

A Poetic Survey Round Birmingham by J. Bisset

From: Bisset's Magnificent Directory

POETIC SURVEY ROUND Birmingham, &c.

Suppose some TRAV'LLERS, at an Inn set down,
And INNS 1 there are that grace this TRADING TOWN
Where elegance and taste, at once, combine
With well stor'd larders – cellars stock'd with wine;
Clean well air'd rooms – for those who pass the night,
Each HOST and HOSTESS, civil and polite.
High mett'l'd horses, every Inn can boast,
For those, in haste, who wish to travel post;
No chaises can be found more neat or clean,
From Dover cliffs to Tweed, or Gretna Green.
Should TRAVELLERS incline to spend a day,
And thro' this SEAT OF ARTS should wish to stray,

¹ For a card of the principal Inns, &c. See plate F. in Magnificent Directory.

To point each devious path shall be my pride,
Well pleas'd (if they'll accept) I'll be their GUIDE.
Or, if th' adjacent spots, that greet the eye,
Which, from St. Philip's Dome, with ease we 'spy,
Will gratify their taste, I'll climb that height,
And, from the CUPOLA, indulge their sight.
For strangers, freely, shall command my pow'r,
To guide their footsteps, at a leisure hour;
And, whilst surrounding objects they survey,
Some knowledge of the diff'rent scenes convey.
Tho' little of the kind I have to spare,
Yet what I have, I'm sure, I'll freely share,
And, any little child, by chance, you meet,
May name each PUBLIC BUILDING, and each STREET.

Or any stranger guide, and easy tell
The way to ev'ry Inn – or Grand Hotel.
Of course I can, with ease, each Fact'ry show,
And say – “There HANDSWORTH lies – or there SOHO.”
Then, where yon Cross salutes the azure skies,
See PHILIP'S¹ noble dome majestic rise;
My station there I'll fix – as suiting best,
Then, faithful guide you – North, East, South, or West.
South-west the FOUNDRY,² and the BRASS-HOUSE³ stand,
The CRESCENT,⁴ and the WHARFS,⁴ rich views command;

St. Philip's is one of the handsomest Churches and Church-yards in England; it is situated on an eminence and commands a beautiful and extensive Prospect. The walks around it are planted with trees. See Plate H. of Magnificent Directory,

² Dearman and Francis's Iron Foundry, Magnificent Directory, plate U.

³ Works belonging to the Brass Company, plate L.

⁴ See plate G.

The MONUMENT,¹ near LADY-WOOD,² you'll view,
There SPRINGFIELD'S³ seen – the COTTAGE⁴ lies perdue.
Near yonder terrace walk, so clean and neat,
There GILES and FORREST oft prepare a treat
Of healthy bev'rage; Porter, stout and strong,
To renovate old age, or cheer the young.
Beneath your eye – north-west, you'll view ST. PAUL'S,⁵
And where, in yonder vale, the water falls,
Where locks impede the current's rapid force,
A grand CANAL⁶ there takes its devious course;
In mazy windings round the town it bends
Its circling course; at south-south-east it ends,
Tho' various branches from its trunk extends.
Now further glance your eye beyond the town,
Where purple Heaths⁷ appear, or dusky brown,
Close by yon LAKE'S⁸ pellucid stream, behold
A GOTHIC PILE,⁹ which seems some cent'ries old
VULCANIC FANCY there display'd her taste,
And rear'd the fabrick on the barren waste;

¹ Belonging to Parrot Noel, Esq.

² Seat of Colonel Rann.

³ Seat of Thomas Barker, Esq.

⁴ Cottage of Content.

⁵ St. Paul's Chapel is a very neat stone building; there is an Altar Piece of St. Paul's Conversion, in stained glass, executed by the ingenious and celebrated Mr Eginton, of Handsworth – (plate N.) – whose elegant works are so much admired at Oxford, Windsor, Fonthill and various other parts of Great Britain and Ireland.

⁶ Birmingham Grand Canal.

⁷ Birmingham Heath

⁸ Hockley Pool, a beautiful lake of water, plate A.

⁹ Hockley Abbey, the seat of Mr Richard Ford, do.

The FORGE materials for the work provides,
Rude cinders clothe the front – compose the sides.
Where bogs and brakes, and marshy fens were seen,
We now behold a turf-enamel'd green;
It's hoary sage, withdrawn from toil and care,
Both ease and solitude possesses there;
The moss-clad turrets, ivy-clasp'd, o'er grown,
Look as if PEACE had mark'd the spot her own.
On Yonder gentle slope; which shrubs adorn,
Where grew, of late, "rank weeds," gorse, ling, and thorn,
Now pendant woods, and shady groves are seen,

And nature there assumes a nobler mien.
 There verdant lawns, cools grots, and peaceful bow'rs,
 Luxuriant, now, are strew'd with sweetest flow'rs,
 Reflected by the lake, which spreads below,
 All Nature smiles around – there stands SOHO!¹
 SOHO!² – where GENIUS and the ARTS preside,
 EUROPA'S wonder and BRITANNIA'S pride;
 THY matchless works have rais'd Old England's fame,
 And future ages will record thy name;
 Each rival Nation shall to thee resign
 The PALM of TASTE, and own – 'tis justly thine;
 Whilst COMMERCE shall to thee an alter raise,
 And infant Genius learn to lisp thy praise:
 Whilst Art and Science reign, they'll still proclaim
 THINE! ever blended, with a BOULTON'S name.

¹ The seat of M. Boulton, Esq. Plate A.

² Soho, about two miles from Birmingham, on the Walsall and Wolverhampton Road. For a view of this elegant and splendid manufactory, see plate T.

Behold, due north, a stately building stands,¹
 Whose friendly portal wide to all expands.
 The poor, if sick or lame, there find relief,
 To calm their anguish or assuage their grief.
 By voluntary gifts the pile was rear'd,
 By voluntary aid each patient's cheer'd,
 And what must be acceptable to heav'n,
 Relief to strangers, there is freely giv'n;
 The Sons of GALEN anxious cares express,
 To ease their patients pain and sooth distress;
 Like good Samaritans, with pleasure toil,
 And freely pour their balsam, wine, and oil.
 Near north by east, BARR BEACON² greets your eye,
 More to the right, you'll ASTON'S³ turrets spy.
 BRITANNIA BREW'RY, nearer view, between,
 And o'er that CONIC TOW'R⁴ lies NECHELL'S GREEN.⁵
 In that neat SQUARE, ST MARY'S⁶ you'll behold,
 Whose vane is tipp'd and shines with burnish'd gold.
 Beyond it, ASTON JUNCTION'S⁷ plainly seen,
 Where boats seem sailing o'er the verdant green;

¹ Birmingham General Hospital. – It was opened in 1779 for the reception of patients, since which period no less than 22,373 have happily experienced its bountiful effects.

² Near which is the seat of Joseph Scott, Esq.

³ Aston Hall, the seat of Heneage Legge, Esq.

⁴ Aston Glass House, the Manufactory of Messrs. Smart, Jones, and Co. See plate W. in Magnificent Directory.

⁵ At which are the Rolling and Thimble Mills, belonging to Mr. Rose.

⁶ St. Mary's Chapel, is a neat octagon brick building, with a beautiful stone spire.

⁷ Aston Junction Wharf, adjacent to the elegant and extensive Porter Brewery of Messrs. Clay, Barrs, Farley & Co.

Or rosy children, sportive, trip along.
 To see rare Fire-works – or to hear a Song:
 For oft, in Summer, Music's secret pow'rs,
 Woos thousands to VAUXHALL, to pass their hours.
 Next ASHTED¹ view – the Chapel's plainly seen,
 The BARRACKS for the troops, lie just between.
 BARTHOLOMEW'S² you'll see about due east,
 SMALL HEATH extends beyond, two miles at least.
 Where curling eddies of black smoke ascends,
 STEAM-ENGINES³ wondrous force and pow'r portends,
 A WATT and BOULTON'S Fame they sure must raise,
 Far, far beyond, my Muse's feeble praise;
 Tho' on a theme so grand she'd wish to shew,
 Respect to TALENTS and to GENIUS due.
 These Locks, and Boats, and Bridges, now you'll view,
 Point out a fresh CANAL,⁴ and Junction new;
 Thence boats to WARWICK and STRATFORD go,
 And thence – where silver THAMES and AVON flow.
 Now, more beneath your eye, see, to the right,
 St. MARTIN'S⁵ beauteous spire attracts your sight.

¹ Ashted is a new built Hamlet adjoining the town; having a very neat Chapel; and the Barracks are situated there – about a mile from the centre of Birmingham.

² Chapel of St. Bartholomew.

³ Watt and Boulton's ingenious and celebrated Steam Engine, secured to them not only by a common Patent, but by Act of Parliament, plate Q.

⁴ The Warwick and Stratford Canal.

⁵ A very ancient Church, with one of the most beautiful Spires in the kingdom. This Church has an excellent peal of twelve bells, and a very musical set of chimes. For a distant view of the steeple, see Magnificent Directory, plate D.

Those Trees that wave below, by yonder MOAT,¹
 The ancient MANOR of our Lords denote;
 The STREAMLET which beyond you now may see,
 For we've no RIVER else, - is call'd the REA.²
 South-east lies DERITEND and BORDESLEY³ rare,
 Both fam'd alike for good and special ware.
 CAMP-HILL⁴ upon yon summit you'll espy,
 Beyond, FAIR HILL⁵ and MOSELEY WAKE they lie.
 More south stands MOSELEY VILLAGE – just below,
 Where cedars, ash, and lofty poplars grow,
 Lies MOSELEY HALL,⁶ near which is CANNON HILL,
 And, just beyond that CHURCH,⁷ the PEBBLE MILL.
 See NORTON⁸ spire, upon yon rising ground,
 And num'rous villas lie dispers'd around;
 Those hills beyond, are Bromsgrove Lickey nam'd,
 More for their barrenness, than beauty, fam'd.
 MOOR GREEN,⁹ and SELLY OAK¹⁰ lie south by west,
 In Nature's verdant liv'ry, gaily drest;
 EDGBASTON'S¹¹ rural beauties intervene,
 And fairest landscapes fill the chequer'd scene.

¹ Moat House, originally the seat of the Lords de Birmingham, now the Manufactory of Mr Thomas Francis.

² A mere brook, serving to turn mills.

³ Two Manufacturing Hamlets adjoining Birmingham. – For a view of the Chapel, &c. see plate S.

⁴ For an account of a curious battle fought there in 1643 – See Hutton's History of Birmingham.

⁵ Once the residence of the Rev. Dr. Priestley: also of the late Dr. Withering.

⁶ Seat of John Taylor, Esq.

⁷ Edgbaston Church.

⁸ King's Norton.

⁹ Seat of Thomas Russell, Esq.

¹⁰ Seat of James Bingham, Esq.

¹¹ Edgbaston Hall, seat of Lord Calthorpe.

Now, gently, to the right, your eyes incline,
And mark where Barges float along yon line,¹
Till disappearing, 'in the dark profound,'
They sail some thousand yards beneath the ground;
From thence emerging, swiftly on they glide,
To reach the confines of the Severn's side.
What, tho' we boast no RIVER'S genial source,
And, to old Ocean, rocks impede our course,
Impervious mountains, yielding to our skill,
We pierce their centers, and the vallies fill;
Direct their springs, construct a NAVIGATION,
To waft our COMMERCE to each distant nation;
And shew, where'er our PATTERNS are unfurl'd,
For works of FANCY, we outstrip the WORLD.
The COAL and TIMBER WHARFS see just below,
South-west stand ISLINGTON, and HAGLEY ROW;
Beyond, the RAVENHURST² and HARBORNE³ lie;
South-west by west, you may the LIGHTWOODS⁴ spy;

¹ The Worcester and Birmingham Canal – no less celebrated for its breadth and deep-cutting, than for its famous arched Tunnel near King's Norton, which is nearly two miles in length, sixteen feet wide, and eighteen feet high; but so perfectly straight, though it was begun at extremities, as to be distinctly seen through. It is allowed to be one of the greatest curiosities of the kind in Great Britain, and redounds highly to the honour of that eminent engineer Cartwright. This tunnel is so extensive in the centre, where Barges pass and re-pass, that the Royal Arch Masons of Birmingham held a regular Chapter there in August 1795.

² Seat of J. Wigley, Esq.

³ Seat of Thomas Green, Esq.

⁴ Seat of Jonathan Grundy, Esq.

Three miles exhibits to your view,
Those rural scenes¹ that SHENSTONE'S pencil drew.
Around, in various parts, you'll RUINS trace,
Mementoes sad, of RIOT and disgrace;
RELIGION o'er these relics drops a tear,
And SUPERSTITION shrinks, appall'd with fear;
The MUSE laments the scene, but draws a veil,
And, in oblivion, sinks the hapless tale.
Near LADY GROVE² again you may descry,

The tow'ring MONUMENT ascending high;
The BEAKS³ and SHIRELAND HALL,⁴ see to the right,
And, west-ward, SMETHWICK⁵ BRASS-WORKS meet your sight;
Where clouds of smoke in lofty columns rise,
And sable exhalations dim the skies.

¹ The Leasowes, a most delightful and enchanting spot, near Hales Owen – once the residence of Shenstone, the celebrated pastoral Poet; whose taste and genius form'd the place, from a rude uncultivated waste. It is about four miles from Hagley, the seat of Lord Lyttleton.

² Residence of Mr. Wm. Walker, merchant, Congreve-street.

³ Residence of Mr. J. Rabone, merchant.

⁴ Residence of Messrs. Cairns and Frears, merchants.

⁵ Very extensive Works, belonging to the Smethwick Brass Company, about three miles from Birmingham. – Messrs. Boulton and Watt, have erected there a complete Iron Foundry, in which the power of their steam engines is applied to the boring of cylinders, pumps, &c. to drilling, turning, or blowing smelting furnaces, and whatever tends to abridge human labour. The following facts shew the wonderful powers of their engines; one bushel of coals applied to one of them, will raise 30,000,000 of pounds weight of water one foot high, 3,000,000 ten feet high, or the like proportion to any given height. For a particular account of these stupendous works, see notes to Dr. Darwin's celebrated Botanic Garden. – About two miles on this side Smethwick, are the Glass Works of Mr. John Hawker, for a view of which, see plate 0 in Magnificent Directory.

Our circuit is now complete, around the Town,
Ere from this eminence we venture down,
Be pleas'd to look once more t'ward WINSON GREEN,¹
Where glittering spears, and MARTIAL troops, are seen,
Where splendid BANNERS, BRITAIN'S ARMS display,
And VOLUNTEERS are rang'd in fair array.
When dangers² threat'ned NEPTUNE'S favourite ISLE,
Ere BRITISH bulwarks thunder'd off the NILE,³
A warlike band arose, a valiant host,
To guard the fam'd BRITANNIA'S sea-girt coast;
INTERIOR COUNTIES, fir'd with ardent zeal,
Pour'd forth their sons, to guard the Common-weal;
ASSOCIATED CORPS, join'd HEART and HAND,
And BIRMINGHAM produc'd a chosen band,
Of HORSE⁴ and FOOT,⁵ – to aid their Country's cause,
Protect their KING, their LIBERTY, and LAWS.
These are the troops, in training, now you view,
The HORSEMEN, SCARLET wear, the FOOT, TRUE BLUE.

¹ Mr. Pickering's academy, near Birmingham Heath.

² When there was a rumour of an intended invasion.

³ Alluding to Nelson's brilliant victory, Aug. 1, 1798.

⁴ The Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers, commanded by Capt. Pearson.

⁵ The Birmingham Loyal Association, Lord Brooke, Colonel Commandant.

* The above respectable corps are composed of Gentlemen of the town, who furnish themselves, at their own expense, with elegant clothing, arms, and accoutrements. They amount to upwards of 500 strong, and have evinced great zeal and attention to the interests of the town. The alacrity and readiness of the Association to serve in cases of emergency, or to assist in extinguishing fires and protecting property, has often, deservedly, call'd forth the

thanks and approbation of the inhabitants.

Now, soft descending, from this height, we'll trace
The different MANUFACT'RIES of the place;
But WORKS so various BIRMINGHAM displays,
To view them all, would take some length of days.
Therefore each courteous READER, STRANGER, FRIEND,
Back to your Inn, be pleas'd your way to bend;
T'amuse you there, I'll do the best I'm able,
And give a brief DESCRIPTION – in a FABLE.

* It was originally the Author's intention to annex "TONY LUMPKIN'S Ramble thro' BIRMINGHAM," written for, and spoken by Mr MUNDEN, at the Theatre last Season, and received with such unbounded applause:- But as the RAMBLE OF THE GODS contains a more circumstantial account of the different MANUFACTORIES, &c. he presumes it will be more acceptable to the Public – to whom he submits it, with all due deference.