

1855-7 CHELTENHAM OLD TOWN SURVEY

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Until December 2019 Cheltenham Old Town Survey 1855-7 was available as a CD compiled by Cheltenham Local History Society, containing the text, index and the digitised images. **This CD is no longer available for purchase.**

The CD is available for research purposes at:

Cheltenham Local Studies Library, behind the main Library on Clarence Street, Cheltenham;

CDs for loan from Cheltenham Local History Society;

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HISTORY:

The 1855-7 Old Town Survey is a large-scale (44ft to 1in) map of Cheltenham, consisting of 84 sheets, each 24 ins x 36 ins, together with an index map sheet. The survey was originally commissioned to show all the drainage and sewerage in the town, and was held in the Borough Engineer's Department in the Municipal Offices until very recently.

In 1849 Edward Cressy, the superintendent inspector under the Board of Health, Whitehall, led an enquiry into the sanitary condition of Cheltenham under the 1848 Public Health Act. His report highlighted the public nuisance caused by lack of sewerage; of over 5,000 homes in the borough, only 736 had contracted with the private sewer company to have a legal sewage outlet. A Town Improvement Bill was thus introduced to Parliament, receiving Royal Assent on 28th May 1852.

The Town Improvement Commissioners, elected under the 1852 Town Improvement Act, decided to sewer the whole parish and to attempt to purchase the Cheltenham Sewers Company (eventually bought for the town in 1857 for £9,000). As early as 1846 the Cheltenham Sanitary Committee had been authorised to buy a map to show the course of the town sewers. However, in 1854 the General Board of Health at Whitehall advised that an accurate, detailed, large-scale plan of the town should be specifically drawn up to enable the most economical and efficient provision of drainage and sewerage. The Town Surveyor, architect Henry Dangerfield, was appointed to manage the project, which resulted in the production of the 1855-7 Old Town Survey.

The Survey covers an area of 3,600 acres, with 1,700 in great detail, the remainder being a skeleton survey of the suburbs. The actual surveying of the town was completed by the end of May 1856, with the levelling work completed by the end of June. The draughtsmen completed the hand-coloured maps in March 1857. The total cost of the work amounted to £1,215 11s 7d. In a report of 1854, Henry Dangerfield envisaged that

‘... the plan will constantly be referred to and will be useful for various purposes and it will remain after these works are completed a map of reference, all additions and alterations

being made to it as they actually occur.’

This has indeed been the case, with the Borough Engineers using the original maps into the 21st century. Now that the images have been digitised the Old Town Survey can be preserved, and future generations of borough engineers, local and family historians can benefit from the monumental project carried out by Henry Dangerfield and his team in the 1850s.

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