



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Law and Government Buildings Selection Guide

Heritage Protection Department

March 2007

# Selection Guide

## Law and Government Buildings

### I INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

This Selection Guide covers town halls, law courts, police stations, fire stations and central government buildings, all of which were built in large numbers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the role of the state expanded. Many are architecturally ambitious and designed to project pride in public service provision. In their size and planning they reflect the growing complexity of public administration, and their ubiquity provides a constant reminder of the role of elected local authorities in the life of the nation. They can thus possess considerable community value. Sometimes they combined various purposes (law courts, assembly rooms, concert halls, administrative quarters), which enabled considerable resources to be devoted to their construction. Government ministries are few in number, but include some important public structures. Prisons are grouped here because of their obvious functional links with policing and the legal system.

Museums and public libraries are covered separately under the **Culture and Entertainment** selection guide.

### 2 SPECIAL CONSIDERATION WHEN CONSIDERING LAW AND GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

Because the building types covered in this Selection Guide so overtly aspire to project a social message, their architectural (including planning) qualities are generally the overriding considerations for designation. Such buildings are hierarchical, with some areas being accorded much more attention than others: principal public areas will be of particular importance when assessing buildings. Decorative or symbolic elements can sometimes be significant.

However, because of radical changes in the provision of these public services, original or early internal features are vulnerable and in some cases only rarely survive. Their significance should be carefully considered as part of the assessment. Adaptation is inevitable, given changing views on humanitarian issues and changing legislative backgrounds, so a degree of alteration is to be expected.

### 3 HISTORY AND SPECIAL INTEREST BY BUILDING TYPE

#### Town Halls

##### *History*

The town hall in the modern sense of the word is largely a creation of the nineteenth century. With the exception of London, no medieval English town possessed a town hall on the scale of those of Italy, the Low Countries or Northern Germany. English towns were small and often shared accommodation with guilds, law courts and, more frequently, markets. The classic form - a first-floor meeting room for town officials, raised on arcades, incorporating an open-sided market hall on the ground floor often on an island site - was remarkably long-lived (e.g., from Thaxted, Essex, 1390-1410, to Kingston-upon-Thames, 1838-40). Until the Municipal Corporations Reform Act (1835), boroughs (corporations) were private bodies that existed for the benefit of their members rather than the community at large. Their income was derived from property and levies on goods and transactions. Early modern examples such as Abingdon, Oxfordshire (by Christopher Kempster, 1678-80), reveal how medieval approaches were brought up to date and given appropriate quarters for the growing responsibilities carried out by local bodies.

During the eighteenth century increasing architectural elaboration was given to town and guildhalls, which closely reflected the growth in municipal self-awareness and urban identity. Local government, the administration of law, and the growing organisation of local society all combined to produce buildings of note, such as Worcester's Guildhall (Thomas White, 1721-23) or Shire Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (John Johnson, 1789-91). These became key features in the Georgian town.

The 1835 Act reformed the administration and accountability of 178 incorporated boroughs but did not touch many of the growing industrial towns that remained unincorporated. The impact of the Act was gradual. Legislation, especially from the 1870s, strengthened municipal powers and eased their ability to raise finance: by 1869 Manchester could afford to spend £1,000,000 on its town hall by Alfred Waterhouse. Public hall, council chamber and mayoral suite all required an appropriately grand access route; office accommodation might be tucked in around these spaces but required separate entrances and its circulation had to work efficiently. In smaller towns, the required functions might be distributed around a single building but in larger towns additions and extensions were often required, or even rebuilding on a bigger site. The expansion of civic responsibilities contributed to this development.

The role of the town hall changed markedly in the nineteenth century. At first it was primarily concerned with public events – large assembly rooms for civic occasions and concerts for large audiences, with a council chamber and mayor's suite, e.g., the grandiose classical temple of Birmingham (Hanson & Welch, 1831-5). The apogee of the early Victorian classical town hall, renowned for its complex multi-functional planning and architectural richness, was Liverpool's St Georges Hall (H.L. Elmes, from 1841). These new forms of civic monument reflected the emergence of new self-identities in economically vibrant cities: economic prosperity and municipal aggrandisement often went hand-in-hand. Whilst image and display remained important, municipal responsibilities proliferated too, and these had to be accommodated: whereas

a borough in 1840 may have had four departments, by 1902 it may well have had thirteen (including schools, housing, rates, highways, trading standards, hygiene, burials, building control) as the role of local government expanded. Scale inevitably increased too, resulting in the palatial municipal complexes of northern England such as Leeds Town Hall (Cuthbert Broderick, 1853-58). These are high points of Victorian public architecture.

London's fractured municipal structure resulted in numerous borough town halls; these increased in stature after 1900 and became more expressive of civic pride. Some were designed with great panache (e.g., Deptford Town Hall, Lewisham, 1901-05 by Lanchester, Stewart & Rickards). A London-wide authority was only established in 1889, and Ralph Knott's Thames-side County Hall (begun in 1912) appropriately reflected the weight of its responsibilities in its monumentality.

Mid twentieth-century municipal buildings could still be impressive in scale (e.g., Vincent Harris's Bristol Council House of 1935-52) and richly appointed in key areas, with mural painting and decorative sculpture playing significant roles. The narrative of historical development was important for civic identity. Post-war town halls could be traditional in style (such as Donald McMorrin's Devon County Hall of 1957-64); others, such as the North Lincolnshire Civic Centre at Scunthorpe (Charles B. Pearson & Son, 1960-62) were deliberately modern in their use of open planning, subtle spatial effects and interesting materials and artefacts.

In summary, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, municipal image equalled architectural grandeur; in the post-war period, town halls became less intimidating, accessible and low-key.

### ***Special Interest***

***Date*** Virtually all municipal buildings built before 1840 are already listed. From the middle years of the nineteenth century greater selectivity is required because of the greater numbers of survivors, but respect is accorded to all such buildings. It is important to know the principal dates of a given municipality's institutional development since powers were acquired accretively through individual Acts of Parliament. With inter- and post-war town halls, greater survival rates demand rigorous selection: architectural interest will be the principal determinant in assessing modern examples across the range.

***Civic identity*** Many new town halls were built in response to a change in civic status, a symbolic expression of an enhanced civic identity. Leeds Town Hall (as above), for instance, was rebuilt to support a campaign to be granted an assize, as well as to cater for the growing town. Young municipalities frequently built civic buildings early on, as an assertion of newly-won status (i.e., Dagenham Civic Centre, East London). This category of buildings often has strong meanings for residents; amalgamation of local authorities has rendered some of them superfluous to present need, however.

***Architectural and decorative treatment*** Because the projection of a confident municipal image was so important, the quality and finesse of architectural style is of great importance. The façade and the ceremonial spaces provided a canvas for decoration and adornment, often depicting notable local figures or making reference to the

historical associations of the town; these can often be major claims to special interest. Almost every major style was used, from Palladianism in the mid eighteenth century, via Neoclassicism, the Italianate manner, the Gothic Revival, Edwardian neo-Baroque, to Scandinavian- and Dutch- inspired Modernism of the inter-war years, right up to post-war diversity. Leading architects have been engaged on such buildings throughout.

**Setting and Civic groups** Town halls are often the most prominent civic buildings in town centres and have an important symbolic role. The northern and midland industrial towns are famous for their grand municipal buildings. Public monuments sometimes embellish spacious settings around the hall, and landscaping too can be of note. By grouping the town hall with other municipal buildings such as law courts, libraries, educational buildings and swimming baths, a powerful municipal complex might emerge, as in Croydon and East Ham and, most strikingly, at Southampton (E. Berry Webber, 1929-39). Group value can thus be a relevant consideration. Such complexes may sometimes be amenable to additional forms of area designation, and may lie within conservation areas.

**Planning** The planning of town halls was a challenge, given the increasingly complex functions that had to be accommodated within. How these buildings work can thus be crucial: Waterhouse's Manchester Town Hall was admired at the time as much for its ingenious plan as its striking massing and exterior. Birmingham Town Hall (1831-5) was immediately extended (1835-54), then superseded by the adjacent Council House (1874-9) which was itself enlarged (1884, 1906-19). Such evolution can add to the interest of a building.

**Post-war** In the post-war period the focus of planning shifted from the ceremonial aspect to public accessibility and the provision of office accommodation. But the town hall has remained a complex and prestigious building type, with high-quality decoration and internal finishes. Probably the best example is Newcastle upon Tyne Civic Centre (1956-63) by G. W. Kenyon. The neo-Georgian style remained popular but other buildings have adopted a more functional aesthetic, differing little in appearance from a prestigious corporate headquarters. Architectural quality is paramount.

## Government Buildings

### *History*

The origins of central government premises lie in the royal households. Bespoke quarters were only provided from the eighteenth century onwards: William Kent's Treasury Block on Horseguards Parade in Whitehall of 1733-37 is among the earliest. Most significant was Sir William Chambers's Somerset House, on the Strand: very much a product of the Enlightenment, it was begun in 1776 and consisted of a multi-functional quadrangle housing numerous government departments as well as learned societies. It can be seen as the earliest government office building (see also **Commercial** selection guide). Its combination of outward show and inward ingenuity of planning, combining opulent public spaces and more restrained working areas, set the tone for the subsequent development of the type. Government buildings were concentrated very much around one street in central London: Whitehall. Individual private houses were at first adapted for government use: from the late Georgian period onwards, specific

designs were produced to serve instead. The summit of public architecture in the mid nineteenth century was attained with the construction of the Palace of Westminster (Sir Charles Barry with A.W.N. Pugin, 1840-60). Sir George Gilbert Scott's Foreign Office (1862-75) embodied High Victorian confidence on a fittingly imperial scale, combining sophisticated planning with outward grandeur in a classical Renaissance manner. Later government buildings opted for a Baroque grandeur which conveyed the solemnity of public administration (a message sometimes underscored by allegorical sculpture). J.M. Brydon's New Government Offices on Whitehall (1899-1915) represents this trend. Monumental government buildings continued into the mid twentieth century: Vincent Harris's Ministry of Defence building (1939-59) marks the close of the tradition, and the erosion of the former emphasis on decoration and lavish public areas. More recent government buildings have been designed to a high specification by leading architects, such as Whitfield Partners' Richmond House (1983-86) and Sir Michael Hopkins' Portcullis House (1998-2001). Outside London, other government buildings tend to occupy speculative office premises.

### ***Special Interest***

Central government buildings are few in number and are judged on the basis of their architectural interest.

## **Law Courts**

### ***History***

The history of law court buildings is the history of increasingly complex legal processes requiring increasingly complex accommodation. Often, this took place alongside (or even within) municipal buildings. The architectural vocabulary of the court attempts to convey function combined with a sense of state authority and civic pride. The principal consideration in their layout is the separation of different, and sometimes opposing, categories of participants in the legal process. In criminal cases the dock, bench and jury box are at the heart of proceedings and dominate the space. In civil cases, where a just settlement rather than an assignment of guilt is the aim, the two opposing parties may each have a stand from which to put forward their evidence.

***Criminal courts*** Before the creation of the Crown Court in 1972, the majority of serious criminal cases was dealt with by Borough and County Quarter Sessions while the most serious offences were heard at the itinerant Assizes. The Assizes also sat as a civil court. Buildings that housed the Assizes would have one courtroom for criminal cases, the *Crown Court*, and another for civil cases, the *Nisi Prius* court. Originally, the Assizes were held in great halls in royal castles, while the Quarter Sessions were usually held in town halls, the only buildings with a large room capable of housing courts where more than one case might be held at the same time. As the room also had to perform a variety of functions, the furnishings of the court were portable. By the eighteenth century a new type of building evolved with courtrooms attached to a large hall. This allowed the twin functions that had previously been exercised in a single hall to be conducted separately, with courtrooms situated behind an entrance hall (as at Worcester Guildhall 1721-24, the earliest of this new type of building) or at either end (as in John Carr's York Assize Courts, 1773-77).

Planning became increasingly complex during the nineteenth century. The formalisation of legal processes led to the fixing of courtroom furniture to create a permanent space for trials. The separation of the courthouse users may begin at the boundary of the law court site, or once inside the main entrance. The courtroom, at the heart of the courthouse, is where each circulation route converges, each participant arriving from the section of the building they are permitted to occupy. Assize courtrooms were designed to accommodate large numbers of participants, each category in their own, pew-like, wooden seating areas. Seating usually faced the raised bench or was at ninety degrees to it, though in some courts a curved arrangement was employed. The double-height of courtrooms allowed for rear and side galleries and enabled the courtrooms to be lit from above and by lights high in exterior walls. Criminal courts had a central dock connected to the cells below. Civil courts had a pair of opposing stands for the plaintiff and defendant and were characterised by quite complex circulation patterns: sometimes there were three separate entrances and suites for judge, officials and public.

The modernisation of local government provided opportunities to combine civic and court accommodation. This might result in a single court, such as at St Albans (1826-31) or a number of courtrooms and ancillary accommodation around a central, multi-functional hall as at Leeds Town Hall (1853-58). Purpose-built Assize and Quarter Sessions courthouses, with little or no local government function, became more common from the nineteenth century. The largest, such as Birmingham's Victoria Law Courts (1887-91), also included Petty Sessions Courts and a Coroner's Court. Changes in legislation, responsibility for court design or social attitudes manifested itself in the appearance of the buildings. County courts under surveyors (1846-70) tended to be Italianate, whereas towards the end of the century, Gothic Revival was more generally favoured. This change in style was paralleled by the move from classical to Gothic detailing in Assize Courts.

The Courts Act of 1971 abolished the Assizes and the Quarter Sessions and replaced them with the Crown Court. Former Assize and Quarter Sessions Court buildings became Crown Courts, Magistrates' Courts, or were made redundant. The earliest dedicated Crown Courts did not open until the early 1980s.

**Summary Justice (Magistrates' Court)** Prior to the establishment of the Magistrates' Court in 1949, summary criminal courts were known as Police Courts or Petty Sessions Courts. The modern magistrate has evolved from the medieval Justice of the Peace. The role of justices originally included some local government administration as well as criminal and civil law responsibilities. Formally, Justices of the Peace held local 'Petty Sessions' in whatever appropriate accommodation was to hand, including their own homes, town halls, inns or workhouses. Existing rooms in inns were fitted up for the sessions with moveable furniture and in some cases rooms were built for the express purpose of holding Petty Sessions. A rare survival is the Black Bull Inn in Birstall (W. Yorks.) which has a first-floor former courtroom containing panelled boxes for the magistrate and defendant, decorated with symbolic paintings. Petty Sessions continued to be held in inns until around the 1880s.

Increasingly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, JPs came to share accommodation with the police, establishing a distinct building type (see Police Stations below), but the 1949 Justices of the Peace Act separated summary justice from policing.

Consequently, the Magistrates' Court became a distinct civic building type in its own right even where it continued to share the same site as the police station. The Chesterfield Court House (1963-65, by J.S. Allen and Roy Keenleyside) shows the type at its most imaginative.

## Civil Courts

**County Courts** were established in 1846 to provide a unified national system for small debt recovery at local courthouses or other buildings. Earlier types of court, such as the Courts of Request or Courts of Conscience, of which there were several hundred all over the country, did not have a uniform constitution and jurisdiction. Surviving purpose-built Courts of Requests are extremely rare. The best example is in Queen Street, Huddersfield. From 1846 until their abolition in 1870, responsibility for county court design lay with the Surveyor of County Courts. Thereafter, responsibility passed to HM Office of Works.

**Coroners' Courts.** Before the late nineteenth century, coroners' inquests were held in a variety of buildings, including town and vestry halls, Magistrates' Courts, Poor-Law institutions and public houses. The main requirement was for a room of adequate size that could be available at short notice. The Coroner's Act of 1887 established the duties of the modern coroner, which are primarily to investigate the cause and circumstances of deaths and new Coroners' Courts were designed specifically for the holding of such inquests.

Coroner's courts reflected changing sensibilities towards the dead. Because both coroner and jury had to view the body before an inquest, it was desirable that a court should be close to a mortuary and, after 1866, the latter were adapted to serve as places where bodies could be kept before inquests and post-mortems were held and in the 1890s and 1900s were commonly situated to the rear of the court. During the twentieth century the need to view the body was reduced and therefore Coroners' Courts could be included in general municipal buildings.

### **Special interest**

**Fixtures** Early courtroom furniture was moveable so that the space could be used for a variety of functions. Courtrooms with significant surviving furnishings are significant; without their courtroom furniture, law court buildings lose much of their historic significance and greater emphasis has to be placed on other factors.

**Architectural quality** Because of the importance attached by government to the legal process, courts throughout the nineteenth century were designed to instil awe and reverence and are comparable in terms of pretension to contemporary town halls. Again, as with town halls, it was only in the later twentieth century that courts were designed to be less intimidating. Architectural impact is thus a key consideration.

**Planning** The planning ingenuity required, especially in large and complex courts, should be a consideration when assessing courts for listing.

## Police Stations

Police stations are predominately an urban building type, often endowed with dignity, which make a strong townscape contribution. Frequently combined with other public buildings, they usually occupy prominent positions in the high street.

### *History*

London blazed the trail in the provision of police forces and the standard of accommodation. The modern police force was created with the 1829 Metropolitan Police Act, which established a 1,000-strong force organized along military lines, responsible, as today, to the Home Office. The structure comprised a hierarchy of rank with chief inspectors, sergeants and constables. The new headquarters for this revamped and established force was Whitehall Place, adjacent to Scotland Yard. Operating initially from converted private houses, it was not until 1842 that a department was set up whose sole function was the design, erection and maintenance of purpose-built police buildings for the Metropolitan Police.

Early police stations were domestic in character, usually Gothic in style, and rather like contemporary parish vicarages. After 1846, the new Surveyor of County Courts (Charles Reeves) assumed responsibility for the design and erection of purpose-built County Courts and police stations (see Courts above) and adopted the distinctive Italianate design that characterised both building types during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Police stations had four main elements: the administrative block to the front, a cell block, police accommodation, and a drill yard. Inside, features included an enquiry counter where the public would speak to a duty officer, and separate rooms (such as an interview room, a superintendent's room and, from 1880, a medical room). These were linked by a corridor to a number of cells. Also provided, either in the same building or in a separate block, were rooms for use by the constables: a day room, mess room, kitchen, and boot room, and sometimes a house for the inspector. Above the station or in a separate block there would usually be rooms for around ten men, with shared baths and toilets, library and recreation room, uniform room, and drying room. After c.1880, with an increasing number of officers, accommodation was kept separate from the station, in a new building type, the section house. These could be tall buildings – often up to six storeys high – and contained dormitories for single men alongside other facilities. Other features to look for include an exercise yard, drill yard, stables and kennels, perhaps a mortuary and, increasingly, space for the police motor vehicles, along with associated boundary walls, gates, railings and fixed furniture like the famous blue Windsor lanterns introduced in 1861.

Following widespread civil unrest in the 1880s, the government invested in more stations and section houses. Under the influence of Richard Norman Shaw, the Queen Anne style – most highly developed at the Metropolitan Police headquarters at New Scotland Yard (1894-6) – was widely adopted, combining civilised domesticity with impregnable corner towers (set on a base of granite dug by Dartmoor convicts). In London 350 stations and magistrates' courts were built between 1842 and 1900 – almost as many as the rest of the country put together, creating an exceptional heritage of the architecture of law and order in the capital.

Victorian and Edwardian police stations outside London were generally designed by the architects responsible for municipal buildings. The requirements for accommodation were broadly similar but the range of styles adopted tended to be wider: some, especially in rural locations, were sensitive to local vernacular traditions. Major divisional headquarters for the police were usually designed as part of a civic complex that included courts, a weights and measures office or a fire station. This led to complex and ingenious designs often wrapped up in grand Baroque elevations (see Courts above). The twentieth century favoured more restrained styles - Neo-Georgian, with occasional flourishes of Dutch expressionist outlines and ornamental brickwork - but planning remained complex and, if anything, became more sophisticated as municipal and civic functions were combined as is the case, e.g., at Withington in Manchester, a Neo-Georgian group comprising police station, fire station and flats for all the men, comparable to and generally of a better standard than contemporary local authority housing.

A programme of modernisation and expansion took place in the 1950s; this led to alterations to the older stations. Strict national regulations gave little room for architectural experiment or advance although much ingenuity could be spent on resolving the planning problems usually behind a traditional elevation. Many headquarters police buildings of the 1950s were designed by the county architect as a part of the civic centre of the town, sometimes – as at Hull - setting the standard for the buildings that followed. London police stations adopted a more modernistic idiom, a fashion that spread to other authorities in the 1960s. But by and large, stations of the 1960s, with notable exceptions such as McMorran and Whitby's police station in Wood Street, City of London, were hardly distinguishable from the 1960s commercial office block, and very little indeed is listed from recent decades. The notion of the inherent architectural 'message' of dignity, solidity, and security; of form reflecting functions; and of regional distinctiveness in style, had all but disappeared.

### ***Special interest***

***Selectivity*** Because there are so many police stations surviving, with many of them designed to a standardised formula, selection is necessary.

***Architectural Quality*** Careful design, considered details, good quality materials and craftsmanship, e.g., rubbed and moulded brickwork, carved or dressed stonework, fine ironwork, lanterns, etc. will be important factors.

***Categories of Police Stations*** A divisional headquarters, or a station designed as part of a court complex, or one that is complete with cells, police accommodation and stables (the latter being particularly rare), is likely to be of more architectural and historic interest.

***Date*** Relatively early dates for police stations (depending in the location and sort of station) may be significant.

***Planning*** A legible plan form is an important consideration together with the survival of internal features or specialised buildings; some alteration is to be expected however.

## Prisons

Prisons are a particularly sensitive building type, being built to incarcerate people and remove them from society. They can have outward interest, in that architectural efforts were made to project messages of the solemnity of law and punishment. Internally they display considered planning which reflects changing attitudes to the treatment of the prisoner. Virtually all have undergone radical change, for instance as policies have altered, and as efforts have been made to make room for rising prison populations. Conservation can be reconciled with humanitarian considerations, however, and the identification of those buildings of special interest is important.

### *History*

Before the 1770s imprisonment was not the standard punishment, prisons usually being places of detention prior to some form of corporal or capital punishment being carried out. Any secure building might be used. In 1698 Justices of the Peace (JPs) were given additional responsibility for building or repairing county gaols, but only at York was a new prison built, in 1701-5. Larger pre-1770s purpose-built prisons were rare and should have been recognised already through designation. Like hospitals, their architecture was modelled on fashionable large houses. Cells were rare before John Howard's reforms (see below) and were often restricted to prisoners awaiting execution. Serious offenders might face transportation, initially to America, and later, to Australia. In villages single cell lock ups were provided to hold inebriates and other miscreants overnight. These can be as simple as a sturdy timber or stone box, but some are larger and more elaborate.

***Later Georgian prisons*** John Howard in the 1770s was the first to systematically document prison conditions, to propose a solution, and to use his political skills to achieve reforms. Under his influence many prisons were rebuilt and prison conditions were significantly improved. At the heart of Howard's system was the need to separate different categories of offender who would spend the days working together but who at night would sleep in small, single cells. As well as cell blocks, new prisons would include an infirmary and a chapel, two essentials if prisoners were to be reformed and cared for. The earliest prisons where his system can be seen are at HMP Stafford and Littledean Gaol (Glos.) in the second half of the 1780s, designed by Howard's associate William Blackburn. These pioneered a detached radial plan that became the dominant (but never the exclusive) form in the early nineteenth century. In this arrangement, a central block enabled guards to supervise prisoners in the yards rather than in the cell blocks, which was both more humane and more effective. The largest prison of this type was at Maidstone (Kent) by Daniel Asher Alexander: this survives in part, with a fittingly stern exterior. By the 1820s prisons were facing a crisis. Classification schemes (and the need for greater segregation) had become complex, and crime rates caused growing concern: the reforming penal system with its notion of useful labour was evidently not reducing levels of re-offending. Consequently, punitive regimes were beefed up (such as the treadmill, or cellular hand-crank); some vestiges of these survive, but are rare: plan form analysis can provide the evidence.

***Victorian prisons*** Central government played an increasingly important role in prison design, which had hitherto been largely left to county authorities to administer. Various harsh regimes were experimented with, including the 'separate system' that combined

both silence and separation. This was first enforced in a purpose-built prison that became the model for prison discipline and design: Pentonville, designed by Col. Joshua Jebb for the Home Office (1840-2). It had a radial plan with four cell blocks around a central hall. The wings had three stories with cells on either side of an open central corridor, the upper tiers of cells being reached from galleries. Individual cells contained all the necessities of prison life but evidence for these has largely disappeared. It became the model for prisons until supplanted by Wormwood Scrubs in the 1870s, with its separate wings. By 1850 around sixty British prisons had been rebuilt or were being altered to conform to the separate system, and between 1842 and 1877 nineteen radial prisons were erected in England. In addition to new prisons, Pentonville-style wings were added to some prisons, while at others the existing buildings were altered or progressively rebuilt.

By the second half of the nineteenth century specialised buildings were being built alongside the cell blocks: infirmaries, and a reception block for new inmates with a store for their property. There were also kitchens, workshops and a laundry, often beside the female wing. Prison governors were accommodated in purpose-built houses close to the prison. With the decline in transportation during the 1850s and 1860s a new generation of prisons was built.

**1877-1940** The Prison Act 1877 placed prisons under the control a central Prison Commission and by 1878 the number of prisons had been reduced from 113 to 69 as small, unsuitable, prisons were closed. The Commission's first chairman, Edmund du Cane, designed Wormwood Scrubs (1874-91): with its four parallel cellblocks linked at their centre by covered walkways oriented so that all cells received some sunlight during the day, it became the model for many new prisons between the 1880s and the 1950s. Regimes re-focused on rehabilitation in the 1890s and prisoners were taught trades and worked together, sometimes in purpose-built workshops. The twentieth century saw the introduction of more specialised prisons, including those for women and juveniles: a reformatory for young adults was established in the Borstal convict prison at Rochester (Kent) from 1902. Experimental open prisons were introduced during the 1930s, with compounds of huts and outdoor work taking the place of incarceration in secure permanent buildings.

By the end of the 1950s penal reformers and architectural writers were denouncing the latest prisons as being old-fashioned. In 1959 a scheme for a new type of prison was developed which lay greater emphasis on association, classrooms, gyms and other facilities. HMP Blundeston (Suffolk), the first of these so-called 'New Wave' prisons, was opened in July 1963, and this became the dominant architectural form employed in the 1960s prisons. More recent developments, probably inspired by 'New Generation' American prisons, developed informal campus layouts.

### ***Special interest***

**Planning** Prisons reflect changing attitudes. Some regimes sought to punish, others to reform; more recently, removal from society and physical containment has been the principal end. It is important when assessing prison buildings to identify the type of penal system that was being enforced and to recognise how buildings were adapted as later regimes were employed. It is also important to be aware that although the gatehouse is often the only building with overt architectural ambition, any more utilitarian building on

the site may be of equal significance. By the nineteenth century prisons consisted not only of a gatehouse and cell blocks but also workshops, infirmaries, reception buildings and staff housing. These are now sometimes rare.

**Alteration** Older prisons will have undergone extensive alteration, and little remains from pre-Victorian times; partial survivals will still be of interest. While completeness is a significant factor for later prisons, working prisons have inevitably changed to maintain security to accommodate new regimes. For instance, at most prisons the original cell windows have had to be replaced and slate roof coverings have been replaced by similarly-coloured sheet steel on security grounds. Similarly, internally some cells will probably have been subdivided and walls breached to provide in-cell sanitation. Recent pressure on prisons due to rising populations and the desire to improve conditions constantly requires the removal of old buildings and features: this can be managed through the Listed Building Consent process.

**Adapted buildings** While most current prisons were purpose-built, a significant number were built as country houses (such as Hewell Grange, Worcs., an 1880s house by G.F. Bodley); others originated as military camps, as workhouses or as an orphanage. These may merit consideration as prisons, but would need to be assessed more in terms of the original function they were intended to fulfil.

## Fire Stations

### *History*

Although some local communities were providing fire-fighting equipment in the early seventeenth century, the oldest listed fire stations and fire engine houses date to the late eighteenth and are extremely rare. The Great Fire of London in 1666 spurred insurance companies and some municipalities into action and led to a system whereby insured properties were given a badge or fire mark, a system ended by legislation only in 1938. Fire marks can still be found on buildings today. A Fire Establishment was created in Brighton in 1831, and in 1833 the insurance company brigades in London came together under the title of the London Fire Engine Establishment, operating from thirteen stations. A city fire brigade was formed in Liverpool in 1834 and in 1836 this became part of the newly formed City Police Force.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act of 1865 brought the control of the London Fire Engine Establishment under the Metropolitan Board of Works; significantly it was publicly funded. This reorganisation led to an increase in the number of fire stations in the capital. In 1889 the control of fire fighting in London was taken over by the newly-formed London County Council and in 1904 the Establishment was renamed the London Fire Brigade (LFB). Elsewhere, brigades were organised by the police, insurance companies, a variety of businesses, and private individuals.

In the second half of the nineteenth century purpose-built fire stations began to appear all over the country, usually around the time of the formation of local brigades. Purpose-built fire stations are generally divided into distinct areas, one for appliances and one for staff. The fire-fighting vehicle was kept in an engine shed or engine house, which might accommodate one or more appliances, accessed by large doors opening onto an adjacent highway. Where the building was erected on a restricted site it was

common for multiple storeys of offices and accommodation to sit above the engine sheds: look-out towers were incorporated into early designs, so height could be a consideration. Historic and modern fire stations may contain offices, a kitchen, a recreation room and a dormitory for watches on night shift. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was common for staff to live in the fire station or in adjacent housing supplied for this purpose, as at Birmingham's large 1930s central fire station. To the rear of the fire station, there may be a yard for drill and for cleaning appliances and equipment. There may also be a workshop and training buildings such as towers and mock houses, and hose-drying towers.

The introduction of motorised fire engines c.1905 had a major impact. Mechanisation resulted in widespread closures and, consequently, many earlier stations survive in other uses. Locations shifted from town centres, where they had traditionally been sited, to new developments, sometimes green-field sites, to take into account changing road layouts and population distribution, and the siting of potentially hazardous sites such as industrial estates.

The Fire Brigades Act 1938 made it compulsory for local authorities to provide adequate fire services. In 1941 the Government created the National Fire Service to unify fire fighting throughout the country, leading to new national standards and greater compatibility in equipment. In 1948 fire-fighting services were returned to local authority control and 148 borough and county council-run fire brigades were established. Most working stations today date from after the introduction of this legislation, and fire station provision continues to reflect changes in local government organisation.

### ***Special interest***

***Alteration*** Although the vast majority of fire stations in use today were constructed after World War II, some pre-war and even late nineteenth-century fire stations are still in use. However, few, if any of these, have remained unaltered: fire engines have got larger, requiring wider openings, for example.

***Architecture*** The architectural forms and styles employed in fire station architecture generally reflect the fashion of the time for public buildings. Victorian picturesque eclecticism gave way to Neo-Georgian and mildly Moderne designs (as at Bath) between the wars. Occasionally distinct iconography exists, as at Rochdale Town Hall (1866-71), where images of a phoenix and a salamander (which was impervious to fire) are featured on corbels. Elsewhere, fire services and authority coats of arms may also be present on the exterior of fire stations.

***Date*** Given their extreme scarcity, any documented examples of fire engine houses which survive from before the great age of fire station construction in the 1860s are likely to be of special interest, humble as they may be.

***Group interest*** Purpose-built fire stations may also be part of multi-functional civic complexes, which may reinforce the claims to special interest.

## 4 SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Town Halls

- Borsay, P., *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (1991)
- Cunningham, C., *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls* (1981)
- English Heritage, *London's Town Halls: The Architecture of Local Government from 1840 to the Present* (1991)
- Girouard, M., *The English Town: A History of Urban Life* (1990)
- Smith, J., *London's Town Halls* (1999)
- Tittler, R., *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community c.1500-1640* (1991)

### Courts

- Brodie, A., Winter, G. and Porter, S., *The Law Court 1800-2000: Developments in Form and Function* (A report for English Heritage, the Court Service and the Lord Chancellor's Department, 2000)
- Graham, C., *Ordering Law: The Architectural and Social History of the English Law Court to 1914* (2003)
- Pollard, R., *Silence in Court: The Future of the UK's Historic Law Courts* (2004)

### Police Stations

- Ascoli, D., *The Queens Peace* (1979)
- Browne, D.G., *The Rise of Scotland Yard* (1956)
- Critchley, T., *The History of the Police in England and Wales* (1979)
- Saint, A., *Richard Norman Shaw* (1976)

No single study of police station architecture has yet been published. The most useful official records are at the National Archives at Kew. MEPO 9 includes plans of police stations no longer in use; MEPO 13 contains photographs. Some police stations were published in *The Builder*; *Architect and Building News*; *Architectural Review*; *Architects' Journal*.

### Prisons

- Brodie, A., Croom, J., and Davies J.O., *Behind Bars: The Hidden Architecture of English Prisons* (2000)
- Brodie, A., Croom, J., and Davies J.O., *English Prisons: An Architectural History* (2002)
- Evans, R., *The Fabrication of Virtue* (1982)
- Fairweather, L. and McConville, S., (eds.), *Prison Architecture* (2000)
- Johnston, N., *A History of Prison Architecture* (2000)
- Morris, N. and Rothman, D.J., *The Oxford History of the Prison* (1995)

### Fire Stations

- Saint, A. *The Architecture of the London Fire Brigade* (unpublished paper, RIBA exhibition, 1981)

### Web sites:

- <http://www.fireservice.co.uk/history/index.php>
- [http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about\\_us/our\\_history/our\\_history.asp](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about_us/our_history/our_history.asp)

