

Burford's Shopfronts



Figure A The 18th-century apothecary's shopfront at 124 High Street, still a chemist's shop. The large sash windows are typical of the period.



Figure B The bow shop-window at 93 High Street was installed in the early 19th century, probably for a bakery. The relatively thin glazing bars are typical of this later period.

Shopfronts have always been one of the most frequently replaced parts of town buildings, as on any modern High Street. Like many towns, therefore, Burford has few early examples despite its rich variety of domestic fronts. The earliest to survive, other than the fragments of a medieval shopfront inside 111 High Street (Panel 3), is the important 18th-century front at 124 High Street, converted from an inn to an apothecary's shop c.1734. Inside are drawers and fittings of the period.

A shop window at 121 High Street is late 18th-century, but most others are from the 19th and 20th centuries. Generally, those with thicker glazing bars are early (e.g. at 123 High Street). These became

thinner in the early 19th century, for example in the bow-fronted window at 93 High Street (Stone Gallery). From the mid-19th century are the tripartite sash windows such as at 48 High Street (Elm of Burford). After the abolition of the glass tax in 1857, large sheets of plate glass replaced some earlier windows. Burford's economic stagnation kept their installation small-scale, however, and many earlier examples survive.

This gradual increase in window size allowed increased views of shop interiors as the century progressed. Some tradesmen and retailers never had purpose-built shop windows, however. In the side streets front rooms were often used, with goods displayed behind ordinary domestic windows.

Figure C Some specialist shopfronts survive in Burford. At 49 High Street (formerly a butcher's), the wide sash would have opened completely to allow the meat to be seen in fresh air. Above can be seen the iron bars from which carcasses were hung. In the pavement outside are blue industrial paviors with a diamond pattern, provided so that passers-by did not slip when the counters were washed down.



Further Reading: Morrison, Kathryn, *English Shops and Shopping: an Architectural History* (2003)