

THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS IN LANCASTER OF C. B. PEARSON, 1904–1944

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Abstract

This paper details the architectural commissions in Lancaster between 1904 and 1944 by the Pearson practice, based on building plans submitted to the Borough Council.

Introduction

A previous paper in *Contrebis* by James Price traced the history of the Lancaster-based architectural practice of the Pearsons, Charles Bulman Pearson (1876–1944) and his son, Charles Edward Pearson (1907–1982) who became a partner in 1931 (Price 2017, 19). The paper included the history of the firm up to recent times, when they eventually became a national and then international practice. It recorded many of their major local works and also their many commissions, exhibitions and competition entries across the UK up to the Second World War. Price's paper also examined and illustrated the evolution in the architectural styles the firm employed over the first four decades of the twentieth century.

The present paper expands on Price's research by detailing as much as is known of the firm's local work in Lancaster up to 1944 when C.B. Pearson died. A great deal of this is on a relatively modest scale, involving both complete new houses, shops, garages and various commercial developments, and also alterations and extensions to their or other architects' existing buildings. This is the bread-and-butter of any small architectural practice. Many of the commissions listed in Appendix 1 have not previously been attributed to the Pearsons. The nature of these commissions reflects the changing urban geography of Lancaster and many other British towns and cities during the first half of the twentieth century. The commissions link the Pearsons to their clients, many of whom were the leading business people of Lancaster of the time. The Pearsons did not then work for the national chains of shops that were starting to move into Lancaster. A notable point is that many clients remained with the Pearsons, they and their families returning with other commissions.

Sources

The major source is the author's unpublished database of Lancaster building plans between 1851 and 1951, used in conjunction with James Price's article (2017). The author's database is derived from the records of Lancaster Municipal Borough held at Lancashire Archives in Preston (deposit number MBLA (Acc) 5167: Building Plan Registers and Surveyor's Report Books). Also used was an archive of Lancaster architects that has been collected by the author from many sources since 1963. Other information came from the author's earlier articles in *Contrebis* (Stansfield 2016, 2017). The dates attached to the Pearson commissions listed below and in Appendix 1 are for when the plans for the project were approved by the Municipal Borough Council, often only a few days after they had been submitted. The dates for completions and official openings are later. There are 76 Pearson plans listed between 1904 and 1944 on behalf of 52 different clients. Plans required approval by the Council only for property developments that affected municipal utilities (e.g. water, drainage and sewerage) within the area of Lancaster Municipal Borough, hence excluding Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth and the surrounding Rural Districts. Therefore there are no plans listed here for Pearson developments nearby such as the houses at Inverlune (1910), Carus Park (1926) and Moorgarth (1931) (Price 2017, 24). The work on Penny's Almshouses on King Street in 1929–30 has no plan because it was carried out as part of a road-widening scheme. The work on Queen Street Almshouses (1937) is attributed by Hartwell (2009, 396) as "...probably by Charles

Pearson”, but it is shown in the record of plans in Lancashire Archives as being a project by Harrison & Moore’s architectural practice that was approved in 1936.

Major local commissions (public, commercial and housing) and the firm’s clients

The earliest deposited plan (in July 1904) was C B Pearson’s design for Bowerham Mission Hall (now the URC Church on Bowerham Road). It probably prompted his return to Lancaster and followed the establishment of his architectural practice at 12a Cheapside (Price 2017, 20). It was followed by a plan for a greenhouse at 70 Dallas Road in September for William Masheter, and a plan for Mr J R Wiper in March 1905 to convert his shop on King Street to a café. This and another plan in 1905 to alter a house at 18 Brock Street into a house and shop (for J R Birkett) were Pearson’s first ventures into commercial work. Cafés became a noticeable feature in the practice. Pearson designed the Rendezvous Café in 1919 (Market Street, part of the Palladium cinema, now WH Smith) and in the 1930s Oliver’s cafés on Penny Street and their Mary Street bakery (several commissions), a proposed café at 19 Dalton Square next to Pearson’s office at No. 18 for J W Sandham, and Miss Irving’s Milk Bar in Ffrances Passage, 1944. They worked on the Empire Café in Market Street in 1948.

Bowerham Mission Hall (1904) was the first building he designed with public access. Later came the plans for a vestry at the Parish Church of St Mary (the Priory) in 1923 and a decade later he provided a plan for a vestry at St Thomas’ Church in Penny Street (1933). In 1931 and 1933 he was asked to draw up plans for an organ chamber and a new roof kitchen at the Palace Cinema in Dalton Square for the Hippodrome Company (Lancaster) Ltd. The Barker Circuit installed a new biograph chamber at the Grand Cinema in St Leonardgate in 1931 (Stansfield 2017). The last two buildings with public access were the School for the Methodists on Owen Road in Skerton and the Dallas Road Lad’s Club, both designed in 1937.

The commercial sector formed a large part of the firm’s work. The first record of commercial work has already been noted (Mr J R Wiper in 1905). He was one of the many clients who returned to Mr Pearson; later he asked him to design two semi-detached houses off Scotforth Road in 1909. Work in Dalton Square was regular – Pearson’s office was at number 18 from 1907 (Price 2017, 20). There was the conversion of number 1 from the house built in 1799 by William Barrow to offices for the ‘Brittanic [sic] Assurance Co.’ (1930). Other early commercial work involving warehouse and office provision was for J S Parkinson at the Penny Street / James Street junction and for George Iresnon at Thurnham and Marton Streets (1907–09). In 1919 he designed the Town Hall Garage for J C Hinton (an architect’s assistant with Austin & Paley before the Great War) (Figure 1). The site at 14 Dalton Square had been a house built by John Kitchen, the builder. An extension to the garage was proposed in 1927. It is now (2018) the Dalton Rooms. Pearson also drew up plans for Mr W E Pinches’ shops on the corner of King Street and Common Garden Street in 1922 (now called King Street Chambers) (Figure 2), Mr A H Mansergh’s warehouses and offices on the Cable Street / Water Street corner (1924), Reddrop & Co’s shop on Cheapside in 1926 (Figures 3 & 4) and Hart & Levy’s shop on the Cheapside and St Nicholas Street corner in 1926 (now Thomas Cook) (Price 2017, 23).

The doctors at 8 Dalton Square (Millar, Howat & Howson) made additions to the surgery in 1929. Commercial work undertaken by the partnership continued with alterations for Oliver’s Café and their bakery in Penny Street, and a number of alterations and additions to Bell’s Factory on Parliament Street from 1935. This had been built in 1863 for James Fawcett as Fawcett’s Marble Works: it was taken over by Anthony Bell and owned by R Gardner for whom the Pearsons worked.

Other clients included Barton Townley for his showrooms and garage-cum-filling station on King Street (1939).

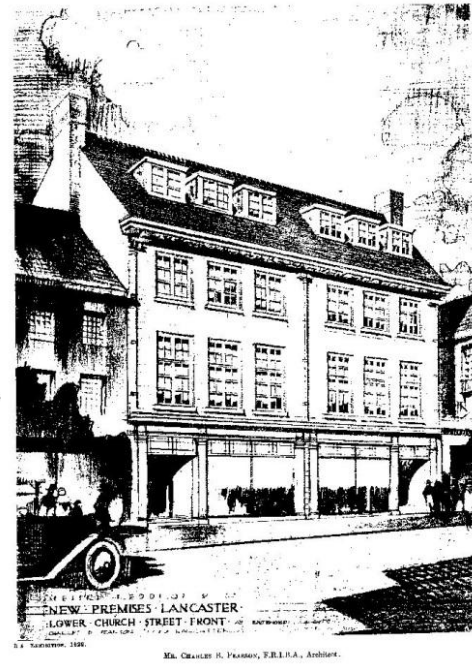


Figure 1 (left) J C Hinton's Town Hall Garage 1919 & 1927. (Source: Author)

Figure 2 (right) W E Pinches. King Street Chambers and shops. (Source: Author)

Extensions were made for Waring & Gillow and Messrs J Kinlock/h & Son. J W Sandham (a shop owner) in Dalton Square was among the final clients prior to C B Pearson's death in 1944. The conversions of city-centre houses into houses with shop fronts were a common theme and this occurred in Kelsey / Sibsey Streets (1909) and 18 Brock St for J R Birkett (1905) and after 1934 at 49 Scotforth Road and Gage St for Mr Eaton (1936). There were many more after 1946. These commercial commissions reflect the changes in the nature and scale of retailing and spending patterns that were happening in Lancaster and other British cities at this time (Winstanley 1993, 170–2; Constantine & Warde 1993, 232–3).

New houses and alterations to houses were a major strand of activity. C B Pearson started with a design for alterations at William Masheter's house in Dallas Rd in 1904 and Mrs Taylor's house at Claremont View in 1905. Further contracts included Waterside Farm (Stodday), at Craiglands in Haverbreaks for the Pye family (Stansfield 2016) and at the W & J Pye garage on Cable Street in 1936. There were a number of works at the Royal Albert Institute (with F W Leach) and 'Strawberry Bank' on Westbourne Road for Alderman Mrs Helme. He designed the conversion of Brunton House, Scotforth, into ten flats and some garages. The first new houses designed were in 1906 for Mr T Teasdale – six semi-detached houses in Derwent Road, Freehold. For one of his regular clients, Simeon Waites, there were plans in 1907 and 1908 for seven houses in Victoria Avenue approved in February and five houses in St Paul's Road (both in Scotforth) in July the following year. Two other houses were designed in 1909 for J R Wiper. In 1919 a house in Wingate Saul Road for W C Halliday was designed by Pearson. In May 1933 Thomson & Morris submitted a plan for bungalows in Regent Street which was rejected by the Council and the following month C B Pearson & Son replaced this with a plan for a block of elaborately-designed flats on the same site for the once-famous music-hall star, Mrs Violet Atroy, the wife of Mr James Atroy who was the owner of the Picturedrome Cinema (the Rex) in Lower Church Street (Stansfield 2017). Sadly these were not built and the present William Penny's Almshouses now occupy this site on Regent Street. Two others houses, 14-16 Ardengate (now numbered 12 and 14), were designed for Mr Fell whose family had owned 'The Palace of Varieties' in Brock Street (the Oddfellows Hall) (Stansfield 2017).



Figures 3 & 4 Reddrop's shop in Cheapside (left) and Lower Church Street (right) The Lower Church St frontage was extended, duplicating the first portion. Source: *The Builder*, 10 December 1937.

We see here evidence of the importance for a local practice of 'repeat business' from local business people and their families for their houses, commercial premises and speculative house-building as Lancaster expanded in the interwar years. As car-ownership grew, so did the number of commissions for garages – domestic and commercial.

Scotforth and Scale Hall

The interwar expansion of Scotforth and Scale Hall brought many new commissions. For example, in 1932 there was a house for R T Heys on Rutland Avenue; in 1933 a house for the Rev. A Jackson on the Hall Park Estate, Scotforth, where in 1935 a bungalow and garage were erected for Mr Walling. Also in 1935 there was a house for Mr G Standen on Ashton Road (the Ashford Park Estate) and a house in the grounds of the Royal Albert Institute for the trustees. In 1936–7 the Pearsons had bought Brunton House from the Royal Albert Institute Trustees and, as noted above, three sets of plans were submitted to create ten flats, a semi-detached house and adjacent garages at the rear of the property. The house had been erected by Miss Elizabeth Dalton: Joseph Aloysious Hansom of London was the architect. The Sharpe family added a fourth gable and the two-storey cottage was attached for a member of the Royal Albert Institution staff by F W Leach. It was used as a private mental home for wealthy women after the Sharpe family sold it on. It remains much as the Pearsons altered it. In 1935 eight pairs of semi-detached houses on Penrhyn Road were designed for Mr H Hudson; and in 1936 a pair of semi-detached houses on Torrisholme Road and five pairs of semi-detached houses on the Vale Estate for Messrs Prince.

Acknowledgements

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Author profile

Born in Openshaw, Manchester, and a resident Freeman of Lancaster, Colin Stansfield (BA Hons) is a retired civil servant with a life-long interest in North-West architects which led him to compile databases of Preston and Lancaster architects between 1851 and 1951. He is a founder and life member of the 20th Century Society. Email: colinstansfield979@gmail.com

Appendix 1

List of Pearson commissions in Lancaster Borough between 1904 and 1944 showing, where recorded, the year the plan was approved, its address and the name of the applicant.

C B Pearson

- 1904 Bowerham Mission Hall, Bowerham Road
70 Dallas Road, greenhouse - William Masheter
- 1905 Claremont View, house- Mrs Taylor
18 Brock Street, house to house and shop - J R Birkett
King Street, shop to cafe - J R Wiper
- 1906 Derwent Road, houses - T Teasdale
- 1907 Penny and James Streets, premises – J S Parkinson
Victoria Avenue, houses – Simeon Waites
- 1908 St Paul's Road, houses - Simeon Waites
- 1909 Thurnham Street, Owen House, premises - George Iresnon
Kelsey and Sibsey Streets, houses and shops – E Parkinson
Scotforth Road, houses - J R Wiper
- 1919 Market Street, Rendezvous Café - Palladium Co
Dalton Square, Town Hall Garage – J C Hinton; (and a plan in 1927)
Wingate Saul Rd, houses - W C Halliday (other family members may have used Pearsons)
- 1922 King and Common Garden Streets, shops and premises – W E Pinches
- 1923 St Mary's Church (The Priory), vestry
- 1924 Water and Cable Streets, warehouses and offices - A H Mansergh
- 1926 Cheapside, shop - Reddrop & Co.
Cheapside and St Nicholas Street, shop - Hart & Levy
- 1927 18 Dalton Square - CBP office
- 1929 8 Dalton Square, surgery - Millar, Howat & Howson, doctors
- 1930 1 Dalton Square, offices- Brittanica [sic] Assurance Co.

C B Pearson & Son

- 1931 Dalton Square, Palace Cinema - Hippodrome Ltd (and a plan in 1933)
Grand Cinema, St Leonardgate - Mr Barker
1–3 Ash Grove, houses
- 1932 4 Friar Street - W Byrom of 2 Friar St
Rutland Street, house - R T Heys
- 1933 Mary St, Smiths Row - Mr Kinlock (and a plan in 1941)
14–18 Regent Street, flats - Mrs J Atroy
Hall Park, house – Rev. A Jackson
St Thomas' Church, Penny St, vestry
- 1934 49 Scotforth Road / Rutland Avenue, house/shop - Mr C E Willan
14–16 Ardengate (now 12 and 14), houses - Mr J Fell, junior
- 1935 Smiths Row, off Mary Street - Oliver & Co
Penny Street - Oliver & Co (and further plans in 1937)
Moor Street - Mr W Seward
Parliament Street, Bell's factory - R Gardner (and further plans in 1937–8)
Penrhyn Road, Scale Hall, houses - Mr H Hudson
Hall Park, house - Mr Walling
Ashton Road, Royal Albert Institute, house - F W Leach
Ashton Road, Ashford Park Estate, house - Mr G Standen

- Waterside Farm, Stodday, house - Messrs W & J Pye
1936 Moor Street - Mr Eaton (Lcr) Ltd (and plans in 1951)
Gage Street, house and shop - Mr Eaton
Cable Street, wash-house and store - Messrs W & J Pye
Old Caton Road - The Central Laundry
1 Golgotha Road, garage - C B Pearson
Craiglands, Stanmore Drive, Haverbreaks, garage - Mr Pye
Torrisholme Road, houses - Messrs Prince
Vale Estate, houses - Messrs Prince
1936–7 Scotforth Road, Brunton House, conversion to flats, garage, house
1937 Owen Road, Methodist School
Dallas Road Lads' Club
Fenton Street/King's Arms Yard - J Pimbley & Son
Thurnham and Marton Streets - Mr Swainson (and again in 1938)
1938 41 Penny Street - Messrs Fleming Reid Co Ltd
King Street Showrooms - Barton Townley Ltd
Ashton Road, Royal Albert Institute - three sets of plans for the Trustees
Westbourne Road, 'Strawberry Bank', house - Alderman Mrs Helme
1939 King Street (petrol filling-station and garage) - Barton Townley Ltd
1940 St Leonardgate, workshop extension - Waring & Gillow
10 Newby Drive - E T Parkinson
1941 19 Dalton Square, workshop extension - Mr J W Sandham
1944 Frances Passage – Miss Irving's Milk Bar
1948 Market Street, Empire Café

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