval times when the town was set out with long narrow plots facing the Great Street. Originally there would have been a dwelling next to the street and a large yard to the rear with the yard being used in association with the dwelling house.



ALDWINKLE'S YARD 1933 (COURTESY BERNARD ELLIOTT)

Over time the uses of the yards broadened and they became hives of activity providing warehouses, workshops, stables and even dwellings. No one is sure when these developments occurred and it is rare to find any detailed information

on the workings of these yards. However, an advertisement in a Leicester Journal of 1809 makes it possible to reconstruct the way just one of these yards was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

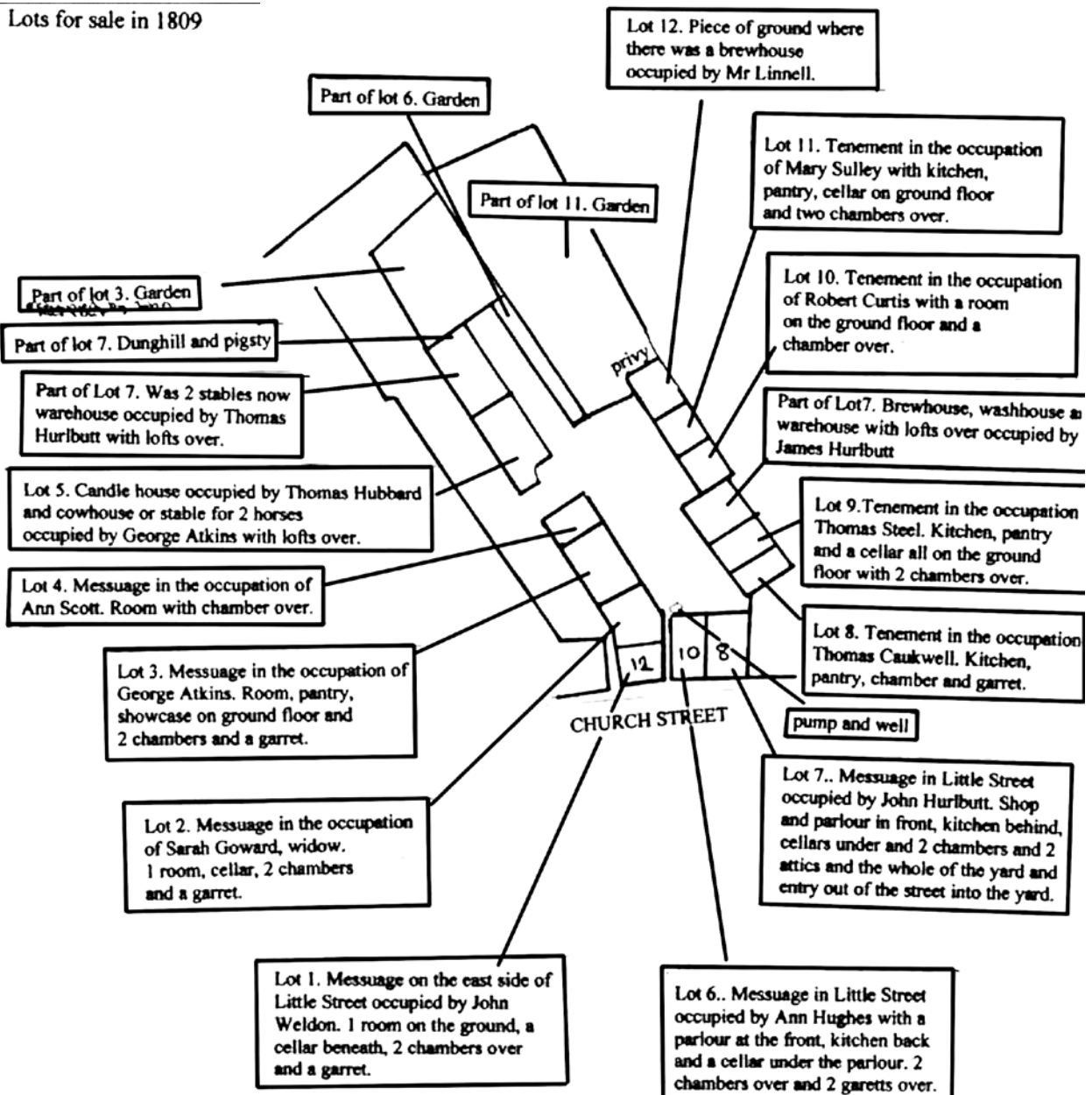


This yard later became known as Aldwinkle's Yard and lay to the east side of Church Street or Little Street as it was known in 1809, to the rear of numbers 8-12. The block of shops below the Old Town Hall did not exist when the town was first laid out making the east side of Church Street part of the Great Street. This yard was named after Sam Aldwinkle, who ran an ironmongery business from 6-8 Church Street in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1809 the whole of the yard was still in the ownership of one person,

although the sale notice shows it was split into 12 lots for sale. Using the sale notice in conjunction with Sam Turner's map of the town, it is possible to reconstruct the layout of the yard. Turner's map was begun at the time the open fields were enclosed and completed over twenty Years later by Rowland Rouse for inclusion in Nicholls History of Leicestershire published in 1804. This reconstruction can be seen in the accompanying plan. The three houses fronting Church Street all had underground cellars and were three stories high. Surprisingly the three cottages immediately behind those fronting Church Street were also three stories high with garrets on the top floor.

The yard was quite large and buildings lined the east and west sides with cottages and warehouses near the front and workshops, stables and gardens at the back. George Atkins, a cordwainer, both lived and worked in the yard. In all there were three cottages on the west side and four on the east side.

Lots for sale in 1809



A well with a pump was located to the rear of 10 Church Street whilst a single privy located next to the gardens at the far end served the whole of the yard. In the middle of the twentieth century there was still a single WC at the end of the yard remembered as having blue flowers on it. The sale notice also refers to the great gates of the yard which were located along the northern boundary, suggesting the yard could be closed off from the streets. This entrance was for the entry of carriages and livestock as well as people and included a right of passage through the yard in the occupation of Mr Hind. A narrow passageway between 10 and 12 Church Street provided pedestrian access to the street. Mr Hind may have purchased Lot 3 for the Manor Court of 1812 records Mr Hind transferring a piece of ground to the Trustees of the chapel. In 1816 the first Methodist Chapel within the town was built on the garden in the northwest corner of the yard, this had been sold as part of Lot 3 in 1808.

The names of the occupiers of all the lots were recorded in the advertisement and by comparing these with the rate returns for 1807 it can be calculated that John Weldon occupied number 12, Ann Hughes number 10 and John Hurlbut number 8 Church Street. Living in the yard there were three tradesmen, one servant and one pauper and the widows Sully and Hurlbut. These two widows have the word school after their names in the rate return suggesting they were providing basic education for younger children. Only Mary Sulley is named in the sale notice suggesting the two may have shared one cottage.



ALDWINKLE'S YARD EARLY 1990s (COURTESY ROSALIND WILLATTS')

Comparing Sam Turner's map with the first large scale OS map of the town published in 1885 it can be seen that in 1809 the yards were still developing and Lots 10 and 12 were in later times part of Martin's yard and further buildings were erected in Aldwinkle's yard in front of these. The yard continued to be used for a variety of purposes. By the time Bernard Elliott took photos of the yard in the 1930s almost all the premises were used for storage, although one family continued to live in the yard until the 1950s. Today the yard has undergone a complete redevelopment and once again provides residential accommodation with a total of 9 cottages.