

## Fragments of Sidmouth

Look around you and everywhere in the built environment there is architecture. It is a world full of fascinating shapes and forms that take on different appearances as you change your viewpoint and observe one element against another; or they may create a geometric harmony as you reach some perfect viewpoint. Sidmouth is no exception and in our town we are fortunate to have many interesting and beautiful buildings in our landscape.

Photographing architecture is a voyage of discovery. The more you look, the more you see. You discover the embellishments, notice the symmetry, find that “perfect viewpoint” and hopefully capture the essence of the building or at least some part of it. Sometimes a building will have a dominant feature that is readily visible from afar and is in a way, its signature, there for everyone to see and admire – the arches over the main windows and door of the old post office are a good example. Or perhaps the perfect viewpoint for the definitive composition is discovered almost by accident after viewing the subject from many different angles – the back of the Drill Hall perhaps; an unlikely location.

Why black and white? Monochrome treatment emphasises the graphic nature of construction elements, the distracting colours are gone, and the viewer is led to concentrate on the shapes, lines and patterns of the builder’s materials and the architect’s designs.

This sequence of images reveals vignettes of some of Sidmouth’s buildings; they appeal to the photographer for their graphic qualities. Some are decorative, some less so; but between them it is to be hoped that you will see something of Sidmouth.



row	where
1	1 Fortfield Terrace
1	2 Sidmouth Swimming Pool
1	3 Cotmaton Road
1	4 Sidmouth Cemetery Chapel
1	5 Knowle Drive
1	6 St John’s School
1	7 Connaught Gardens Clock Tower
1	8 Coburg Terrace
1	9 The Victoria Hotel
2	1 The Old Station Buildings
2	2 The Beacon
2	3 The Masonic Hall
2	4 Curzon House
2	5 Beach House
2	6 The Beacon
2	7 The back of Boots Shop
2	8 Sidmouth Cemetery Chapel
2	9 Kennaway House

row	where
3	1 The Drill Hall
3	2 Vicarage Road
3	3 The Old Post Office Building
3	4 The Royal Mail Delivery Office
3	5 The Radway Cinema
3	6 Sidmouth Old Dissenting Meeting House
3	7 Sidmouth Cemetery Chapel
3	8 Marino Lodge
3	9 Connaught View
4	1 The Church of Most Precious Blood
4	2 Lloyds Bank
4	3 The Drill Hall
4	4 The Byes Toll-House
4	5 The Market Place
4	6 Beach House
4	7 The Knowle
4	8 The Royal York and Faulkner Hotel
4	9 The Telephone Exchange

## The photographer's thinking behind some of these images

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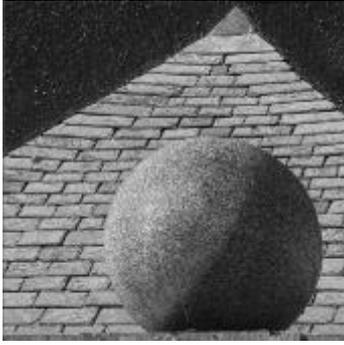


**The Old Post Office on Vicarage Road** is a landmark building in Sidmouth, impossible to miss, Grade II listed, and an architectural statement in yellow stone and red brick; now no longer used for its original purpose. The three arches convert what could have been a mundane utilitarian building, into something quite impressive, and make an inviting entry. The imposing façade has a satisfying and well-proportioned symmetry. It must have seemed very grandiose when it was completed in 1938. It is the arches that always attract my attention and in particular the lovely detail where they meet, the intricacy of the brick layer's attention to the splicing of the bricks, and the shapes so formed.

Spliced Brickwork



Next door to the Old Post Office is the entrance to the Royal Mail Delivery Office, still in use today. Either side are two bricked up telephone cubicles with the words "TELEPHONE" carved into the lintels and preserved within the brickwork. As finials to the gate posts there are two polished granite balls. When you arrive at the "perfect viewpoint" you will see how a ball becomes framed by the tiled triangular shape of an outbuilding roof. Did the architect, Henry Seccombe, intend this or is it an accident of design? It doesn't matter, but it is nevertheless one of life's little delights when you discover it.



Alignment



Curves within Curves

Reaching Up

**The Cemetery Chapel** is one of Sidmouth's hidden gems. Built in an orange/red brick it has gothic style doorways and windows of yellow stone picked out by a pattern of red and yellow bricks over the top, which emphasises the shape of the arches themselves and contrasts perfectly in a monochrome image. It is a place of tranquillity and beauty with plenty of architectural features on which to feast the eyes. And then there is the perfect symmetry of the building itself, topped with an octagonal tower. Whenever I pass this building on my walks around Sidmouth I cannot resist taking yet another photograph of it.





Triangle of Triangles

**The Sidmouth Old Dissenting Meeting House** is around 300 years old and the entrance porch was added on in the 1880s as part of improvements which included the replacement of the thatched roof and the addition of the brick school room. This image is another example of finding the “perfect viewpoint” where the pyramids on top of the gate posts become triangles in sympathy and aligned with the triangular roof of the porch. And I do like the way that the white of the stone arch stands out against the dark green woodwork of the bargeboards of the porch roof. The door is open, there is light within from the window visible through the doorway, inviting us to wonder who is in there and should we join them?



Rectangles and Circles

**The back of Boots** isn't somewhere that you would immediately think worthy of a photograph. When you park your car at the Ham West car park you probably don't even look at it. Yet if you isolate a part of the view and look at the shapes and the arrangement of those shapes there is something there – at least I think so. Black circles inside white rectangles, black rectangles (the window glazing) inside white rectangles, brick rectangles, concrete rectangles, all in a slightly haphazard arrangement that also has some regularity. Not beautiful, but “interesting” and worthy of the photographer's attention.



Counterpoint

**The back of the Drill Hall** is one of those unseen locations – does the Drill Hall have a back? Well yes, and here it is; it's more run down and overgrown at the back than the front might suggest. So what is to like about this? Perhaps not so obvious in colour, but when made into a monochrome image and taken from the “perfect viewpoint” what stands out is the diagonal composition, half white, half black; the dark rectangle on the light wall and the light rectangle on the dark cladding. A satisfying revelation when discovered.



Bricklayer's Art

**The Masonic Hall** "Perseverance Lodge No 164" must be one of the most decorative brick buildings in Sidmouth and a testament to the Victorian bricklayer's skills. According to the wall plaque the foundation stone was laid on 6 March 1890. It was designed by Architect James Jerman and built by MW Critchley. The brick decoration is superb and it is hard to choose a fragment to include in this work as there are so many possibilities, but in the end I decided to include the relief under the main window seemingly carved into the brick. I chose this composition because I liked the way that the brick relief is framed, and the corners of the ground floor windows act as pedestals. But there are many other compositions that I could have chosen.

