

BRITISH BRICK SOCIETY

Summer Meeting

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WORCESTER: THE SPINE ROAD AND THE CITY CENTRE

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INTRODUCTION

The British Brick Society's first visit to Worcester will examine buildings along the spine road going north from the north side of the cathedral and in parts of the city centre just off this road. From the south (the cathedral end), the spine road is known variously as High Street, The Cross, The Foregate, Foregate Street, The Tything, Upper Tything and Bradborne Road. High Street, The Cross, and The Foregate are within the city walls; the other portions are north of the city wall and were already settled by the early sixteenth century. In 1536, the topographer John Leland called Foregate Street a 'longe fayre suburbe'; its extent is shown on John Speed's inset plan of Worcester in his county map, 1610.

No physical remains of this suburb survive, nor much of the prosperous town of the early sixteenth century. Throughout the middle ages the houses of the town were almost exclusively timber-framed and the churches and the now demolished castle were built of local stone. The paintings of Evacustes Phipson (1854-1931) show this to be true even in the nineteenth century for parts of the town and there are still surviving late medieval timber-framed buildings in the town.

Brick is a comparative late-comer to the building materials mix of Worcester. Brick did not become a major building material much before 1700, but a mid-nineteenth century painting (artist unknown) of St Nicholas Church and Foregate Street shows that dominance had been achieved on the main thoroughfare by about 1800. Only one two-storey timber-framed building can be seen; all the other houses shown are either three or four storeys and where ground floor shop fronts were not initially constructed or have not been inserted later, the walls are entirely of brick under tiled roofs.

The visit and these notes will concentrate on three aspects of brick buildings in Worcester:

- -- Brick in the Eighteenth Century and the Regency Period (c.1690-c.1830)
- -- Brick, Terracotta and Stone in Late Victorian and Edwardian Worcester (c.1880-1915)
- -- Brick Buildings of the Inter-War Period of the Twentieth Century (1918-1940)

A few brick buildings from a later period are noted under either 'Brick Buildings erected after 1945'.

Notes on eighteenth-century buildings and some public buildings of the Edwardian period are less full than they might have been.

The Visits Coordinator of the British Brick Society is already planning a second visit to Worcester in 2016 or 2017 to look at 'Brick Buildings for Industry and Transport' on the eastern side of the city around and beyond Shrub Hill Station.

WORCESTER: BRICK BUILDINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Circa 1690 - circa 1830

The prosperous town John Leland encountered in the 1530s was badly affected by the Reformation: neither Friary survived, and the influence and economic input of the cathedral was reduced. The major industry, clothmaking, went into decline and the town suffered economically. Economic decline was exacerbated by the events of the English Civil War: two battles were fought at Worcester, in 1643 and 1651: a map of the town's fortifications made to illustrate events of 3 September 1651 already shows considerable damage to at least one church, St Martin's, and there was damage to others.

In 1662, the householders of Worcester paid tax on 3,619 hearths; there was also a group of exempt persons, occupying smaller houses (rated at 1 or 2 hearths). Translating Hearth Tax payments, or any other form of taxation figures, into population figures is a notoriously

difficult exercise. But if the city is thought to have had a population in the region of 4,000 in the 1520s, the figure for the 1660s would be above that perhaps around 6,000, but certainly no more than 7,000. With increased employment opportunities and something of a building boom, there was immigration into the city in the eighteenth century, probably more in the second half of the century than the first. In 1801, the population of Worcester was 11,352; by 1831 this number had further increased to 26,306. A commentary of 1837 described the city as:

situated on the river Severn, over which is a beautiful stone bridge. The principal manufactured goods are horse-hair cloth, broad cloth, gloves, and elegant china ware. There are nine parish churches, three grammar schools, seven hospitals, an infirmary, a waterhouse, and a well-contrived quay.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITY AND THE COUNTY

Before 1888, Worcester was not only the county town, where the county justices met, but also a county in its own right (like Newcastle-upon-Tyne, York, Lincoln, Norwich, Bristol, London, and Exeter). But unlike Norwich, county buildings were not confined to the former royal castle.

Guildhall High Street	1721-24 1725, 1727 1791 1877-80	possibly Thomas White George Byfield Henry Rowe (with Sir George Gilbert Scott
as consultant)	1926	not recorded

After the cathedral, probably the best-known building in Worcester, the Guildhall reflects the affluence of the eighteenth-century city and in administrative terms, its separateness from the county of which it is the centre. Worcester as a county in its own right had the right to assizes separate from those held for the county and also required the provision of separate buildings for courts, the police, and a prison. (In comparison, Bedford, a county town of roughly the same size, had no such separate privileges although until the 1840s it did have a town jail.)

We are actually very fortunate to have Worcester Guildhall. In 1872, there was a competition to design a new town hall on the site; it was won by C.G. Wray. Three years later, at the invitation of the city corporation, Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) prepared a design but the tide was turning against demolition and new build. In 1877, Sir George Gilbert Scott strongly advised against demolition and in consequence was appointed as consultant to oversee the work of Henry Rowe. It should be pointed out that Scott had very little experience of restoration work.

Worcester Guildhall is red brick, of various hues owing to individual rebuilding work, but laid in Flemish Bond throughout. This is combined with a heavy dose of embellishments of oolitic limestone, particularly in the original, central, section. The centre, set back from the main thoroughfare, is seven bays wide, arranged 3-1-3, and two storeys high: the centre bay is marked by fluted Ionic pilasters. The wings extend forwards by two bays and are three bays wide. These have two and a half storeys; each floor is of less height than those of the centre portion. The wings have curious public entrances at the junction with the centre section.

The central portion is the earliest part but the authorship of its design is problematic. Thomas White (c.1674-1748), a man who was essentially a stone carver rather than an architect or a builder, was known to be responsible for recutting the statute of Charles II in the right-hand niche beside the central door and he carved the statue of Queen Anne in the niche above the doorcase, but Richard Squire (1700-1786) repaired the statue of Charles I. Both statues were rescued from the predecessor guildhall which stood on the same site.

White, however, had submitted a plan in 1718 and he received a substantial pension on completion of the work at the new guildhall.

The centre portion was begun in 1721 and completed three years later. The wings followed later in the decade, the north one two years before the south one; both were extensively repaired and partly rebuilt in the restoration of the 1870s. The nineteenth-century machine-made brick is a slightly different size to its eighteenth-century predecessor.

The eighteenth-century interior originally had two courtrooms on the ground floor with a council chamber above the north-west courtroom, which remains intact, and an assembly room on the first floor of the south wing.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the interior was remodelled by George Byfield (c.1756-1813), a man later known as a designer of prisons: Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Canterbury prisons are amongst his works. In Worcester, in 1793 he designed the House of Industry, a workhouse for the town. At the guildhall, little of Byfield's work remains.

In 1926, a courtroom, the north-west one, was converted into a mayor's parlour; but the south-west courtroom was retained. The architect of this work is not recorded.

Shire Hall	1834-38	Charles Day
Foregate Street	1898	Henry Rowe
	1993	

The grand stone front to Foregate Street in a generous forecourt announces the Shire Hall as an important building, there to be taken notice of. One cannot fail to notice the giant hexastyle portico of fluted Ionic columns beneath a pediment, all fronting a façade of fine ashlar. Side walls of the original 1830s building are of equally good quality stone and construction was effected with exceptionally thin mortar joints.

Interior begins with an open hall, originally used for county events; it and Court One are of 1835. The other courts were modernised in 1995 in preparation for the new use as Worcester Crown Courts building.

To the rear is the 1898 structure, essentially a long office building, three storeys high above a basement, of seven bays in red brick in Flemish Bond. The three rear bays have a raised parapet.

Various structures of 1995 connect the courts with the former Judges' Lodging, within the open space but originally a separate structure. The 1995 brickwork is red brick in Stretcher Bond. Most striking is the full height glazed panels.

Judges' Lodging.	1830s	Charles Day
Sansome Walk		

When judges rode on circuit, they needed a place to stay which was independent of any hostelry, hence the building of houses which were used for perhaps two or three weeks twice a year. That in Worcester is a rare survival.

The building is two and a half storeys high with a raised first floor. It is not especially large: three bays at the front and three bays deep. This was built in red brick laid in Flemish Bond with gauged brickwork to the window heads.

Originally, there would have been stables and a coach house but these have been demolished. Modern crown court judges sit in one court on a semi-permanent basis; a few may divide their time between courts in two different towns.

A glazed foyer now attaches the building to the courts building behind.

PARISH CHURCHES

Worcester in the eighteenth century had the cathedral and eleven other churches within the city walls. Many of these had suffered quite badly in the English Civil War (1642-1651). Four

were rebuilt completely in the middle third of the century: St Nicholas in 1730-35, St Swithin in 1734-36, and All Saints in 1739-42, all in stone, and then in brick St Martin in 1768-72 and 1780. A new building on a different site for St Clement in cemented brick followed half a century later, in 1821-23. Substantial rebuilding in stone of major features of the churches dedicated to St Alban and to St Helen also was undertaken in the 1820s.

The modern parish of Worcester City, covering the whole of the area within the medieval town walls has three churches with worshipping congregations: St Helen, St Martin, and All Saints.

Only two of the eighteenth-century rebuildings were of brick, and one of these, St Clement, covered the brick with cement.

All Saints	medieval	
Deansway	1739-42	Richard Squire (mason), William Davis
(carpenter)	1888-89	Aston Webb

A fine example of an eighteenth-century stone-built church, All Saints incorporates some medieval walling and for which Aston Webb rebuilt the west window.

St Alban	medieval	
Deansway	1821	
	1850	Abraham Edward Perkins

A genuine small Norman church, St Alban's is now used as the Maggs Day Centre for the Homeless. Furnishings and fittings have been removed but monuments remain. The 1821 restoration inserted neo-Norman windows. The early thirteenth-century chancel was rebuilt in the 1850 restoration.

St Andrew	medieval	
Deansway	1751 or 1757	Nathaniel Wilkinson
	1949	demolition of majority of church

St Andrew's church has been demolished except for the fifteenth-century tower topped by an eighteenth-century spire.

The west part of the medieval church had a nave with aisles which engaged the tower: rooflines can be seen chiselled into the stonework of the tower. The chancel was flanked by chapels. The whole is now within a garden made out of the former churchyard.

The old spire was struck by lightning in 1733 and Nathaniel Wilkinson who had a reputation as a "spire-mender" in addition to his work as master mason at Worcester Cathedral was recruited to build a replacement. The work also included rebuilding the top stage of the tower. The slim, ribbed, octagonal spire of St Andrew's church is 155 ft (48 metres) high and is topped by a Corinthian capital (the present one is a replacement). It is on top of a tower 90 ft (27.5 metres) high. Wind damage in 1778 and 1799 meant substantial repairs to the spire were required and in 1870 a kite was used in the restoration.

Given that many of the St Andrew's parishioners in the nineteenth century were in the glove-making trade, the spire acquired the nickname 'the Glovers' needle'.

Apart from his work at Worcester cathedral, before his rebuilding of the spire at St Andrew's church, Nathaniel Wilkinson repaired or rebuilt the spires of churches at Ross-on-Wye, Herefs. (1721), Ledbury, Herefs. (1732), Micheldean, Glos. (c.1733), and Monmouth, Gwent (1743). This last also originally has a Corinthian capital at the apex. Nathaniel Wilkinson was the son and grandson of Worcester master masons, both named Thomas. Thomas I (d.1716) had taken down the spires at St Mary's church, Ripple, Worcs., and St Mary's church, Lichfield, Staffs.; Thomas II (d.1736) had chiefly been employed as master mason of Worcester cathedral, in which post he was succeeded by his son Nathaniel. Nathaniel's son, also named Nathaniel, also followed the trade of stonemason.

St Clement	1821-23	Thomas Lee jnr
Henwick Road	1878-79	Frederick Preedy

The church was built on a completely new site, on the west side of the River Severn within the larger, transpontine part of the parish. The old St Clement's was within the city walls beside the north-west corner and near the old bridge: the gate was called St Clement's Gate. Neo-Norman in style, highly unusual for the immediate post-Napoleonic war period, the church is brick covered with cement. Preedy, who could work in various styles, added the chancel in the same neo-Norman fashion.

St Helen	medieval	
Fish Street	1718	
	1821	John Collingwood
	1863	Frederick Preedy
	1879-80	Aston Webb

Situated on High Street, St Helen has a claim to be the 'mother church' of Worcester; this church in red sandstone, probably quarried at Ombersley, has been much rebuilt and restored. Unfortunately, this is a stone which does not weather well. The Victorian work introduced oolitic limestone. Modern work has introduced a harder red sandstone from Annan, Scotland. The building was extensively rebuilt in the fifteenth century with a six-bay arcade encompassing both the nave and the chancel. The stone tower was rebuilt in 1821 reusing the existing materials.

A long period of secular use in the second half of the twentieth century has been discontinued and the church was restored to worship in 2002. In 2014, it is one of three churches open for worship within the city walls.

St Martin	medieval	demolished
Cornmarket	1768-72	Anthony Keck
	1780	
	1855-62	William Jeffery Hopkins

In the census returns for 1801 through to 1881, the parish of St Martin is accounted for outside the City of Worcester, which was then regarded as being within the town walls. The east end of St Martin's church was separated by a relatively narrow open space, Cornmarket, from the wall and St Martin's Gate (demolished 1787). Cornmarket, now somewhat elongated to the north has become a car park allowing for two rows of parked cars. The majority of the parish was outside the city walls but became a part of the area of the municipal borough with the boundary extension of 1885.

A new church for the suburban area of the parish was designed in 1903-04 by G.H. Fellowes Prynne and also dedicated to St Martin was built on a site on London Road in 1909-11. Within the city, St Martin's then became Old St Martin to distinguish it from the new building. Old St Martin became a chapelry of St Swithin's church until the formation of the Worcester City Parish and the latter being vested in the Churches Conservation Trust. From 1977, St Martin's on the Cornmarket has been one of three church operating in Worcester City parish and catering for the worship needs of a high church Anglican congregation.

Given its proximity to the wall, it is hardly surprising that the medieval St Martin's church suffered damage during the English Civil War. The top of its fifteenth-century tower had been replaced earlier in the eighteenth century but the parish authorities clearly thought that the damage to the majority of the building had been more serious and a complete rebuilding was necessary.

Anthony Keck (1726-1797) was a comparatively young man, aged only 41, and with no known previous church experience when he was appointed: his great advantage was that he was well-known in Worcester supervising the construction of the County Infirmary to his own design and that he had recently become a freeman of the City of Worcester.

For St Martin's. Keck created five-bay aisled nave and sanctuary in one, following a design supplied in 1765 by the more experienced Henry Keene (1726-1776): Keene was both Surveyor to the Fabric of Westminster Abbey and Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. St Martin's has a round-headed arch separating off the small sanctuary at the east end. The interior lacks the original furnishings, but its decorative scheme of groin-vaulted aisles and a flat roof for the nave remains, except that a west gallery was inserted in 1811. The arcades are plain Ionic columns placed on high square bases, which reach above the level of the 1856 box pews.

Externally, the walls of the body of the church and the first stage of the west tower are of Bewdley blue brick laid in Flemish Bond, with a deliberate policy of using overburnt headers.

The aisle windows are round-headed without special treatment of the window heads; the east windows are cased in stone. There are limestone dressings to the walls.

The tower is on the foundations of the medieval one. The lowest stage is coeval with the body of the church; there was an eight-year delay in completing the tower. The second and third stages are in a brown brick.

Hopkins added the tracery to the east window of the sanctuary.

The parish room of 1881 is in orange-red brick; it was designed by Henry Rowe and is on the building footprint of the former rectory.

Keck went on to add the cupola to the early-fourteenth-century west tower of the recently rebuilt church beside the river at Upton-on-Severn, Worcs. The church, which was liable to flooding, was demolished in 1937, half a century after A.W. Blomfield had designed a new church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, built 1877-79. The tower and its pepper pot cupola remain with miscellaneous parts of eighteenth-century walling as a heritage centre in Upton-on-Severn. Most of Keck's work was in the design of country houses, although through his association with Thomas Freeman of Batsford Park, Glos., he did add the south aisle to St David's church, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. In Worcester, apart from the Royal Infirmary in 1767-70, in 1784-88 he enlarged the County Gaol, then still within the castle site.

St Nicholas	1730-35	Humphrey Hollins, builder
The Cross		Thomas White, carver and mason
	1935	Philip Chatwin
	1992	closed

St Nicholas' church, at the northern end of the spine road within the city walls has been closed for almost a quarter of a century and has found a new use as a wine bar. Built on a sloping site, the church had a crypt, probably last refurbished in the early sixteenth century. This undercroft was converted the offices in 1988. The undercroft is red and green sandstone.

Humphrey Hollins, master builder, worked from a model based on James Gibbs' published alternative design for St Mary-le-Strand. The west tower has four stages, the uppermost being octagonal, and is capped by a cupola. The whole was executed in oolitic limestone.

St Swithin	medieval	
Church Street	1734-36	Thomas & Edward Woodward of
Chipping Campden		
	1977	closed; Churches Conservation Trust

When the Woodwards, master masons of Chipping Campden, Glos., rebuilt St Swithin's they retained the fifteenth-century west tower from the medieval church although they refaced it and altered the fenestration. Otherwise this is one of the most perfect Georgian churches in England.

Oolitic limestone is used. The east end is a showpiece: a Venetian window set within a pedimented entablature, surmounted by a clock, and flanked by round-headed windows.

The aisleless interior is splendid and virtually untouched since it was built, thus there are box pews and a three-decker pulpit and an original plasterwork ceiling.

Thomas (1699-1761) and Edward (c.1697-1766) were the fourth generation of a family of Campden masons to practice the trade; Edward's sons, Richard (d.1755 aged 32) and Edward (fl.1766-1777) were also stonemasons. The Woodward brothers also had interests in a limestone quarry. In 1719, their father, Thomas Woodward II (d.1748) had taken a lease for three lives (is own, his wife Mary's, and that of his third son, Robert) Westington Quarries, near Chipping Campden. Together, they rebuilt St Nicholas' church, Alcester, Warks., to the design of Francis Smith of Warwick in 1730, and, to their own design in 1732-34, the church dedicated to St John the Baptist at Gloucester. St Swithin's Worcester is very like their work at the Gloucester church. To be eligible to work at St Swithin's, the Woodward brothers had to become freemen of the City of Worcester on payment of a fine of £20 in January 1735.

Success in building St Swithin's induced Thomas Woodward III to settle in Worcester where he died in November 1761; as his death was recorded in St Swithin's burial register, it can be assumed that he worshipped there and lived in the parish. His later work included the nave, now demolished, of St Mary's church, Abertawe (Swansea), Wales in 1739. He was the principal mason in the rebuilding the body of St Anne's church, Bewdley, Worcs., in association with his nephew, Richard, and a local joiner, Thomas Cook. Bewdley church resembles the work Thomas did with his brother. Another example of uncle and nephew working together is at the tower of Fladbury church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, between 1750 and 1752.

Edward Woodward spent much of later career working on projects just over the county boundary with Warwickshire from Chipping Campden. At the period whilst the brothers were in partnership in the 1730s, on stylistic grounds various secular projects in Warwickshire have been attributed to them: Radbrooke Manor, at Preston-on-Stour; Foxcote Hall; and work at Honnington Hall. This work impressed one member of the local gentry, James West of Alscott Hall, who engaged Edward Woodward to reconstruct his house and the estate church, St Mary, Preston-on-Stour. The church was remodelled between 1753 and 1757; work on the house had begun about 1750 and was on-going to 1764. He also did more traditional mason's work: commemorative tablets, tombstones and churchyard monuments, including ones to his grandparents at Mickleton, Glos., and for himself in Chipping Campden churchyard.

OTHER RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

With the Toleration Act of 1689, the Church of England ceased to have a monopoly on church building. Buildings were therefore constructed for other branches of the Christian religion. Three buildings survive from between 1689 and 1837; a further one has been demolished and rebuilt four times.

<i>Friends Meeting House</i>	1701	
Sansome Place	c.1823	
	1981-82	<i>Rowe, Elliott & Partners</i>
A modest, originally single-storeyed building		
<i>Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel</i> (now Huntingdon Hall)	1771-73	(replaced)
Deansway	1804	
	1815	
	1839	(buildings of courtyard)
	1980-87	<i>Donald Buttress Partnership</i>

The former four-bay, brick-built chapel, of 1804, is approached by a deep courtyard containing three houses in the south row and former schoolrooms in the north row, both

rows built in 1839. It was enlarged to give the present T-shaped plan in 1815. Now converted into a concert hall.

St George	1828-29	Henry Rowe
(Roman Catholic)	1880	S.J. Nicholl
Sansome Place	1887	probably S.J. Nicholl
	1907	Edmund Kirby & Sons of

Liverpool

The Jesuit Mission of St George began work in Worcester in 1633: the terrors of the Elizabethan state apparatus and its pogroms against sincere Roman Catholics and their priests had evaporated. The Laudian inclination of the hierarchy of the Church of England was more tolerant towards those of other religious persuasions and Worcestershire had several prominent families who kept their allegiance to the old faith: the brick-built Harvington Hall with its multiplicity of priest holes is within 13 miles (20 km) of Worcester and the Throckmortons were not alone in the county in their adherence.

St George's register begins in 1685 when a chapel was built in Foregate Street. In 1687, King James II attended mass there. For thirty years (1689-1720) the chapel was served by Carmelite priests.

In the year of the Catholic Emancipation Act, Henry Rowe (1787-1859) rebuilt the Roman Catholic chapel serving the inhabitants of Worcester and the surrounding villages. Rowe built a Georgian box, of which the red brick side walls in Flemish Bond remain together with four round-headed windows marked out by a lighter red brick. The west gallery is not lighted.

In two campaigns in the 1880s, S.J. Nicholl added a short chancel with flanking chapels and a room for confessions in red brick in 1880, and then an ashlar-fronted west façade on a supporting brick wall, the top of which can be seen when viewed from the east in 1887. Kirby's work was confined to internal redecoration but involved the removal of Ionic pilasters to the chancel arch; these matched the columns supporting the west gallery. The interior and its plasterwork belong to the late 1820s. The chapel has fine interior.

Adjoining the west front is the presbytery, from which two of its three bays project. The door is immediately beside the west front of the church. The building has three bays to its west front and a curious half-hexagonal portion projects northwards from the north wall; this has a door in the centre. The whole was originally two houses, one for the parish priest and one for his curate; the entrances were individual, one by the church façade, the other to the street. The presbytery was built in 1851 to designs of J.A. Hansom.

A new circular building, separated by a south cloister from the church, provides social space for congregation; Opened in 2006, it was designed by KKE Architects. Sadly, the red brick is laid in Stretcher Bond.

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

There were certainly two grammar schools in Worcester at the end of the eighteenth century. The King's School, on College Green, beside the cathedral, was founded *circa* 1541 by Henry VIII in compensation for the loss of the school attached to Worcester Priory. No eighteenth-century buildings are known from this school. The Royal Grammar School, now on a large site bounded by St Oswald's Road, Upper Tything and Little London, whose foundation dates to 1561 and includes provisions for an almshouse. The building in Church Street was the schoolroom of the latter between 1735 and 1868.

Old Grammar School	1735
(now used as a wine bar)	
Church Street	

Difficult to see behind the tower of St Swithun's church, this small brick building is four bays, an entry beside the church tower and three bays to the east. Of a reddish brown brick, laid in Flemish Bond, the fenestration is round-headed.

HOSPITALS AND ALMSHOUSES

The 1837 description quoted says that there were seven hospitals (meaning almshouses) in the city in the 1830s. In fact, eleven charitable institutions maintained houses for poor persons, often restricted to poor widows or maiden ladies over 60 years of age. The full list in order of foundation is:

Before 1268	St Oswald's Hospital Rebuilt 1873-74 on original site, Upper Tything and St Oswald's Street <i>Henry Rowe</i> Had 37 houses for 20 men and 17 women in 1914.
1554	Almshouses of the Guild of the Holy Trinity Small portion of timber-framed building, Trinity Street Relocated to present site 1891
1562	Queen Elizabeth's Almshouses Rebuilt 1876 on original site, Upper Tything, <i>Aston Webb</i> Had 20 almshouses for women in 1914.
1613	Charity of Thomas Fleet alias Waldegrave Four almshouses with 20 inmates in 1914, Northfield Court
1618	Richard Inglethorpe's Charity 1620 opened on Sansome Street 1648 fire and rebuilt on Sansome Street c.1730 rebuilt on Taylor's Lane early 1890s demolished; then with 16 almshouses

Inscription on the site of the sixteen almshouses in a block on the north side of Taylor Street reads

THE MAINTENAUNCS FOR THE
POORE PEOPLE OF THESE HOUES
WERE GIVEN BY THE CHARITIE OF
RICHARD INGLETHORPE OF THIS CITY GENTL
THE YOUNGER AND HOWES WER REBUILT AT
THE DESIIR OF MARGARET HIS WYFE IN HER LYFE
BURNT JUNE REBUILT 1648

1661	Charity of Alderman Thomas Nash Rebuilt 1964-65, as Nash's and Wyatt's Court, New Street In 1914, 15 almshouses on site of warehouse in Nash's Passage and 9 almshouses on Croft Walk.
1692	Robert Berkeley's Almshouses Original buildings in use, The Foregate west side Has 14 dwellings for aged persons.
1702	Thomas Shewing's Hospital Provided hospital for 6 poor widows or ancient maidens. No building discovered
1725	Michael Wyatt's Charity In 1914, 6 almshouses in Friar Street. Amalgamated with Thomas Nash's Almshouses, new building, New Street unknown St Nicholas Almshouse, Charity of Mr Steynor Building was on side of churchyard, demolished 1736

In 1914, house in Bridport, a street near the river and the bridge.

1814 Goulding's Hospital

In Churchyard Close, but no building discovered, provided an almshouses for six persons, three poor men, three poor women.

Two new foundations date to the Victorian period:

**1868 William Laslett's Almshouses
Friar Street**

Lewis Shepperd & Son

1869 John Wheeley Lea's Charity

Several of the 'seven hospitals' were rebuilt in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, but there is one exception to this general rebuilding of the almshouses of Worcester.

Berkeley's Hospital	1692	endowed
The Foregate	1703	chapel built
	c.1710	complex completed

A blue plaque on the wall of the southern range of almshouses records the position of the north gate of Worcester, the Foregate, taken down in the late seventeenth century.

Endowed before his death by Robert Berkeley (*d.*1694) of Spetchley, a village 3½ miles west of Worcester, and grandson of Sir Rowland Berkeley, a Worcester wool merchant and clothier who established his family as country gentry and kept his religious sentiments private, the family were and remain Roman Catholic in their sympathies despite having seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monuments in the parish church at Spetchley.

The whole almshouse complex has been claimed to be "slightly Dutch in appearance. The basic plan is a pair of two-storey houses beside the street joined by elaborate ironwork, including the gates, to enclose the almshouse space. The large houses, of five bays, were for the warden and the chaplain, men expected to have families to house, clothe and feed, hence their size. Behind these and facing one another, two rows of six single-storey almshouses, giving accommodation with three rooms for single, aged persons, with at the back of the garden a chapel.

Throughout the complex are the Berkeley arms, over the doorways of each dwelling, whether large or small, and over the entrance to the chapel a statue of the founder.

Built in mottled reddish brick, there is much stone throughout the complex. The houses, both large and small, have curly broken pediments over the doorways; the windows of the large houses have moulded surrounds or are under pedimented dormers.

The chapel is six bays, five with round-headed windows and one with the statue in its niche; there is a central doorway which has a broken segmental pediment on carved brackets. This opens into the middle of the chapel space. The rear of the chapel has three rectangular windows.

Worcester Royal Infirmary	1766-70	<i>Anthony Keck</i>
Castle Street	1849-50	<i>Henry Day</i>
	1864-65	<i>Henry Day</i>
	1871-74	<i>Martin & Chamberlain of Birmingham</i>
	1887	<i>Fell & Jones of London</i>
	1912	<i>Alfred Hill Parker</i>
	1932	<i>Adams, Holden & Pearson of London</i>

Currently undergoing refurbishment as part of the city campus of the University of Worcester, the former Worcester Royal Infirmary is probably the second most important secular building in the city, after the Guildhall.

Half a decade after Luke Singleton's Gloucester Infirmary of 1757-61 (now demolished) was completed, the young Anthony Keck (1726-1797) designed this, probably his largest building. Of red brick, it is two storeys above a basement, originally with wards in the wings and a rear projection containing a physicians room on the raised ground floor and the operating theatre on the first floor. The front had eleven bays, each wing of two bays and a seven bay centre, the middle three bays of which project slightly and are crowned by a brick pediment. The side walls of the wings are also have a central pediment.

The core remains but there are numerous additions and alterations. In 1849-50, Henry Day (d.1869) extended the lower part of the rear projects to provide an enlarged board room and a chapel in a neo-Norman style, using red brick with purple and buff brick patterning. Day also added a half storey to the main building in 1864-65. Sluice towers were added to the rear of the wings in 1871-74 and to the front of the south-east wing in 1887.

Later buildings are separate from the main block. An outpatients department belongs partly to 1871-74 and partly to 1912.

Nurses Home Infirmary Walk	1897-98	<i>Lewis Sheppard & Son</i>
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Nurses Home Castle Street	1931-32 c.1940-50	<i>Alfred Vernon Rowe</i>
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The 1890s building is an H-shaped, red brick building, one of many built to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. The later one is neo-Georgian in style and thirteen bays in length, to which the cross wings were added at a later date.

WORCESTER: BRICK, TERRACOTTA AND STONE IN BUILDINGS ERECTED IN THE LATE VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN PERIOD Circa 1880 - 1915

Selected building types only.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Former City Police Station	1862	Henry Rowe
Copenhagen Street	1900	probably A.B. Rowe

On land at the rear of the Guildhall and fronting the street which goes beside its southern wall, the original building for the City Police Station is three bays wide and build of orange-red brick laid in Flemish Bond. The rusticated corners are covered with stucco. The building remained in use until 1941, when the police moved to their new premises on Deansway.

The City Police Station was extended westwards by five bays in about 1900. The brick used was glazed and much more orange.

Former County Police Station	1902-03	A.B. Rowe
Castle Street	1999	Johnson, Blight & Dees

Big, dark red brick, with a lot going on across its façade which turns the corner from Castle Street into Infirmary Walk, it sited was almost opposite the county jail across Castle Street. Now converted into a small business centre.

Victoria Institute	1894-96	John W. Simpson & E Milner, J Allen
later Museum, Art Gallery	1935	Alfred G. Parker
and Public Library;		
now Museum and Art Gallery		
Foregate Street		

Queen Victoria said she wanted no fuss when as a “little old lady, dressed all in black, to whom a quarter of the world owed fealty”, to quote Harold Macmillan, she had reigned over England and its Empire for sixty years. The Worcester Nurses’ Home, like a host of others throughout England, was built to exemplify her suggestion as how to mark the diamond jubilee.

Worcester, it appears, wished to do more and commissioned the London partnership of Simpson and Allen. John Simpson (1858-1933) and Milner Allen had had considerable success in designing the Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery in 1893, which was paid for out of the profits of the 1888 Glasgow Exposition and incorporated in the 1901 Glasgow Exhibition. After their work in Glasgow, they did the Victoria Institute in Worcester and subsequently won the competition for Cartwright Hall, Bradford, in 1899, during the building of which (in 1900-04), Milner Allen retired.

In 1905, Simpson took Ormrod Maxwell Ayrton (1874-1960) into partnership: the buildings for the 1924 British Empire Exhibition are their best-known work.

The Victoria Institute is built of red brick with terracotta dressings. The street frontage is asymmetric.

SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS

School of Art and Science	1894-95	John W. Simpson & E. Milner J. Allen
Sansome Walk		

Part of the same commission as the Victoria Institute at a vast cost, £51,000 in total. Again an asymmetric façade, and a successful one in red brick and terracotta, this is a tour-de-force. It was converted to housing in 2001.

Girls' Secondary School
Taylor's Lane

1909-10

Alfred G. Parker

Partially on the site of the Ingoldthorpe Almshouses and set between the Victoria Institute and the School of Art and Science, Park used the same palette for the Girls' Secondary School, a product of the Balfour Education Act of 1902.

The girls moved out in 1962 to purpose-built premises on Spetchley Road in the south-east of the city. These four-storey buildings, by *Musman & Cousens*, are on an adjacent site to Nunnery Wood High School, for pupils aged eleven to sixteen (designed by *E.B. Musman* in 1950) and now serve as the city's sixth form college.

Boys with academic aspirations were catered for by the King's School on College Green and by the Royal Grammar School, founded respectively by Henry VIII in 1541 and Elizabeth I in 1561. There was no need for the state to provide new buildings for boys in Worcester: the existing selective schools could admit a small percentage of boys on free places, competed for in an examination. The system was that Direct Grant Schools such as Worcester RGS and the King's School, admitted a minimum of one quarter of pupils on free places, thus providing grammar school education for boys in the city.

BANK BUILDINGS

In the late nineteenth century, local banks were the economic lifeblood of small towns, but they were also becoming amalgamated into much larger concerns. Worcester has spectacularly good bank buildings of the period 1860 to 1914, not all of which are still used for banking.

The Old Bank

1761

63 High Street

1860

John Billing

north-west corner of Bank Street

In 2014 W.H. Smith occupy this extensive three-storey building, with attics, but earlier in the twenty-first century this firm was elsewhere. This is essentially two buildings: facing High Street is a five-bay façade, arranged 2-1-2 with the centre bay marked by stonework under a stone triangular pediment. The front building, built in 1761 and restored in 1860, is five bays to Bank Street. Behind this, facing Bank Street, is a seven-bay building, arranged 2-3-2 bays, with the central three bays stepped forward by half a brick. Red brick throughout, laid in Flemish Bond.

Nat West Bank

1890

Henry Rowe & Son

The Cross, St Swithin's Street
(north-east corner)

Red brick with much red sandstone, this building is three bays to High Street, a polygonal corner with a turret, and then six bays to St Swithin' Street, which are arranged 4-1-1. Immediately east of this, and in similar style is a further building in the same style, of seven bays, arranged 4-1-2, which is shop fronts on the ground floor and domestic accommodation on the first and second floors. It was not built as a bank. A plaque above the western single bay of the bank premises on St Swithin's Street states 'REBUILT 1890 INGLETHORPE'S TRUST'.

Externally, the bank has a ground floor of sandstone blocks. Below the cornice is a row of terracotta blocks with swags in a reddish-brown colour to imitate the stone of the ground floor. The red brick between the stone of the ground floor and the terracotta of the cornice is laid in English Bond.

National Provincial Bank
Manchester

1906-06

Charles Heathcote & Sons of

(Former premises)

The Cross

Now a nightclub; and although totally different in style, this is as exquisite as any “jewel box” designed by Louis Sullivan in a small town in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, or Ohio.

The Worcester building presents a public face in Portland Stone, a three-bay façade with the ground floor rustication deeply channelled and the Ionic columns of the first floor recessed. But look behind the first bay of the side wall and an equally well made sight may be seen, red brick in English Bond with very precise pointing.

Charles Henry Heathcote (1851-1938) was a Manchester architect whose work included various banks and insurance company buildings in that city. He was later joined by his sons Ernest and Edgar.

Lloyds Bank 1860-61 **E.W. Elmslie**
The Cross
with side frontage to The Avenue

Built as the headquarters of the Worcester City and County Bank, whose name sits proudly over the door, which itself is approached by three steps, with further steps inside to reach the banking hall. With the confidence engendered by the first ten years of the mid-Victorian boom and having survived the crash of 1857 (the one Karl Marx wrote about), this is a building which states that “we shall be here for ever”, little realising that another crash was on the way in 1873 to be followed by ‘the long depression’ which lasted until the mid 1890s.

This three storey palazzo is faced in well-cut ashlar of Bath Stone, an oolitic limestone, rusticated on the ground floor. The entrance is flanked by Doric columns of Aberdeen granite, Corrennie Pink granite to be precise, a neat illustration of the ability of the railways to move stone around for ambitious architects and their discerning patrons.

The ground floor is three bays, a large window within a thick frame to emphasise the solidity of the institution whose premises this was either side of the strongly emphasised entrance. The first and second floors have five bays, in generous spacing. The south wall faces The Avenue. On the ground floor it is marked by a swelling bow, placed off-centre.

CHURCHES

Former Congregational Chapel 1858-59 **Poulton & Woodman of**
Reading
(now nightclub)
Angel Place

The Independents, or Congregationalists, came to Worcester in the seventeenth century; their first meeting house was in Fish Street. Early in the first decade of the eighteenth century they acquired a large plot fronting Angel Place, going back some way and touching Angel Row. Herein 1708 they built a chapel. This chapel was rebuilt to an enlarged plan in 1858-59 by architects specializing in nonconformist chapels, Poulton & Woodman of Reading.

Even in its new use as a night club, this has an impressive frontage to Angel Place: four giant Corinthian columns in a semi-circle and beneath a recessed pediment; these are flanked by ornate porches. Forget about being outside the ‘local establishment’, as with the now demolished King Street Congregational church in Luton, Beds., with its site on top of a rise and its prominent spire, the Worcester building is saying, we, the Congregationalists, have arrived and are a force to be reckoned with in the commercial, civic, and political life of the city. To prove our worth and our worthiness, we have spent nearly £6,000 on building our church.

The side walls are brick in a deep red hue.

Former Sunday Schools Building 1888 **Aston Webb**
for the Congregational Church

**(now a community centre)
Angel Place and The Butts**

A relatively early work, one of several in the city with which he had close family connections, of the future designer of such London landmarks as the long wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum on Brompton Road (1891-1909), Admiralty Arch (1901-08), the front of Buckingham Palace (1908), the much honoured Sir Aston Webb (1849-1930). Apart from St George's church for the growing northern suburb, this is Webb's last independent building in the county: work in the early 1920s was done with his son, Maurice E. Webb (1880-1939).

The site was an awkward one with an obtuse angle at the road junction. The plan is an irregular heptagon producing a central hall surrounded by small classrooms. The arrangement is ideal for its present use as a community centre. .

Webb was a good planner of buildings but also knew how to get the best out of even the most mundane façade. For the Sunday Schools he chose buff Ruabon brick, not common in Worcester, but easy of rail access. Here, the orange-coloured brick is combined with stone dressings.

WORCESTER: BRICK BUILDINGS 1918-1942

Worcester is a town where there was not a great influx of people in the first four decades of the twentieth century. The population in 1901 was 43,000; by 1931, the number of people living in the city had grown to 49,000, an increase of only 14 percent. To accommodate the newcomers and much more to alleviate overcrowding in small houses in the city centre, in the 1920s and 1930s the city council built several largish estates of municipal housing on the city outskirts: at Blackpool and Brickfields, north-east of the city, large estates of semi-detached houses were designed by the City Engineer, William Ransom.

For public buildings of these two decades, the city and the county authorities relied on architects in private practice. These, both from the city and from outside Worcester, were responsible for other major buildings in the city.

COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL PREMISES

These are given in an approximate south to north listing along the spine road of Worcester.

Russell & Dorrell	1925, 1932	Yeates & Jones
High Street, Pump Street	1959	
(south-east corner)		

Long block now incorporated into the Lychgate Shopping Precinct (a 1960s development much condemned by architectural critics for its location opposite Worcester Cathedral), this is a building of some sophistication. pronounced concrete frame to first and second floors, with concrete surrounds to the windows, the infill is variegated brick in Flemish Bond. The second floor has brick patterns. Although built in three sections, the northernmost with a rounded corner first, the architects kept to the same general idea although the form of the brick patterning changes in each phase. Useful date roundels punctuate each section.

78 High Street	1921	L.L. Bussault for Shakespeare Café
Enthusiastic timber-framing imitating the real thing can be seen inside.		
O2 and empty shop	1930s	
High Street (west side)		

Three storey buildings in orange-brown brick laid in Flemish Bond, this pair of buildings are separated by large modern structure for TK MAXX. Originally part of a longer terrace, their Art Deco touches include the fenestration on the first and second floors. A large window divided in three. At top of the brickwork surrounding the windows are decorative panels.

Boots The Chemist	1936	Percy J. Barlett of Boots Architects
Dept		
High Street		

Three storeys, three wide bays, of buff-brown brick in English Bond. Windows on first floor attempt to be vaguely Art Deco.

Barclays Bank	1930-31	H. Rowe & Son for David Grieg
High Street	1937	E.C. Aldridge for Martin's Bank
South-west corner of Bank Street		

This three storey building, originally a grocery store, was converted into bank premises. Martin's Bank was a Liverpool concern which amalgamated with Barclays Bank in the 1970s; E.C. Aldridge was a Liverpool-based architect. There is a lot of stone in the structure. Red brick laid in Flemish Bond is used between the stonework but black brick is used below the window openings; the window heads are in red brick. Art Deco touch to the cut-off corner.

Jap Furnishing Company	1928	Yeates & Jones
Angel Place,		

Royal Insurance Company 36 Foregate Street Art Deco in inspiration.	1935	Briggs & Thornely of Liverpool
Austin House (now County Furnishings) Castle Street	1938-39	John C.S. Soutar

Built as a car showroom, in three distinct parts on a sloping site, with the central tower linking the outer two elements, the raised entry at the westernmost bay of the west part originally led to a ramp to allow vehicles to be driven on to the flat roof. The west part is three broad bays, with a wide window to the centre on the ground floor, clearly available for display, below another wide window for office accommodation, accessed through a ground floor doorway with a fanlight, of half-hexagonal shape, above. The east portion is a single storey with a broad forecourt underneath a canopy extending the overhead parking area. The steel beam holding the parapet of the overhang is supported by two L-shaped pillars at the corners and two central pillars opposite the jambs of the central doorway, either side of which are two very wide windows.

The centre tower is the distinctive feature of the building. On the ground floor level of the west part there are windows to the west and south; the floor level above this, level with the first floor of the west part and the ground floor of the east part is plain brickwork; two floors above this have windows to lavatory accommodation for the staff. The remainder of the brickwork is plain and includes a clock. A tall cupola at the top completes the tower. The tower has carefully arranged sloping sides.

Like the rest of the structure, the tower is in brown brick in Flemish Bond. On the ground floor level corresponding to that of the west part, there are neat closers both inside the corners and beside the windows. These closers are absent further up.

The building occupies part of the site of the County Prison (1809-13: Francis Sandys).

Clydesdale House The Tything	1938	W. Broxton Sinclair
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Built as the showroom for Messrs Kay & Co, whose earlier offices are a few buildings to the north.

This is imitation Georgian (not neo-Georgian) in red brick, a piece of architectural good manners in a street of eighteenth-century houses. A wide eleven-bay house, with a recessed centre with a stone doorcase and pedimented windows, it can easily be mistaken for the real thing. It fits its context well.

In 1941, the building caught fire and in 1949 the interior was reduced to a single storey, making the first floor windows blind ones.

There are ornate flanking lampposts, again an attempt to imitate Georgian reality.

BUILDINGS FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

County Buildings St Mary's Street and Sansome Place	1929-30 1935	A.V. Rowe A.V. Rowe
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Office block in the north-west corner of the plot occupied by Shire Hall and the Judge's Lodgings, the principal entrance is on St Mary's Street. It was originally three storeys but was clearly built to take a fourth one, added above the cornice in 1935. All four faces were originally highly visible, hence each is completed to a high standard. The north and south faces are fifteen bays, arranged six-three-six, with the centre portions stone clad, with Doric pilasters and the arms of Worcestershire County Council above the door. The east and west faces are nine bays, set two-five-two. The whole is executed in red brick in English Bond,

with rusticated brown brick corners, also used to accentuate the centres of the west and east faces. Every sixth brick is recessed.

The gatepiers are brick.

SCHOOLS

No detailed notes were made on the school buildings erected in the inter-war years.

King's School	1925	H.Rowe & Son
College Green	1936, 1950	
	1931	landscaping, Hope Bagnall

South of the cathedral on the site of Worcester Castle, where the county prison was until 1813.

Royal Grammar School	1922
Upper Tything	1928

Established here in 1868, from the site by St Swithun's church, and taking over two early Georgian houses, Priory House of *circa* 1720 and Whiteladies House of about the same date, which are on the site of a Cistercian nunnery, Whitestones. The school has brick buildings of various dates from the late 1860s onwards. Worcester RGS is now combined with Alice Otley School for Girls, established in 1883 in Britannia House, an ambitious house of *circa* 1730, perhaps by Thomas White.

RNIB New College	1937-39	Elcock & Sutcliffe
Whittington Road		

In outer Worcester

Secondary School for Girls	1928-29	William Ransom
Barborne Road		

In outer Worcester, replacing the 1909-10 building on Taylor's Lane.

BUIDINGS FOR LEISURE AND PLEASURE

During the 1920s and 1930s, four cinemas were built in Worcester and the city's theatre was well patronized. Under various guises, the cinema buildings remain standing and in use; the Theatre Royal has been demolished.

Theatre Royal	March 1781	opened
Angel Street	1874	C.J. Phipps
	28 May 1955	closed
	1960	demolished

In its final form, this was a building in an Italianate style. From photographs, it had corners marked by long-and-short work, with corner stones laid alternately with the short face or the long face facing the front. Stone was used for the five-bay arcaded façade of the first floor with broad sash windows. However, the upper part of the structure was covered with stucco suggesting that brick was the principal walling material.

The building was replaced by a single-storey shed used as a supermarket by different grocery chains: it is currently a Cooperative store.

Scala Theatre	1921-22	Essex & Goodman
(now Shipley's Entertainments)		
Angel Street/Angel Place		

Despite its name, this always was a cinema. On a corner site, pale grey terracotta façade, the principal features of which are tall Ionic pilasters below a lattice-like parapet and giant festoons or swags. The new use has barely altered the exterior.

The architects, Essex & Goodman, are a Birmingham practice, set up by Oliver Essex (1855-1939) in 1883 which under various names lasted until Essex's death in 1939. John

Goodman (1864-1931) became a partner in 1892, having worked for the firm since 1887. By the time, the commission for the Scala Theatre arrived, the firm had already designed three cinemas in Birmingham: The Electric Theatre, on John Bright Street, in 1911; the Scala on Smallbrook Street in 1913; and The Futurist on John Bright Street in 1915 but this did not open until 1919. Oliver Essex, as office manager in the early 1880s for Birmingham architect W.H. Ward (1844-1917) had worked on drawings for the latter's New Theatre (later Grand Theatre), Corporation Street, Birmingham.

Adjacent to the west side are ladies' and gentlemen's public conveniences squeezed into a narrow triangular site. These are faced in buff terracotta.

Gaumont Cinema **1934-35** **W.E. Trent & Ernest F. Tulley**
(now Gala Bingo)
21 Foregate Street

Built on the east side of Foregate Street, almost opposite the existing Silver Cinema which had opened 1919 and closed and demolished March 1939, the Gaumont could seat 1,740 patrons. In Worcester, the new cinema replaced an earlier cinema of the Provincial Cinematograph Theatre chain, the Arcade in St Swithin's Street; this had 850, which is a large number for an early cinema.

The Gaumont has a rather severe façade, very wide, of almost unrelieved brickwork above a Portland stone base but not without interest. The frontage is in a buff brick. The auditorium block has chamfered corners, on which sat the 'GAUMONT' name in red neon letters: the rustication behind the lettering ensured that the lights were away from the main body of the hall. In the centre of the first floor is a five-light window ensconced in a concrete frame which allowed natural light into the 100-seat restaurant behind. The auditorium block is flanked by two setback wings of Portland stone below and brickwork above; within the brickwork are large areas for giant posters to advertise the films on offer that week. The Portland stone area includes five entrance doors beneath a canopy, three spaces either side of these for posters and exit doors.

The interior had a balcony but this did not overhang the stalls. The auditorium was very wide. At the front of the auditorium was a curving wall, leading into a stage 70 ft (21.35 metres) wide and 14 ft 4.27 metres) deep; the proscenium arch for the screen was 50 ft (15.25 metres) wide and 28 ft (8.54 metres) high, and there was an organ, which rose from its housing, to entertain patrons before and between showings. Some Art Deco embellishments were added to the interior.

The cinema closed on 4 May 1974. Twenty years later, it opened as the Gala Bingo Club.

W.E. Trent was an architect who designed no fewer than 44 cinemas for the Provincial Cinematograph Theatres, either singly, with named assistants, or in association with other architects. The Gaumont in Worcester, although in a different leisure use, is one of the few to survive relatively intact both on the outside and internally.

Odeon Cinema **1938-39** **H.W. Weedon (practice name: shell of exterior)**
Foregate Street **1948-49** **Robert Bullivant (interior)**

North of the railway bridge, on the west side of the street, this is a big cinema, designed before the Second World War to hold 1,688 patrons but not owing to the war not opened until 2 January 1950. The site held an earlier cinema, the Silver. Opened in 1919, the Silver could hold 741 patrons. In January 1929, this was one of the earliest acquisitions of the future cinema mogul, Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941), who with William George Elcock, a chartered accountant, formed a private limited company, Picture House (Worcester) Ltd, to take over the existing premises. Initially, Deutsch formed small private limited companies for each individual cinema he wished to take over or build. At the time of its acquisition, Deutsch had purchased two cinemas in Coventry and built one in Brierley Hill, Staffs. (now West

Midlands county). In January 1929, he was a director of the scrap metal business, one of its founders was his deceased father; but his main business was as the operator of a cinema booking service, named Cinema Service.

The plans for the new Odeon were submitted early in 1939 and construction commenced soon after the site had been cleared. The new cinema was more than twice the size of the one it replaced but not quite that of the opposition across the road.

The street frontage has a broad entrance flanked by tall wings with curving corners in buff-orange brick. The brickwork is relieved by a diamond pattern which where the diagonal lines cross is marked by a single protruding header. Each wing has a single, square window on the first floor. The ground floor is marked by shops under the wings. The centre of the façade is a broad entrance on the ground floor leading to the foyer; the broad entrance is beneath a canopy, which partly extending into the wings is designed to offer protection for the queues. Above the canopy is a triple-height recess the first two floors of which are marked by four columns below a bar holding the name 'ODEON'.

The auditorium was initially described as "dreary", something put down to post-war austerity and the general lack of decorative building materials. Thus it had no hint of luxury or escapism which was so prevalent in pre-1939 cinemas.

The carcass of the building was complete in late 1940 and it had a water-tight roof but owing to the intervention of a rival cinema proprietor, the building, in which seating had begun to be installed in November 1940, the building was requisitioned as a munitions store in the early part of 1941. It remained in government control until June 1948, first with the Ministry of Aircraft Production to store alloys in transit from Birmingham to Bristol — its position next to a railway line meant that a hole was punched in the south wall to facilitate the transfer of goods from railway to storage — and then from 1943 to 1947 as a store for government surplus goods.

Harry W. Weedon (1887/88-1970) came to head up one of the leading practices specialising in cinema architecture after an initial contact in 1932 with Oscar Deutsch, a fellow resident of Birmingham, over business premises he was working on for Deutsch & Brenner, scrap metal merchants. Weedon mentioned that he had designed The Picture House, a small cinema in Birchfield, a suburb of Birmingham, some years before. A chance meeting would turn a small, provincial practice into a much larger, national one, undertaking work across the whole of England and Wales. Weedon was essentially an impresario, leaving the design work on cinemas to his talented assistants. Between 1932 and 1940, Weedon's practice would design no fewer than 40 Odeons for Oscar Deutsch, which is more than those designed by the practices led by George Coles (19 cinemas) and Andrew Mather (34 cinemas). Both Coles and Mather also did work for other cinema chains.

Robert Bullivant (d.2001) was one of Weedon's talented assistants. Bullivant is first recorded as the joint job architect with J. Cecil Clavering for the Odeon Scarborough in 1935: this cinema opened on 28 March 1935 and is now the Alan Akeborn Theatre. Before working on the Odeon at Worcester, Bullivant had previously worked on Odeon cinemas in other cathedral cities: at Chester in 1935-36, York in 1936-37, Exeter in 1936-37, and Leicester and Bradford in 1938; plus those in Rhyl in 1937, Burnley in 1936-37, and Hendon, north London, in 1938-39. After the war, Bullivant became one of the partners in Harry Weedon & Partners.

**Northwick Cinema
(structure)
Ombersley Road**

1938

C. Edmund Wilford of Leicester

John Alexander (interior)

In outer Worcester, a relatively plain brick building hiding a fabulous Art Deco interior. The cinema entrance was marked by buff tiles beneath a canopy, which itself held a projection resembling a fluted fin with a curved top carrying the cinema's name.

For the interior, John Alexander in 1936 designed a transport of delight. Beside the proscenium arch the splayed walls offered the cinema patron a stairway heaven on which stood women in white, their hair rising in an unbelievable upward-curling creation, their outer arm raised and carrying gold-coloured drapery, itself strategically-placed to hide their modesty. All this was against a bright yellow background cut by filigree work in gold and plain white columns. The plasterwork of the stepped-up ceiling and the balcony front was complemented by fluted white columns.

Only one church appears to have been built in Worcester in the inter-war decades. In an eastern suburb, *H.S. Rogers* of Oxford in association with *Maurice W. Jones* of Worcester designed Christ Church, Rowan Avenue, in the east part of the city, well beyond Shrub Hill Station. This has been subsumed within the Tolly Centre (2005-06: *Meadowcroft Griffin Architects*).

“leisure activity” rather than a bore to be squeezed into ten minutes between leaving the library and catching the bus home. But that is a male view.

As to the building, it is almost inoffensive and uninteresting. The dull red brick is laid in Stretcher Bond, which lacks interest. At least it is not too tall. And on High Street fits with the height of the adjacent building, originally constructed for Russell & Dorrell between the shopping centre and Pump Street.

Marmion House **1965-66** **John B. Day of Bristol**
High Street

Shows what could be done when a little care was taken, strange to think that this is contemporary with the Lychgate Centre. Brick interest is in the narrow brown bricks in Flemish Bond with deep pointing to the horizontal and flush pointing in a light sand colour (matching that of the bricks) to the vertical joints. The ground floor has a small portion of blue engineering brick hiding an awkward join with the adjacent property.

Below the rear is a thirteenth-century stone vaulted cellar (now a night club).

Debenhams **c.1960** **Healing & Overbury**
High Street

Big, four storey, concrete-framed structure clad in brick and glass, with the brown brick laid in English Bond. The stone is imported Lavrik from Norway.

Offices and shops
54 Foregate Street

Between the railway viaduct and the Odeon Cinema, on the west side of the street, three storeys with shops on the ground floor, the red brick of the first and second floors is laid in Flemish Bond.

Magistrates Court **2000-01** **Architects of Worcestershire County Council**
Castle Street **Property Department**

Conceived as one with the Police Station, although preserving three houses between them; the latter are a semi-detached pair and a single, three bay house, both of two storeys.

As with the late 1930s pairing of Fire Station and City Police headquarters on Deansway, the two are by no means the same, but they do share extensive use of brick, large windows, and a drum entry at the outer corner.

The smooth-surfaced red brick of the three-storey Magistrates Court is laid in Stretcher Bond. The south face, to Castle Street, is seven bays west of the entrance, with big black windows on the ground floor. The rear is a total of eleven bays, arranged 4-3-3-3 (the last only two storeys). At the eastern end is a two-bay high vehicle entry, with edging of reconstituted stone. The upper floors of the rear are in cladding painted grey above the red brick.

Castle Street is nothing to do with Worcester Castle, which was south of the cathedral. The County Jail finally left the castle precinct in 1823 when a new prison was built on the west end of the north side of the road, where Austin Garage was later built. The jail was castellated, and it was designed by Francis Sandys (*fl.*1791-1814). The name ‘Castle Street’ refers to this building.

Police Station **2000-01** **Architects of Worcestershire County Council**
Castle Street, Loves Grove **Property Department**

To paraphrase Alan Brooks, if the Magistrates Court was the maid, attempting to be benign, the Police Station is the master, distinctly not benign. The brick is more orange red than bright red. It is certainly less smooth. Again, the choice was Stretcher Bond.

There are two faces to this building whose wings are at a slight acute angle. The circular entry hides the change well. From Castle Street, the Police Station looks two storeyed; from Loves Grove, two recessed upper floors are visible. There are six bays to Castle Street and eleven to Loves Grove with a return of three bays.
