

HEREFORD ASSIZES WHERE ARE THEY???

The county assizes are held here, likewise the petty sessions for the hundred of Grimsworth every Saturday ; and, under certain restrictions, those of Oyer and Terminer for the whole of South Wales. The old town and shire-hall, erected in the reign of James I., is a large edifice of timber and brick, supported on twenty- seven pillars of solid oak : it formerly contained an upper story, in which were chambers for the fourteen different trading companies of the city, but has been much reduced in height and beauty, and, though formerly appropriated, by consent of the corporation, as proprietors of it, to the courts of assize, session, and public meetings for the county, was surrendered to that body in 1817.

The new shire-hall was erected by act of parliament passed in the 55th of George III., authorising a sum not exceeding £30,000 to be raised, for the purpose of building courts of justice, county hall, &c., together with a depot for arms and military clothing, including the purchase of an appropriate site ; also a further sum of £3150, to purchase a house for the accommodation of the judges. This edifice has been completed from a design by Mr. Smirke : the portico in front is a fine specimen of Grecian Doric architecture, copied from the Temple of Theseus at Athens : a subterraneous passage, through which prisoners are brought to the bar, leads to the Crown court, from an apartment beneath the grand jury room, in which they are kept during the trials : the hall is decorated with portraits of George III. and the late Duke of Norfolk, and here the quarter sessions, county meetings, and the triennial musical festivals, are held.

The city gaol is an ancient building, the original part containing seven cells for felons, and three sleeping-rooms for debtors ; to which an addition has recently been made, comprising four cells for males, and three for females, with spacious airing-yards. The county gaol was erected in 1798, upon Mr. Howard's plan, and occupies the site of St. Guthlac's priory, at the foot of Aylestone hill, being enclosed by a brick wall : the entrance, over which is the place of execution, is ornamented with Tuscan pillars : the prison contains appropriate apartments for the classification of prisoners of both sexes, with day-rooms, courtyard, inspection- room, a newly-built penitentiary, infirmary, chapel, work-rooms, a room for the meeting of the county magistrates, and apartments for the gaoler and his family : the inspecting-room is about eighteen yards in diameter, nearly circular, and having six windows, which open into each court : the total expense of erecting it was £22,461. 7. S., and the annual expenditure of the establishment is estimated at from £2000 to £3000. The elective franchise was conferred in the 23d of Edward I., since which time the city has regularly returned two members to parliament : the right of election is vested in the freemen generally, nearly one thousand in number : the mayor is the returning officer.

1815 and 1816

An Act for erecting a **Shire Hall**, Courts of Justice and other Buildings, for Public Purposes; and for providing suitable Accommodations for His Majesty's Justices of Assize, in and for the County of *Hereford*.
[23d March 1815.]

• **W**HEREAS the **Shire Hall** for the County of *Hereford* is locally situate within the City of *Hereford*, in the same County; and the **Assizes** and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, and the County Courts and other Courts of and for the said County have been there holden; and the said **Shire Hall** is also the accustomed Place for electing Knights of the Shire, and for holding the other Public Meetings of the said County of *Hereford*: And Whereas at the **Assizes** and General Gaol Delivery holden in and for the said County of *Hereford*, on *Monday* the Eighth Day of *August* One thousand eight hundred and fourteen, it was presented by the Grand Jury of and for the County of *Hereford*, that the **Shire Hall** for the said County of *Hereford* is a very inconvenient Building, and ill adapted for the Administration of Justice; and that the said **Shire Hall** is much out of Repair and in Decay, and insufficient and unfit for the Public Purposes to which the same hath been and ought to be applied, and the Scite thereof, being surrounded by a Public Street in the City of *Hereford*, is too limited and confined to admit of Enlargement, or of any adequate Alteration or Improvement in the present Building, without creating great Inconvenience by obstructing the Highway and Passage in the said Street: And Whereas it is expedient to erect new Courts of Justice, with suitable Conveniences, wherein to hold the **Assizes** and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, and the County Courts and other Courts for the said County of *Hereford*, and to transact other Judicial Business; and also to erect a new **Shire Hall** for the County of *Hereford*, and other proper Buildings for the Purposes of such County: And Whereas a new Gaol for the said County of *Hereford*, was some time since erected; and the Scite or Ground whereupon the old Gaol for the said County formerly stood, and the Buildings and Materials thereupon still remain un sold and undisposed of; and the same Scite or Ground is situate in the said City of *Hereford*, lying in Front next to *Saint Owen Street*, in the Parish of *Saint Peter*, in the said City, and being at a short Distance from the present **Shire Hall**, is well calculated for such new Erections, with Accommodations thereto, and affords an easy Communication with the present Gaol of the said County of *Hereford*; and it is expedient that the said Scite or Ground should be made use of for the said Purposes, but to adapt the same for such Purposes, and to make convenient Avenues and Approaches thereto, it will be necessary to purchase several Houses, Buildings, Tenements, Gardens and Pieces of Ground adjacent and opposite thereto: And Whereas it is expedient that better Accommodation should be procured for The King's Judges, when holding the **Assizes** in the said City of *Hereford*; and there appears to be no Mode of procuring permanent and suitable Accommodation for them, but by the Expenditure of a considerable Sum of Money, either in the purchase, repairing or building of some House for that Purpose: And Whereas it is expedient that the Expences of purchasing, repairing, altering or building such Houses, Buildings, Tenements, Gardens and Pieces of Ground, as shall be necessary for the several Purposes aforesaid, and of erecting and making the said new Courts of Justice, **Shire Hall**, Lodgings for His Majesty's Judges, and other Buildings and Accommodations, and of obtaining and passing this Act, and also all other Expences attending the Execution thereof, should be borne and paid by and raised by way of Rate upon the said County of *Hereford*; and it is expedient that such Expences should be borne in certain Proportions by and between the Proprietors and the Occupiers of Lands and Hereditaments within the said County; but as the several Ends and Purposes aforesaid cannot be effected without the Aid and Authority of Parliament; May it therefore please Your Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by The King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and

• there appears to be no Mode of procuring permanent and suitable Accommodation for them, but by the Expenditure of a considerable Sum of Money, either in the purchase, repairing or building of some House for that Purpose: And Whereas it is expedient that the Expences of purchasing, repairing, altering or building such Houses, Buildings, Tenements, Gardens and Pieces of Ground, as shall be necessary for the several Purposes aforesaid, and of erecting and making the said new Courts of Justice, **Shire Hall**, Lodgings for His Majesty's Judges, and other Buildings and Accommodations, and of obtaining and passing this Act, and also all other Expences attending the Execution thereof, should be borne and paid by and raised by way of Rate upon the said County of *Hereford*; and it is expedient that such Expences should be borne in certain Proportions by and between the Proprietors and the Occupiers of Lands and Hereditaments within the said County; but as the several Ends and Purposes aforesaid cannot be effected without the Aid and Authority of Parliament; May it therefore please Your Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by The King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and

by the Authority of the same, That all Persons who now are or shall hereafter for the time being be Justices of the Peace for the said County of *Hereford*, shall be and they are hereby appointed Commissioners for directing, ordering and managing the erection and building of new Courts of Justice, with suitable Conveniences, wherein to hold the **Assizes** and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, and the County Courts and other Courts for the said County of *Hereford*, and to transact other Judicial Business, and also of a new **Shire Hall** for the said County of *Hereford*, and other proper Rooms and Buildings for the Use and Public Purposes of the said County, and for making, widening, beautifying or improving the Avenues or Approaches to or surrounding the same respectively, and also the purchasing, adapting or erecting of any proper and commodious Messuage or Messuages, with Gardens and other suitable Conveniences and Accommodations for the lodging of His Majesty's Judges when holding **Assizes** in the said City, and repairing and sitting up the same, and the Application of the Scite or Ground whereon the old Gaol for the said County stood, or any proper Part or Parts thereof, and such other Messuages, Buildings, Land, Ground and Hereditaments, as shall or may be purchased or acquired under the Powers of this Act, for such Erections and Buildings, or such other Purposes as aforesaid, and for selling such Parts of the said Scite, Buildings, Ground and Premises, as shall not be wanted for the Purposes aforesaid, and for raising and defraying the Expences of such Erections and Buildings as aforesaid, and of all Sales, Purchases, and other Acts to be made and done under the Powers of this Act, and also the Expences of obtaining and passing this Act, and generally for carrying this Act, and the several Purposes thereof, into Execution.

Hereford Court and Gaol



Hereford County Gaol circa 1840

[23d March 1815.]

• **W**HEREAS the **Shire Hall** for the County of *Hereford* is locally situate within the City of *Hereford*,
• in the same County; and the **Affizes** and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, and the County
• Courts and other Courts of and for the said County have been there holden; and the said **Shire Hall** is
• also the accustomed Place for electing Knights of the **Shire**, and for holding the other Public Meetings of
• the said County of *Hereford*: And Whereas at the **Affizes** and General Gaol Delivery holden in and for
• the said County of *Hereford*, on *Monday* the Eighth Day of *August* One thousand eight hundred and
• fourteen, it was presented by the Grand Jury of and for the County of *Hereford*, that the **Shire Hall** for
• the said County of *Hereford* is a very inconvenient Building, and ill adapted for the Administration of
• Justice; and that the said **Shire Hall** is much out of Repair and in Decay, and insufficient and unfit for the
• Public Purposes to which the same hath been and ought to be applied, and the Scite thereof, being sur-
• rounded by a Public Street in the City of *Hereford*, is too limited and confined to admit of Enlargement,
• or of any adequate Alteration or Improvement in the present Building, without creating great Inconvenience
• by obstructing the Highway and Passage in the said Street: And Whereas it is expedient to erect new
• Courts of Justice, with suitable Conveniences, wherein to hold the **Affizes** and General Quarter Sessions of
• the Peace, and the County Courts and other Courts for the said County of *Hereford*, and to transact other
• Judicial Business; and also to erect a new **Shire Hall** for the County of *Hereford*, and other proper
• Buildings for the Purposes of such County: And Whereas a new Gaol for the said County of *Hereford*,
• was some time since erected; and the Scite or Ground whereupon the old Gaol for the said County formerly
• stood, and the Buildings and Materials thereupon still remain unford and undisposed of; and the same Scite
• or Ground is situate in the said City of *Hereford*, lying in Front next to *Saint Owen Street*, in the Parish of
• *Saint Peter*, in the said City, and being at a short Distance from the present **Shire Hall**, is well calculated
• for such new Erections, with Accommodations thereto, and affords an easy Communication with the present
• Gaol of the said County of *Hereford*; and it is expedient that the said Scite or Ground should be made
• use of for the said Purposes, but to adapt the same for such Purposes, and to make convenient Avenues and

THE OLD TOWN, OR SHIRE HALL

will first demand our attention. It is a spacious wooden structure, rude in its appearance, being built in the taste prevalent in the reign of James I. by John Abel, the expert carpenter (as he is called in a letter from the governor, Scudamore, to Lord Digby), who in the next reign proved of so much use to the defenders of the city. It has been reduced in height, and its beauty destroyed, in order to lessen the weight on the oaken pillars, by three rows of which (nine in each row) it is supported. In this hall were (till March, 1817), held the assizes, quarter sessions, city and county meetings, &c. It is intended to be in future appropriated to public purposes more immediately connected with the city, a new County Hall and Courts of Justice having been erected.

4 WALK THROUGH HEREFORD.

Under it are held the hop and corn markets. The old staircase on the south side of the building was removed in 1818, and a new one formed on its west end, an improvement which reflects great credit on its projectors; detracting nothing from the character of the pile, and adding greatly to cleanliness and utility. On the west side of this staircase, is the new watch and ward room, and over it an antiquated clock.

North of this building is the entrance to

THE NEW MARKETS,

THE NEW COUNTY HALL

and Courts of Justice, erected in 1817, forms a grand and interesting object. It occupies the site of the old County Gaol, a little eastward of St. Peter's Church, and in front, a number of old

houses have been pulled down, to afford it an ample area. It has in front a portico supported by eight large fluted pillars of the Grecian Doric order, resting upon a flight of steps, and surmounted by a pediment: under it are ornaments of that order, consisting of triglyphs with metopes between, and mutes above. Three plain doorways lead into the entrance hall, beyond this is a large and high corridor, terminating with a flight of steps upon which is the entrance to the County Hall, and having on each side, passages leading to the apartments of the Judges, the jury and record rooms, &c. and to the seats of the magistrates, council, and jury in the courts. On the right and left before we enter this passage, are two courts, or lobbies, having a flight of steps on the east sides, ascending to galleries in each of the Courts of Justice, which are fitted up with seats for the use of spectators. The *Nisi Prius Court* occupies the south side of the building, and the *Crown Court* the north. The whole is beautifully fitted up with oak; the *crown court* has a subterraneous passage, through which the felons are brought to the bar by a private door. They are kept, during the trials, in an apartment under the jury room. The *County Hall* is a most spacious and beautiful room, under it is a series of small apartments, used as a depot for the military stores of the county. It is altogether a noble work, worthy of the county which erected it, and doing great credit to the talents of the



