



Barnsley County Court

buttress fuller alsop williams

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was in force. Thus consent for any proposed works should be applied for. Consent has however been granted for the replacement of the existing Plane trees, which have outgrown this location. A copy of the consent is enclosed in appendix B.



Entrance Façade to Regent Street



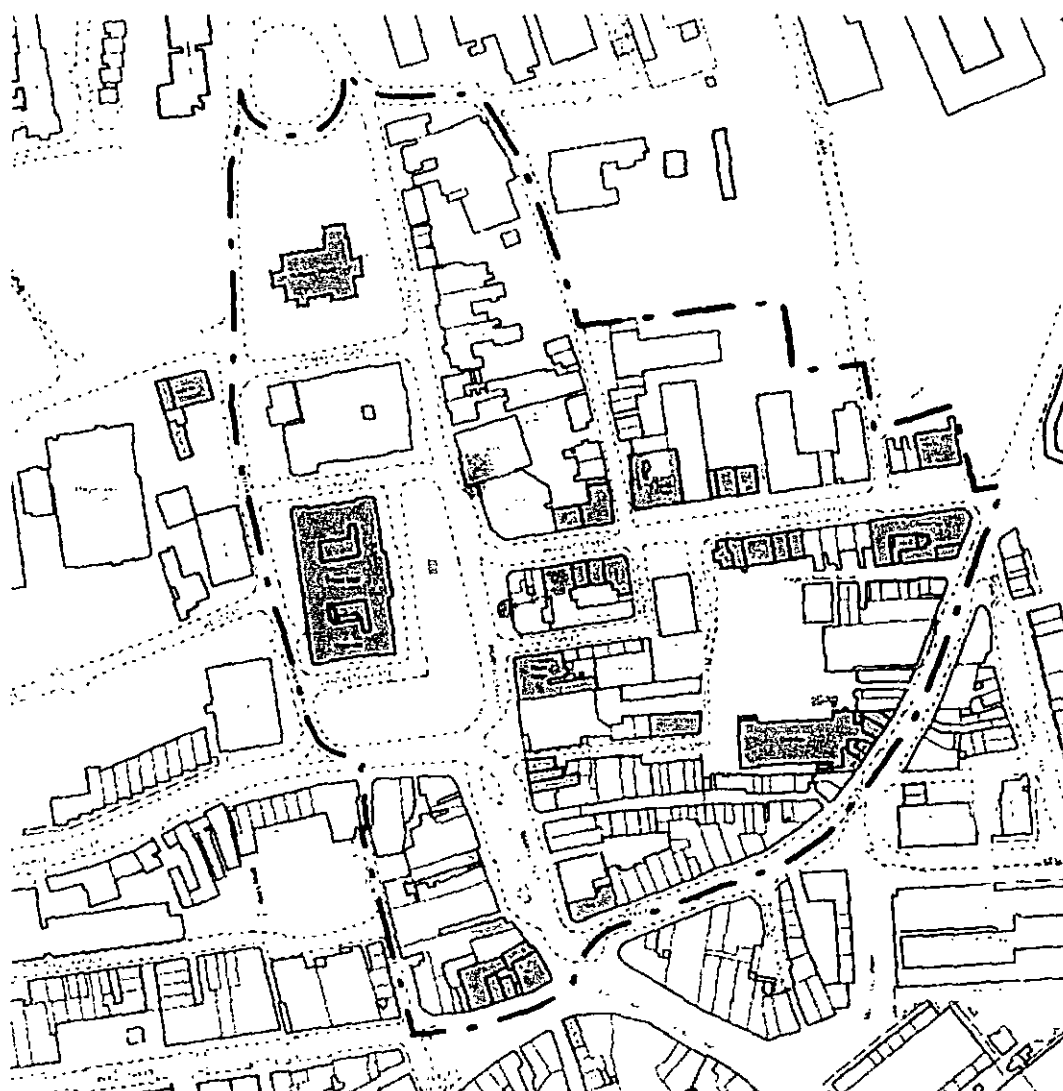
Side view to Eastgate

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Location within Conservation Area

Barnsley County Court is within the Barnsley Regent Street / Church Street / Market Hill Conservation Area. Below is a map of the conservation area, with the listed building highlighted, and the court bounded by a red line. This shows the court centrally to the north of Regent Street, with the Town Hall situated to the West on the axis of Regent Street. The red circles to Church Street are trees with individual tree preservation orders. Others are protected by virtue of their location within the Conservation Area.

It can be seen from the map that the majority of the buildings to Regent Street are listed, with the Town Hall prominently sited at the Western end; opposite the railway station to the Eastern end. There is also an interesting juxtaposition between the former County Court at the East end of Regent Street, and the Court. The former court constructed only a decade earlier by Charles Reeves, Sorby's predecessor as Surveyor of County Courts.



Brief History of the Building

The existing courthouse was constructed as a result of the former County Court in Regent Street being taken over by the Midland Railway Company. A contemporary local newspaper report records the present court house as follows:

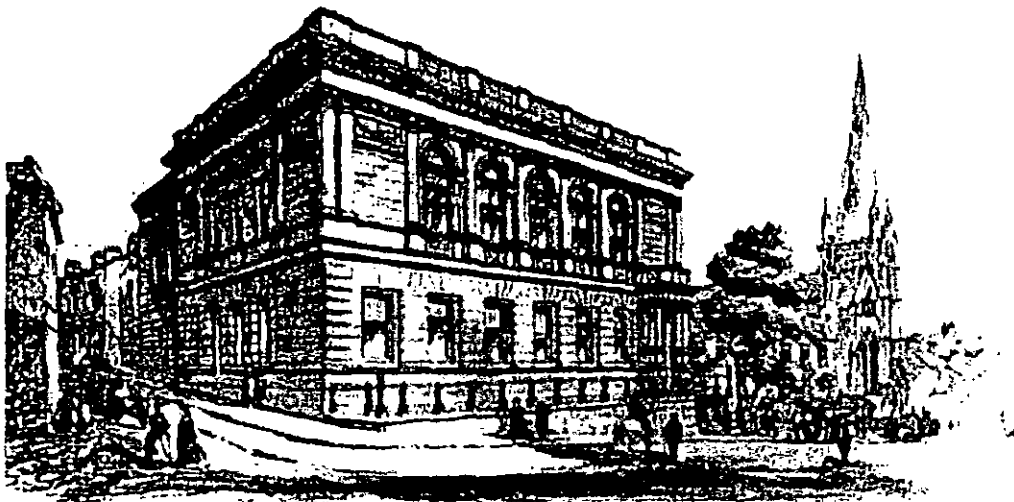
"The Midland Railway Company having made a branch line from Cudworth to Barnsley, arranged to take the Old County Court as their station, a new court has therefore been erected about two-hundred yards higher up Regent Street, mainly at the expense of the company, under the direction of Mr Thomas Charles Sorby, of London, acting as architect to the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury. The principal entrance is from Regent Street, by a portico and flight of sixteen steps, 12ft wide. On the ground floor is the public office, 32ft by 34ft, by 13ft high, with offices en suite for the Registrar, the bankruptcy department, and the bailiffs. On the first floor, approached by a flight of stone stairs, is the court, about 46ft by 35ft, and 23ft high fitted up in a very complete manner. The retiring room for the judge is on the same level as the raised bench, and is about 19ft long by 18ft, with lavatory and water-closet attached; this room is approached by a separate staircase from the private entrance in Eastgate. Retiring rooms are also provided for the jury and counsel, and for females, with the requisite water-closets attached. A residence in the rear front Eastgate is also provided for the court-keeper, consisting of living-room, kitchen, scullery, etc, and three bedrooms. The first is faced with Mr Seal's Darfield stone, from the carboniferous sandstone formation. The principal internal joinery is in Stettin oak, the rest in deal, painted. The floors are constructed with fir joists, the interspaces being roughboarded on fillets, and filled in the whole depth of the joists with concrete, surfaced in cement to receive kamptulicon, except in the passages and lobbies, etc, which are laid with tiles, manufactured by Mr Whetstone, of Coalville, and in the private offices, which are furnished with ordinary floor boards. The public office and court are warmed by stoves specially made by Messrs Steuart and Smith, of Sheffield, the remainder of the rooms having open fireplaces. Extracting flues, fitted with mica valves to prevent black draught, are provided to most rooms, for ventilation. The court was to have been artificially lighted and ventilated by an improved sunlight, partially invented by the architect, and manufactured by Mr Freeman, of Vine Street, Piccadilly, similar to several to be seen in the London county and police courts, as at Bloomsbury, Marylebone, etc, and in all of the more recent county courts, but the sunlight now going to be supplied (when all the works are quite complete) will be a cheap substitute, designed by the Office of Works, of which time will tell the efficiency. The works generally have been executed by Messrs Nicholson, of

South Brook Street, Leeds, the duties of clerk of works having been efficiently fulfilled by Mr J C Bethell. The cast iron railing is the work of the Coalbrookdale Company, and the gas fittings, except the sunlight, have been supplied by Mr Freeman". - Building News

"We have but little to add to the above, which is from the pen of Mr Sorby, the architect. Our readers have had ample evidence as to the substantial character of the building during the eighteen months it has been in progress, and as to its architectural beauties there can, we think, be only one opinion. It is unquestionably the most handsome of the two or three handsome buildings already existing in regent Street, and is alike a credit to the architect from whose designs it has been erected, and an ornament to the town. Having, through the kindness of Mr Bethell, been shown over the building, we may state generally that the description given above by Mr Sorby is in no way overdrawn. There is one advantage which ought not to be overlooked, and that is the thoroughly sound and dry foundation upon which the premises are erected. The work is throughout of the most solid and substantial character, and every attention has been paid to matters of detail, such as warming, ventilation, acoustics, etc. The contract for the erection of the structure amounted to £7,250, but, with the land and extras, the total cost will be over £10,000. The last sitting in the old County Court (if such we may term it) took place on Thursday last, and the next two sittings - on the 12th and 24th of the present month - will be held in the Town Hall. It is expected that the new court room will be ready for the first sitting in November, but the offices business will continue to be transacted in the present premises for some time longer. The present Court House, now the property of the Midland Railway Company, was erected, it may be remembered, some ten years ago, the first court being held within its walls on the 18th July, 1861. It was erected from designs furnished by the late Mr Charles Reeves, the then Government architect for County Courts in England, who died some five years ago."

Brief History of County Courts

County Courts are local civil courts, established in England and Wales following legislation in 1846, to allow a national system for the recovery of small debts. They were derived from the Courts of Request or Courts of Conscience, which had been established piecemeal from around 1700 until their formalisation in 1846. The country was divided into sixty districts, in which one or more courts would operate. Each district had a judge who was an experienced barrister, and courts initially heard claims worth up to £20. Juries were made up of five individuals, and all verdicts had to be unanimous. Each court also had a clerk and sometimes an assistant; court servants; and at least one high bailiff, to serve summonses and execute all warrants and writs served by the court. Each court had a treasurer, who was authorised to build, purchase or hire buildings or land for the court if the current facilities were deemed insufficient. The Act of 1846 also allowed for the position of surveyor of County Courts; this post, abolished in 1870, was held first by Charles Reeves, and from 1866 by Thomas Charles Sorby – architect of Barnsley County Court. The County Court Act of 1888 increased the size of the jury from five to eight. This made the jury box at Barnsley insufficient, but rather than make invasive and potentially expensive alterations, the solution was simply to swap the positions of the jury and the press, which sat in purpose built boxes to either side of the courtroom. The court remained in use as a county court until the beginning of the 2011.



*Sketch of Barnsley County Court
Attributed to Thomas C. Sorby - Architect*

The Architect

SORBY, Thomas Charles, architect (b 1836, Wakefield, England; d 1924, Victoria). Thomas Sorby was born in Wakefield, Yorkshire, and studied architecture in London.

Sorby was born in Wakefield, in West Yorkshire. Sorby was trained in architecture in London, and practiced there for 25 years. The Directory of British Architects places his office in London at Holborn, Bedford Row. In the 1870 British census, Sorby and his wife, five years his senior and a native of Sheffield, were living at Palace Grove 5, Penge, Surrey. Sorby was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Fellow of the Royal Geological Society and a member of the Society of Arts.

Thomas Sorby was the Police Surveyor in London Prior to taking the roll of Surveyor of County Courts. He designed two surviving police stations, one at Clerkenwell (formerly Kings Cross Police Station), and Rochester Row, as well as The Old Police Court, in Lambeth in 1869, is the oldest surviving, intact, Victorian Police Court in London which later became a Magistrates Court and then a Buddhist Temple.

As Surveyor to the County Courts, Sorby succeeded Charles Reeves in 1866, until the abolition of the post in 1870. Sorby continued to produce Courts in a similar style to that of Reeves, with almost identical Plan arrangements – especially to the courtrooms themselves.

He emigrated to Canada in 1883. In Montreal he designed several railway stations and hotels for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). The CPR connection was significant in attracting Sorby to the western terminus of the railway; the CPR mainline had been completed in 1885. He moved west in 1886 to take part in the post-fire building boom in Vancouver. He had his office and residence in the James Bay village area of Victoria, at Cheviot Lodge, at the corner of Niagara Street and Menzies Street. He also had a downtown office at the Five Sisters Building on Government Street. He designed the first Hotel Vancouver, St James Church, the first CPR terminal and a residence for the CPR executive Henry Abbott. His most important commercial building still standing was the 1898 Weiler Department Store at 921 Government Street, and fronted also on Broughton and Gordon streets. This, Victoria's first large scale department store, had a total floor area of 109,168 square feet.

At the time of his death, he was residing with his daughter at 429 Quebec Street, Victoria – the family home for the last two decades of his life. Sorby died in St Joseph's Hospital, 15 November 1924, aged 88. His funeral was arranged by the Sands Funeral Chapel, the Rev F. H. Fatt officiating; he was buried in the Ross Bay Cemetery. He was survived by his daughter, Lucy Winifred Sorby, who had lived with him probably since emigrating to Canada in 1887; she died 27 May 1942, aged 74. As the Victoria Times obituary commented, "Thomas C. Sorby demonstrated that age was no bar to usefulness."

SECTION B : RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

Consents

We have been advised that the following works have been granted consent in recent years:

1. **Addition of the Glazed link in 1999**
2. **Infill of the rear door in 1999**

It should be noted that all of these works done under Crown Immunity from the requirement to submit planning permission. As such the Local Authority were advised of proposed works and asked to comment. There is no public record of applications to the Local Authority.

In addition consent has been granted for the replacement of the two remaining Plane Trees with Fastigate Hornbeams. The Letter of consent can be found in Appendix B.

Routine maintenance:

The Managing Agents have confirmed that no significant maintenance works has been done on the building in recent years, as all works have been small scale reactive maintenance,

Future Alteration:

English Heritage have published guidelines on court buildings entitled 'Historic Court Buildings; Guidelines for their Conservation, Alteration and Management' (1998). This states:

"Historic courts are a distinct building type, characterised by complex patterns of circulation and elaborate accommodation, particularly in court rooms and public spaces... With sensitive modification and effective management, they can continue to function effectively while retaining their special architectural or historic interest. It is highly desirable that they should continue to serve their original purpose; their specialised form can make it difficult to find sympathetic alternative uses."

This said County Courts are less formal structures, with less formal circulatory routes than Crown Courts, and as such are more easily modified. On considering future alterations for re-use, other more general publications should be referred to including English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment' (2008) and Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment; Department for Communities and Local Government, (2010).

On discussion with the Local Authority Conservation Officer – Tony Wiles, it was noted that Barnsley County Court has been heavily modified internally, although it retains many original architectural features. Its external character and its contribution to the streetscene and the wider conservation area were felt to be significant. It was also noted that in finding a viable future use for the building it is accepted that some further internal modifications may be required, but the building has the potential for differing uses if executed sympathetically.