



Doncaster and Its Environment

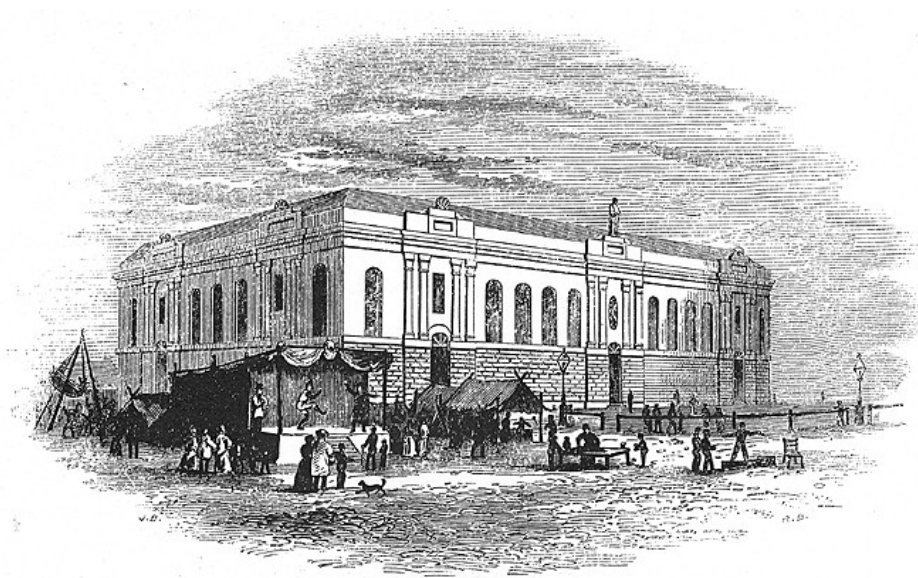
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John Butterfield

Doncaster Architects No 10

The Corporation Steward



The Market Hall



The Guildhall, Frenchgate *Image: Postcard by E L Scrivens*

John Butterfield 1800 -1875
Designer of some of the town's
most important buildings

Doncaster Architects

No 10: John Butterfield, the Corporation Steward

John Butterfield did not claim to be an architect but he did have a major impact on early Victorian Doncaster by designing the town's most important public buildings.

He was born in Horsforth near Leeds on 18th August 1800. His father, also called John, was a carpenter. By 1819 the family had moved to Doncaster but we know nothing more for nearly 20 years. By 1838 John Butterfield the younger seems to have been self-employed because he was asked by Doncaster Corporation in September of that year to value timber at Rossington for £60. In January 1839 he was described as a 'respected valuer of trees'. Only a few weeks later Butterfield became an employee of the Corporation when he was appointed to 'manage the estates and woods and to superintend the different works and workmen of the Corporation'. Shortly afterwards he was also appointed bailiff. Later he was referred to as the Steward as well as the Surveyor. In this article we will look only at his architectural work.

First Work

In 1840 the Corporation instructed that two cottages should be built at the brickyard at Sandall, one at each entrance, under John Butterfield's direction. It seems possible that he designed the cottages as his first work. (The site is now Sandall Park.)

The Markets and the Guildhall

In 1837 the Corporation decided that the market needed to be modernised. Improvements had been made piecemeal; trade was falling with the decline of the coaching trade and with no main line railway. Despite their concern it was not until 1840 that they had all the market and surrounding streets surveyed with a view to formulating an improvement plan. Various options were considered over the next few years. Then, in 1843, a decision was made to replace the open-air Corn Market. Local architects Hurst and Moffatt submitted plans for a new covered Corn Market but these were rejected. Instead, John Butterfield was asked to design it. The building was open on three sides with iron pillars supporting a glass and slate roof and was described as looking like a railway station. In 1845 the Corporation paid him £20 for a 'very able and efficient plan' and congratulated themselves that they had saved the cost of an architect. (The building was located near what was later the Irish Market.)



The new Market House or Market Hall as built in 1849

Plans now moved forward for the re-development of the rest of the market. The Corporation decided to erect a market hall for meat, poultry, butter, fish and vegetables. Apart from the clearance of most of the old market buildings it also involved the demolition of the Town Hall which had been in the Market Place for 300 years. Butterfield was instructed to prepare plans for the new market building and a new Town Hall. He visited markets in at least five other places including Newcastle, Liverpool and Birkenhead to 'ensure the best possible construction'.

The new market was described as being of rusticated ashlar stone, with each doorway being decorated with 4 pilasters and windows having circular heads. Inside, the stalls were arranged back to back to deter pick-pockets. The building, which opened in 1849, is still in use as our food market today, although it has lost some ornamentation including the figure of Ceres, a Roman goddess, which stood over an entrance until 1951.

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It was a fine neo-classical building with a portico *in antis* supported by four massive Corinthian columns and it was Butterfield's masterpiece.

For providing this building and the Market Hall he was given an increase in salary and a gratuity of 100 guineas. Gradually the Guildhall became more of a centre for law and order rather than a Town Hall.



The Guildhall, Frenchgate, Doncaster, 1847 (Courtesy of Heritage Doncaster)

This Grade 2 building was demolished in 1968 despite objections from the Victorian Society and this Trust who suggested the portico be retained. The Marks and Spencer's store now stands on the site.

Personal Life

In 1841 John Butterfield lived in Spring Gardens but he moved to the Horse Fair in the early 1850s and stayed there for the rest of his life. He lived with his mother until her death in 1855. He never married.

Other Buildings



In 1853 the Corporation re-built the Neatherd's House on Bawtry Road. They wanted it to be ornamental as it stood on the main road where everyone would see it. Butterfield designed it.

Later it became the club house for the Town Moor Golf Club. The building was demolished when the Dome was constructed.

Neatherd's House, Bawtry Road, Doncaster 1853 (E Braim)

John Butterfield designed an impressive double (and stone) fronted house in Regent Square in 1860.



This was for Charles Hatfield, who is remembered today as the author of 'Historical Notices of Doncaster'.

The house was originally called Hall Cross Villa. This later became Rockcliffe. Today it is still a private house and one of the finest in the Square.

Rockcliffe, Regent Square, Doncaster, 1860

Stocks's Charity had once owned almshouses on Factory Lane but these had been demolished by the Great Northern Railway in 1850 and the charity was in abeyance.

In 1860, Alderman John Hatfield, the Mayor, was keen to revive it. He worked with the Council and the Vicar to build some new almshouses at Holmes Market. The railway paid for four houses and the Mayor for two more. The latter were for 'the use of decayed servants of the corporation or their widows'. Butterfield designed the neo-Elizabethan almshouses. They were demolished for road widening in the 1960s.



Almshouses, Holmes Market, Doncaster 1860

A Return to the Market

By the 1860s the railways had increased trade at the Market dramatically. Corn, cattle and wool were coming from the east of town to supply the large towns to the west. For the Corporation, in 1862, John Butterfield designed the Wool Market with its cast iron columns and slate roof with glass rooflights. Inside it had sheep pens. It opened in 1868 and was extended in 1870.



It still stands today and its refurbishment is almost complete. Wool Market, Doncaster, 1868-70

However Butterfield's plans to modernise his Corn Market by extending it and enclosing it mainly in glass in 1861 did not go ahead.



As trade grew the Corporation discussed expanding the general market. In 1865 they proposed to build a south wing to the Market Hall to match the one on the north on a plan submitted by Butterfield earlier. In 1866 William Watkins of Lincoln won an architectural competition to design a new Corn Exchange, a new wing to the Market House, a vegetable market and a slaughterhouse. The new wing to the Market Hall, probably built in 1869, matched the original northern wing.

The carvings on the Corn Exchange include depictions of the Guildhall (top left) and Mansion House (top right). (Reproduced with the permission of Bob Speel)
The impressive Corn Exchange was built to replace Butterfield's now outdated Corn Market. It was started in 1870 and fitted in between the wings of the Market Hall. There are some detailed carvings on the façade of the Corn Exchange which includes a depiction of Butterfield's Guildhall.

The Mansion House

In January 1863 Butterfield was asked to prepare a plan for a 'passage from the Supper Room to the Drawing Room' at the Mansion House. Until then there had been only one route out of the Supper or Banqueting Room to the Ballroom and staircase. Butterfield was to provide an alternative. The plans were approved in August but they were far more than just a passage.

In fact a 'Balcony Room' was created overlooking the grand staircase. This was achieved by the removal of James Paine's original Venetian window with a replacement inserted further back in a newly created rear wall. The room is in a convincing Georgian style and integrates remarkably well with the rest of the Mansion House. (The window was replaced by the superb Peace Window in 1986).

The "Balcony Room" at Doncaster Mansion House, 1863 (Colin Barnes & Friends of Doncaster Mansion House)



The back of the building is also of some interest. Although it has since been partly altered, the structure was originally fully open on the ground floor, supported by four iron pillars, built in the manner of the Corn Market of 20 years earlier.

John Butterfield probably retired from many of his duties in late 1863. Thomas Anelay, who had been appointed as his deputy the year before, became Corporation Surveyor in December. Anelay may have been involved in the design of the Mansion House extension. Butterfield was now the Land Agent.

Another Project---The Cottages at Long Sandall



Two pairs of cottages at Long Sandall, 1869

In May 1868 the Corporation stated 'that four new cottages according to plans by Mr Butterfield and Mr Anelay be built at Sandall'. However only John Butterfield's name appears on the builder's contract dated 1st June 1869. They are his last known buildings still standing. They are quite distinctive with bargeboards and elaborate chimney stacks. In 1876 historian Charles Hatfield referred to the cottages 'as the ones put up by the late Steward who did things to a superlative degree'. They fell derelict in the late 20th century but were sold by the Council about 25 years ago and have since been restored.

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There may well be other work by Butterfield that I have not discovered. Also space precludes a discussion on the alterations he made to Belle Vue House (1856); 1, Priory Place (1859) and the Grandstand (1861).

John Butterfield may not be well known but the importance of his surviving buildings is recognised today as all are listed or in a conservation area.

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