

A MEDALLION

commemorating the

**Foundation of the Town Hall,
in Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield**

on 25th August 1858



With a Newspaper Report of the occasion and other interesting details.

Janet Jordan
Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group
June 2020

With thanks to Jim Whorwood, who is the owner of this medallion. It was initially given to one of his ancestors and has been handed down to him through his family.

The Whorwood Family has lived in Sutton Coldfield for around 250 years.

**THE FOUNDATION
OF THE
TOWN HALL
SUTTON COLDFIELD
WAS LAID
AUGUST 25, 1858
BARON D. WEBSTER
WARDEN**



**SUTTON COLDFIELD
NEW TOWN HALL**

(reverse of medallion)



NEWSPAPER CUTTING from ARIS'S BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE

(Monday 30 August 1858, Page 4)

SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN HALL: The ceremony of laying the first stone of the new Town Hall of Sutton Coldfield took place at noon on Wednesday last, and it was evident from the animated appearance of the town and the large number of spectators that the event created a lively interest. The proposal to erect a new public Hall was mooted some years ago, but the success of the project was delayed by difficulties that unexpectedly arose, particularly in reference to the choice of a site. These difficulties, however, were ultimately overcome by the Corporate body fixing upon a site at the foot of the hill in Mill-street, in close proximity to the Church.

On Wednesday upwards of one thousand persons assembled on the site, in the Church-yard, and at various points where a view of the ceremony could be obtained. A spacious platform was set apart for the children of the various schools, who assembled to the number of about seven hundred. The open space around the stone was occupied by ladies and gentlemen residing in the town and neighbourhood, amongst whom were Baron D. Webster, Esq., the Warden, and Mrs. Webster, the Rev. J Packwood, the Rev. E. H. Kittoe, the Rev. G. W. Robinson, the Rev. S. G. Saxton, the Rev. — Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Addenbrooke, Mr.

and Mrs. T. Chavasse, Mr. and Mrs. H. Chavasse, Mr. H. E. Shaw, Mr. Campbell Bedford, Mr. and Mrs. V. Holbeche, Mr. and Mrs. T. S. Wilkins, Dr. and Miss Bodington, Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Wright, Mr. T. S. Eddowes, Mr. J. P. Oates, Mr. and Mrs. Kempson, Mr. J. Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. J. Wiggin, Mr. W. Hayward, Mr. and Mrs. W. Dutton, Mr. Dutton, jun., Mrs. Harvey, and Mrs. W. Smith, Mr. H. Smith, Mr. Charles Smith, the Misses Smith (Foxhall), Mr. Todd, Mr. Loveridge, Mr. Buggins, Mr. Clive, Mr. John King, Mr. J. Horsfall, Mr. J. Hinks, and Mr. Jaffray (Birmingham), Mr. George Bidlake (Wolverhampton), Mr. Charles Cooper (Surveyor to the Corporation), and Mr. Charles Burkitt (the contractor).

The ceremony of laying the stone was performed by Mrs. B. D. Webster. The proceedings were commenced by the Rev. J. Packwood offering a prayer for the successful completion of the undertaking, after which the School children sang the 100th Psalm. A glass vase, containing a record of the event, written on parchment, was then placed, together with specimens of the coins of the realm, in the cavity of the stone. The inscription on the vellum was as follows: "In the year of Grace 1858, on the twenty-fifth day of August, and the 22nd year of the reign of her Majesty Queen Victoria, the first stone of this Moot Hall, erected on a new site, was laid by Anna Maria, the wife of Baron Dickenson Webster, of Penns, in this Royal Manor, Esquire, the Warden for the time being. As a record of this event (if it should ever meet the eye of posterity), this writing was deposited within cavity in the stone by the said Warden, in the presence of a great number of the inhabitants wishing well to the undertaking." To the foregoing, which was also written in Latin, the names of the Earl of Aylesford, High Steward, of the Warden, and of the twenty-four members of the Corporation, and of the Deputy-Stewards, Messrs. Holbeche and Addenbrooke, were appended. A handsome silver trowel (manufactured by Messrs. Elkington, Mason, and Co) was then handed to Mrs. Webster, who proceeded to lay the stone with the usual formalities. The stone having been lowered to its final resting-place, Mrs. Webster, amidst loud cheering, declared it to be "well and truly laid." Three hearty cheers were then given for Mrs. Webster, three more for Mr. Charles Webster and the Warden, and the proceedings at the site terminated with the singing of the National Anthem.

A description of the Hall has been furnished to us by Mr. George Bidlake, the architect, from which we gather that it was originally proposed to erect the public rooms in the centre of the Marketplace, the site occupied by the old Town Hall. For this site the Warden and the

Society first sought plans; but it was afterwards abandoned, being found that, owing to the limited area, not only would the rooms be very much straitened, but the surrounding thoroughfares would be impeded. These circumstances led the Committee to decide upon removing to the more eligible site, which it is now proposed to occupy, fronting Mill Street, and which comprises over one thousand superficial feet.

The building will have two main frontages, the west towards the high road and the south towards a large open area adjoining the alms-houses which has been cleared in order to avoid the declivity of the hill, and afford facilities for the readier approach by carriage to the principal entrance. The building will be two storeys in height. The external dimensions 72 feet long by 38 feet wide, and from the terrace level to the cornice 32 feet high. On the first floor are the Corporation room, 26 feet by 18 feet, an ante-room, and an assembly-room, 50 feet by 35 feet, with an apsidal end 20 feet by 12 feet, fitted as an orchestra, with performers' rooms underneath. On the ground floor the accommodation given consists of a Magistrates' Court, 35 feet by 20 feet, public waiting room, prisoners' cell, surveyor's office, reading room, library, and ante-room, approached by a hall (containing the staircase to the upper floor), which latter is entered from a vestibule formed by the lower storey of a tower placed about the centre of the south front, rising to the altitude of 64 feet. Another entrance is provided on the north front for the public attending the Magistrates' Court. On the basement floor are kitchens, scullery, heating-apparatus room, and coal stores.

The building will be set back from the road about five feet, and a terrace formed in front to overcome the fall in the ground, and give substantial base to the structure. A flight of ten or twelve stone steps on to this terrace will form the approach to the principal entrance under the tower. The edifice is Gothic in character, and will be executed in red brick, banded with white brick and stone. The windows are grouped double and triple, the single-light windows are moulded with painted archheads, and the dressings generally are stone. The contract for the building has been entrusted to Mr. Charles Burkitt, Wolverhampton. The amount of the contract, including heating, is £3300.

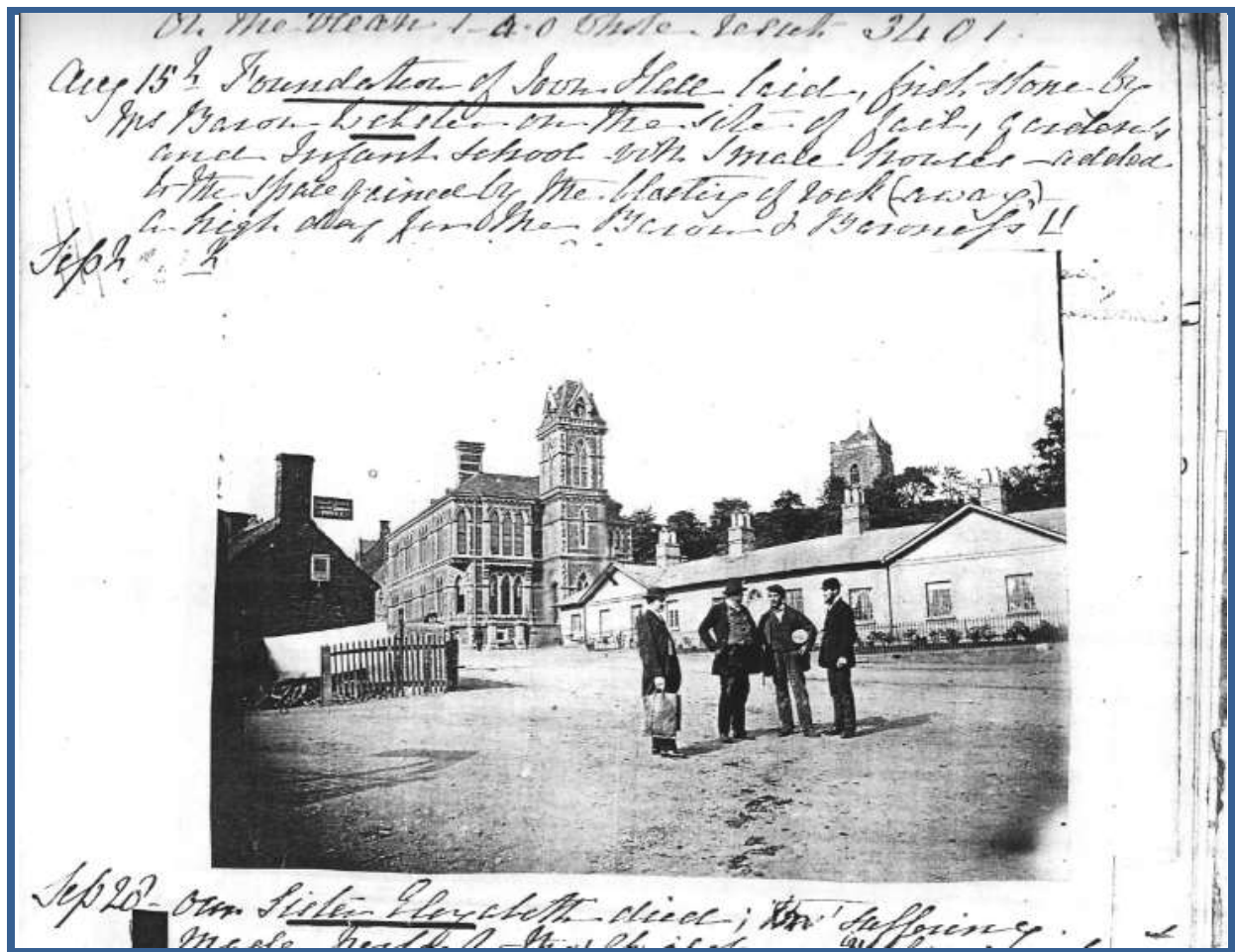
After the ceremony of laying the stone, the Corporation entertained a numerous company at luncheon in the Public Reading Room. The collation was provided by Mr. Lisseter, of Birmingham. Baron D. Webster, Esq., the Warden, presided, and most of the ladies and gentlemen already named were present. At the conclusion of the repast the Chairman proposed "The health of her Majesty the Queen," followed by that of "The Prince Consort and the other members of the Royal family." These toasts having been duly honoured, the Chairman gave "The Army and Navy," coupling with it the name of Captain Bedford, of the Dumfries Militia. Captain Bedford briefly returned thanks. The Chairman, in proposing "The Bishops of this and the adjoining Diocese," said the faithful manner which the Clergy of this country discharged their sacred duties entitled them to their warmest admiration and respect. They could many of them remember the progress that had been made during the last twenty years in the condition of the people, and many of them would agree with him in attributing it in a great measure to the exertions which the Clergy had been making everywhere to perform the sacred duty which they now fully recognised. -The toast was heartily drank. The Rev. E. H. Kittoe responded and took occasion to mention that it was proposed to erect a statue of Bishop Vesey on the site of the old Town Hall. The Rev. J. Packwood, in humorous speech, gave "Success to the New Town Hall," coupled with the health of Mrs. Webster. The toast, he observed, was of a duplex character. First, with reference to the new Hall, he heartily joined those present in wishing every prosperity to the new undertaking. Those who knew the difficulties that had to be encountered in connection with it, would heartily rejoice with him to see it so happily inaugurated (applause). Their differences were now fortunately at an end, and they had commenced the erection of a building which would be not only creditable, but eminently useful to the inhabitants of Sutton Coldfield. It was part of his duty to present to Mrs. Webster the trowel with which she had so gracefully performed the ceremony of that day, and which he hoped would long remain in her family as a memorial of the event. Mr. Packwood then handed the trowel to Mrs. Webster, and the toast was drank with enthusiasm. The Chairman, in responding, said he felt assured that Mrs. Webster would feel that she had been honoured by being selected to perform the ceremony of that morning, and it was her earnest hope that the new building would be useful as well as ornamental to the town. For his own part, he believed that every class in the parish would be more or less benefited by it, and he was exceedingly glad to reflect that when finished it would supply a want that had long been inconveniently felt, and especially so since the old Moot Hall was dernolished.

"The Ladies" was next proposed by the Rev. E. H. Kittoe, and responded to by Mr. C. Bedford. Dr. Bodington proposed "The health of Baron D. Webster, Esq., the Warden." Alluding to Mr. Webster's services to the town, he pointed out that the present Warden had filled the office for about three years, a longer period than any other gentleman had held it, and by his admirable business habits and excellent temper had secured the esteem, respect, and confidence of the Corporation (applause). The toast was drank with musical honours. Mr. Webster, responding, said he rejoiced, after three or four years of much anxiety, to see the first stone of the new Town Hall laid, and he hoped soon to see it successfully completed. He had been thanked for the services he had rendered in connection with the undertaking, but he could only say that he did not begrudge any amount of trouble, if he could further the interests of the parish in which he was born. Some differences of opinion had occurred on the subject of the site which the new Hall was to occupy, and it was natural that some differences should occur amongst a body of twenty-four gentlemen. It was certainly not the best that could have been chosen, but it was the only one they could find upon their own property, and if they had selected the best site in the town, it would have cost them a sum which they would not have been justified in spending. He believed, however, that the new building would be in every respect creditable to the town, and although the property of the Corporation, it would always be at the service the parishioners.-Amongst the remaining toasts were "The Capital Burgesses," proposed by Mr. Holbeche, and acknowledged by the Rev. J. Packwood, "The Visitors," proposed by Mr. Josiah Wright, and responded to by Mr. Hinks and Mr. Jaffray; "The Deputy-Steward," responded to by Messrs. Holbeche and Addenbrooke; "The Committee," "The Architect and Builder," "Mr. Charles Cooper, the Corporation Surveyor," and "The Press."

The School children and many of the inhabitants visited the Park in the course of the afternoon, but the weather was unfavourable for out-door recreation. The children, however, were supplied with tea, and a band was in attendance, and played at intervals during the afternoon. The workmen employed in the erection of the new building sat down to a substantial dinner at the Three Tuns Inn.

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF SARAH HOLBECHE

Sutton Coldfield Reference Library: Page 49
(Ref: BCOLQ942.496081HOL)



1858: "August 15th (sic) **Foundation of Town Hall** laid first stone by Mr Baron Webster on the site of Jail; Gardens and Infant School - with small houses added to the space gained by the blasting of rock (away). A high day for the Baron & Baroness!"

TOWN HALL, WITHOUT ITS TOWER

(MAY 2020)



(Author's photo)

According to Roger Lea's *'History Spot'* article entitled *Woodgate* [280] on this website, i.e. www.sclhr.org.uk, this tower was taken down in 1970 as being unsafe.