

# SHERWIN HOUSE AND THE TOWNHOUSES OF NOTTINGHAM IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES



Architectural Investigation  
Reports and Papers  
2005, revised 2008



ENGLISH HERITAGE



ENGLISH HERITAGE

**HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT**

**SHERWIN HOUSE  
AND  
THE TOWNHOUSES OF NOTTINGHAM IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURIES**

**AUGUST 2005, REVISED 2008**

**INTERIM REPORT BY PETER SMITH**

**REPORT SERIES**

©Copyright English Heritage

The National Monuments Record is the public archive of English Heritage  
NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD CENTRE, GREAT WESTERN VILLAGE, KEMBLE DRIVE, SWINDON SN2  
2GZ

This report has been commissioned by James Edgar, the Historic Buildings Inspector for East Midlands Regional Team in English Heritage, as supplementary information to assist in dealing with the listed building consent application to demolish Sherwin House, No. 41, Pilchergate, Nottingham.

This report begins with a general discussion of the history of the town of Nottingham in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The bulk of the report outlines the individual histories of the larger townhouses in Nottingham; it also gives an indication of how well these buildings survive today. The third section of this report outlines the detailed history and surviving features of Sherwin House, No. 41, Pilchergate. Finally this report attempts to assess the importance of Sherwin House in comparison with the other large townhouses that survive in Nottingham.

## **Contents**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>1. Introduction</b> .....                                     | 4  |
| <b>2. Nottingham Townhouses</b> .....                            | 7  |
| <b>2.1. Thurland Hall, Pelham Street</b> .....                   | 8  |
| <b>2.2. Nottingham Castle</b> .....                              | 9  |
| <b>2.3. Pierrepont House, Stoney Street</b> .....                | 10 |
| <b>2.4. Mansfield House, Wheeler Gate</b> .....                  | 11 |
| <b>2.5. Newdigate House, Castle Gate</b> .....                   | 12 |
| <b>2.6. Plumptre House, Stoney Street</b> .....                  | 14 |
| <b>2.7. County House, High Pavement</b> .....                    | 16 |
| <b>2.8. Abigail Gawthern’s House, No. 26, Low Pavement</b> ..... | 18 |
| <b>2.9. Willoughby House, Nos. 20-22, Low Pavement</b> .....     | 20 |
| <b>2.10. Morley House, Heathcoat Street</b> .....                | 22 |
| <b>2.11. Bromley House, Angel Row</b> .....                      | 24 |
| <b>2.12. Enfield House, No. 18, Low Pavement</b> .....           | 27 |
| <b>2.13. Launder House, No. 64, St James Street</b> .....        | 28 |
| <b>2.14. Stanford House, Castle Gate</b> .....                   | 30 |
| <b>2.15. The Sherwin Family and Sherwin House</b> .....          | 31 |
| <b>2.16. Sherwin House today</b> .....                           | 32 |
| <b>2.17. The importance of Sherwin House</b> .....               | 40 |
| <b>3. Conclusion</b> .....                                       | 42 |



## 1. Introduction

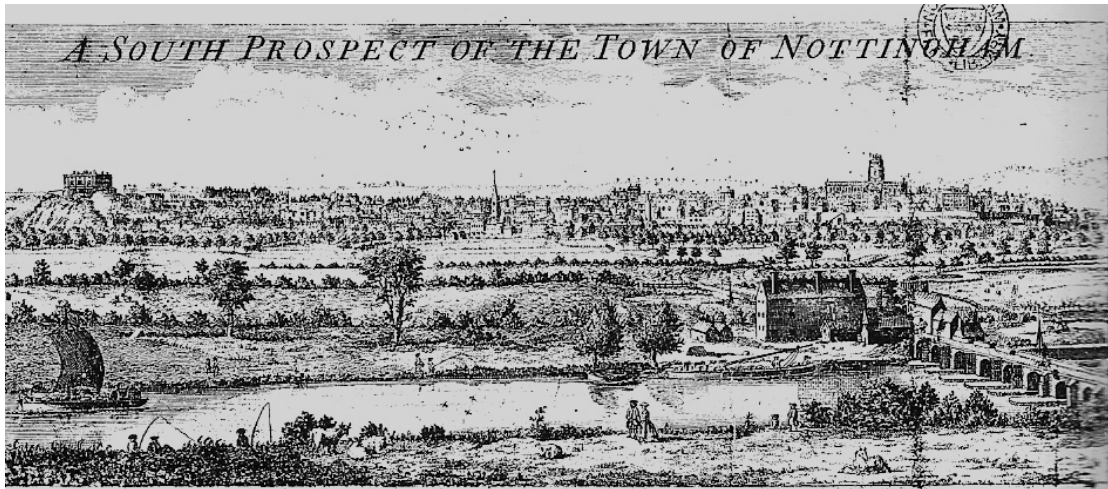


Fig. 1. A prospect of the town of Nottingham from the south, with Trent Bridge in the right foreground c. 1720

Nottingham occupies an important strategic site on the sandstone cliffs which command an ancient crossing point of the river Trent to the south of the town, the site of the present Trent Bridge (fig. 1). The medieval walled town consisted of the French settlement to the west dominated by the royal castle built by William Peverel for William the Conqueror and the Anglo-Danish settlement to the east dominated by St Mary's church with the largest market place in England linking them together. The medieval town according to Leland 'was both a large town and well built for timber and plaster' with thatched roofs. Very few timber-framed buildings from this period survive in Nottingham today, apart from sections of the former Flying Horse Inn. Though many such houses are clearly identifiable in eighteenth century engravings and in nineteenth and twentieth century photographs of the town. In the sixteenth century clay tiles were introduced as a roofing material. Charles Deering, who published the first history of the town in 1751 under the title *Nottinghamia vetus et nova, or an Historical Account of the Ancient and Present State of the Town of Nottingham*, states that 'the first Tiled House in Nottingham appears that of Mr Stanton on the Long-Row...built in the Year 1503'. In the seventeenth century brick was introduced as a building material. Again Deering states that 'The Date of the oldest Brick House I met with, is that of the Green-Dragon, a Public House on the Long Row 1615.' By the end of the seventeenth century Nottingham was being transformed into an elegant

town filled with fine brick townhouses some with generous gardens. As John Blackner states in his later *History of Nottingham*, published in 1815,

Nottingham put on a new dress...gentlemen vied with each other who should first rebuild and beautify their houses, or erect new ones: the small windows, with stone frames, fixed in semi-octangular projectments [bay windows], gave way to large sashes, placed in square and graceful fronts; and mid day light succeeded to twilight gloom throughout the habitations.

A series of visitors have left glowing records of the new town that this rebuilding created. Even as early as 1690 Thomas Baskerville in his *Travels* describes Nottingham as

Paradise restored, for here you find large streets, fair built houses, fine women, and many coaches rattling about, and their shops full of merchantable goods.

A little later Celia Fiennes, after her visit to Nottingham in 1694, wrote in her *Journal*

The town of Nottingham is the neatest town I have seen, built of stone and delicate wide Streets much like London and the houses lofty and well built, the Market place is very broad – out of which runns 2 very large streetes much like Holborn but the buildings finer and there is a Pyaza all along one side of one of the Streetes [Long Row], with stone pillars for walking that runs the length of the Streete, which is a mile long; all the streetes are of a good size all about the town and well pitched, there are several good houses in the town, there are 3 or 4 large houses.

Daniel Defoe in his *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, published in 1726, is equally complementary about the town.

Nottingham, the capital of that shire, and is the most considerable in all that part of England. Nottingham is one of the most pleasant and beautiful towns in England..... I might enter into a long description of all the modern buildings lately erected in Nottingham.

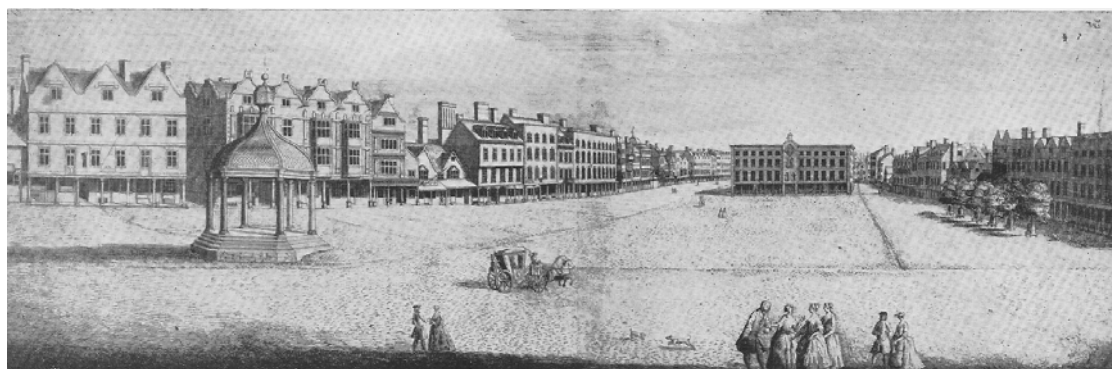


Fig. 2. The Market Square from the east, showing Long Row to the left and the Exchange to the right, c.1740.

Whilst as late as 1772 Robert Sanders recorded in his *Complete English*

### *Traveller -*

The situation is not exceeded by any in England, and in the principal streets are many fine houses...The streets are broad, open and well paved, for being on an eminence they are washed clean by every shower of rain that falls...Many gentlemen of great fortune reside here, which is not to be wondered at, as the prospect from the streets over the fields, and the windings of the Trent are so delightful, that even exceeds imagination.

Badder & Peat's elegant and accurate map of Nottingham published in 1744 illustrates perfectly the town described by these visitors. The most built-up area around the Market Square (figs 2 and 3), especially along Long Row is clearly visible, whilst the remainder of the town's properties have generous open gardens and orchards. These houses, their gardens and the town's abundant open spaces are all clearly visible in the topographical views of Nottingham by such artists as Kip & Knyff, Jan Siberechts, Thomas Sandby and Richard Parkes Bonnington. The gradual rebuilding of the town during the eighteenth century also included the town's most important public buildings. The Exchange (fig. 2), on the east side of the Market Square was rebuilt to the designs of the Mayor, Alderman Pennell in 1723, the Town Hall at Weekday Cross was rebuilt in 1744 and the Shire Hall on High Pavement was rebuilt to the designs of James Gandon in the 1770s. A number of brand new public buildings were also built including the Assembly Rooms on Low Pavement and the Racecourse Grandstand on the Forest, both designed by John Carr of York in 1770 and 1777 respectively. A new Hospital was built on Castle Hill, 1781-82 to the designs of John Simpson, and a new Cavalry Barracks was constructed off Derby Road in 1790 to the designs of Samuel & William Stretton. Other important new public buildings included the Collins Almshouses on Friar Lane, built in 1709 and the Bluecoat School at Weekday Cross was built in 1723. Whilst many new Non-conformist chapels were also constructed to satisfy the changing religious needs of the town. All these new buildings contributed to its social and cultural development, providing the facilities which helped to attract the wealthier members of society to reside in the town. As Dr. Pococke, who visited the town in the 1750s, recorded

Nottingham begins to be much frequented by gentlemen, some who retire to it from their country houses, others who have left over trade, and many gentlemen of the neighbourhood have houses here for the winter.

The town's commercial success, based largely on the development of the 'stocking frame' industry in the locality, led to a steady population increase during the eighteenth century. But this gave way to a very rapid increase in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, due largely to the fast industrialisation of the hosiery industry. The population nearly doubled from 28,000 in 1801 to 50,000 in 1830. As the population increased the gardens, orchards and other open spaces were gradually built over and the once green and pleasant eighteenth century town was soon replaced by a congested nineteenth century industrial town. Nottingham quickly became a far less attractive and healthy place to live. In 1832 a cholera epidemic swept through the town killing nearly 300 people. By 1845 things had become so bad that

the Report of the Commissioners for the Inquiry into the State of the Large Towns and Populous Districts stated,

I believe that nowhere else shall we find so large a mass of inhabitants crowded into courts, alleys, and lanes as in Nottingham, and those too, of the worst possible construction. Here they are clustered upon each other; court within court, yard within yard, lane within lane, in a manner to defy description...Some parts of Nottingham [are] so very bad as hardly to be surpassed in misery by anything to be found within the entire range of our manufacturing cities.

These problems were largely caused by the corporation townsmen who were not willing to relinquish common land around the town for development. It was only after the reform of the town council in the 1830s and the eventual passing of a series of Enclosure Acts in the 1840s that much needed development land around the town was released to allow for the town's Victorian expansion to begin in earnest. Residential development for the wealthy moved to the west of the town, to the area around the castle, with the development of Standard Hill after 1807.

## 2. Nottingham Townhouses



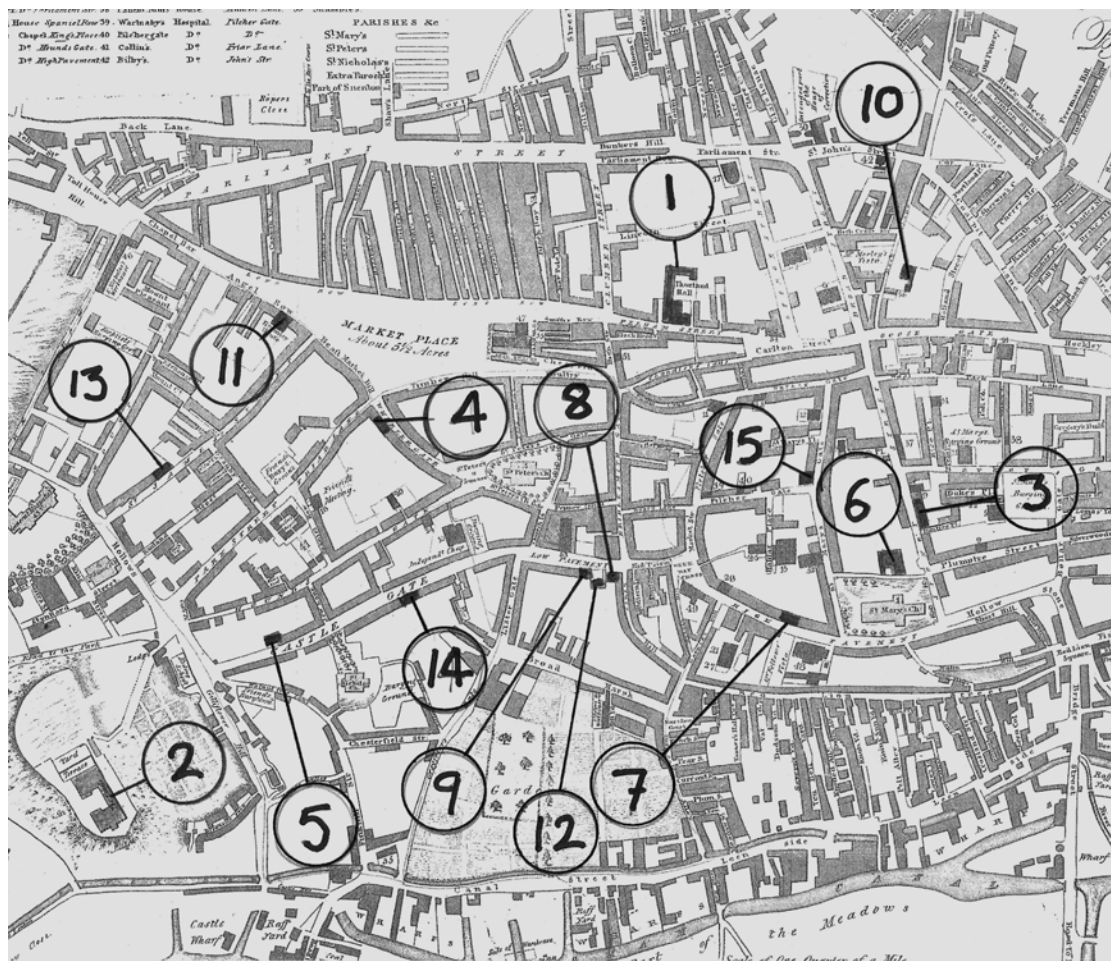
Fig. 3. The Market Square from the west, c.1740.

Eighteenth century Nottingham was dominated by its huge market place, now known as the Market Square (figs 2 and 3), which is surrounded even today by buildings supported on a virtually continuous ground floor colonnade. These columned walkways, which had protected the shops around the square since the medieval period, formed an exceedingly important element of the town's architectural character. They were remarked upon by Celia Fiennes, as we have seen, and they are illustrated by Richard Parkes Bonnington in his well known view of *The Market Place* taken in 1813. One of the best preserved of these buildings is the Scarborough Building Society on Beast Market Hill. These buildings formed the commercial heart of the town whilst the remainder was largely given over to residential properties. The larger and more important townhouses were mostly concentrated around St Mary's church, in the area now known as the Lace Market, and along the main thoroughfare which linked it with the Castle - High Pavement, Middle Pavement, Low Pavement and Castle Gate. This thoroughfare ran along the top of the cliff facing south across the valley of the river Trent, and gave all the houses on its south side fine views across open countryside. These houses

were described by a late-eighteenth century guide book as

occupied by respectable families from which are delightful prospects of the meadows and surrounding country.

Amongst these many townhouses were a number of larger often detached houses with very large and impressive gardens. The local county history and the first history of the town both stress the importance of these large townhouses and they mention most of the important ones by the names of their owners. From this it has been possible to identify many of these larger houses and a short history and description of a majority of them is included below in a roughly chronological order.



Map 1. *A New Map of the Town of Nottingham* by H Wild and T H Smith, 1820. Detail marked with the townhouses included in this report. 1. Thurland Hall. 2. Nottingham Castle. 3. Pierrepont House. 4. Mansfield House. 5. Newdigate House. 6. Plumpton House. 7. County House. 8. Abigail Gawthorn's House. 9. Enfield House. 10. Morley House. 11. Bromley House. 12. Willoughby House. 13. Launder House. 14. Stanford House. 15. Sherwin House.

## 2.1. Thurland Hall, Pelham Street

Thurland Hall (Map. 1.1), also known as Clare Hall, was one the oldest and largest courtyard houses in the town. Thoroton states that 'it is an ancient building of stone' and Blackner states,

that this hall was the residence of Thomas Thurland, who served the office



of mayor of Nottingham in 1449 and 1468, and who, very probably erected it about this time.

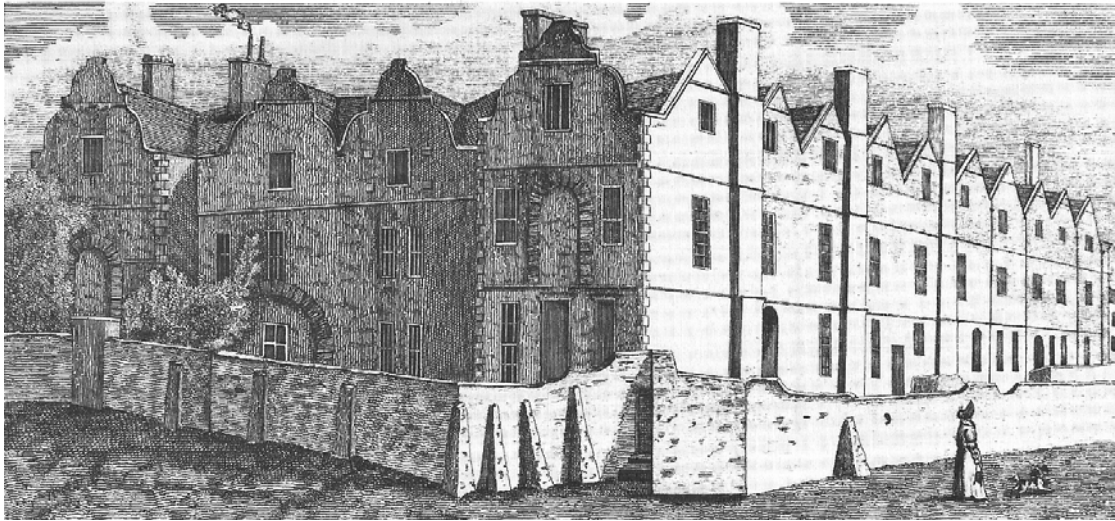


Fig. 4. Thurland Hall c.1800.

Various engravings (fig. 4) show a house with many curved gables which had been extensively remodelled in the first half of the seventeenth century, probably for John Hollis, Earl of Clare, whose family had purchased the Thurland estates. The house was recorded as having 47 hearths in the hearth tax returns for 1674, making it by far the largest house in the town. The gabled courtyard house is clearly delineated on Thoroton's map of the town published in 1677. It became the property of the Dukes of Newcastle in the early eighteenth century, and by the early nineteenth century it was in use as attorney's chambers and an inn. It was finally demolished in 1831 to make way for the new Thurland Street constructed in 1845.

## 2.2. Nottingham Castle



Fig. 5. Nottingham Castle, Samuel Marsh 1676, model. Nottingham City Museums.

The medieval Nottingham Castle (Map 1.2) was slighted after the Civil War and a new residence (fig. 5) was begun for the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle in 1676, probably to the designs of Samuel Marsh. It was completed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke in 1683. Internal alterations were made by Sir John Vanbrugh in 1719. The castle was designed on such a grand scale that in reality it qualifies as a 'ducal palace' rather than a townhouse – consequently it cannot be compared with the other townhouses discussed in this report. It was burnt out in the

Reform Riots of 1831 and the surviving shell was restored and converted into the Castle Museum and Art Gallery by T C Hine in 1876.

### 2.3. Pierrepont House, Stoney Street

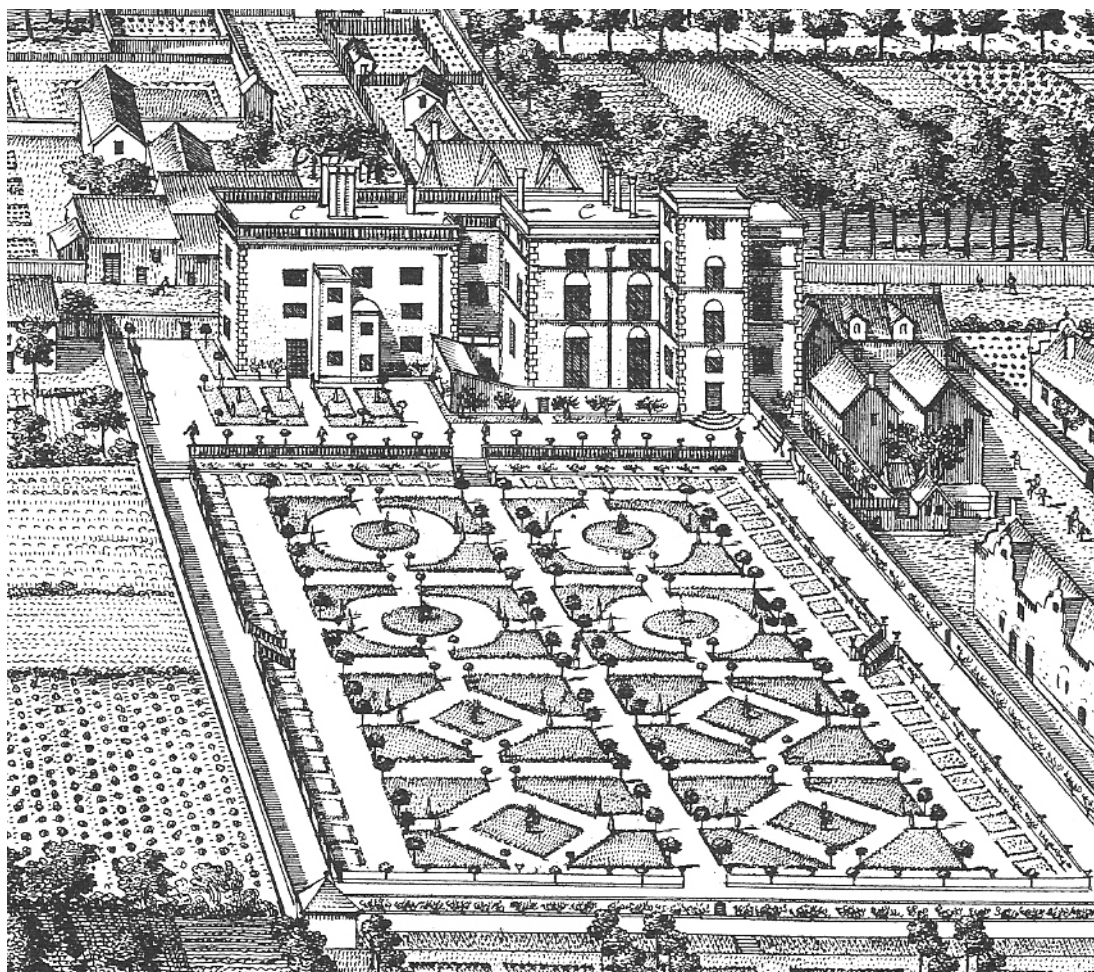


Fig. 6. Pierrepont House, Stoney Street. A detail from *The Prospect of Nottingham from ye East*. Kip & Kniff, drawn 1699, published 1707.

At the other end of the town, just beyond St Mary's church, stood Pierrepont House on Stoney Street (Map 1.3), clearly visible in the foreground of Kip & Kniff's engraving entitled *The Prospect of Nottingham from ye East* taken in 1699 and published in 1707 (fig. 6). The house and its magnificent garden are even more meticulously recorded in an anonymous picture, painted in the late 1690s, now in the Paul Mellon Collection at the Yale Center for British Art. This brick house consisted of a mid-seventeenth century range along Stoney Street, erected by Francis Pierrepont, third son of Robert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kingston, who died in 1657. This section, partially visible on the left of both views of the house, is topped with a balustrade. This house was recorded as having 23 hearths in the hearth tax returns for 1674, making it the second largest house in the town. The newer block to the right with sash windows and a bold white parapet was probably built for William Pierrepont, Francis's grandson, who inherited the property in around 1694. Presumably he was also responsible for commissioning the garden and the anonymous painting when the work was complete. Many other contemporary gardens are recorded on early maps

of Nottingham, though only two, at Thurland Hall (see 2.1) and Gregory House, had gardens on a similar scale. The raised terrace with its balustrades adorned with local blue and white pots gives a perfect setting for strolling and viewing the intricate enclosed parterre below. By 1797 the house had been sold to Thomas Curtis, a hosier, and James Bellamy, a dyer, and the site already included one workshop. All these buildings were demolished soon afterwards and a large hosiery warehouse built on the site.

#### 2.4. Mansfield House, Wheeler Gate



Fig.7. Mansfield House or the Oriental Café, Wheeler Gate, c.1920.

The building known as Mansfield House (fig. 7), or more popularly the Oriental Café, stood at the top of Wheeler Gate, next door to the Moot Hall (Map 1.4). It was reputedly built in around 1680 for Lord Mansfield, the eldest son of the Duke of Newcastle, but no documentary evidence has surfaced to confirm this suggestion. There is no record of Lord Mansfield owning any property in the town in the hearth tax returns of 1674. Early photographs show that it was a five window, three storey house with three curved gables to the attic. Nineteenth century shop fronts had replaced the ground floor and the



windows above had eighteenth century glazing bar sashes.

When the house was demolished an exceptionally fine plaster ceiling was rescued from one of the rooms on the first floor. This ceiling with its wreathed central oval is a typical example of the work of the later seventeenth century. It is of very fine quality, decorated with elaborate fruit and flower motifs, comparable with examples surviving in contemporary country houses. Nothing else is known about the internal decoration of this house, but the evidence of the ceiling does show the fashionable taste of the patron and the skill of the craftsmen employed. The ceiling bears a shield decorated with a coat-of-arms in one spandrel and a boar in another, and hopefully these will one day allow us to the identity for certain the builder of this house. This house was demolished in 1961 to make way for the new Pearl Assurance building. The ceiling was transferred to Holme Pierrepont Hall, where it remained until the restoration in 1998. It recently resurfaced on the architectural salvage market and it was featured in an article 'The Plaster Puzzle' in *World of Interiors* magazine, prior to its being auctioned by Sotheby's Sussex in May 2004.

## **2.5. Newdigate House, Castle Gate**

Newdigate House (fig. 8), at the eastern end of Castle Gate (Map 1.5), was built before 1683 by Thomas Charlton, the younger, of Chilwell. It may even have been built before 1674, for in the hearth tax returns for that year Thomas Charleton is recorded as owning two properties, one with 12 hearths which might well refer to this house. In 1683 he sold Newdigate House to Samuel Staples of Nottingham who leased it to its most illustrious tenant, Marshall Tallard. Tallard, a French general, was imprisoned here for eleven years from 1705 onwards, and employed London & Wise to lay out a French style garden. After Tallard's departure in 1716 the property was sold to Thomas Newdigate, the sixth son of Sir Richard Newdigate 1<sup>st</sup> Bt of Arbury Hall in Warwickshire. Thomas 'received a legal education and pursued a career as a barrister.' In around 1675 he married Charitie the daughter and co-heiress of Stephen French of Lewes in Sussex and he also acquired a small estate at Hawton near Newark from the Molyneaux family. He died in 1722 at the age of 74. The Newdigate family remained here throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century. In 1790 the house was sold to Mrs Thomas Wright, who employed William Stretton to make a three-window addition to the rear, which is recorded in photographs taken before alterations made in the 1960s. The house was sold again in 1817 and a further addition was made by the new owners, this is also recorded in the 1960s photographs. Both these additions have since been removed, leaving the original house and its main façade as the best preserved late-seventeenth century exterior in the town.

This brick house has been rendered and then painted, probably in the late eighteenth century, when the present glazing bar sashes were introduced. Externally the house is dominated by its bold carved cornice and its hipped roof, both features which were probably introduced here to Nottingham for the first time. This gives the house a quite different appearance to Mansfield House (see 2.4), though the fenestration of the two upper floors is almost identical in both buildings, and the surviving ground floor fenestration and main doorway at Newdigate House probably indicate the original appearance

of Mansfield House. Unfortunately the original, finely carved solid-oak cornice at Newdigate House was removed in 1906, when it became dangerous. The present copy was added when the building was restored in the 1960s. In front the original small forecourt survives with a wrought-iron screen and gates made for Thomas Newdigate by Francis Foulgham, ironsmith, who worked in Nottingham from about 1710 until his death in 1749.



Fig. 8. Newdigate House, Castle Gate. Pete Smith 2005.

Though Newdigate House does still survive today, it should be noted that it was very heavily rebuilt internally in the 1960s. The photographs recording the internal appearance of the building at that time show fine quality panelling, deeply raised with bold moulding divided into tall upper and smaller lower panels above and below a moulded dado-rail. A round-headed arch in the former hall had similar moulded decoration and a number of doorcases and bolection moulded chimney-pieces were recorded in the upper rooms. All these decorative features could date from the 1670s, but it is also possible that this interior decoration was added later, either for Marshall Tallard, or more likely for Thomas Newdigate. The later eighteenth century chimney-pieces and doorcases were added by William Stretton for Mrs Wright. After its restoration in the 1960s Newdigate House became the United Services Club; the building is now in use as World Service restaurant.

The history of **Sherwin House** on Pilchergate, which is the main subject of

this report, is considered below (see 2.15 and 2.16).

## 2.6. Plumptre House, Stoney Street

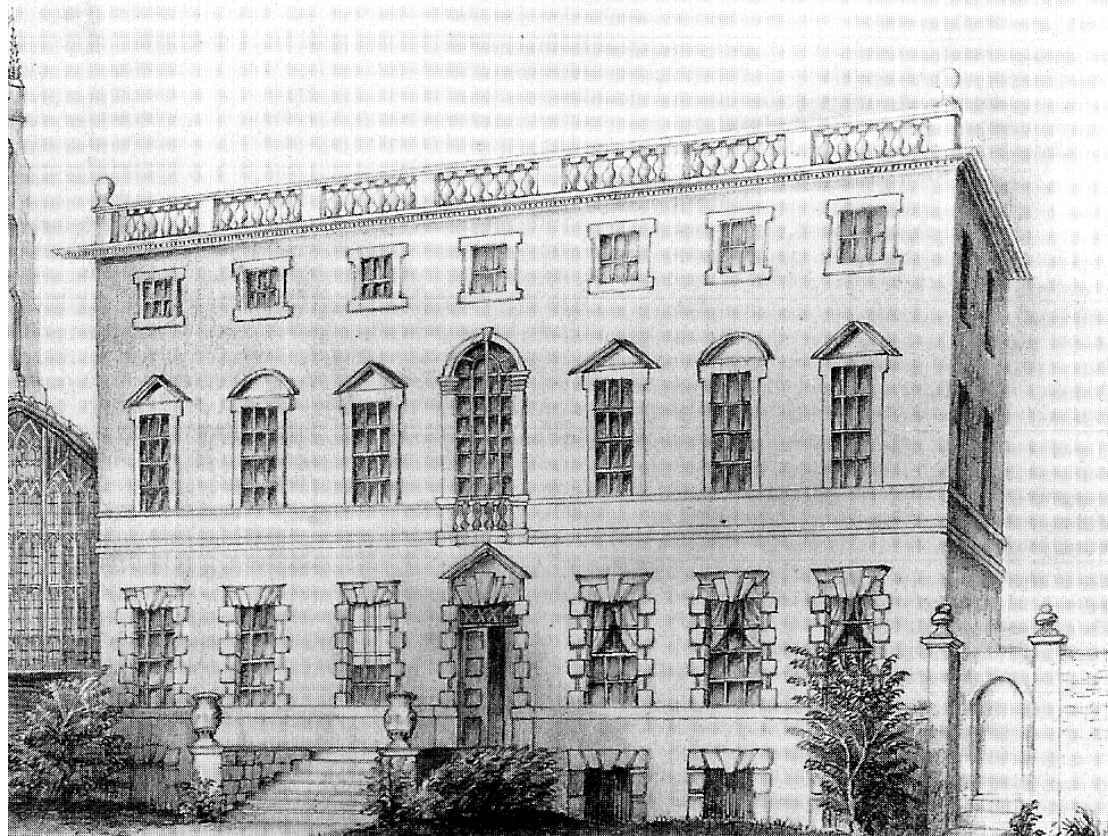


Fig. 9. Plumptre House, Stoney Street, Colen Campbell c.1723. Drawing c.1800.

The Plumptre family had been merchants in Nottingham since at least the thirteenth century and Plumptre House was situated next to St Mary's Church and on the opposite side of Stoney Street to Pierrepont House (Map 1.6). John Plumptre was born in 1679, the eldest son of Henry Plumptre, he was educated at the Middle Temple and Queen's College Cambridge. In 1706 he was elected as a Whig MP for Nottingham. He held a number of minor government posts, and through one of these, the Commons Committee concerned with the proposals for a new Fulham Bridge, he became acquainted with the architect, Colen Campbell. John Plumptre inherited Plumptre House in Nottingham, a traditional H-plan hall-house, from his father Henry in 1693. The house had been altered in the early-seventeenth century and again in the late seventeenth century, by his father. Henry Plumptre was rated for a property with 14 hearths in 1674. An album of over 80 drawings for further alterations to Plumptre House survives in the Nottingham Archives. They were probably made by John Plumptre himself, who seems to have been a talented draughtsman and amateur architect. These drawings include a plan for his own proposals to completely rebuild the west wing as a new entrance fronting onto Stoney Street. This drawing is inscribed 'Plan of a design for altering ye principal Floor of my House at Nottingham' and 'This

double scheme I shew'd to Colen Campbel Esq; who improv'd it to what has since been erected.' Colen Campbell included the elevation and plan of his addition to Plumptre House, as it was actually built in c.1723, in the third volume of his *Vitruvius Britannicus* published in 1725 (fig. 10).

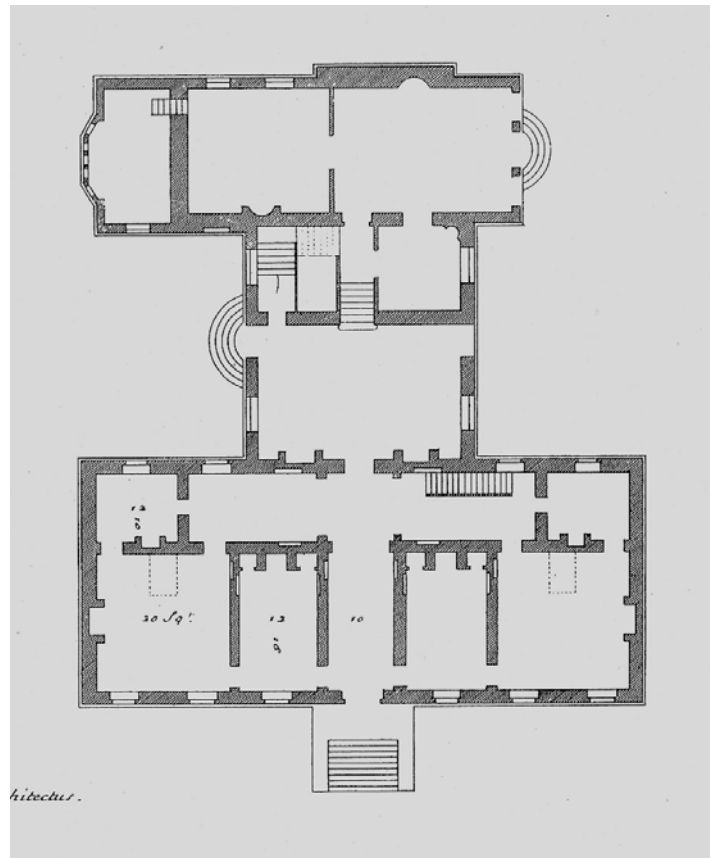


Fig. 10. Ground plan of Plumptre House, from *Vitruvius Britannicus* Vol. III, pl. 55.

The 'Grand Stuko'd Front' (fig. 9) of this new block was typical of Campbell's developing new Palladian style, reminiscent of his designs for both Hotham House and the Roll's House. The surrounds to the windows are used to differentiate each of the floors, with rock-faced rustication on the basement, rusticated Gibbs surrounds on the first floor, alternating pedimented windows to the *piano nobile* and eared and shouldered surrounds to the attic storey. The whole façade is topped with a bold pulvinated cornice with balustrade and ball finials. The ground floor windows are linked by a stone band, and the piano nobile has two stone bands, one also linking these windows. The single most unusual feature of the design is the tall round-headed central window with false balustrade and pilastered surround. Though this was an important example of Campbell's new Palladian style it is not a design which seems to have been particularly influential on the local builders or architects practicing in Nottingham at this time.

John Plumptre's album of drawings also includes a large number of designs for the internal decoration of the rooms in this new west wing. Plumptre makes no mention of Campbell having improved these designs and it therefore seems likely that Campbell had very little to do with the detailed design of these interiors. The final result of this combination of these two men's work,



Campbell on the exterior and Plumptre on the interior, was neatly summed up by Charles Deering, who states that Plumptre House

joined to the external beauty of the Italian, the inside Conveniences of the English Taste.

Plumptre House was purchased by Richard Birkin, the textile industrialist, in 1853. It was briefly used as the Government School of Design, 1854-6. Birkin commissioned T C Hine to design a new street Broadway across its garden, and the house was finally demolished in 1857 to make way for further new warehouses also designed by Hine.

## 2.7. County House, High Pavement



Fig. 11. County House, High Pavement. Remodelled Wood & Nicholson 1833, Pete Smith 2008.

County House, sometimes known as Hallows House, on the north side of

High Pavement (Map 1.7) was not a detached house but one built along the street adjoining the buildings on either side. The property was purchased by Samuel Hallows, a Derbyshire gentleman, in around 1670 and a Mr Hallows is recorded in the hearth tax returns as owning a property with 6 hearths. According to his probate inventory of 1715 his house contained 15 rooms. This timber-framed building was remodelled in brick in c.1728-30 (fig. 11) by his second son, William, who inherited most of his father's property in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. In 1728 William purchased the land adjoining his property to the east to create access to his rear garden and space for stabling. In 1733 he purchased the property opposite, the former Castle Inn for £300, and demolished this building to create a new garden and more importantly a view or vista from his house over the Trent valley. An anonymous traveller who visited Nottingham in 1769 was so taken with this phenomenon that he recorded it in detail.

The town abounds in gentlemen's houses, before the front of one of these, in a street called the High Pavement, is an opening made on the other side of the way, and here the stranger is surprised with seeing through the railings a garden, beyond which is an unbounded prospect suddenly breaks upon his view, from an eminence equal to the height of several house. The meadows, at a considerable depth below, spreading to a very great extent, with the Trent winding along, and the view carried as far as the eye can reach.

This garden is labelled as 'Mr Fellows Vista' on Smith & Wild's map of 1820.

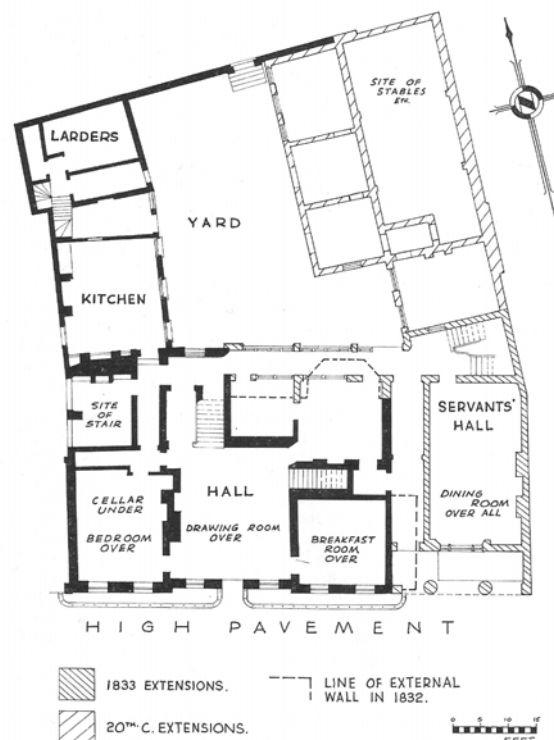


Fig. 12. Ground plan of County House, F N Hoskins 1974.

County House has a central hall and cross wings (fig. 12) which presumably

reflects the original plan of the former timber-framed building. The original appearance of this house, as rebuilt in c.1730, is recorded in Thomas Sandby's *South Prospect of Nottingham* of 1742. It had a two storey brick façade with three windows to the recessed centre and two windows to each of the wings and it was topped with three broad gables. The panelled hall and the staircase are all that survive internally from this period of rebuilding. This stair is sited at the rear of the hall, in a projection to the west; it is of two flights with a continuous string and turned balusters. Following the death of Graciana Hallows the house was sold for £2,820 in 1771 to John Fellows a successful hosier, who also owned the smaller house to the west, known as Fellows House. Surviving interior features suggest that Fellows made at least some alterations to the house. His family finally sold both houses in 1833.

The Nottingham magistrates purchased the County House as the new Judge's Lodgings and the garden opposite for additions to the adjoining Shire Hall, for £5,000 and £3,000 respectively. They immediately employed the architects Moses Wood & James Nicholson to remodel and extend County House. The present three storey stucco façade (fig. 11) dates from this period, as does the Greek Revival style addition to the east. Similarly most of the surviving internal features date from this remodelling. The building ceased use as the Judge's Lodgings in 1922 and it then became offices. Alterations took place in 1930 and 1949, and in 1966 it became the County Record Office. The building has been vacant since the Record Office moved out in 1997.

## **2.8. Abigail Gawthorn's House, No. 26, Low Pavement**

Abigail Gawthorn's House, No. 26, Low Pavement (Map 1.8), is one of a pair of houses originally built by her husband's father, Francis Gawthorn in 1733. According to Charles Deering, writing in 1751,

On the West side stood an house formerly called Vout [or Vault] Hall, once the Mansion House of the Family of the Plumptre's, after in the Possession of Alderman Drury, whose eldest Son Mr William Drury, sold it to Mr. Gawthorn, the present Proprietor.

In fact Alderman William Drury purchased the property in 1645 for £103 21s and it was resold to William Gawthorn in 1733 for £500. Both these houses survive today as Nos. 24 and 26, Low Pavement. They are sited on the south side of the street, and they have a long garden at the rear with dramatic views to the south across the valley of the river Trent. Abigail Gawthorn lived at No. 26 in the late eighteenth century and No. 24 was let to a Mr Neville.

The façade of this pair of three storey houses has eight windows arranged symmetrically. It is of brick and it is dominated by its large sash windows all set flush with the front wall. All these windows have brick lintels with painted ashlar keystones. Both houses have fine carved doorcases with Doric half-columns supporting open pediments, and the round headed doorways within have panelled doors and original fanlights. Even the wrought iron railings with their lantern overthrows survive around their narrow front yards. Though on this side these houses are divided equally with four windows each, on the south side No. 24 has only three windows. No. 24 retains its original gabled

garden front, if somewhat hidden by low nineteenth century additions. Internally too this house retains much of its original decoration including a small main staircase with two turned balusters per tread, and a number of rooms with at least some of their raised and fielded panelling still intact. No. 26 was obviously a larger house, with five windows on its garden façade, and it became even larger when a whole new garden range was constructed by the architect William Stretton and the builder, Mr Taylor for Abigail Gawthorn.



Fig. 13. Abigail Gawthorn's House, No. 26, Low Pavement, the garden front added in 1792. Pete Smith 2005.

Her Diary entries for 1792 give us a rare glimpse of the detailed progress of a major building project on a townhouse from the patrons viewpoint.

- May 7, Sent to Stretton & Taylor about the house;
- May 11, began removing furniture from the back rooms to the front, and several things down to Pepper Street;
- May 16, the workmen began to pull down the garden front of the house;
- June 1, the new foundation began to be made;
- June 2, Frank [her son, then six years old] laid the first stone,
- August 25, the roof was reared; I gave the men three guineas to drink; Mr Neville fired a pistol three times on the occasion, and Sally displayed a flag with blue ribbons...;
- Sep 14, the roof was finished covering in,
- Nov 12. The front parlour windows were taken out, and new ones put in by Mr Taylor, also the hall window; the whole front was new sashed in the course of a week.



Dec 31, a door broke through into the lodging rooms, and in the drawing room.

Jan 4. Our drawing room was opened with a ball, 15 couples; Mr Wylde and myself danced down the first dance; supped in the dining room.

These additions were probably not entirely completed until six months later when Abigail records,

June 17. We breakfasted in our new drawing room for the first time; very pleasant.

This dramatic new rear wing (fig. 13) was taller, an extra storey higher than the front wing, and it transformed Abigail Gawthern's House from a middle sized townhouse into one comparable with the grander houses included in this report. This plain four storey, five window garden façade is simply decorated with a first floor sill band and a wooden cornice, plus that newly fashionable architectural feature the decorated stucco lintel. All these lintels have a central oval patera and a curved hood of a type found on a number of other late-eighteenth century houses in the town. The central doorcase is of a fairly common type, with scroll brackets supporting an open pediment. Internally this house too retains original features of 1733 in the front range, including a number of rooms complete with their raised and fielded panelling. The rooms in the new wing are larger, some with decorative plasterwork and richly carved chimney-pieces. The largest and main room on the first floor retains its decorative plaster dado rail and moulded cornice with a decorative Neo-classical frieze. It was almost certainly in this room that Abigail quite unknowingly entertained by far her most famous visitor. For her diary records that in 1798;

August 21, Lord Byron, the two Miss Parkyns [of Bunny Hall], and the two Master Smiths from Wilford [Hall] spent the day here; Miss Edwards drank tea with us.

Both these houses were used as offices for most of the twentieth century, and some of the rooms were subdivided. Recently they have been sensitively converted into a furniture store, and many of the later partition walls have been removed.

## **2.9. Willoughby House, Nos. 20-22, Low Pavement**

Willoughby House, Nos. 20-22, Low Pavement (Map 1.9) was the next major townhouse to be built in Nottingham. Willoughby House was constructed for the Hon. Rothwell Willoughby, the third son of Sir Thomas Willoughby, Lord Middleton of Wollaton Hall, in around 1738. On his death in 1752 the house was inherited by his nephew, Rothwell Southeby Willoughby. When he died in 1764 it passed to Ichabod Wright, an ironmonger and banker, who retained the property until 1806, when Lewis Allsopp purchased it. Allsopp was an attorney, who used Willoughby House as both his home and his place of business until 1835. Willoughby House was originally built as a detached house set well back from the road. Rothwell Willoughby was granted permission in 1743 'to set his Palisadoes before his house in Low Pavement

out onto the street'. This permission was rescinded in 1809-10, when these 'Palisadoes' or elaborate iron railings and gates were moved back to their present situation. These original iron railings and gates may well have been manufactured by the local ironsmith, Francis Foulgham. The former front garden was probably become a paved forecourt.

The main façade of Willoughby House is five windows wide, and three full storeys high, though the windows on the top floor are slightly shorter than the rest. All the windows have stone bolection-mould surrounds with individual keystones. This facade has a very fine central doorcase with a segmental pediment supported on full Ionic columns and an inner bolection moulded surround. It has rusticated quoins and a bold stone cornice topped with a brick parapet. All these rather old-fashioned architectural features show that the local architect responsible for its design was not influenced by the example of 'Italian taste' that Colen Campbell produced for Plumtre House.



Fig. 14. Willoughby House, Nos. 20-22, Low Pavement, the garden front. Pete Smith 2005.

The rear façade of this house (fig. 14) has exactly the same window arrangement as the front, though with no quoins and no stone surrounds to any of the windows, only simple stone keystones. This façade was probably remodelled in the later eighteenth century when the new sash windows were introduced, and the fine central garden doorway, appropriately decorated with blocks of vermiculated rustication and a rustic masked, was added. The

interior retains some rooms with their original panelling and doorcases, and the main staircase with two turned balusters per tread and a mahogany handrail survives largely intact. But most of the interior features including a number of fireplaces date to around 1790 when the house was radically remodelled. Willoughby House became the property of Lewis Allsopp in 1806 and he may well have been responsible for further internal alterations. White's Directory of 1885-86 lists Willoughby House as occupied by the Borough Justices' Clerks' Office, 2 barrister and firms of solicitors and accountants. It continued to be used as commercial offices during the twentieth century, and in 2004 it was sensitively converted into a shop for Paul Smith.

### **2.10. Morley House, Heathcoat Street**

Contemporary commentators noted that Nottingham continued to be graced with large new townhouses throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Charles Deering, noted that:

a considerable Number of handsome Houses have of late been built by Wealthy tradesmen, and more are daily Building.

One of these handsome houses was undoubtedly the building known today as The People's Hall, though originally built as Morley House (fig.15). It is sited on Heathcoat Street, formerly known as Beck Lane, in the north-eastern corner of the town (Map 1.10). It is one of the least known and best preserved of all the eighteenth century townhouses in Nottingham. It was constructed for the Morley family in 1750 according to a surviving lead rainwater head which bears the inscription 'A M 1750'. The Morley family were yeoman farmers from Sneinton who became very successful hosiery merchants in the eighteenth century. Mr Thomas Morley was rated for 8 hearths in the hearth tax returns for 1674, a substantial though not large property. The surviving rate books for Nottingham, record that Charles Morley, merchant, owned substantial property on Beck Lane including a house with a rateable value of £17 in 1780. The earlier rate books, which date from 1729, 1736 and 1759 respectively, make no mention of Beck Lane at all, but they do record Charles Morley and then Mrs Morley as owning a house and property on Coalpit Lane. Since Beck Lane was a small lane opening off Coalpit Lane it seems more than likely that all these entries refer to the same property. The rateable value of this house was £16 10s in 1729 and £12 in 1736, but it jumps to £37 in 1759 confirming that a new house was built on this site in the years between, and suggesting that the initials 'A M' on the rainwater head refer to Mrs Morley.

All this is confirmed by Badder & Peat's map of 1744 which shows a small L-plan house built along the road and Smith & Wild's map of 1820 which clearly shows the present rectangular house set well back from the lane (Map 1.10). This later map also marks a break in the houses on the opposite side of Beck Lane as 'Mr Morley's Vista', another example of a detached garden. A Mr Morley was appointed sheriff in 1809. The architect, T C Hine, in his book *Nottingham its Castle* states that in 1874

Beck Lane was widened into a street, bringing into open view the mansion of Mr Lomas Morley, who made a large fortune out of the Pottery formerly

established in this town.



Fig. 15. Morley House, now the People's Hall, Heathcoat Street. Pete Smith 2008.

Externally this tall three storey detached townhouse has a five window façade with a deep parapet, triple gable side elevations (fig. 15) and an irregular rear facade. It has a prominent central doorway with a rusticated stone surround. This doorcase was lowered when the house lost its front garden and external stairs, as part of the widening of Beck Lane and its conversion into Heathcoat Street in 1874. The original front railings with their ornate wrought iron gate were moved to the front of the yard to right the house, where they still remain today (fig. 15). The façade retains sash windows with stucco lintels, though the original glazing bars have been replaced with plate glass. The quoins and parapet are probably also original. Internally the building retains its original plan-form. The central section is occupied by the entrance hall and staircase with two rooms on either side, a service staircase rises from the basement to the top floor between the two rooms on the south side. The entrance hall was altered and a screen inserted when the doorway was lowered and a new internal flight of steps had to be accommodated. The magnificent eighteenth century main staircase of two flights, with three turned balusters per tread, survives complete with all its ornate plaster decoration on the ceiling and walls. Almost all the rooms on the ground and first floors survive with their complete panelling, doorcases, shutters and chimney pieces. Unfortunately the two rooms at the front on the north side of the house have had one wall removed to give access to the nineteenth century addition to the north. Apart from this the original mid-eighteenth century interiors survive virtually



untouched. The Government School of Design was founded here in 1843 and remained until 1854. The house was purchased by George Gill, a generous local philanthropist, in 1854 and converted into The People's Hall a temperance facility where local clubs and associations could meet. Thanks largely to the institutional ownership of this building it has been very little altered since it was first converted and today it is amongst the best preserved of all the townhouses in Nottingham.

### 2.11. Bromley House, Angel Row

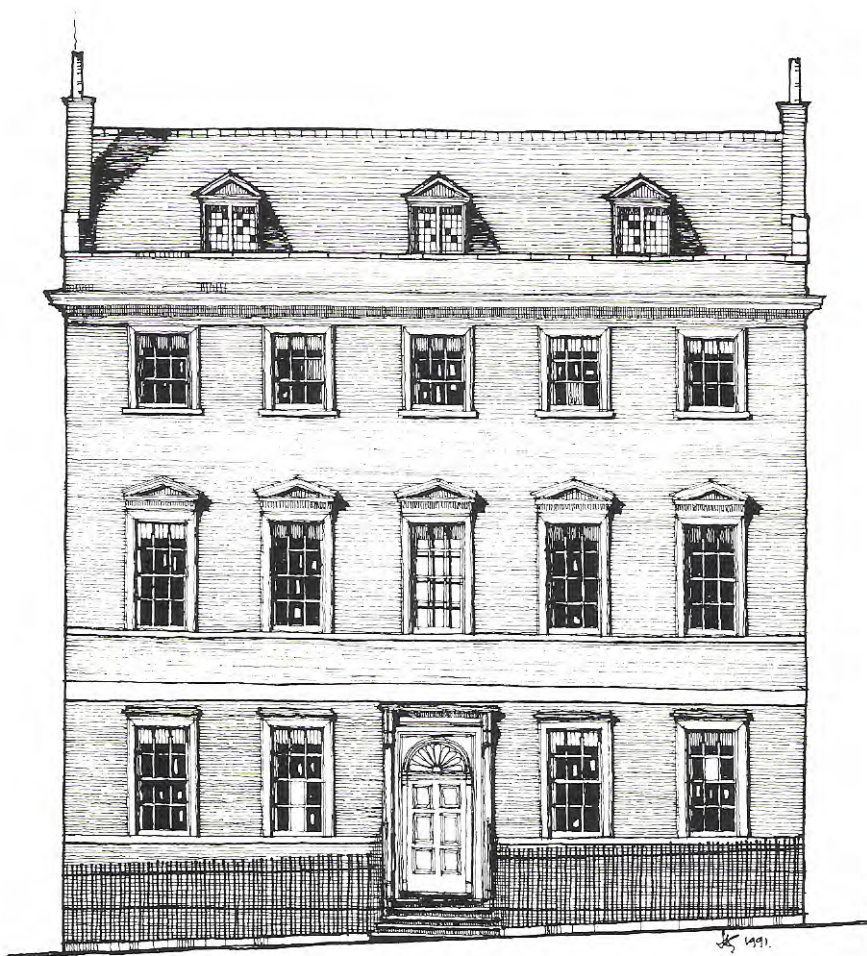


Fig. 16. Bromley House, Angel Row. Reconstruction showing the house before the shop fronts were inserted either side of the front door c.1929. John Severn 1991.

Bromley House is situated on Angel Row at the western end of the Market Square. It was built for the head of one of the most important families in the town, George Smith. George's grandfather founded the first English bank, which opened its doors to the public five years before the Bank of England. It was to be the single most important commercial institution in the town for most of the eighteenth century, and economic historians today suggest that it was largely responsible for financing the development of the stocking-frame industry, which was to become so important to Nottingham's economic growth.

George Smith owned a country house and estate at East Stoke near Newark, but he began buying plots of land along Angel Row at the western end of the Market Square in the 1740s. The deeds to Bromley House show that it was conveyed to George Smith in 1752, so the surviving date-stone in the garden wall inscribed '1752 GS' must relate to the beginning of the building his new house. The ground floor was converted into shops in the early twentieth century, but a few Victorian photographs survive to show the house's original appearance (fig. 16). The ornate wrought-iron railings were removed but fortunately the central doorcase with its fanlight does survive. Above the façade survives untouched, with five large sash windows with triangular pediments linked by a plain sill band. Above, on the second floor are five smaller sashes in bracketed surrounds, topped by a moulded stone cornice and parapet, which hides three small dormer windows.

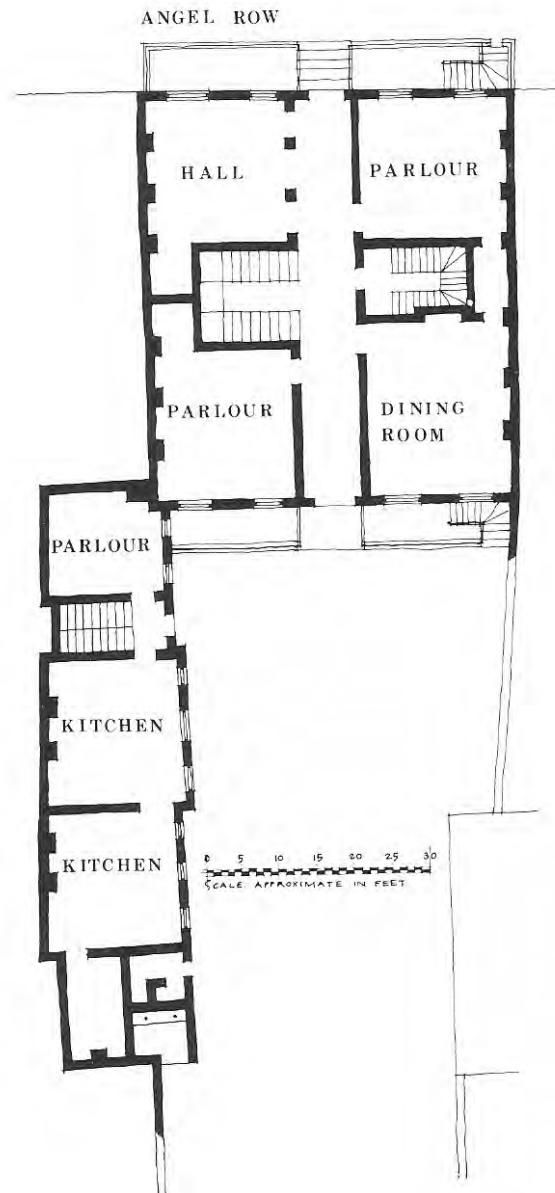


Fig. 17. Ground plan of Bromley House c.1820. John Severn 1991.

The internal layout of this house survives largely intact (fig. 17). It has a central passage, which runs from front to back, and on either side there were two rooms with staircases in between. The central front entrance actually leads into a passage with Ionic half-columns on the right, these are in actual fact full-columns which have been walled-in. Originally they were open, forming a type of screens-passage to the right hand room, the hall. This room also once contained one of the oddest eighteenth century chimney-pieces in the town, which is fortunately recorded in an early photograph. The lower section of this chimney-piece was relatively conventional but the flamboyant Rococo plaster over-mantel was quite extraordinary. It had a female bust in the centre with huge scrolls supporting the most flamboyant decorated coat-of-arms, bearing the impaled arms of George Smith and his wife, Mary Howe. On either side of this extravagant composition were displayed the arms of the Smith and Howe families, each surmounted by its respective crest. This wonderful confection, which must have dominated this entrance hall, would have left visitors in no doubt as to George Smith's pride in his marriage to the Mary Howe, the daughter of one of the leading Nottinghamshire families, and perhaps more importantly the grand-daughter of Prince Rupert. It was probably this family connection with royalty which led to George Smith being created a Baronet in 1757.

Little else survives in the house on the ground floor, except the arches of the passage way, and the great staircase behind the entrance hall. This magnificent stair of three flights takes the visitor to the first floor only, though the space itself continues right up through the house to the lantern above. The stair itself, with its three turned balusters per tread and its tread ends with carved scrolls, is somewhat old-fashioned for the date of 1752, but it is still a magnificent example of the local joiners skill and craftsmanship. The walls of the stair are decorated with similarly old-fashioned plasterwork. The first floor of this house retains much of its original decoration, though some of the original walls were removed when the building was converted into a library in the early-nineteenth century. All the rooms on this floor retain their chimney-pieces and panelling, which clearly show the differing importance of the rooms. The much lower rooms on the second floor were originally reached by a service staircase, which rose right through the house from basement to attic. Most of this staircase, with its simple turned balusters, survives on the upper floors. The rooms on this second floor have little decoration, merely conventional plaster coving and simple doorcases with four-panel doors.

The garden elevation of Bromley House has been mutilated by later alteration, but the rear wing on the north side of the garden, survives largely intact. This wing seems to have contained most of the services on the ground floor though the usage of the remainder of the building is unclear, the large sashes on the first floor do suggest that these were rooms of some importance. Bromley House was occupied by the Smith family up until 1819 when the vacant house was requisitioned for the billeting of the Yeomanry, and in 1821 it was fortunately purchased by the recently founded Nottingham Subscription Library for £2,750, and this usage has ensured that this building has retained many of its most important architectural interiors to this day.

## 2.12. Enfield House, No. 18, Low Pavement



Fig. 18. Enfield House, No. 18, Low Pavement. Pete Smith 2008.

Enfield House, No. 18, Low Pavement (fig. 18), is situated next door to Willoughby House (Map 1.12). This house is characterised by its fine display of Venetian windows. Like most houses in the town this was not so much a new house, as a new façade, or a new front range added to an already existing house. Nothing is known, as yet, about the building of this



extraordinary house, except that it was occupied by a Mr Stockdale in 1743. Nikolaus Pevsner states that the rear wing bears a date of 1760 which would seem likely on stylistic grounds, especially in view of the somewhat old-fashioned nature of most Nottingham townhouses. The use of six Venetian windows, two to each floor, on this otherwise unremarkable façade is most unusual. These windows have slightly less elaborate surrounds on each floor, and the top floor windows are lower. The Venetian windows on the both the lower floors have Ionic columns supporting a bold entablature, and the ground floor ones are also topped with broken pediments.

Few townhouses have more than one or two Venetian windows. In mid-eighteenth century townhouses it was common to find a Venetian window lighting the staircase, but in various parts of the midlands it became popular to use large numbers of Venetian windows on their main facades. Nottingham had rather more than its fair share of such townhouses, at least three other examples are known. Enfield House is the grandest and probably also one of the earliest to survive. Presumably most of these houses with multiple Venetian windows were designed by the same local architect or builder, but his identity at present remains a mystery.

### **2.13. Launder House, No. 64, St James Street**

According to John Blackner;

Near one half of the north side of St James's Street, from the west end downwards, consists of magnificent houses; so that to particularise one would be doing injustice to the rest; except it be that which was erected by the late Cornelius Launder, Esq. Who was equally well known for his wealth, for being a miser and a most excellent landlord.

Launder House, No. 64, St James Street (Map 1.13) was constructed in 1767, according to a date-stone at the rear of the house. This stone is inscribed 'C1767 L', recording the initials of Cornelius Launder, who built the house and who lived here until his death in 1806. The Launders had been prominent members of Nottingham society since the seventeenth century, though there is no mention of them owning property in the town in the hearth tax returns of 1674. Cornelius had a reputation as a miser, but he did not stint himself when it came to building a fashionable new townhouse. He served as Sheriff for the town in 1775. This house is unusual amongst Nottingham townhouses for it has a pedimented centre which projects forward and contains a tall round-headed arch. This particular feature was one which the architect Joseph Pickford of Derby often incorporated into his designs for both townhouses and country houses. The similarity between this house and Joseph Pickford's own house at 41, Friar Gate in Derby, which was completed in 1771, does suggest that it could have been designed by Pickford, or by someone under his influence. The main front of this house may have been very elaborate, but the rear façade is far plainer with only a central Venetian window, lighting the staircase, and a Diocletian window above, to enliven this slightly unsymmetrical front. The reason for this is that the house had little or no garden to the rear, instead it had a garden on the opposite side of St James Street; like County House (see 2.7) and Morley House (see 2.10), its 'vista'

was to the front. All the houses on the upper section of St James Street had detached gardens on the south side of the street, and these gardens are still clearly delineated on Edward W Salmon's detailed map of 1861.



Fig. 19. Launder House, the main staircase. Pete Smith 2007.

The interior layout of Launder House follows the standard Nottingham plan, with a central section comprising the entrance hall with the staircase behind, flanked by two rooms on either side. The well preserved interiors have equally traditional raised and fielded panelling with a dado rail, simple pedimented doorcases and a two-flight staircase with two turned balusters per tread (fig. 19). This stair, similar to the one at Morley House, would not have looked out of place in a country house of forty years earlier. It seems that the citizens of Nottingham were prepared to recognise new fashions in the exterior architecture of their houses, whilst continuing to employ local joiners and plasters inside to produce familiar and comfortable interiors of an increasingly old fashioned type; a type which Charles Deering so perceptively described as being in the 'English taste'. This house remained a private residence until 1908. In 1910 it became the headquarters of the Medico-Chirurgical Society who occupied the property until 1956. The property survives today largely

intact and in use as offices.

#### 2.14. Stanford House, Castle Gate

The last of the large townhouses to be considered in this report is Stanford House (fig. 20), on the south side of Castle Gate (Map 1.14), which was remodelled for William Stanford, a merchant hosier, between 1775 and 1782. The original house is individually delineated on Thoroton's map of Nottingham dated 1677. Thurland Hall (see 2.1) is the only other domestic residence to be similarly delineated by Thoroton and it must therefore have been one of the largest and most important houses in the town at this date. The map shows a gabled range to street with two side ranges forming an open courtyard to the south. This house was probably the residence of Ralph Bennet, a town burgess, who was named in the new town charter of 1693, for the same property is clearly identified on Badder & Peat's map of 1744 as 'Bennet's House'. The house is individually outlined as an H-plan house on this later map, very similar to County House (fig. 12) probably comprising a central hall and cross wings, suggesting that it too was originally timber framed. It is described by Deering writing in 1751 as 'the late Mr Bennet's house', so presumably George Augustus, Viscount Howe of Langar Hall purchased the house from Mr Bennet's heirs, since he is reputed to have built a 'magnificent mansion' on this site in 1755. The property was then sold to William Stanford in 1775.



Fig. 20. Stanford House, Castle Gate, the main entrance and garden front. Pete Smith 2005.

The main street facade of Stanford House is one of the few examples of the Neo-Classical style to be found in the town. It was probably the direct influence of the work of the architect John Carr of York, who was then remodelling the Assembly Rooms and building the new Grandstand in Nottingham. Carr was also altering the houses of many of the local gentry in the county close by; he worked at Clifton Hall from 1778 to 1797 and at Colwick Hall for Mr John Musters in c. 1776. In fact the local builder Samuel

Stretton, who carried out Carr's designs at Colwick, as well as on the New Grandstand, would seem to be a likely candidate.

The street façade is dominated by its slightly projecting central section, which has a Venetian-type window, including a huge fanlight, and a finely carved doorcase with a bucranium frieze and fluted columns. The severity of this façade is enlivened by the windows on the first floor with their false balconies and linking bands. It has rusticated quoins and a dentilated cornice with a Doric frieze topped by a panelled parapet. The Neo-classical style continued internally, for Harry Gill recorded in 1912 that there were,

graceful wooden chimney pieces on the ground floor [whilst] the principal rooms have beautiful white marble chimney-pieces of classic design enriched with inlaid patterns in vari-coloured marbles.

Its staircase no longer had turned balusters, instead,

The balustrade consists of an elegant polished mahogany handrail, carried on ebony balusters  $\frac{3}{4}$ in square, set 3ins apart.

The garden façade of this house also survives unaltered, though it is now boxed in by later additions. It is markedly different in architectural character to the Neo-classical street front, which shows evidence of being little more than a new façade when viewed from Stanford Street. The garden front is faced in stone, it has a central curved three storey bay window, which rises from cellar to attic, the windows have moulded stone surrounds and there are moulded ashlar bands marking the floors. All this tends to suggest that this façade and the shell of the present building date from before the 1770s, and that they are in actual fact part of the 'magnificent mansion' reputedly built for Lord Howe in 1755. The use of stone would certainly have been enough to justify the epithet 'magnificent', since good quality local building stone was scarce and rarely used in Nottingham; only the Castle and Thurland Hall and the new Shire Hall were considered important enough to justify the importing of stone from the north of the county. The building remains in use as offices.

### **2.15. The Sherwin Family and Sherwin House, No. 41, Pilchergate**

The Sherwin, or Sherwyn, family are recorded as resident in Nottingham from the sixteenth century onwards. For example, one Nichus Sherwin, a tanner, was rated in 1589 for property in Narrow Marsh. The family were particularly active in local politics in the seventeenth century. Robert Sherwin was sheriff in 1602 and mayor in 1623, 1630 and again in 1637. His grandson John Sherwin, who was also mayor in 1667 and again in 1716, is probably the Mr Sherwin first mentioned as owning property in Pilchergate. For, in his *Annals of Nottingham*, published in 1815, Thomas Bailey states in his entry for 1657 that,

About this time, the building of several of the ancient large houses of Nottingham was begun...that of Mr Sherwin, at the top of Pilchergate, had in front [on the south side of street] a fine garden, afterwards made into a paddock, occupying all the ground between Halifax Lane and St Mary's

Place, as far as the Theatre, as likewise another garden adjoining to the house [to the west] (fig. 25).

There is no record of any member of the Sherwin family owning a large house in Nottingham according to the hearth tax returns for 1674. Three Sherwins are recorded, Richard Sherwyn who was rated for two hearths in John Wogdale's 'Disnary', plus Mr. Henry Sherwin rated for five hearths and Mr John Sherwin for three hearths, both in John Twell's 'Disnary'. None of which could be associated with 'the ancient large houses' Bailey refers to, for as we have seen, Newdigate House was probably rated at 12 hearths and Pierrepont House definitely rated at 23 hearths. This suggests that Bailey's statement 'at about this time' referring to 1657 is only intended as a very general reference to the later seventeenth century.

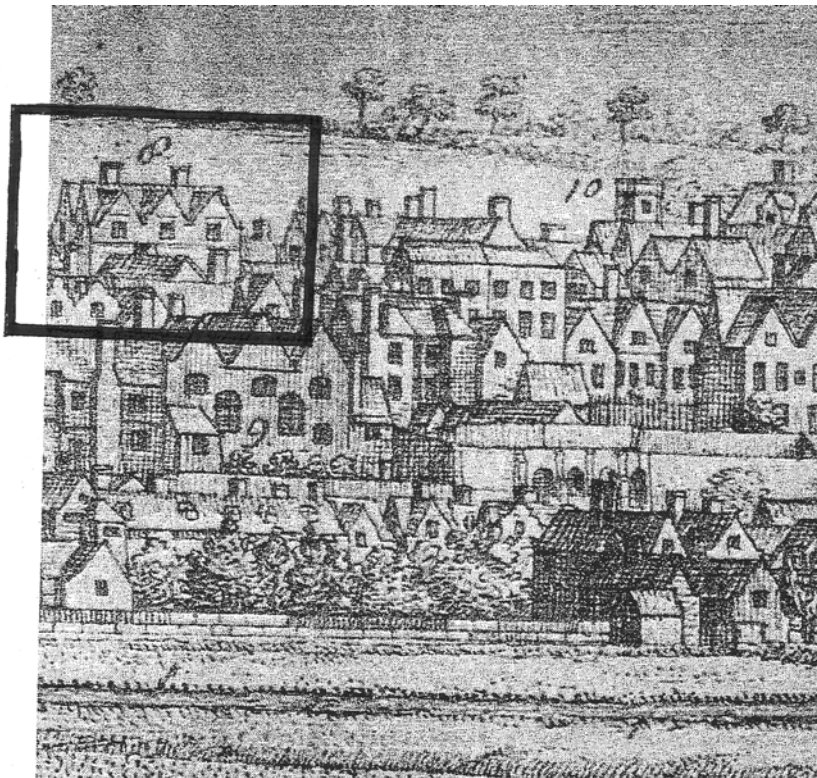


Fig. 21. Thomas Sandby. Sherwin House from a detail of *A Prospect of Nottingham*, 1742.

On one version of Thomas Sandby's immensely accurate and detailed 'South Prospect of Nottingham' drawn in 1742 he clearly identifies Mr Sherwin's House as a large brick house, three gables wide on its south front and two gables deep on its west side with two prominent internal chimney stacks, rising above the houses on Middle Pavement (fig. 21). The other version of Sandby's 'Prospect', also dating from 1742, is taken from slightly further east and shows how the house dominated the urban skyline (fig. 22). This view also indicates that the house had two gables on its east front.

Both these illustrations concur with Charles Deering, who in 1751, stated that,

Here I must not pass over in Silence the stately Houses of those Gentlemen whose Families have for a long series of Years inhabited



this our Town...Mr. *Sherwin*'s at the upper corner of *Pilchergate*, being built upon the highest spot in the Town.

Deering then goes on to say in a footnote that,

Disenters privately met for the Exercise of their religion, as they did after the Act of Toleration [1689] publicly, in a House at the upper End of *Pilchergate*, which is since pulled down and a new one built in its Room, the Property and present Mansion House of John *Sherwin*, Esq;

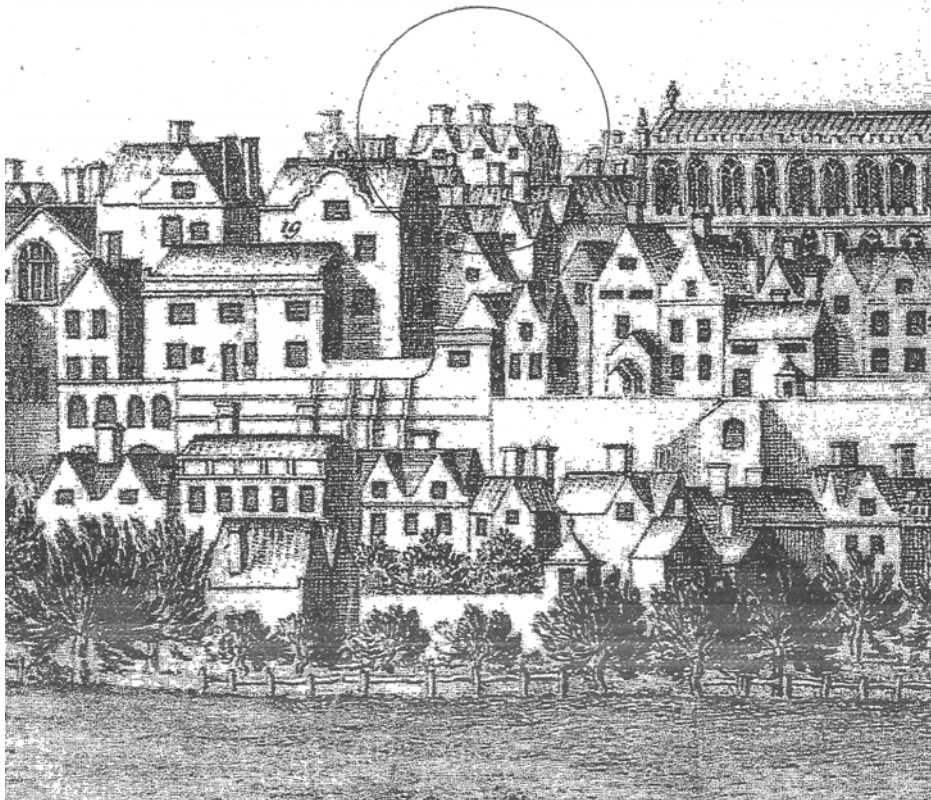


Fig. 22. Thomas Sandby. *Sherwin House* from a detail of *A Prospect of Nottingham*. The second version showing how the house dominated the local skyline. 1742.

From this we can safely conclude that the house, built for Mr *Sherwin* on *Pilchergate* and illustrated by Sandby, was not erected until after the Act of Toleration in 1689. Kip & Knyff's engraved view of Nottingham from the east also shows a building which corresponds exactly to *Sherwin House* as seen in Sandby's later view (fig. 23). One might normally be a little reticent about relying on the lesser details of an engraving by Kip & Knyff, were it not for the fact that the building shown corresponds so exactly in outline and in position with the later more detailed drawings of Thomas Sandby. The engraving again shows only the attic floor of the building, seen this time from the east, with a two gable front and three gables to the south with prominent internal chimney stacks. Though this engraving was not published until 1707, the Duke of Newcastle actually commissioned the drawing of this view from Leonard Knyff in January 1698/99. The original drawing, from which this

engraving was taken, was therefore most likely carried out during 1699, indicating that Sherwin House must have been constructed before this date. This means that we can now conclude with certainty that the present Sherwin House was actually constructed sometime between 1689 and 1699.

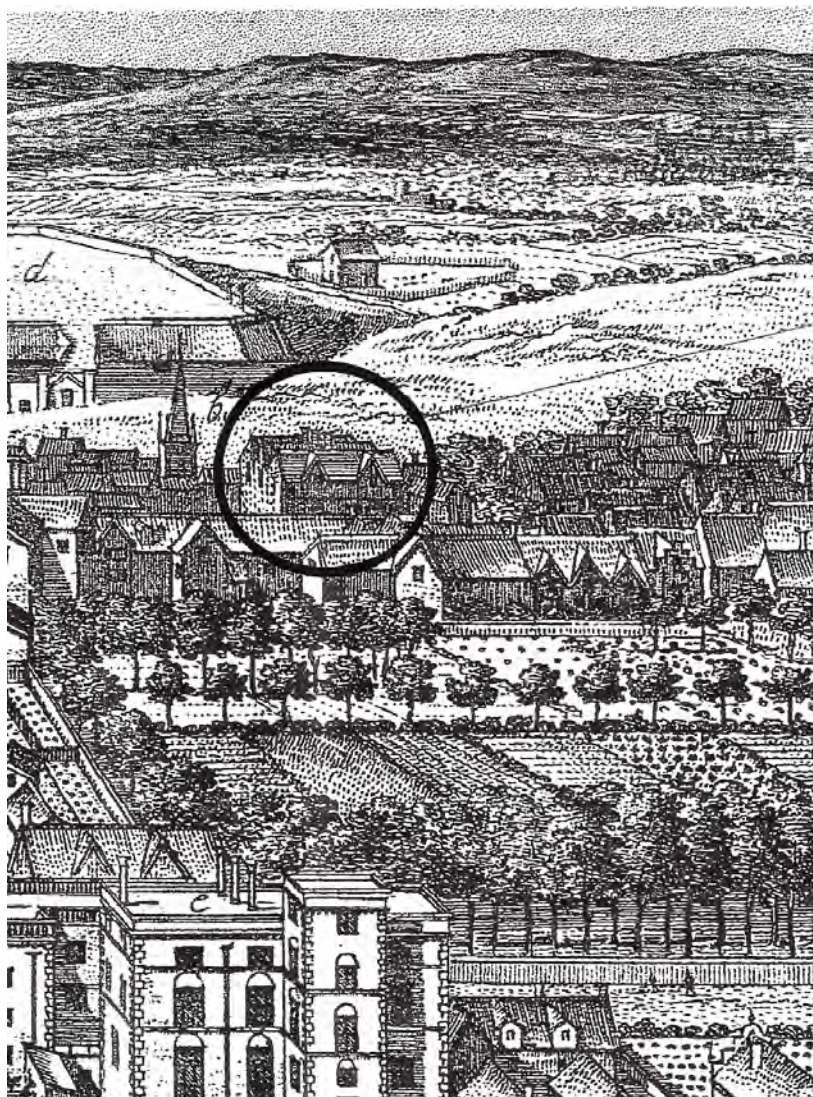


Fig. 23. Sherwin House. Detail from *The Prospect of Nottingham from ye East*. Kip & Knyff, drawn 1699, published 1707.

Badder & Peat's map of 1744 clearly shows Sherwin House sited at the corner of Pilchergate and St Mary Gate. The building has a narrow front yard to Pilchergate, a large garden to the west and north-west and a small courtyard and outbuilding to the north-east. It also shows the open 'paddock' on the other side of Pilchergate referred to by Bailey (fig. 25). The rectangular outline of Sherwin House corresponds exactly to the house illustrated by Kip & Knyff and Thomas Sandy as well as the surviving building at No. 41, Pilchergate. Smith & Wild's map of 1820 (Map 1.15) and Staveley & Wood's map of 1831 both show an addition to the north-east along St Mary's Gate. The fragmentary surviving Ratepayer's Returns for Nottingham record that in 1729 and 1736 John Sherwin's house was rateable at £20, this rose slightly to £25 in the 1759 and 1780 returns, reflecting the increased value of the property made by the alterations visible on these early nineteenth century

maps.

The Sherwin Family were prominent members of Nottingham society throughout the eighteenth century. According to Charles Deering Mr Sherwin owned the extensive orchards and two closes either side of Coal Pit Lane which he had inherited under a marriage settlement of 1726. By the 1780s John Sherwin was selling off this land for residential development. The land was divided up into small plots or strips which were then sold to developers like Thomas Woolridge, bricklayer, who purchased land in August 1785, which he had sold as 45 tenements by 1788. John Sherwin assisted many of these builders with mortgages, even purchasing finished houses from insolvent builders on occasion. The total receipts from the sale of the Cherry Orchard over nearly 20 years were between £2,000 and £2,500. John Sherwin is recorded as contributing 20 guineas to the building of the Grandstand in 1776 and £50 to the building of the Hospital in 1781. He is described as an attorney-at-law in Bailey's *Western & Midlands Directory* for 1783. According to Abigail Gawthern's Diary entry for March 1800,

John Sherwin Esq., died in Pilchergate, Mar 16, aged [ ]; he was buried at St Mary's the 24th; he has left his property to Mr John Longdon, his nephew, legacies to his Brother and two sisters.

John's brother was the Rev Mr Roby Sherwin, whose death is also recorded by Abigail in Feb 1802. Mr Longdon, who inherited Sherwin House, is referred to in 1807 as the 'High Sheriff, Mr Longdon of Bramcote', and the Longdons stayed with Abigail Gawthern at High Pavement on the night of Aug 25, 1806, something they would not have needed to have done if they were living in Pilchergate. This is also confirmed by John Blackner, who states that,

the ancient seat of the Sherwins, at the north-east end of Pilcher-gate, has long been admired for its commanding appearance: on its becoming the property of Mr Bigsby, attorney-at-law, who is a gentleman of taste and literature, he in 1807, expended a large sum of money in fitting it up anew in the inside, and in stuccoing it without.

Mr Longdon must therefore have sold the Pilchergate property to Mr Bigsby between 1800 and 1807. Bigsby's remodelling included the removal of the gables and the raising of the roof and the second floor, giving the house the general appearance it still retains today (fig. 29).

Staveley & Wood's map of 1831 shows that the garden or paddock opposite Sherwin House had been developed since 1820. Whist William Dearden's map of 1844 and the far more detailed map produced by Edward W Salmon in 1861 show that the gardens to the west of the house were replaced by a pair of houses fronting onto Pilchergate between 1831 and 1844. Later maps show that Pilchergate was widened between 1881 and 1886, and that, as a result, Sherwin House lost its narrow front yard with railings. It also lost its external steps, and consequently the front door was lowered and the steps transferred into the entrance hall. The two properties to the west were replaced by the present lace warehouse at the same time. Gaod's map of



1886 also shows that a new wing had been added filling in most of the rear courtyard of Sherwin House. It identifies the building as 'various lace warehouses' like almost all the buildings around it. Twentieth century photographs show that the four windows on the ground and first floors to the left of the main doorway were replaced with a single large window (fig. 26). This window was removed in the post-war period and the four sash windows reinstated.

No detailed views of Sherwin House exist before the twentieth century, but the three eighteenth century partial views, the maps and the surviving fabric plus contemporary examples allow us to reconstruct fairly accurately the original appearance of this building. The building was two stories high with three attic gables to the south front and two gables to the sides. The arrangement of five windows and three gables echoes the same composition seen at Mansfield House (see 2.4), though minus the ground floor. Though the straight gables, the brick hoods to the attic windows and the first floor brick band clearly delineated in Sandby's drawings suggest a building closer in detail to the Bluecoat Charity School at Weekday Cross built c.1723, without the niches on the first floor and with a single central doorway. Perhaps the building which compares most closely in architectural detail to Sherwin House was one which stood on Long Row, to the west of Sheep Lane, where Market Street is today.



Fig. 24. A house on Long Row on the corner of Sheep Lane c. 1860.

This very large brick house, recorded in a photograph taken c.1860 (fig. 24), shows all the same simple brick architectural decoration outlined in Sandby's drawings (figs 21 and 22). It is obviously wider, with six windows rather than five, and it is raised a further storey on a colonnade, but apart from this the building must once have looked remarkably similar to Sherwin House as built. Much of the same brick detailing can still be seen today on a smaller house at

the top of Castle Gate and on the Broomhouse Yard building, probably built c.1680. The latter building retains the type of cross-casement windows which were popular throughout the later seventeenth century. There is no knowing whether Sherwin House was built with these type of windows or whether, like the new wing at Pierrepont House, built at about the same time, it had the very latest type of sliding sash windows then being introduced from London.

The former gardens of Sherwin House are more difficult to visualise. Unfortunately we have no detailed contemporary topographical records, like those which survive for Pierrepont House (see 2.3) and Newdigate House (see 2.5). Instead we know from Baileys' Annals that it,

had in front [on the south side of street] a fine garden, afterwards made into a paddock, occupying all the ground between Halifax Lane and St Mary's Place, as far as the Theatre, as likewise another garden adjoining to the house [to the west].



Fig. 25. Badder & Peat's map of 1744. Detail showing Sherwin House on the north side of Pilcher Gate at the corner of St Mary's Gate, with its large rectangular garden on the south side of Pilcher Gate.

The existence of both these gardens is confirmed by Badder & Peat's map

(fig. 25) which shows a garden adjoining the house made up of a small rectangle, or parterre, to west of the house and a much larger rectangle to the north-west, there are also what appear to be raised terraces running along the north and west sides of this garden with a small rectangular structure at the north-west corner that could represent a small garden house. The outline of this garden and its relationship to the house is remarkably similar to the general disposition of the gardens at Newdigate House. The much larger garden at the front of the house, on the south side of Pilchergate, has a long rectangle on its north side possibly another terrace, with a large rectangular garden beyond bounded on the east side by a row of trees.

This once 'fine garden' as it is referred to by Bailey was presumably laid out when Sherwin House was built in the 1690s and it may well have been similar to the famous garden at Pierrepoint House with elaborate formal parterres surrounded by raised terrace walks (fig. 6). It was certainly amongst the largest gardens identifiable on Badder & Peat's map, only Thurland Hall, Pierrepoint House and Gregory House on Swine Gate had larger gardens. As we have seen it was common in Nottingham for townhouses to have detached gardens and vistas, but Sherwin House seems to have been unique in having both a garden adjoining the house and a detached garden over the road.

## 2.16. Sherwin House today

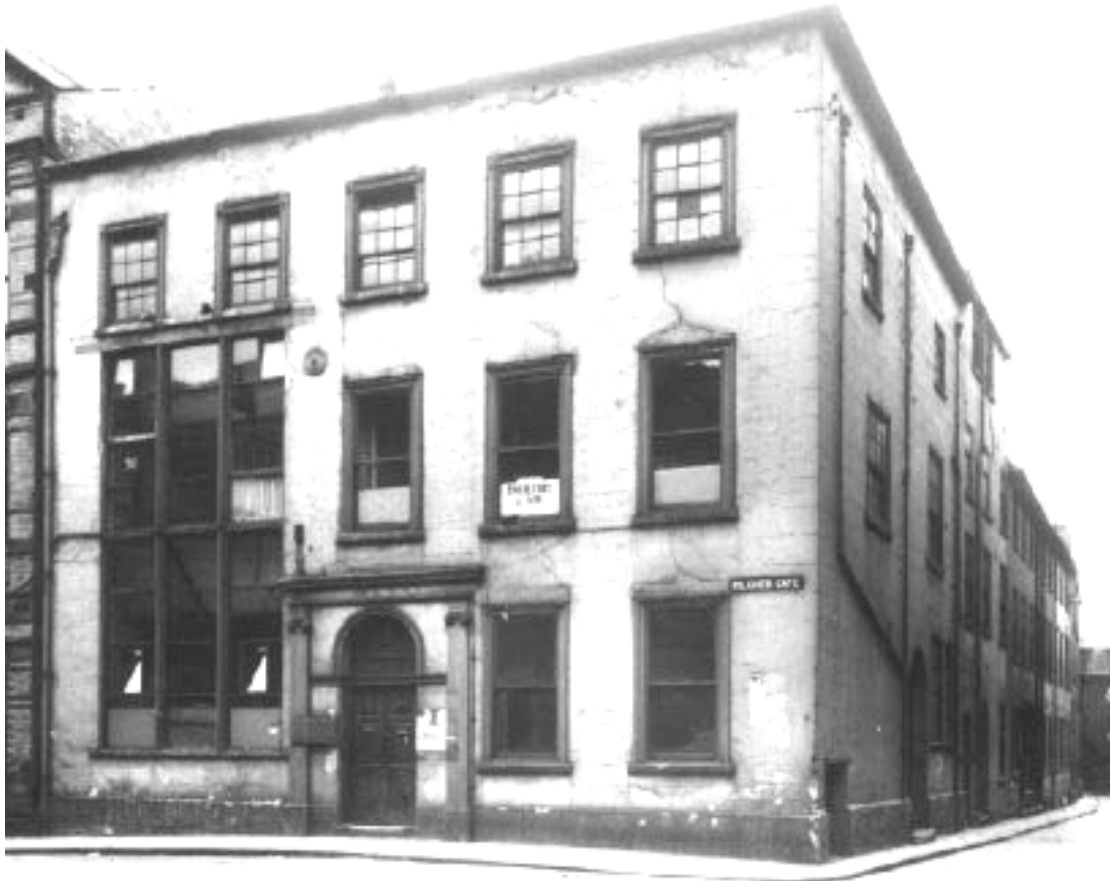


Fig. 26. Sherwin House, Pilchergate c.1920.

The surviving house (Map 1.15) consists of the main rectangular block of the original house built between 1689 and 1699, the mid-eighteenth century addition to the north-east and the Victorian lace warehouse addition to the rear. The street facades retain their painted stucco added in 1807 to disguise the top floor alterations, which included the removal of the original gables and the original roof. The main façade is three storeys high and five windows wide. It retains the Ionic pilasters of its original doorcase as altered in 1807. The windows retain their early nineteenth century glazing bar sashes on the top floor, though the remainder of the windows have later plate glass sashes. Those to the left were reinstated after the large showroom window, inserted here in the early twentieth century, was replaced (fig. 26). The former lintel to this window can still be seen below the present top floor windows (fig. 29).

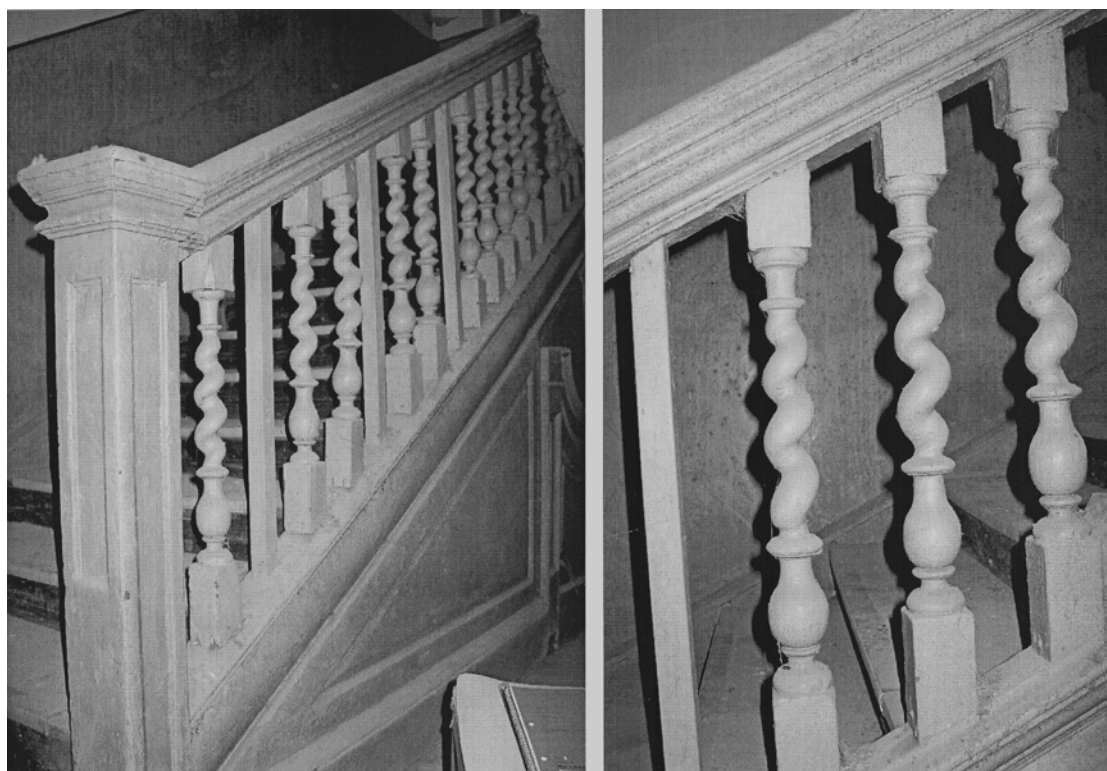


Fig. 27. Sherwin House, Pilchergate. The staircase. Pete Smith 2005.

The staircase (figs 27 and 28) consists of four broad flights which rise from the ground to the second floor, and it is large enough to stand comparison with those found in smaller country houses of this date. The stair has a continuous string and square panelled newel posts with twisted or 'barley sugar' turned balusters; a few of these have been lost and replaced with plain square balusters. No contemporary plasterwork survives on the ceiling or walls and the original window or windows on the north wall have been blocked. This is the earliest large scale staircase to survive in any of the larger Nottingham townhouses and the somewhat crude quality of the carving of this stair is absolutely consistent with its relatively early date. The staircase is markedly different from all the other surviving staircases in the townhouses discussed here in that it rises through two full floors, all the others only rise through a

single floor. It is therefore twice as large as any of the others, comprising four full flights rather than only two. It exemplifies the change from a single large staircase serving the whole house to the later arrangement of two staircases, a main staircase rising only to the first floor and a hidden secondary service staircase linking all the floors. This is indicative of a general social change in attitudes to servants and the usage of rooms within townhouses. Though in this particular case it may also be something to do with the fact that only from the top floor of Sherwin House would one have been able to see the view or vista south across the Trent valley so much remarked upon by contemporary visitors. The staircase is especially interesting in that it combines two different styles of staircase. Traditional early-seventeenth century staircases had an open well with flights around all four sides, each flight had a continuous string and square newel posts, whilst the balusters were usually square or flat. By the early-eighteenth century larger staircases had developed into two flight stairs with a single landing, instead of an open string and newel posts, each individual tread was carved and decorated, and the balusters were often elaborately turned and arranged per tread. The Sherwin House staircase combines the square newels and closed string of traditional staircase construction with the two flight arrangement and the elaborately turned balusters of the most up-to-date type of staircase. The rarity of this staircase was remarked upon by Harry Gill in 1912. He published an illustration of a small section of the staircase, commenting that it was 'of a different type' from all the others he had seen in Nottingham at that time. In fact this example of a transitional type staircase is unique in Nottingham and even nationally these type of staircases are very rare.

### **2.17. The importance of Sherwin House**

As we have seen, the timber and plaster buildings of the medieval town of Nottingham were largely replaced in brick from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Eventually making Nottingham a very desirable place to live and one which was much admired by all visitors to the town. Sherwin House is one of a small number of these buildings which were rebuilt as fine townhouses for the wealthy merchants and local gentry during the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century. Nottingham Castle (see **2.2**), Thurland Hall (see **2.1**) and even Pierrepont House (see **2.3**) are all too large to compare realistically with Sherwin House. The earliest townhouse to survive, which is comparable is Newdigate House, built c.1680 (see **2.4**), which survives largely unaltered externally, but which has lost all its original internal features and fittings. Sherwin House comes next, built between 1689 and 1699, then County House, built c.1730 (see **2.7**), both these houses were significantly altered in the early nineteenth century, though both still retain their original staircases. Then comes Willoughby House of 1738 (see **2.9**), altered internally c. 1790; Morley House of 1750 (see **2.10**) with some alteration 1854; Bromley House of 1752 (see **2.11**) converted internally in 1812 and with shops inserted c.1936; Stanford House of 1755 (see **2.14**), radically remodelled in 1775; Enfield House of c.1760 (see **2.12**) altered in the twentieth century and finally Launder House of 1765 (see **2.13**). These last three survive relatively well with many well preserved interior features, though Launder House is perhaps the most complete. Most of these houses survive well externally though their interiors have been somewhat altered. As is to be expected the later houses



tend to survive better than the earlier ones. Mansfield House, Newdigate House and Sherwin House, have all been either heavily altered or demolished. The mere fact that any of these important buildings survive at all makes them highly significant in the architectural history of Nottingham. But it is particularly the early ones, like Newdigate House and Sherwin House, examples of the first phase of the town's rebuilding pre-1700, which are by far the rarest and most precious.



Fig. 28. Sherwin House, Pilchergate. The staircase. Pete Smith 2005.

The importance of the original late-seventeenth century staircase which survives intact within Sherwin House cannot be underestimated (figs 27 and 28). It is by far the best preserved seventeenth century staircase to survive in any building in Nottingham, in fact it is almost certainly the only substantial staircase to survive in the town from any period prior to 1700. The staircase was the single most important internal feature in any townhouse and the staircase hall occupied the largest proportion of its volume. The survival of such a staircase must therefore add enormously to the architectural value of the building it occupies. The staircase was also the single most important element of a house provided by the joiner and it was often his one opportunity to show off his skills and his knowledge, for the design of a staircase would have been entrusted to the joiner, rather than the mason, bricklayer or architect who designed the house itself. The joiner responsible for this stair was a man interested in new ideas who was experimenting with the new designs arriving daily from the capital. He used turned balusters, a newly fashionable feature at that time, but he did not simply opt for the plain or bulbous balusters often employed, instead he uses the much more fashionable and complex twisted or 'barley sugar' balusters. These balusters are based on similarly twisted 'salamonic' columns which became briefly fashionable in the second half of the seventeenth century. The only columns

of this type known in the Nottingham area are those on the long demolished Howitt House, which stood on the south side of the Market Square, and it may well be that the joiner who designed the staircase at Sherwin House was inspired by this example. Wherever he got the idea the result is magnificent example of the joiner's art. Though the carving of this stair might seem unsophisticated by comparison with the elegant type of the staircase found in Launder House (fig. 19), this is possibly more to do with the material it is carved from, oak rather than foreign hardwood, rather than the skill of the craftsmen who made it. It must also be remembered that the staircase in Sherwin House has been subjected to tough warehouse usage for at least part of its life. Neither has it been restored recently, so it still retains the many layers of paint which have been applied to it in the past, and which undoubtedly now blur the quality and finish of its original carving.

### 3. Conclusion



Fig. 29. Sherwin House, Pilchergate. Pete Smith 2008.

It has to be admitted that the external appearance of Sherwin House, especially in its present neglected state (fig. 29), does not compare favourably with most of the other houses mentioned in this report. In fact it is probably its present neglected appearance more than anything which has allowed this house to go almost completely unrecognised for so long. Harry Gill in his seminal article published in the *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* in 1912, entitled 'Nottingham in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, especially with reference to Domestic Architecture', did recognise that No 41, Pilchergate was the important and imposing townhouse of the Sherwin family. But this information seems to have lain dormant within the pages of the local historical society's journal for the past 90 years. Now that the basic outline of this building's history has been

uncovered, it must once again be recognised for the important building that it undoubtedly was and still is. In a town often remarked upon by visitors for the quality and number of its large townhouses Sherwin House is singled out for special mention in all the important early histories of the town. It was obviously recognised by all these writers as making an important architectural statement, equivalent to any of the other houses mentioned in this report.

Like Plumtre House (see **2.6**) and Pierrepont House (see **2.3**), this house was sited in the heart of what was later to become the Lace Market, though unlike them this building was not demolished. The pressure to redevelop sites in this area in the nineteenth century was such that Sherwin House, the short row of terraced houses behind it and Turner House, No. 27, St Mary's Gate on the other side of St Mary's Gate were the only ones to survive, though all of them inevitably underwent conversion to lace warehousing. Most of the remaining houses in this report are sited along South Cliff or close to the castle where pressure for redevelopment was far less in the nineteenth century, the only two houses situated outside this area which have survived, Bromley House (see **2.11**) and Morley House (see **2.10**), were preserved by being taken into benign institutional usage. All this makes the survival of Sherwin House all the more remarkable and its preservation a matter of vital importance.

## Bibliography

Thomas Bailey, *Annals of Nottingham*, 1815.

John Beckett with Ken Brand, *Nottingham, An Illustrated History*, 1997.

John Blackner, *The History of Nottingham, Embracing its Antiquities, Trade, and Manufactures, From the Earliest Authentic Records, to the Present Period*, 1815.

Charles Deering, *Nottinghamia vetus et nova, or an Historical Account of the Ancient and Present State of the Town of Nottingham*, 1751.

P N Furbank, W R Owens and A J Coulson (eds), *Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 1991.

Duncan Gray, *Nottingham through 500 years, A History of Town Government*, 1960.

Adrian Henstock, *County House, High Pavement, Nottingham: A Georgian and Regency Town House*, Transactions of the Thoroton Society, Volume LXXVII, 1974.

Adrian Henstock (ed.), *The Diary of Abigail Gawthorn of Nottingham 1751-1810*, Thoroton Society Record Series Volume XXXIII, 1978-79.

Neville Hoskins *The Best House in Town*, in Rosalys Coope & Jane Corbett (eds), *Bromley House 1752-1991*, Nottingham Subscription Library, 1991.

Harry Gill, *Nottingham in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, especially with reference to Domestic Architecture*, Transactions of the Thoroton Society, 1912.

Christopher Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, 1947.

Nikolaus Pevsner, revised by Elizabeth Williamson (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), *The Buildings of England, Nottinghamshire*, 1979.

John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, *A Desk-based Archaeological Assessment of Willoughby House, 20-22 Low Pavement, Nottingham*, October 2003.

Howard Stutchbury, *The Architecture of Colen Campbell*, 1967.

Malcolm I Thomas, *Old Nottingham*, 1968.

Geoffrey Trease, *Nottingham, A Biography*, 1970.

W F Webster (ed.), *Nottinghamshire Hearth Tax, 1664: 1674*, Thoroton Society Record Series, Volume XXXVII, 1986-87.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NATIONAL  
MONUMENTS  
RECORD

***The National Monuments Record***  
*is the public archive of English Heritage.*  
*It contains all the information in this report – and more:*  
*original photographs, plans old and new,*  
*the results of all field surveys, indexes*  
*of archaeological sites and historical buildings,*  
*and complete coverage of England in*  
*air photography.*

World Wide Web: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>

National Monuments Record enquiries: telephone 01793 414600

National Monuments Record Centre, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive,  
Swindon SN2 2GZ



