

Victoria Cross Garden – Cheswick Green

Current Situation

The remains of this Memorial Garden are in the grounds of 194 Creynolds Lane, Cheswick Green.

This site is the subject of a planning application for redevelopment.

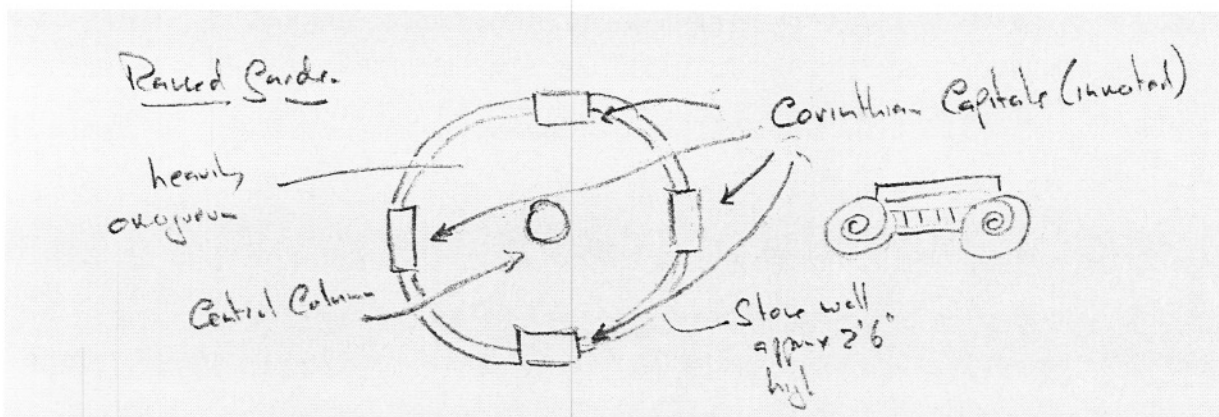
Currently a bungalow exists on the site and this is about to be demolished.

Many of the remaining laurel bushes of the garden have been sawn off and the site 'pegged out' to mark future building.

The developer will no doubt be eager to move the remains of the Victoria Cross Garden as soon as possible.

The original central pillar of the Victoria Cross Garden stands in the grounds of 194 Creynolds Lane to the rear of the existing bungalow. (photographs 9 and 10).

The central pillar of the Garden stands in a circular raised flower bed, approx five feet radius and two feet high (photograph 1). The bed is retained by a stone wall and there are four Corinthian capitals (photograph 3 and 3a) placed as decoration, on the retaining wall. The pillar (somewhat eroded photograph 2) stands some twenty feet tall. The flower bed is heavily overgrown. (photograph 4 and 4a).

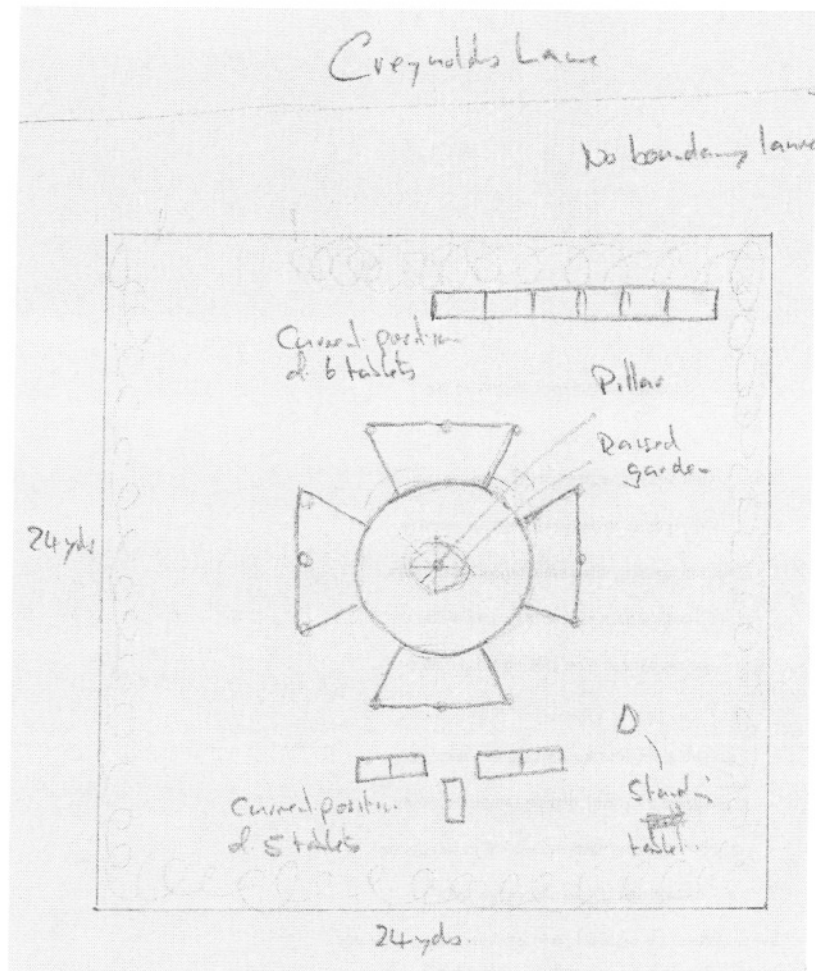


Sketch of raised flower bed, pillar and decorative capitals.

At the rear of the bungalow there are five stone, engraved, memorial tablets, heavily overgrown with ivy. The tablets appear to have probably cut from pillars. (photographs 5 and 6).

Also in the rear garden is a further memorial tablet, standing erect. (photograph 7).

In front of the bungalow there are a further five memorial tablets, partly overgrown with ivy. (photographs 8 and 8a).



Sketch of site (5th March 2011) showing positions of pillar and memorial tablets – and probable layout of the original garden.

History

The Mount Pleasure Grounds were opened in the Spring of 1906.

In July 1906, seventy-five members of the Birmingham Military Veterans Association men who had fought in the South African, and other wars, visited the Mount Pleasure Grounds for a 'day-out'. Attending were Sergeant Parkinson, one of the survivors of the charge of the Light Brigade (Crimean War), and Sergeant Dawes who recited Tennyson's 'Charge of the Six Hundred.' As he had ridden down the 'Valley of Death' with them, he knew how to recite it. This visit may have been the inspiration for the creation of the Victoria Cross Garden.

The Garden was constructed about 1907 as a memorial to those who fought and died in the South African War (Boer War) which had ended in 1902. *'To the 37 Victoria Cross Heroes, the 14 officers killed and 1753 wounded and the 845 men killed and 19292 wounded'*.

It also is a memorial to the 'Abolition of Slavery in 1834.

Future

If it is possible to relieve the developers of 194 Creynolds Lane of the burden of retaining the remains and making a feature of them, it could be possible for the Cheswick Green Parish Council to take charge of it. They could then themselves make a feature of the memorial on their own land perhaps at the top of Saxon Wood Road, for the benefit of the Village as a whole and in remembrance of those brave men in whose honour it was originally created.

Memorial Tablets

Some of the Memorial tablets have already been recorded – I believe by Chris Kenyon:

- England annexed Natal 1843
Orange Free State
- Abolition of Slavery 1834
The Great Trek 1837
- Bloemfontein Entered 18th March 1900
Pretoria " 5 June 1900
- England Took over the Transvaal 1877
Zulu War 1879
- To the 37 VC Heroes
14 Officers killed in action and 1753 wounded
845 men killed in action and 19292 wounded

I have recorded what is on the standing tablet:

BLAND SLAACTZ	?
GLENCOE	(41 killed and 185 wounded)
MODDER RIVER	(72 killed and 372 wounded)
COLENZO	(143 killed and 755 wounded, 240 missing)
PAARDERBERG	(348 killed and 1213 wounded, 59 missing/POW)
RELIEF OF	
KIMBERLEY	(15 February 1900)
LADYSMITH	(28 February 1900)
MAFEKING	(17 May 1900)

All are memorials to significant battles in the Boer War

The other tablets have only partially been transcribed, and need to be looked at again.

Background Information

See below:

VICTORIA CROSS GARDEN.

This is another object of interest commemorating the South African War, and especially the bravery of the Warwickshire men who were engaged. It is 24 yards square, and is appropriately surrounded by a hedge of Laurels. The inside is designed in the shape of a Maltese Cross, and the centre consists of a handsome stone column forming a natural Sun Dial. This central Monument is the more interesting as the stone with which it is constructed was hewn and used at the old Law Courts and Public Offices in Moor Street, which were demolished in the Spring of 1907.

It is surprising how well this Bilston stone has stood the ravages of years, and it is regrettable that the quarries are now exhausted.

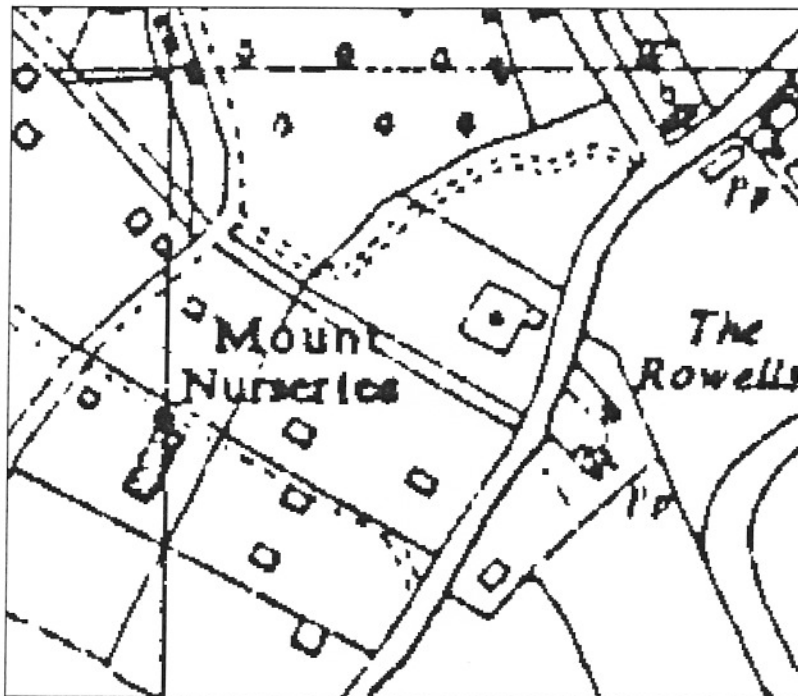
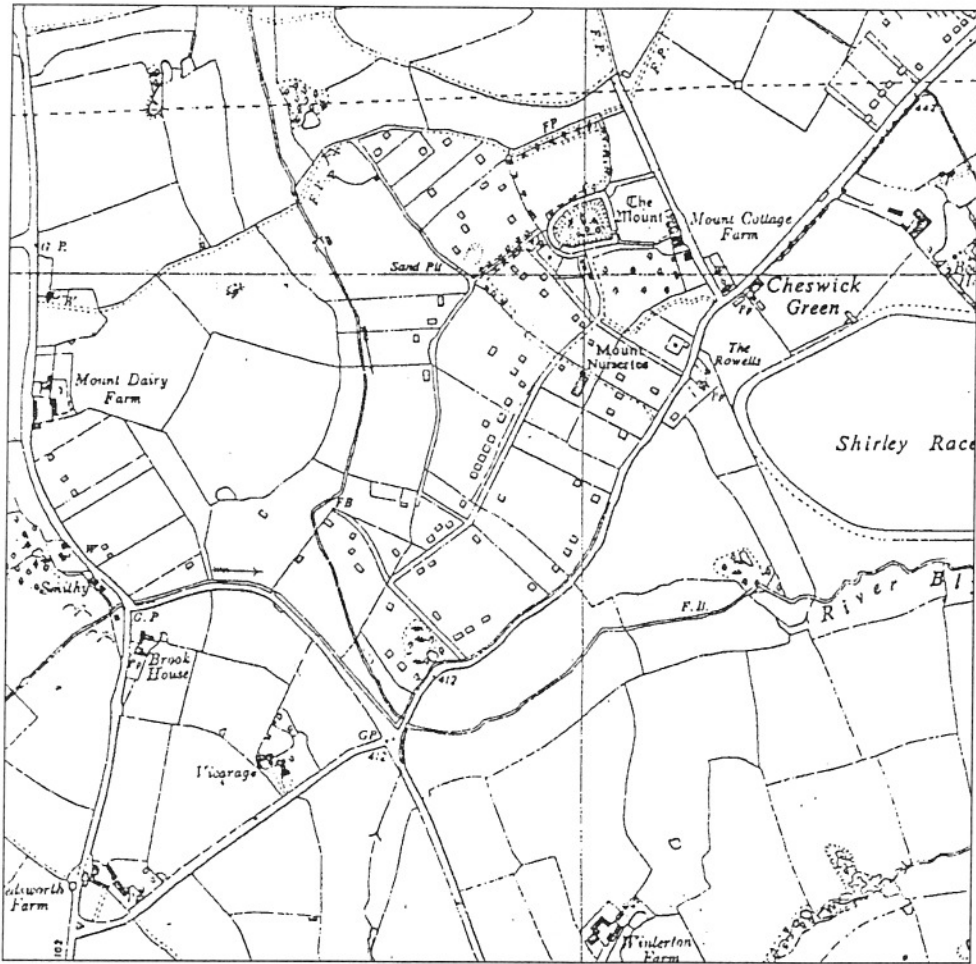
*"Thou by the Dial's shady stealth may know
Time's thievish progress to eternity" - Shakespear*

Many "natural" sun-dials exist. In Ireland as late as 1813 very few persons owned clocks and watches, and each settlement had some natural dial by which the nine watches of the day were shown by the sun's passage over certain mountain peaks or over set pyramids of stones if the natural foundations did not afford a suitable object as a marking place. There are many ways of making a noon mark. A very unscientific but very satisfactory one is this:-- On either April 15, June 15, September 1, or December 24, the four days of the year when the sun and the clock are exactly together, obtain a watch or clock of standard time, then on the surface where you desire to draw your noon mark, cast a straight shadow at 12 and mark it definitely. Another way is, on any clear night hang out of doors two plumb lines in such a position that in sighting from one to the other the North Star will be in exact range. Drive two stakes exactly in the place of the two plumb lines, and when the shadow at noon of one stake extends precisely to the other, that shadow line makes an accurate noon-mark. There is an interesting noon-mark at Durham Cathedral.

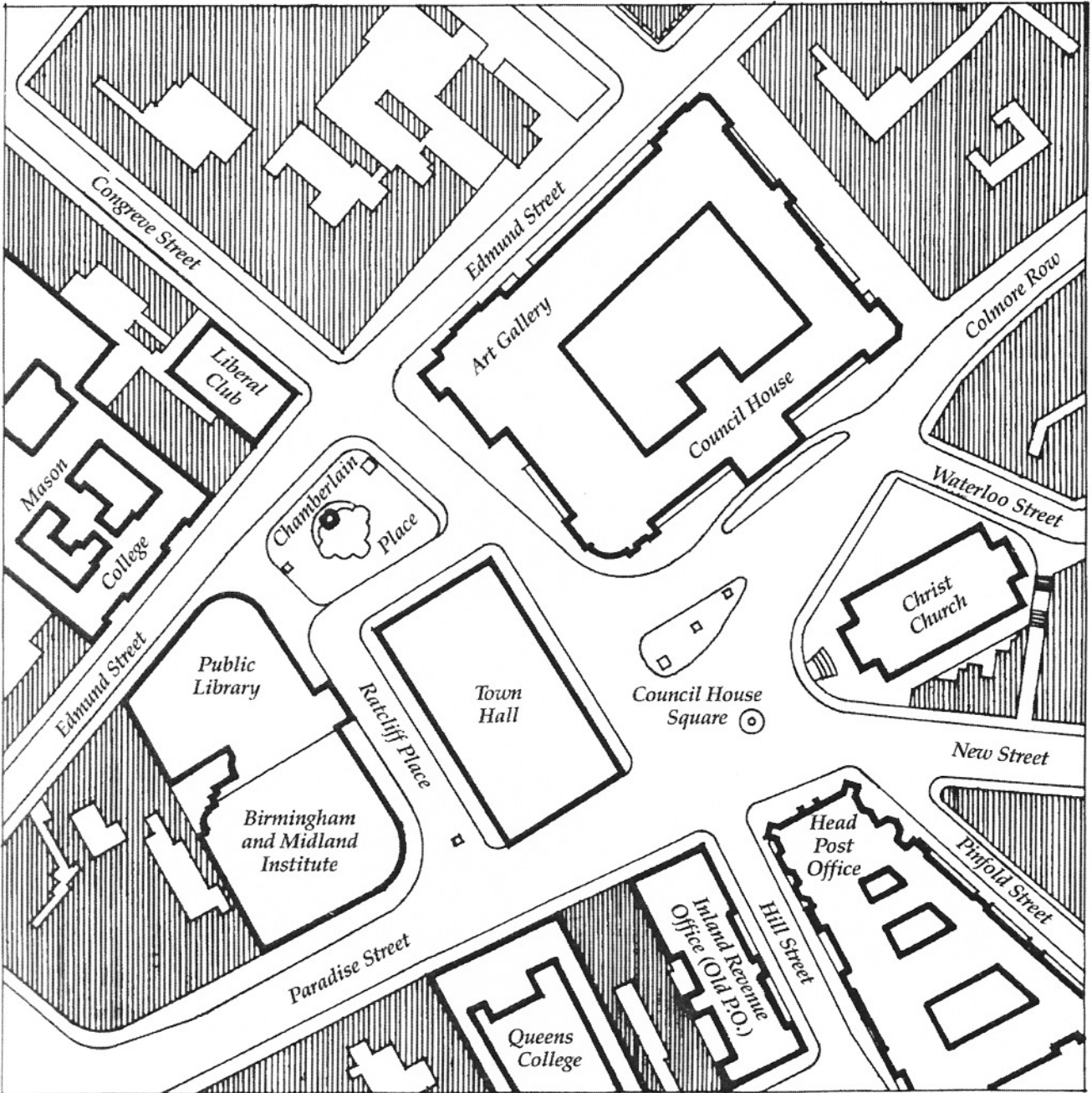
5th July 1906

Birmingham Gazette records the Veterans visit to the Pleasure Grounds.

Christ Church completed 1813 demolished 1898 to make room for offices – it is not thought material from this source was used to construct the garden, but it may have been used in the Pleasure Grounds.



Location of the Victoria Cross Garden

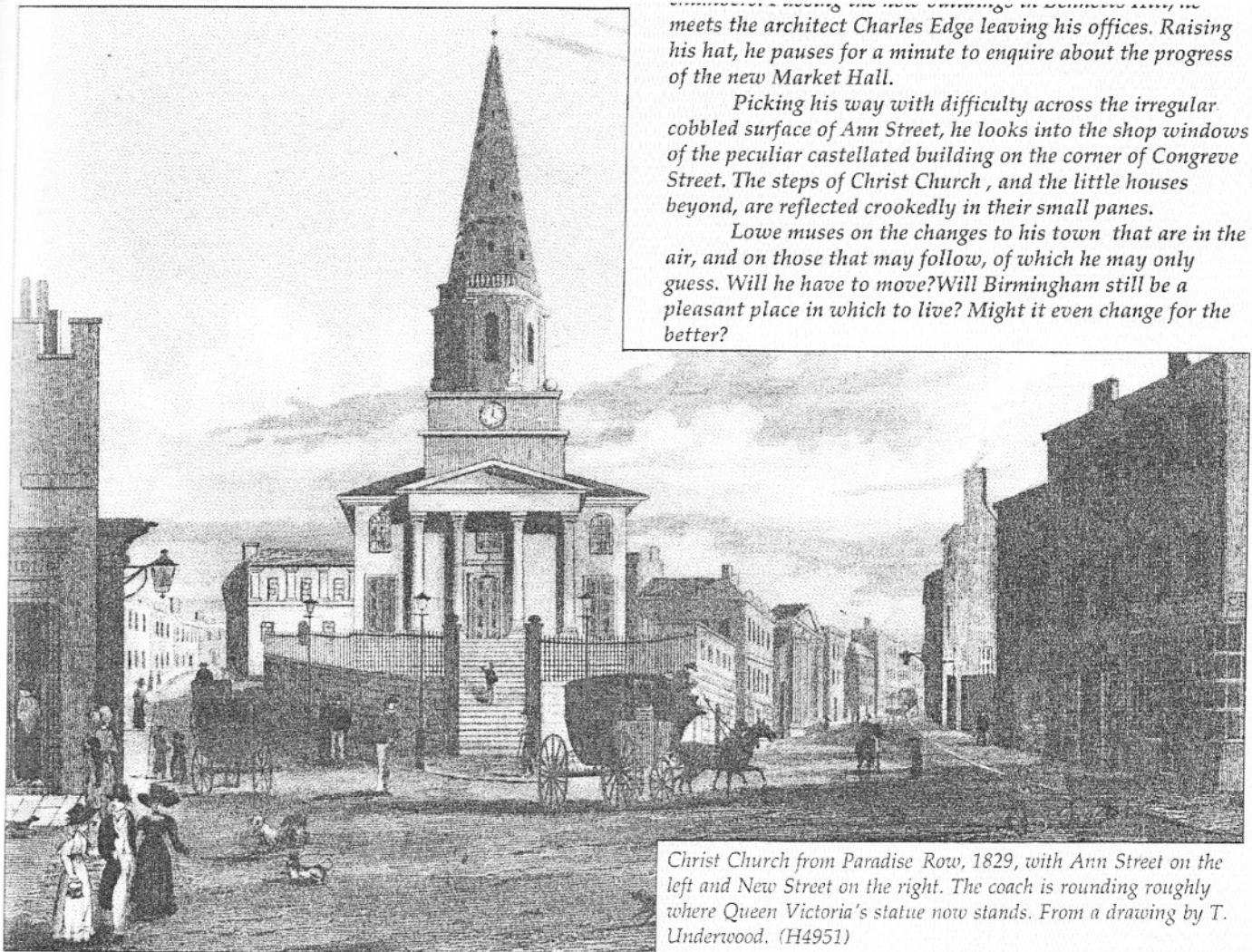


Map of Victoria Square in 1895 (H4962)

...meets the architect Charles Edge leaving his offices. Raising his hat, he pauses for a minute to enquire about the progress of the new Market Hall.

Picking his way with difficulty across the irregular cobbled surface of Ann Street, he looks into the shop windows of the peculiar castellated building on the corner of Congreve Street. The steps of Christ Church, and the little houses beyond, are reflected crookedly in their small panes.

Lowe muses on the changes to his town that are in the air, and on those that may follow, of which he may only guess. Will he have to move? Will Birmingham still be a pleasant place in which to live? Might it even change for the better?

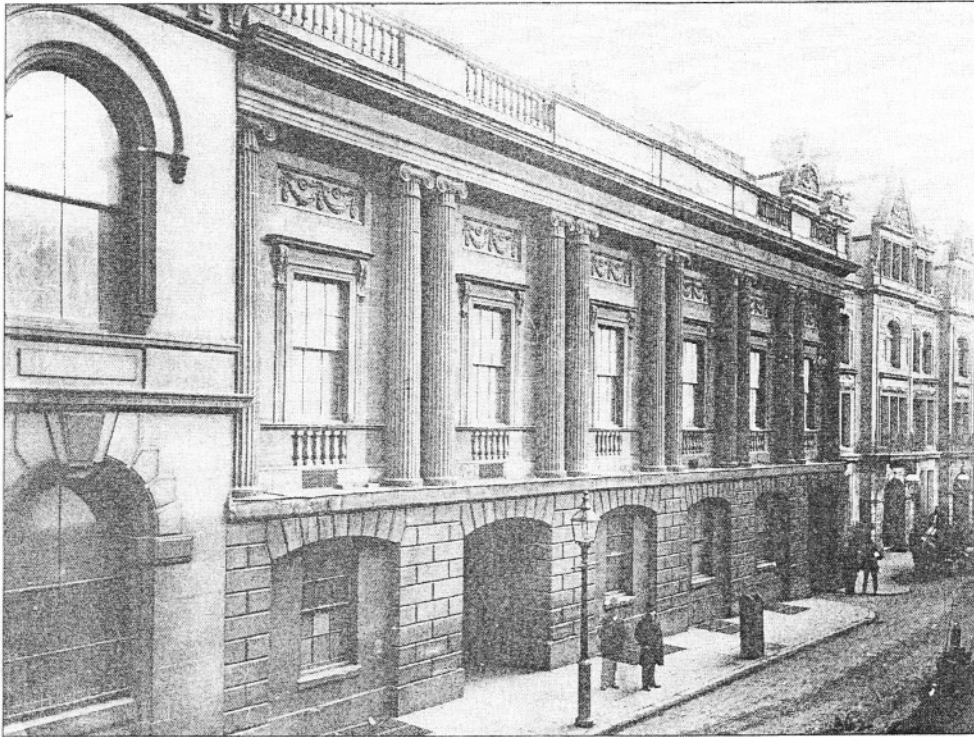


Christ Church from Paradise Row, 1829, with Ann Street on the left and New Street on the right. The coach is rounding roughly where Queen Victoria's statue now stands. From a drawing by T. Underwood. (H4951)

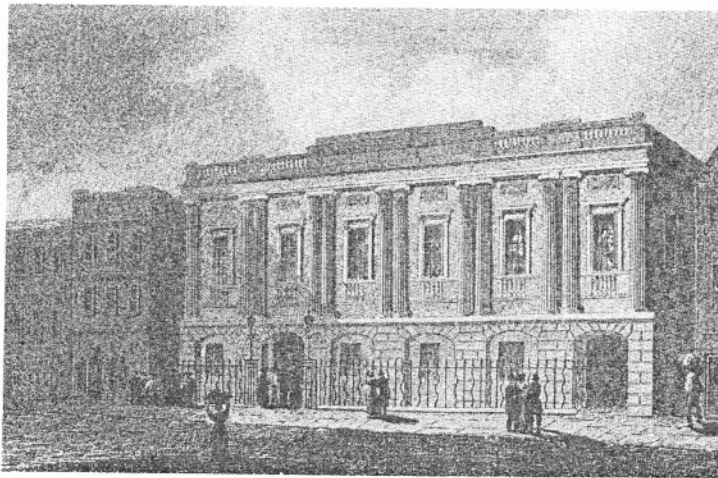
29. CHRIST CHURCH, Birmingham (Colmore Row), was built by public subscription in 1805, on a site provided by W. P. Inge, and consecrated in 1813. The whole of the ground floor was used for free sittings, only the gallery being reserved, and for many years Christ Church was known as the 'Free Church'. (fn. 32) It was a stone building in the Classical style with a slightly projecting chancel and a west portico of three bays supported on Doric columns. The square west tower was surmounted by an octagonal belfry with Ionic pilasters and a balustraded parapet, above which was an octagonal spire. The church occupied a fine site in the angle between Ann Street (afterwards Colmore Row) and New Street; it was set high above street level and approached by a wide flight of steps. (fn. 33) The design has been attributed to William Hollins (fn. 34) but although he was awarded a premium in a competition held in 1804 the work was afterwards entrusted to Charles Norton, the Birmingham builder and surveyor. The tower, which had originally been designed with a cupola instead of a spire, was not completed until 1814. (fn. 35) A parish was assigned in 1865 from St. Martin's, Birmingham, and St. Philip's, Birmingham. (fn. 36) The prebend of Tachbrooke in Lichfield Cathedral was attached to the living, which was a perpetual curacy in 1813 and a vicarage from 1889. (fn. 37) It was in the gift of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1813-37, of the Bishop of Worcester, 1837-97. (fn. 38) The building and site were sold in 1897, and the proceeds of the sale used to found St. Agatha's, Sparkbrook; the church was demolished in 1899, and the parish merged with St. Philip's. (fn. 39) A mission in Fleet Street was licensed for several years up to 1890, and one in Pinfold Street was licensed from 1886. (fn. 40)

From: 'Religious History: Churches built since 1800', A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham (1964), pp. 379-396.

URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22976> Date accessed: 05 March 2011.



The Public Office in Moor Street,
c. 1890.



35. The Public Office in Moor Street, completed in 1807, was often condemned as too ornate for a public building. It contained courtrooms and a prison. In September 1842, surprisingly, there was not a single prisoner in confinement.

Cheapside, or to the open space of Newhall Hill. The Repository, a local landmark topped by a gigantic white horse, was the venue for horse sales and contained a large open space surrounded by a gallery.

The year that the Public Offices opened can be seen to mark, as well as any, the end of the first phase of the Commissioners' work. There was much still to do. The markets were still in a transitional stage and road improvements had only just begun. And the Public Offices were only the first of a generation of large public buildings needed to reflect Birmingham's growing status and reputation. But there were other major changes taking place in the town for which the Commissioners were not responsible, though they might ease their introduction. A transport revolution, hard on the heels of the industrial one, was underway.