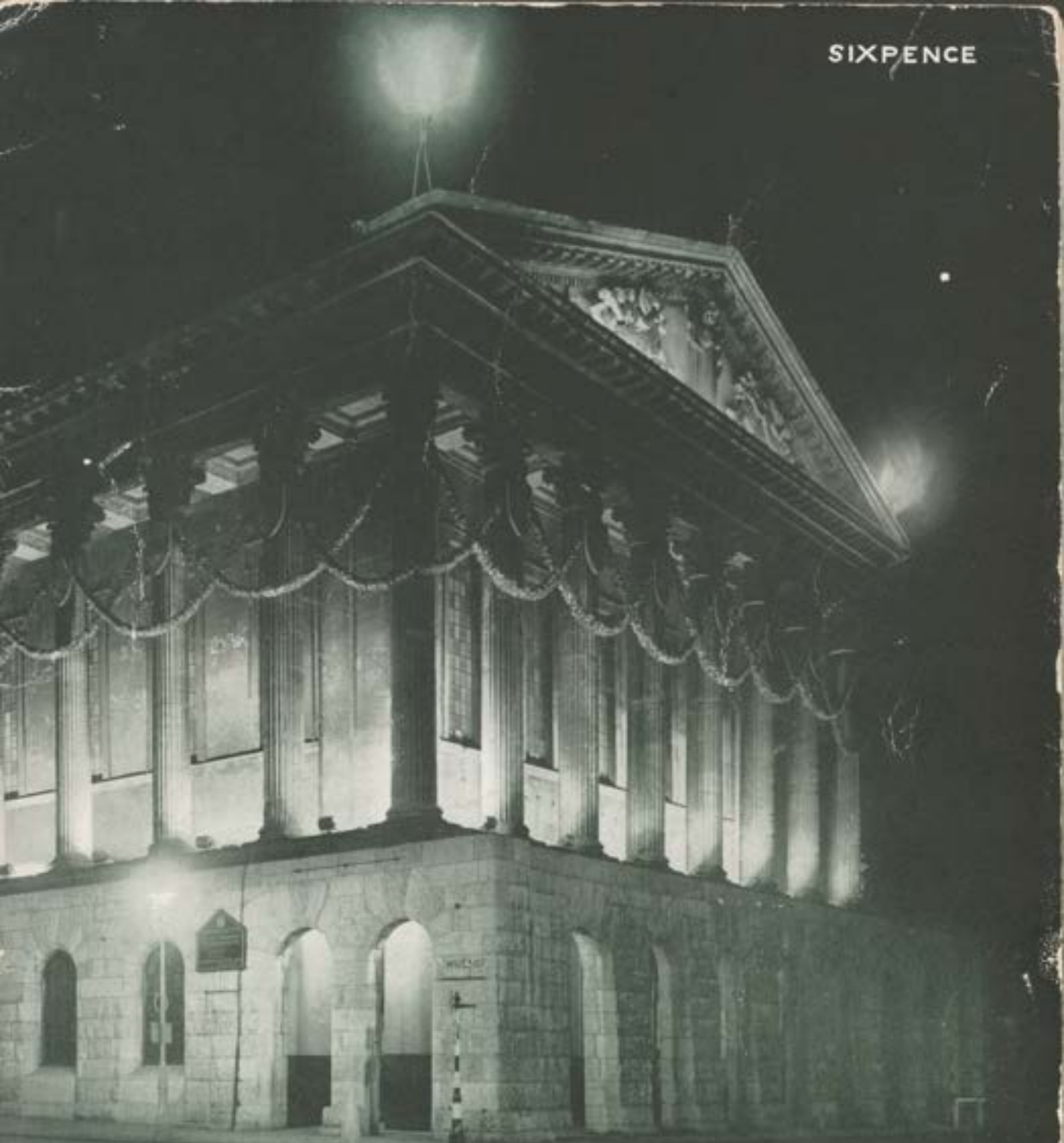
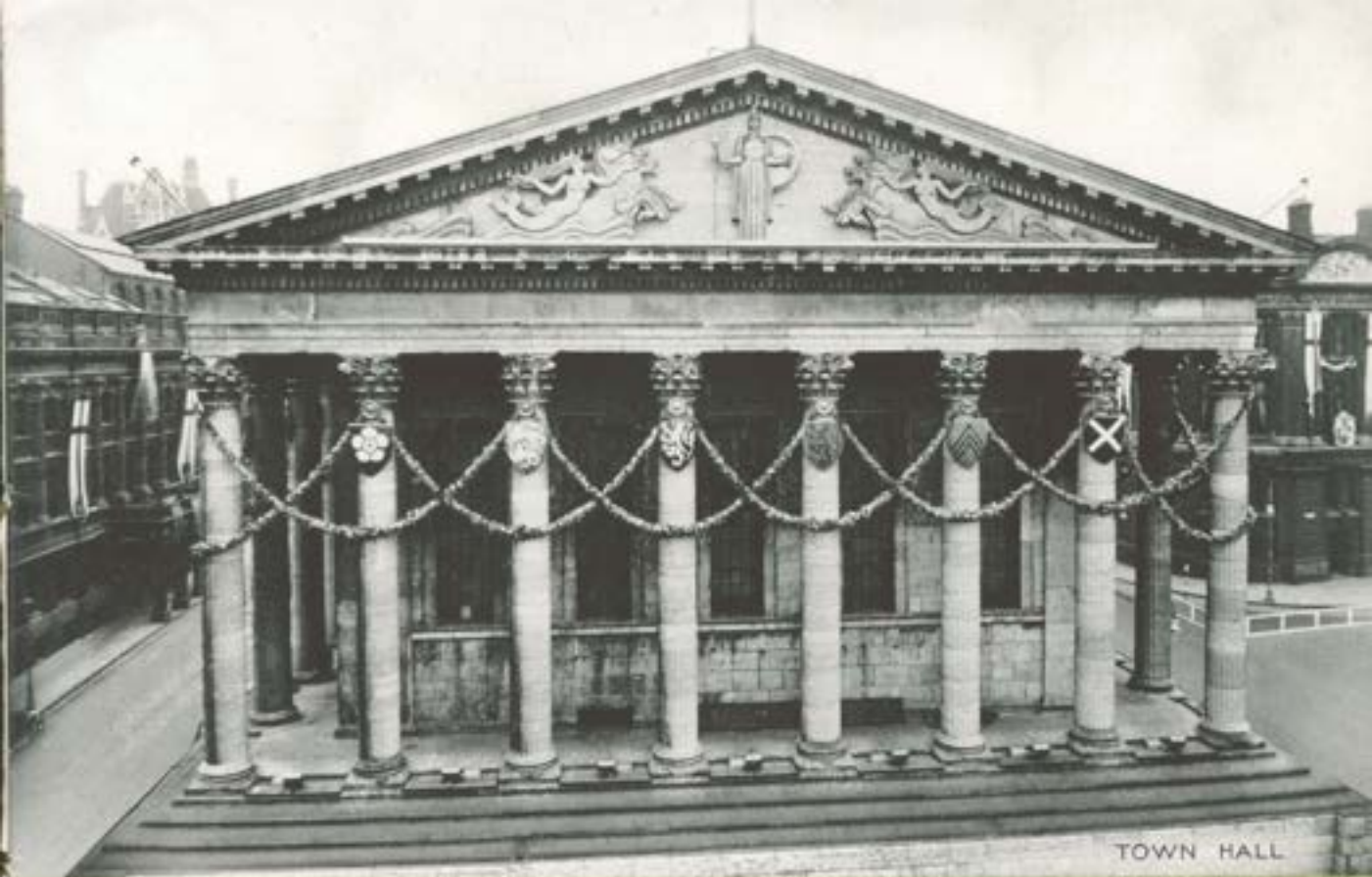


SIXPENCE



THE CORONATION  
A TRIBUTE OF PAGEANTRY  
BIRMINGHAM

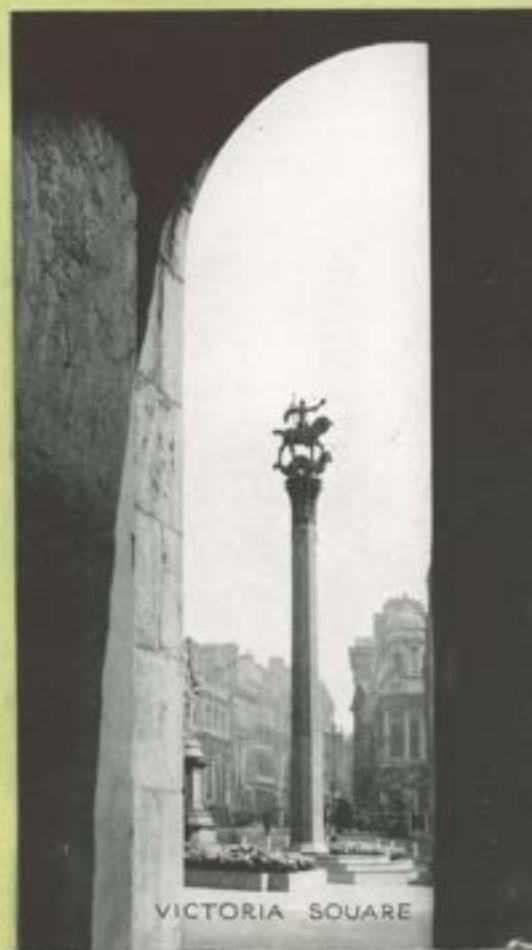
1937



TOWN HALL



EASY ROW



VICTORIA SQUARE



COUNCIL HOUSE



ST. GEORGE'S COLUMN



TOWN HALL



VICTORIA SQ



ART GALLERY



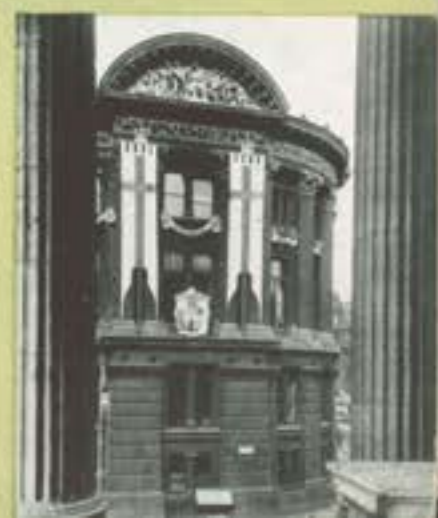
VICTORIA SQUARE



TOWN HALL



COUNCIL HOUSE





BROAD ST



HALL OF MEMORY



BROAD ST



EASY ROW



BROAD ST



MUNICIPAL BANK

## CORONATION OF GEORGE VI AND ELIZABETH

12th May, 1937

### THE DECORATIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL AND OTHER BUILDINGS AND PRINCIPAL STREETS AND PARKS IN BIRMINGHAM

#### *Preface*

THE decorations of the municipal buildings and the principal streets of the city of Birmingham during the Coronation week were generally considered by competent judges to be the best of their kind to be seen in all England.

It had been felt that the decorations devised to celebrate the jubilee of King George V were rather tawdry and haphazard. Birmingham is not by nature a festive site. It has grown up in answer to economic needs, expressed in various ways and periods, rather than in response to a formal and sequent aesthetic plan. Its buildings lack relationship and its streets proper connection. Its levels are awkward. The problem of how to adorn it for a great national celebration was one calling for artistic and organising powers of a high kind.

This problem was attacked early by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Roberts, and his predecessor, Alderman Grey, who both realised that it could only be well solved by the co-ordinated efforts of the citizens concerned. Specially appointed committees of the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce quickly established cordial relations in a search for its solution. A decision to co-operate in a comprehensive scheme, to be planned and put into execution by a single professional expert, was soon unanimously adopted. Every consideration pointed to Mr. William Haywood as the right man for the difficult task.

Yet he could never have achieved the splendid result ultimately attained were it not for the loyal, zealous and skilful help which he received from all quarters. Traders agreed to contribute generously to a common fund and to forgo an attractive opportunity for individual display and advertisement. The City Engineer and Surveyor, the Keeper of the City Museum and Art Gallery, the Director of Art Education of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the sculptors, painters, contractors, gardeners, artisans and labourers concerned, all deserve the utmost credit for the work done in their respective spheres.

The decorations formed a whole which was undoubtedly far greater than the sum total of its many parts. No feature extruded itself unduly from the general effect. But some, undoubtedly, deserve particular mention, and the most casual observer must have been specially impressed by the reliefs which Mr. Bloye modelled for the tympana of the Town Hall, by Mr. Walker's group of St. George and the Dragon, and by the fine heraldic shields and banners so lavishly displayed.

As one who took a very minor part in the deliberations which led to such an excellent conclusion, I feel privileged in being allowed to draw attention to the fact that the symbolic figure of Art who acts as one of the supporters of the coat of arms of Birmingham has a better justification for her existence than is at times erroneously supposed.

THOMAS BODKIN

This description of the Birmingham Coronation decorations aims to preserve for the pageantry of a historic occasion that degree of permanence which is its due as a part of the vivid and abiding memory of the national event. A scheme of decoration which has so adequately interpreted the sense of a great city, so happily fused local associations with current history, and earned added distinction for its author, should deserve a better fate than unassisted memory provides.

Further reason for the survival of a record of the commemoration exists in the readiness with which the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce allied itself with the Municipality to make possible the realisation of the unified plan, prepared by Mr. William Haywood, F.R.I.B.A., and carried into effect with the co-operation of those whose services are elsewhere acknowledged.

The Lord Mayor, on the Corporation's behalf, commissioned the decoration of the Council House and Town Hall, and the execution of two equestrian representations of St. George, mounted on columns in Victoria Square and near to the Hall of Memory.

The Chamber of Commerce assumed responsibility for the execution of the scheme of decoration for New Street, Corporation Street, High Street, Bull Street, Colmore Row, Paradise Street, Broad Street Corner and Easy Row. The cost of these street decorations was defrayed from a fund subscribed by the owners or tenants of premises fronting to those streets, who, to achieve a sense of unity, preferred to be represented by a composite scheme. The responsible Committee of the Chamber discouraged elaboration of the scheme by the separate decoration (other than by window display) of individual premises, and while some departures were inevitable, the principle was generally accepted.

Throughout the scheme much use was made of heraldry, and Mr. S. C. Kaines Smith, Keeper of the Museum and Art Gallery, gave his highly authoritative advice as consultant for the proper rendering of the coats of arms and devices employed, and furnished scale drawings of the arms displayed. Heraldry with its wealth of colour and historical association, and by the motive which led to the selection and placing of the devices displayed, contributed to a distinction appropriate to the occasion.

Upon the Council House were shown the arms of the Lords of the Manor of Birmingham from 1166 to 1824, as follows :



Over the main entrance to the Council House, under the great archway, was placed a banner mounted with the arms of England, with the royal cipher and powderings of badges below and the crown above. On either side were the supporters of the Royal Arms, and at either end of the facade of the building were placed the City's arms in relief.

Upon the elevation to Chamberlain Place, a banner and crown, on a smaller scale than those of the Council House, were placed over the entrance to the Museum and Art Gallery. On this elevation the shields of Chamberlain, Tangye and Feeney, Birmingham families identified with the foundation and development of the Art Gallery, were displayed.

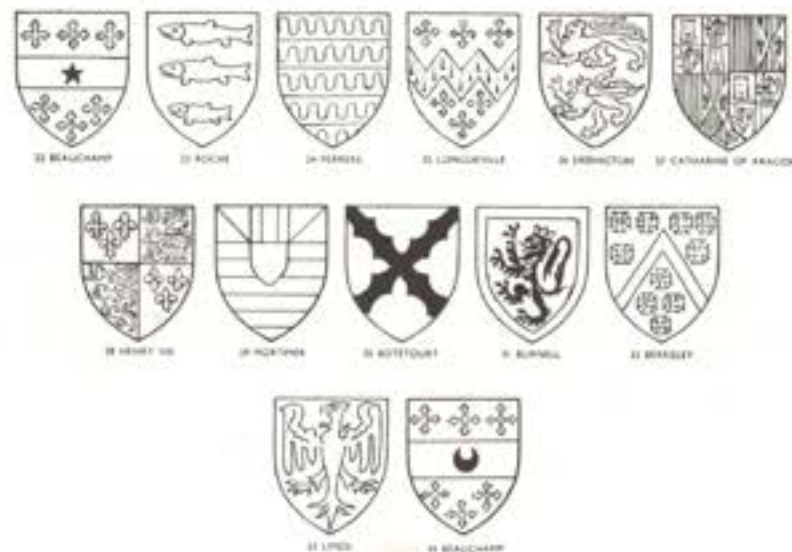


Upon the Town Hall, thirty-eight shields completed the story of Birmingham's expansion, and upon its four elevations were placed the arms of the Overlords and Lords of those Manors which are now within the boundaries of the present city.

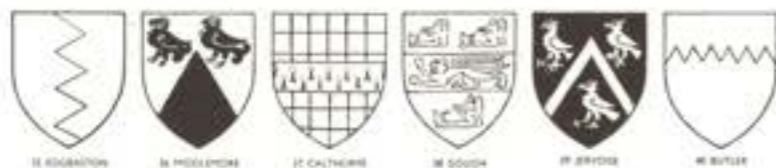
On the Paradise Street frontage were displayed :



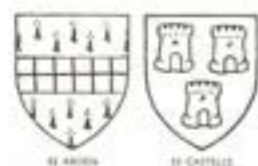
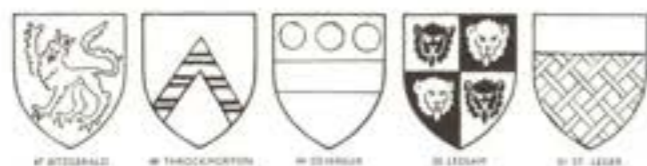
Facing Victoria Square were placed :



Chamberlain Place displayed the following :



On the Ratcliff Place frontage were placed :



Linking the shields were festooned garlands of green and gold, and above the shields in the pediments facing Paradise Street and Chamberlain Place were gilded figures representing Britannia flanked by groups suggesting the homage of the sea.

In Victoria Square, a column 35 feet high to the top of the capital carried a gilded equestrian statue, eight feet high, representing St. George presenting the crown with outstretched arm. The foot of the column was surrounded by beds of rhododendrons.

The second St. George's column, at Broad Street corner, rose from a circular lawn. Standing approximately on the centre line of Broad Street, looking east, the axial position of the column was emphasised by a series of flower-boxes, four on either side of the roadway. The flower-boxes were 10 feet in diameter, and on the nine sides of each box the following subjects were freely rendered and modelled in high relief: The Enthronement; St. George; The Arms of England; St. Andrew; The Arms of Scotland; St. Patrick; The Arms of Ireland; St. David; The Arms of Wales.

The Hall of Memory was decorated with flowers by the Parks Department.

In Broad Street, existing lamp standards were furnished with banners and garlands, coloured red, white and green, the design of which was continued into Suffolk Street, where a large standard carried streamers upon which the emblems of the British Isles and the crest of the City were shown.

In Paradise Street four sets of banners were hung, and these were repeated in series throughout New Street and Corporation Street. From Victoria Square the first set of banners carried on each side the arms of England and Scotland. The second banners bore the Bowes arms of the Queen, and those of Wales; upon the reverse of the Bowes banner were displayed the Lyon arms of the Queen and the arms of Wales were repeated on the reverse. Succeeding banners in the series bore the emblems of the Dominions, Australia and Canada on one side, and New Zealand and South Africa upon the other.

The junction of New Street and High Street was marked by a banner similar to that at Suffolk Street, and High Street was draped with national flags and emblems. Thence followed a succession of standards from Carr's Lane to Bull Street, with national flags and emblems along Bull Street to its crossing at Corporation Street. From this point to Snow Hill and along Colmore Row to the Town Hall the route was decorated with standards on columns. Uniform in design, the standards varied in colour and in the emblems displayed in the several streets. The vista along Colmore Row, between an avenue of blue, white and gold standards, was finely terminated by Victoria Square, presenting St. George's Column silhouetted against the decorated Town Hall.

The floodlighting scheme in the centre of the city, carried out by the Electric Supply Department, included the colonnade and banners at the main entrance of the Council House and the pillared entrance to the Museum and Art Gallery. The upper walls of the Town Hall were illuminated behind the columns, which were thus thrown into relief, while at the corners of the building, four great gas flares were placed. The sculptured groups in either pediment of the Town Hall and the equestrian figures of St. George in Victoria Square and Easy Row, and the Hall of Memory were similarly floodlighted. Other floodlighting schemes in the City centre, outside the scope of the general plan, included the Chamberlain Memorial (for the fountain of which coloured lamps were employed), the Central Fire Station (where coloured lamps were also used to good effect), the west end of St. Philip's Cathedral, the Burnaby Plinth in the Cathedral gardens, and the north and west elevations of St. Martin's Church.

In the suburbs, the Electric Supply Department also carried out floodlighting schemes in a number of parks. At Cannon Hill Park two fountains were installed in the large boating lake and floodlighted in colour. Here the general scheme of floodlighting extended along the main drive from Edgbaston Road to the Pershore Road entrance, illuminating the islands, the bridge between the pools, the Scouts' memorial, the Museum and the drive between.

At Handsworth fountains were floodlighted in colour, and lighting was also used on the island, shrubberies and the figure illustrated. Similar floodlighting was carried out at Victoria Park, Small Heath, Ward End Park, Queen's Park, Harborne, and Aston Park, where, as the illustration demonstrates, modern invention added new beauty to the historic fabric of Aston Hall.





CORPORATION STREET



NEW ST



NEW ST



CORPORATION ST



CORPORATION ST



NEW ST



NEW ST



PARADISE ST



NEW ST



NEW ST



COLMORE ROW



HIGH ST



COLMORE ROW



BULL ST



HALL OF MEMORY



BURNABY PLINTH



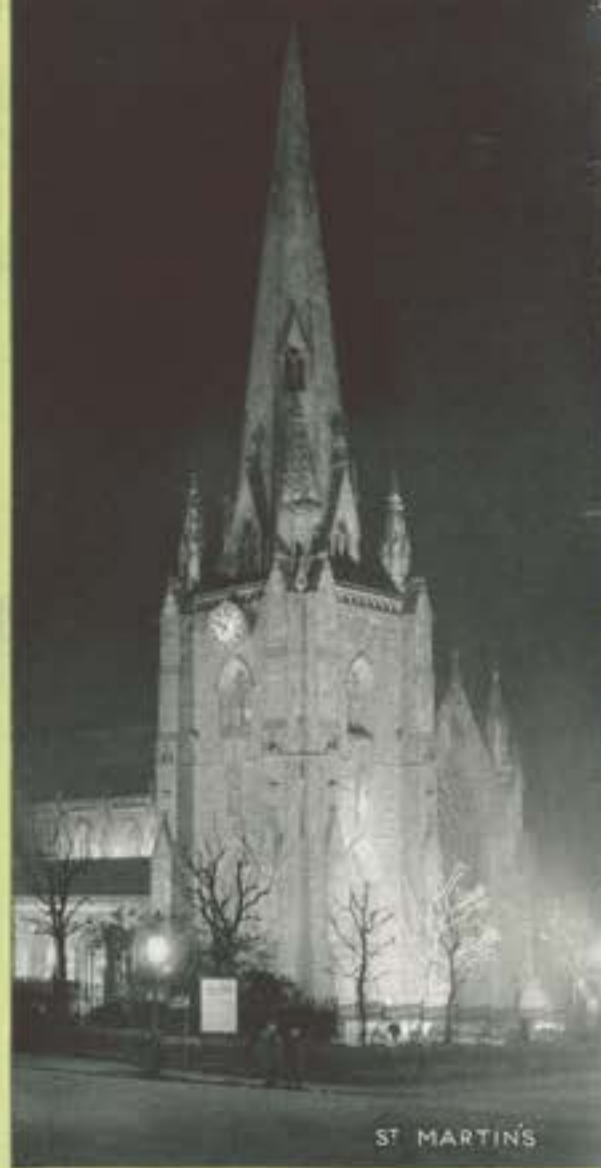
CATHEDRAL



CATHEDRAL



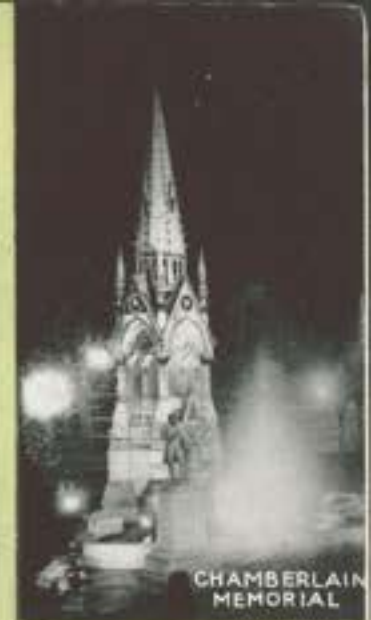
CENTRAL FIRE STATION



ST MARTIN'S



WARD END PARK



CHAMBERLAIN MEMORIAL



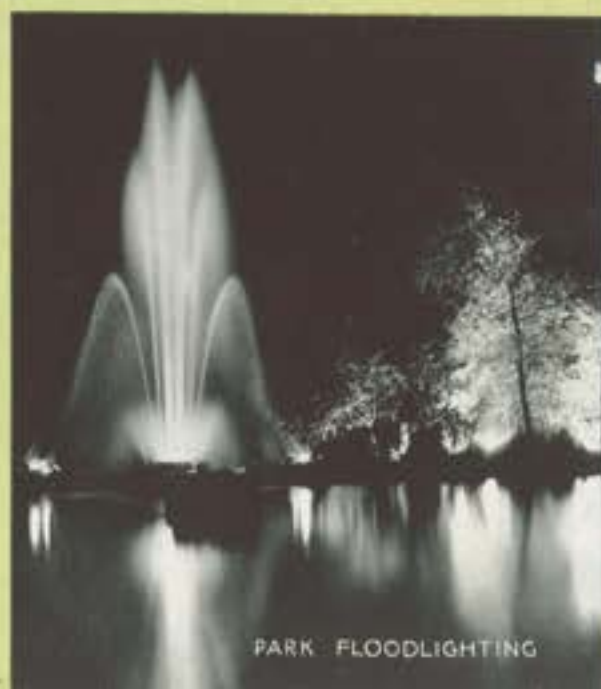
ASTON HALL



HANDSWORTH PARK



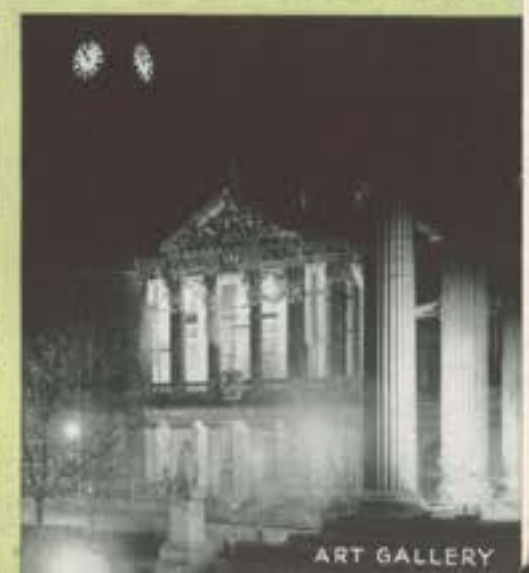
CANNON HILL PARK



PARK FLOODLIGHTING



ASTON PARK



ART GALLERY



The Executive for the Schemes of Decoration was William Haywood, F.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I., Architect; H. J. Manzoni, M.Inst.C.E., City Engineer and Surveyor; S. C. Kaines Smith, M.B.E., M.A., F.S.A., Consultant for Heraldry; William Bloye, A.R.B.S., Sculptor for Town Hall and Council House; J. P. Walker, Sculptor for the group of St. George and panels for flower boxes; H. H. Holden, A.R.C.A., and Students of the School of Art under his direction, Painting of coats of arms on shields for the Town Hall and Council House; C. W. Bloor, Secretary of the Coronation Celebrations Committee, and H. Eyles, O.B.E., Secretary, Chamber of Commerce Committee for Street Decorations.

The schemes of decoration were respectively authorised by the Decorations and Illuminations Sub-Committee of the Coronation Celebrations Committee (the Chairman of which was the Lord Mayor, Alderman Harold Roberts) under the Chairmanship of Councillor W. Martineau, and the Chamber of Commerce Committee for Street Decorations, the Chairman of which was Mr. G. Philip Achurch, M.B.E. Other Sub-Committees responsible for various matters connected with the Celebrations were concerned with Aged Persons Grants (Chairman: Alderman P. L. E. Shurmer), Outdoor Entertainments (Chairman: Alderman R. R. Gelling), Indoor Entertainments (Chairman: Col. Sir Bertram Ford), Church Services (Chairman: Alderman S. J. Grey), Finance and General Purposes (Chairman: Alderman A. E. Ager), Children's Entertainments (Chairman: Alderman W. Byng Kenrick).

The illustrations of the schemes of building and street decorations included in the publication are principally from the photographs of Mr. J. Willoughby Harrison. Among the illustrations of the various schemes of floodlighting, most of which were supplied by the Electric Supply Department, are photographs kindly furnished by British Thomson-Houston Co. Ltd., Edison Swan Electric Co. Ltd., General Electric Co. Ltd., Siemens Electric Lamps and Supplies Ltd., and Walker Bros., Electrical Engineers Ltd.

The type used in this booklet is Monotype Baskerville, a faithful reproduction of that cut by John Baskerville, the celebrated Birmingham printer, about the year 1757.

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