

# An Historical Overview of Laura Place, Bath

Michael Rowe & Mike Chapman, History of Bath Research Group.

The houses in Laura Place (all Grade I listed) are grouped around an open lozenge-shaped arena which serves as the grand entrance into Great Pulteney Street, approached from Pulteney Bridge and Argyle Street at the commercial end of the Pulteney Street axis. Two residential side streets were built leading off from the opposite diagonals, Henrietta Street to the north and Johnstone Street to the south, intended to be connected to further formal developments on each side of the main axis which were never carried out. Laura Place therefore provides a focus to the Pulteney Street development and a generous open space which has been put to a variety of purposes throughout its existence.

Laura Place is named for Miss Henrietta Laura Pulteney upon whose Bathwick Estate it was built. Miss Pulteney, as she was commonly known, but as Laura to her family, was the only surviving child of William Johnstone and his wife Frances Pulteney. Laura was born in 1766 two years after her mother inherited the vast Pulteney fortunes on the death of William Pulteney earl of Bath. Laura's father took the Pulteney name on marriage and commenced the development of all the estates initially in the name of his wife and her Trustees.

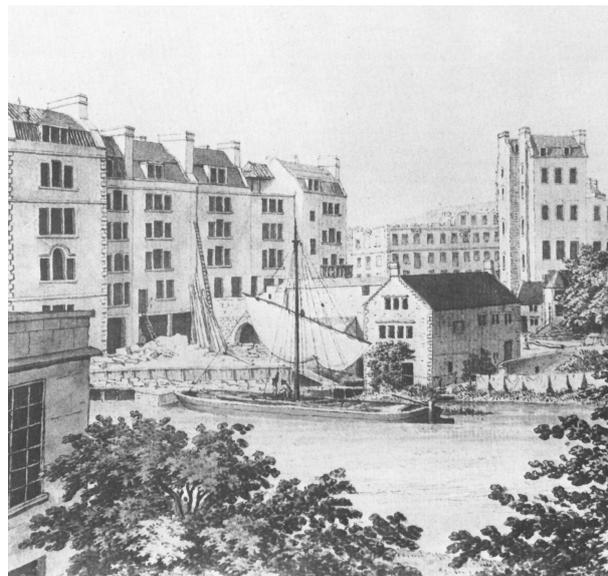
Bathwick was ripe for development as it was largely gardens and fields and the hillsides rich in springs, a valuable and very necessary resource for any developer. Bath was constantly short of clean water and the Bathwick springs proved a priceless asset in negotiations with the council for the building of a bridge and subsequent development of the estate. The bridge was completed in 1770 but the recession in Bath building meant that effectively it led nowhere until financial circumstances for Bath builders improved.

As financial circumstances began to ease, leases started to be sold in 1782 for building to plans by the city architect Thomas Baldwin. There had been numerous earlier plans by Robert Adam but Pulteney considered these much too grandiose and expensive to build. The bridge had cost four times the original estimate and therefore Baldwin was commissioned to provide more economical plans and drawings. These have not yet been found but some of the Adam drawings exist which, compared with the finished buildings, Baldwin clearly produced a similar but stripped down version. No. 6 Laura Place is noteworthy as Thomas Baldwin's own house from 1791 until 1794 when bankruptcy forced its sale.

## The Building of Laura Place

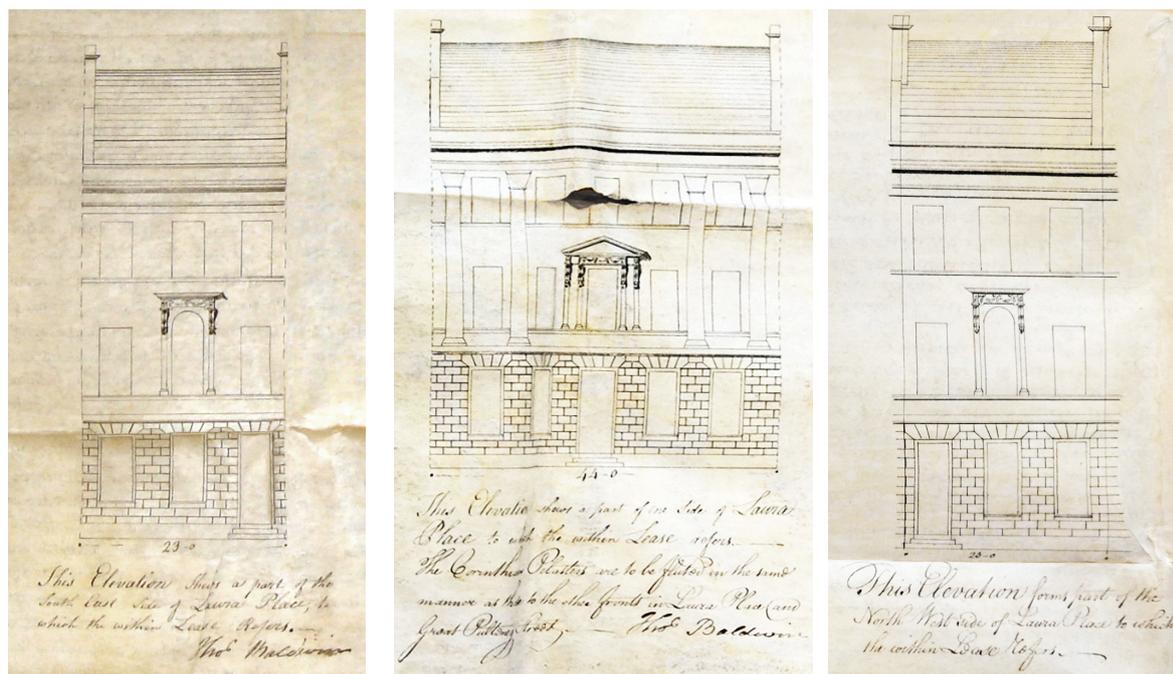
Miss Pulteney at the age of 22 laid the foundation stone for the new buildings in 'Boatstall Meadow' in Bathwick on 31 March 1788, marking the recommencement of work on the development of the New Town of Bath. It is said that she laid the corner stone of Laura Place but, so far, no inscribed stone has been found. The common practice of individuals and builders buying one or more leases and then starting to build was followed, although the Pulteney leases are specific in demanding that the master drawings for the elevations be followed and some materials are specified.

**Right: Drawing by Samuel Hieronimus Grimm showing the piecemeal construction of Argyle Street and Laura Place, with materials being delivered by a trow moored at the wharf beside Bathwick Mill.**



Building supplies were brought up the Avon under sail on large trows and included Welsh slate and ironwork from Shropshire. The source of timber is uncertain but may well have been imported to Bristol from the Baltic. These materials were brought to a wharf or landing place next to the tail-race of Bathwick Mill, with access around the building site through an arch ('No.6') at the east end of

Pulteney Bridge. Stone from Bathwick Downs was used for the bridge but the sizes were too small and requests for larger stones were made. This suggests that some of the best facing stone in Laura Place may be from Combe Down.



The elevations of Nos.1, 2 and 3 Laura Place, from the deed plans.

The 99-year building leases for the north-west side of Laura Place held by the Bath Record Office show that although each of the houses there (Nos.1 to 3) were granted to separate the contractors -

Mr. Henry Mais of Bath, Carver, for No.1 Laura Place, 15 May 1789 [BRO 00036/6/1]

Mr. James Margerum of Bath, Builder, for No.2 Laura Place, 26 March 1788 [BRO 00036/6/2]

Mr. Thomas Chilton of Bath, Plumber, for No.3 Laura Place, 25 June 1788 [BRO 00036/6/3]

- they also show that all the houses in Laura Place followed the same specifications. Since the roadway of Laura Place had to link up with the level of the bridge, some 20ft above the meadow, the level of the first or lowest floor of these houses, including the level or surface of any garden, yard or outlet at the rear, was to be 'at least two feet above the Level of the highest Flood Mark of the River Avon now appearing on the side of a certain Mill in the possession of John Warren called Monks Mill situate on the East side of Orange Grove in Bath' (i.e. the Town Mill on the opposite side of the river). This not only meant building double basements below the houses and streets but also under the open space which, optimistically, were hoped to be used to some profit for stabling and other temporary purposes, as described by William Pulteney when planning the developments in the 1770s:

'By the plan of the new Buildings it is proposed to leave a large open Circular space [i.e. Laura Place] next the Bridge ... and as the whole ground must be raised for the Building (by means of earth and rubbish) so as to be above the highest flood mark, and the under-ground storey of the houses must be raised above or on the top of that raised ground, the consequence is that the several terminations of the ... streets, which will run across the aforesaid open Circular space and all join at the Bridge, must be arched at Mr Pulteney's expence to the hight of the parlour story's of the intended houses, but after entering the several streets, the persons who build the houses on each side will arch the street which lyes between them at their own Expence. It is supposed that the Arches to be thus raised at Mr Pulteney's expence may be lett for Stables and Coach houses as a method has been invented of making them perfectly dry by claying over them in a new invented manner. As this is the Case Mr Pulteney thinks it will be proper to take a Lease of ninety nine years of this Circular piece of ground to a Trustee for his behoof in order to secure to him any rent which may arise from the said Arches when Converted into Stables and Coach houses as some return for the money which he must lay out upon this Entailed estate ...'.

In front of each house the contractor was required to construct an Area ten feet wide and at least nine feet deep from the surface of a 12-foot wide footway which he was to pave 'with the best faced pennant Stone'. Separating the footway from the area there was to be 'a neat Iron railing and that such Railing shall range in a Straight Line and parallel with the front of such house and Buildings in an uniform manner and shall be fixed into the best kind of Freestone Kerb or Base'. Also, there should be '.. a Lamp with a neat handsome Iron Support and Lamp Head, the Situation and proportion of expence for lighting and erecting the same to be fixed by the said Henrietta Laura Pulteney or her Surveyor and to be fixed in the Iron Railing of the said house in Laura Place, and keep the same Lamp burning from Sun set to Sun Rising at his or their own Expence'.

The leaseholder was not only to keep in repair the footways in front of each house, but also to 'pave and pitch and afterwards keep in repair the pitching lying in front of the premises ... extending from the front to the Middle of the said Street and Place ... the level of the pitching of the North West Corner of Laura Place to be within Eighteen Inches of the Level of the present pitching at the North West Corner of the Messuage or Dwellinghouse on the South East corner of the said New Bridge ...'.

Below the streets also there were to be 'good and sufficient Drains from the said Dwelling house and buildings to be built in Laura Place which shall be sufficient to convey and carry off from the said Dwellinghouses into the Common Sewer made or intended to be made in the said Streets all the foul and other water and that at his or their Expence which Drains should be made of Freestone Ashlar and Pennant not less than Ten Inches by Eight Inches in the clear'. It was agreed that Miss Pulteney would construct 'a Grand Common Sewer or Sewers not less than Three feet wide and Five feet in height in the clear and such as may be judged necessary for the conveniency of the future Occupiers of the said Messuage or Tenement and Premises ... into which Grand Common Sewer the Collateral Drains from the said Messuage are to be permitted to empty themselves in order to be discharged into the River Avon'.

Also, she would lay water mains '.. thro' a sufficient Number of Pipes to the said Messuage or Tenement and Premises ... for the purpose of properly supplying the Occupiers of the said Houses ... with good wholesome Soft Water ... in order that the Tenant or Occupier may affix feather pipes thereto'. In the meantime, there was an agreement with the Bath Corporation to supply water temporarily from their main which passed through Laura Place to the bridge. Although it is evident that much of the roadway in Laura Place was supported on vaults to accommodate these service pipes, it is not clear whether this was the case over the whole area. The foundations needed for the massive column proposed later on (mentioned below) would suggest that the centre of the area may have been filled with a solid core of 'earth and rubbish' from quarry waste.

Finally, the leaseholders were 'not to suffer any person or persons to inhabit or dwell in or upon the said premises ... who shall therein use exercise carry on or follow the trade, Business or calling of a Tanner, Skinner, Currier, Fellmonger, Leather Dresser, Blacksmith, Brightsmith, Farrier, Butcher, Slaughterman, Malting, Tallow Chandler, Soap boiler, Cooper, Plumber ... or any other dangerous, noisy, noisome or offensive Trade or calling whatsoever'.

## **The Open Space**

### The Grass Enclosure

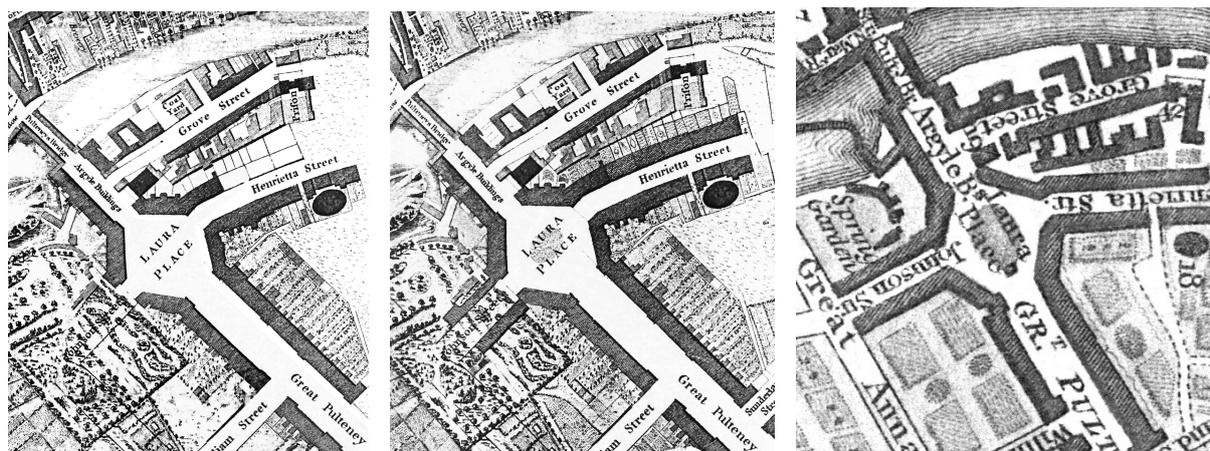
The leases also mention that '.. the said Open Place called or intended to be called Laura Place shall forever hereafter remain and be a Public and Open Place for the use of all the Kings Subjects, and [Miss Pulteney] shall not erect any Buildings or Structures thereon in any manner or by any means whatsoever to obstruct or hinder the free and open Passage therein and the use thereof as an Open Place or Highway ... and also there shall from time to time and at all times thereafter be preserved and kept a free open and convenient Way or Passage for Carriages and Persons on foot from the North East end of Laura Place aforesaid into and from the Road leading from Widcomb to Bathampton.' The latter stipulation presumably refers to Pulteney Street which at that stage was still connected to the Bathampton Road, redirected after 1792 around the Sydney Hotel and Gardens.

Harcourt Master's map of Bath of 1806 shows that by then the centre of Laura Place was occupied by an oval area (possibly paved) which, from the childhood remembrances of Lady Jervis was fronted by a wooden watch-box at the end facing Pulteney Street. This 'sentry' box appears to have been removed in 1809, as mentioned in a letter to the *Bath Chronicle*:

'September 1809; A Bath Correspondent expressed himself highly pleased with the improvement that is making in Laura Place; the removal of that tasteless object and most intolerable nuisance, the watch box; and forming an elegant and spacious iron railing with a grass plot, surrounded by 16 lamps will give a relief and brilliancy to the spot truly pleasing. He advises, however, that if any shrubs are intended to be introduced that they may be used sparingly, and not suffered to grow above four or five feet in height'.

The subscription to cover the cost of these works was raised by a resident, Mr.R.Lansdown, although this appears to have been insufficient according to a notice in the *Bath Herald* in May 1811;

'R.Lansdown presents his respects to those Ladies and Gentlemen who have honoured him with their Subscriptions towards the Improvement in Laura Place, and is sorry to say that he is still short of the expence in the sum of £25.7s.9d.; and as the Inhabitants and Visitors of Bath derive two material advantages from the alteration, he hopes to meet with their future support. The first, the removal of those intolerable nuisances that shocked every decent person, and were daily presented near the late watch box. – Secondly, that the inclosure causes the carriages, waggons, &c. to take their regular course, which prevent those obstructions that were continually experienced at the entrance of Argyle street. R.Lansdown has the satisfaction to say that Dr.Parry, Dr.Haygarth, Dr.Gibbes, Mr.Tickle, and Mr.Spry, acknowledge the improvement to be of great advantage to the public. Subscriptions thankfully received at his house, No.2 Laura Place.'



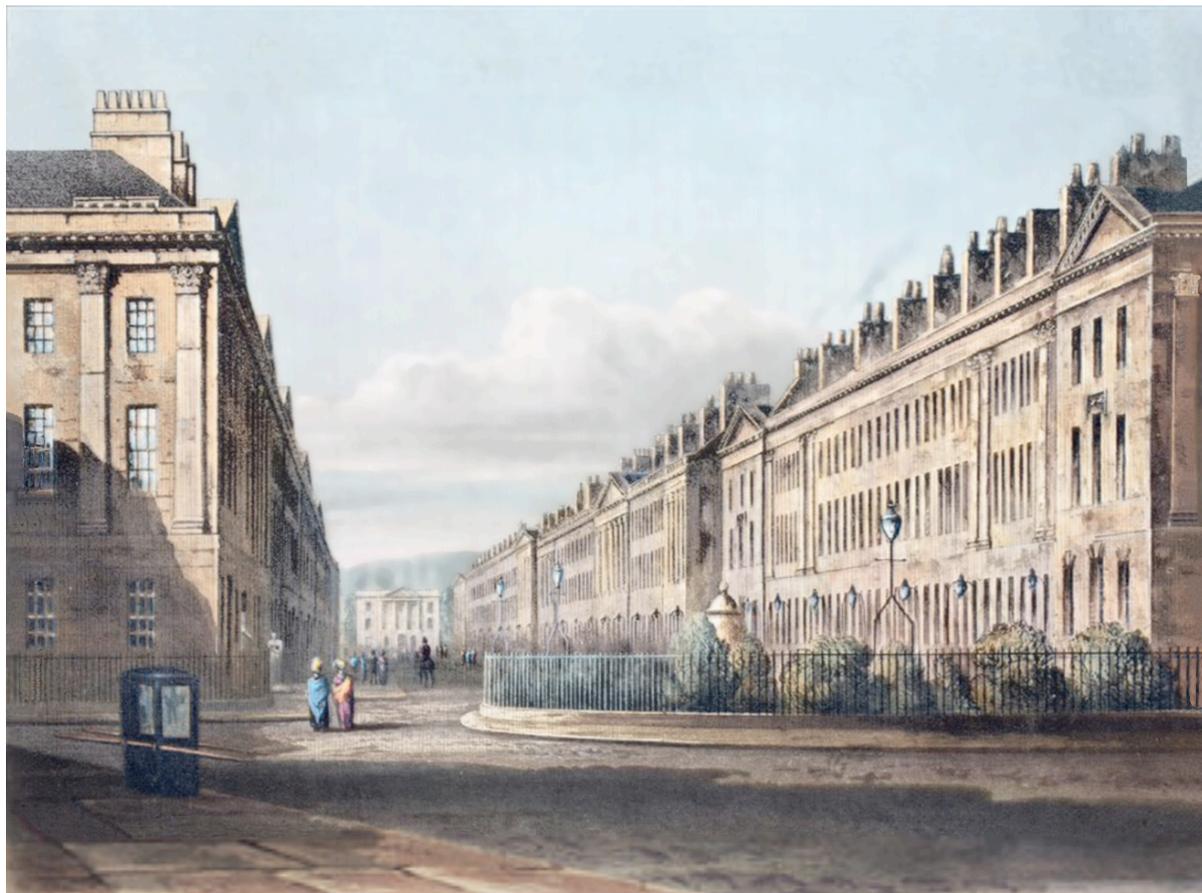
**Laura Place shown on Harcourt Masters' map, 1795 edition (left), compared with the 1806 edition (centre) showing a central area. Barrett's map of 1818 shows the grassed enclosure - with the watch-box.**

David Cox's view of Pulteney Street from Laura Place in 1820 shows this grass enclosure with its shrubbery surrounded by iron rails with oil-lamp brackets attached, much like other 'squares' in Bath at that time, and there is record of the grass being cut on a regular basis, probably for animal fodder. However a watch-box (possibly a more elegant replacement, similar to the surviving example in Norfolk Crescent) still appears at the eastern end, as indicated also on Barrett's map of 1818. What the shocking 'nuisances' near the box were has to be imagined, but the enclosure seems to have served as an early traffic control 'roundabout'. The presence of a sedan chair nearby suggests that by then Laura Place was already used as a standing by Bath chairmen.

### Lighting

Although the Act for gaslight in Bath in 1818 included Bathwick, there was a long delay before street lighting was introduced outside the city centre, and the oil-lamps in front of each of the houses on the south side of Pulteney Street are still prominently shown on Cox's 1820 illustration. Bathwick was the first 'suburb' to have gas lighting installed in 1827, reaching as far as Laura Place by 1829, and gas lamp standards are shown along Pulteney Street on Richard Woodroffe's print of 1830. Although it

also shows that the oil-lamp brackets around the grass enclosure had been retained, the overthrow lamps of individual houses were presumably removed from hereon.



**The central enclosure depicted by David Cox, 1820.**



**Laura Place c.1830 by Richard Woodroffe.**

### Fly Stands.

The earliest horse vehicle to be let for public hire in Bath was the old two-horse hackney coach, first licensed and used in 1815, but only a few of these occupied stands or plied for hire in the streets. However, as public demand increased, in 1829 the City Council appointed 23 standings for the 50 'Coaches, Chariots or Fly Carriages' licensed in the city that year. This included space for two carriages in Laura Place, 'one at the east, the other at the west end of the rails of the enclosed ground'. It was here that the first Fly-stand in Bath was laid out in 1830, on which occasion a citizen named Ewens who carried on the business of a tinman constructed the body of the first Fly seen in the city - with a tin body fitted onto ordinary wooden wheels. This novel vehicle was drawn down Pulteney Street and up Bathwick Hill to the amusement of a large number of people, but from hereon the lighter and more 'modern' single-horse Fly carriage became the standard street conveyance in Bath. Later photographs show that the Fly-stands in Laura Place, as elsewhere in the city, were paved with a hard-standing of 'stable' bricks to help keep the road surface clean and undamaged from the waiting horses.

### The Proposed Column

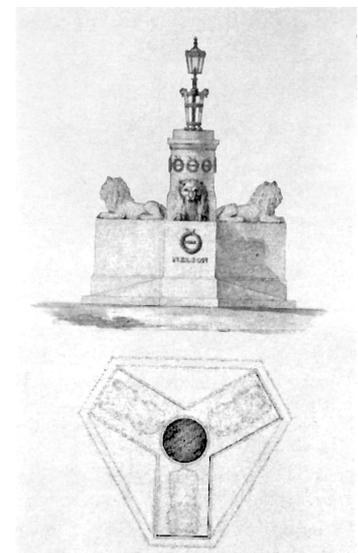
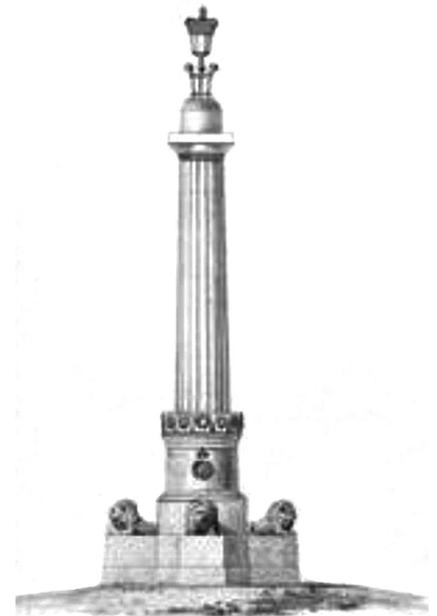
By the Reform Act of 1832 Bathwick was incorporated with the Parliamentary Borough of Bath and under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 became an integral part of the city. About this time a subscription was started to erect a column to commemorate the passage of the Reform Bill which was greeted with great acclaim in Bath, then a stronghold of radicalism. Several designs were proposed, the one by Henry E. Goodridge being chosen. A cutting from a Bath newspaper contains a report of a meeting which provides some surprising details about the plan:

REFORM COLUMN. – A highly respectable meeting of gentlemen and tradesmen favourable to this mode of commemorating the triumph of Reform, assembled at the White Lion Thursday at 12 o'clock, when, at the general request of those present, Thos. Kingsbury, esq. was called to the chair, and commenced the proceedings by observing that the objects of erecting the intended column were twofold – commemoration of the extension of the elective franchise to the mass of the people – and secondly the embellishment of the city. Nor was this all. It was intended also as a source of profit; for as a spiral staircase would be constructed in its interior, many would no doubt be induced to ascend to its summit for the sake of the view which so elevated a building would command, and it was proposed that the profits which might accrue from the admission money on these occasions, should, after the payment of the unavoidable repairs and necessary expenses in preserving the column, be appropriated to the Bath United Hospital. (General cheering.)

He subsequently added that it was in fact contemplated to place a statue of his Majesty on the summit, and that the question of expense was now the only consideration. He could state however, from his own knowledge, that many were disposed to increase their subscription if necessary, and he was in hopes that, for effecting a purpose so loyal and creditable to the city, the Bath Corporation would not be reluctant to contribute. He concluded by observing that the highest credit was due to Mr. H. E. Goodridge, the architect, who not only exerted himself with great activity, but had offered his entire services from the commencement to the finishing of the building gratuitously. – (Cheers.)

The various resolutions (for which see advertisement) were then moved and seconded by Messrs. Perfect, Jeans, Greene, G. King, T. Turner, T. Hunt, Capt. Price, and J. Davies. A committee having been appointed, the thanks of the meeting were unanimously voted to Mr. Kingsbury, the chairman, and to Mr. Smith, for his liberality in the giving the use of the room; after which the meeting separated.

The reaction of the local residents to the prospect of hordes of site-seers entering Laura Place to enjoy the spectacle from the top of this monstrous edifice can easily be imagined. In the event, the whole project was stopped and the brick foundations which had already been laid in the grass enclosure and the construction which had progressed nearly to the 'basement' were immediately dismantled. Significantly, the grass plot and railings were never reinstated, leaving the entrance clear into Pulteney Street for the next fifty years.



The design chosen for the Laura Place Reform Bill Column (above, left), compared with one of the other candidates (top right). The three-armed pedestal base with lions was evidently popular at the time, as can be seen from an 1827 drawing of a lamp pedestal for the estate among the Goodridge correspondence (bottom right).

### The Proposed Public Fountain

A proposal was made in May 1850 for a planned scheme of public fountains in Bath, and a sixty-member 'General Committee for Promoting the Erection of Public Fountains in this City' was formed, presided over by the Mayor and supported by the City Engineer. The supply of water was not thought to be a problem, owing to the many springs in the surrounding hills, but it was soon found that most of these sources had already been acquired for the city's water supply and that the value of spring-water was at a high premium. Several landowners outside the city were approached, but these all had to be abandoned on account of the expense in collecting and conducting the water from so great a

distance. A reduced scheme was therefore put forward by the City Engineer which involved pumping and purifying water from the river by means of a steam engine to a reservoir above the city. As a trial, it was decided to erect an 'exemplar' in Laura Place which could be supplied temporarily with river water supplied by Mr. Edward Saunders of the Town Mills who agreed to lend one of his 4hp water wheels for the pumping. A competition was then announced for designs to be submitted by local artists, and a subscription was set up to cover the cost.



The design chosen out of ten entries was by Mr. Frederick English jnr. of Eaton Villa, Camden Place, who belonged to a family of cabinet-makers in Milsom Street, the runner-up being the later City Architect, Charles E. Davis. The design was described as having an octagonal basin with a pedestal of rushes surrounded by heroic-sized figures of river gods. Above them was another basin in the form of a clam-shell containing a group of three allegorical figures of mermaids, with a cluster of reeds and water lilies rising above them. The water would be emitted from their blossoms and flowers, and after falling into the shell, would then overflow into the lower basin. The stone would come from the same quarry in Box as was used some 15 years earlier for the fountains erected by the Marquis of Lansdown at Bowood, the Marquis of Bath at Longleat, and the Hon. Mr. Henry Fox Talbot at Lacock Abbey, all of which had stood the test of time.

**The design for a fountain in Laura Place by Frederick English, c.1850**

Unfortunately, it was just at this time that public attention was increasingly directed towards the forthcoming Great Exhibition in London. Bath was well-known for its artists and craftsmen, and local interest was focussed on those who were busy preparing masterpieces to be entered for the opening of the Exhibition in March 1851. Anticipating an influx of foreign visitors to Bath as a result of the Exhibition, it was hoped that the new fountain would be ready by May, but by April interest in the project had fallen to such a degree that it was completely abandoned.

### Street Surfacing

Cotterell & Spackman's maps of the city's streetworks produced for the Corporation in 1852-4 show colour-coded details about road and pavement surfacing in Laura Place, together with some information about the underlying water mains (red lines) and sewers (blue lines). The footwalks, paved with Pennant flags for example are coloured pale blue. Argyle Street and Pulteney Bridge are shown pitched with limestone setts (coloured green-grey), but Laura Place and Pulteney Street are coloured orange, indicating they were metalled with a Macadamised surface (compacted gravel). This provided a stable and level surface, adequately drained with pitched gutters, but the attrition of iron tyres and shoes on any stone surface produced dust in the summer and mud in the winter.

To address this problem, the map shows that Laura Place was well provided with pedestrian crossings paved with pitched setts which could be swept clear according to weather conditions. These are shown (in green-grey) across the junction of the streets entering Laura Place, as well as at regular intervals all along Pulteney Street. Street watering to settle the dust in summer was already in operation throughout the city by this time, although water was probably obtained by pumping from the river. Water from a fire plug (in red, F.C.) fed from the Corporation main through the centre of Laura Place towards the bridge was only available in the event of a fire. The map is annotated in pencil to show that the Fly-stands had been moved to the triangle in front of Henrietta Street to give clear access between Pulteney Street and the bridge.



**Laura Place as shown on Cotterell and Spackman's street-works map of 1852-4.**



**Laura Place in 1870, before the erection of the fountain. By this time there were two cabstands, one on each side, at the entrance of Henrietta Street and Johnstone Street. To the left is a Bath Chair waiting for hire, behind the letter box. [Right: an early John Butt letter box type PB1/1 kept in Haverfordwest Town Museum.]**

It was probably also about this time that the first letter box pillars were installed in Laura Place and Pulteney Street, among the earliest in the country. Photographs of the 1870s show that these were originally of the hexagonal design by John Butt, made in Gloucester for the Western Area between

1853-59, the Laura Place box already occupying the same site as exists today. These appear to have been replaced by the present Penfold boxes, the standard type from 1866 to 1879, in the late 1870s.

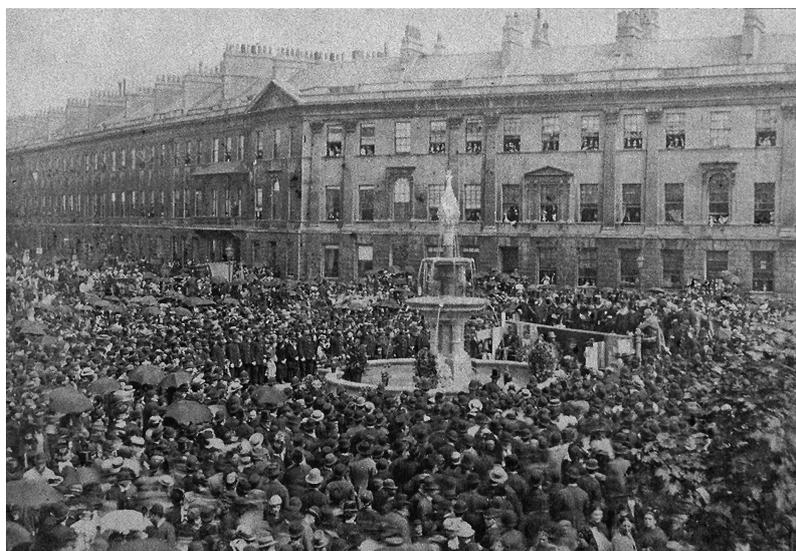
### The Laura Place Fountain

In 1877 a cold water fountain was again proposed in the centre of Laura Place to mark the centenary of the founding of the Bath & West Society, the last fountain to be installed in Bath. Earlier problems over the water supply were evidently overcome, probably as a result of better water supplies being brought in from elsewhere which superseded the local springs which were becoming increasingly contaminated. It is said that the fountain was fed by the small spring in Sydney Gardens.

Again a competition was announced in the local press in January 1878:

‘Architects are invited to submit Designs of a Fountain in Laura Place, Bath. Mythological figures are not required. The style should be simple, but bold and handsome. The material either Bath Stone, Ham Hill Stone, or Pennant. The size and height in accordance with the surroundings ...’.

The winner on this occasion was Alfred S. Goodridge, son of architect Henry E. Goodridge who designed the Reform Bill Column. Unfortunately, the subscriptions fell short of the cost of £595, and application was made to the Town Council for a grant of £100. The Council had no legal powers to do this, but the day was saved by voluntary contributions made by individual Council members. Unlike the earlier fountain, it was built in Gothic style on two tiers of columns surmounted by a pinnacle, with two upper dishes overflowing into a lower basin surrounded with chain railings. When the fountain was finally inaugurated on the 14 July 1880, it was attended by a crowd of 6,000 spectators, 4,000 of whom were Sunday School children. It was soon after this event that four ornamental gas-lamp standards were added to the fountain, one to each corner of the basin, and an avenue of trees planted along Pulteney Street and around Laura Place.



**Left: Inauguration of the Laura Place fountain in July 1880.**

**Below left: The Laura Place fountain in the early 1880s, illuminated with four gas lamps. Also visible is the newly-planted avenue of trees along Pulteney Street and around Laura Place.**

**Below: The fountain in the 1890s, showing the siphon for the water carts.**





**Laura Place on the OS 1:500 map of Bath, surveyed in 1882-83, showing the new fountain with lamps and avenue of trees.**

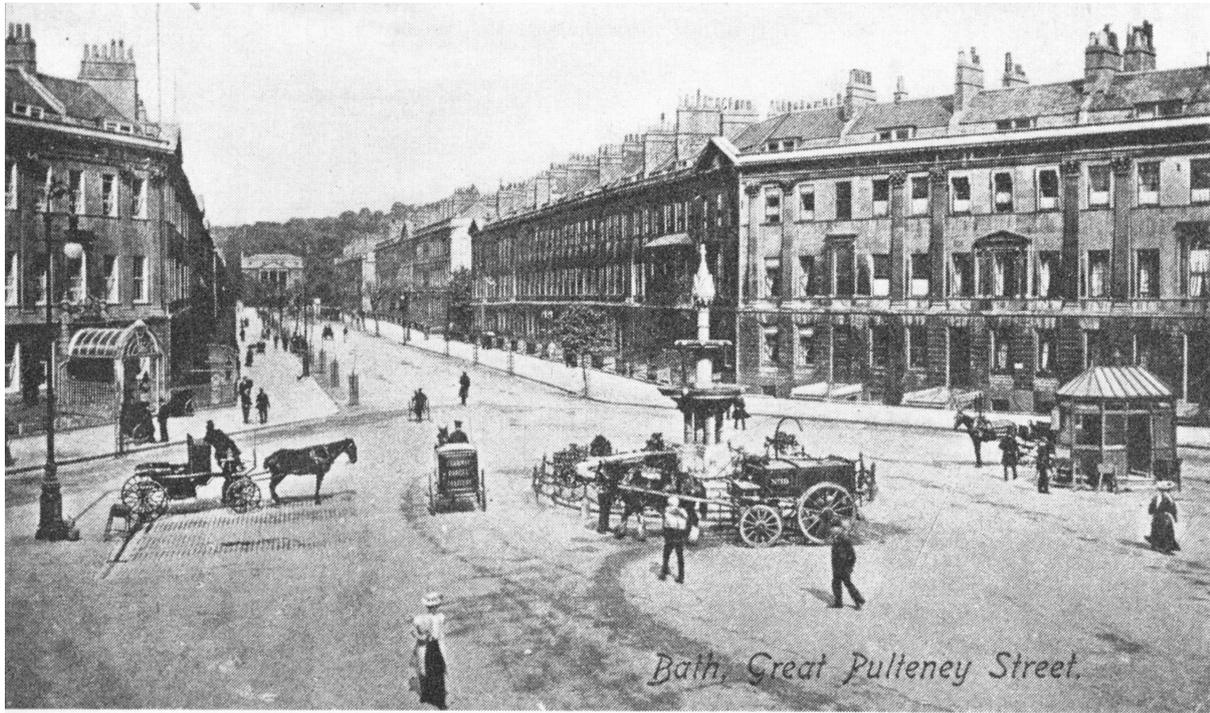
#### Further Additions

The erection of the fountain marks the beginning of a number of new features added to Laura Place in the late 19th and early 20th century. In about 1891 Pulteney Street and Laura Place were among the first to be provided with electric street-lights, replacing the old gas lamps. These were initially carbon-arc lamps which gave a brilliant light and could therefore be erected on very high lamp standards - one behind each Flystand in Laura Place with another five along Pulteney Street. However they were difficult to maintain and were replaced with a larger number of lower energy standard vacuum filament lamps soon after the electric light company was taken over by the city in 1908 - one on each side of the fountain basin and four on the pavements fronting Laura Place.

Other new features included a cabmen's Shelter erected on the south Flystand, probably in 1898 when an identical shelter was installed in the cab rank next to the obelisk in Orange Grove. By this time also the City Council had arranged for the fountain to be used for street watering. The water carts were filled up directly from the western end of the basin by means of a curved siphon pipe, with a brick hard-standing provided for the cart horse. Another important event was the opening of the enlarged Pulteney Hotel in 1904, taking up the whole side of Laura Place at Nos.4, 5, and 6 (now Connaught Mansions), recognizable by its glazed arched porch.

It was also about this time that the practice of surrounding the basin of the fountain with ornamental shrubs was introduced, a custom which, except during WWI, was continued to the end of the 20th century. By now Laura Place had become an increasingly favoured location for public assemblies, most notably during the celebrations of the 1897 Jubilee of Queen Victoria when the fountain was decorated for the occasion.

However, the character of Laura Place was already beginning to change with the appearance of the first motorcars. By 1910 motor taxis had already replaced some of the horse-drawn Flies on the cab stands, and by the end of WWI the horses had entirely disappeared.



Above: Laura Place c.1907, showing a water-cart filling up at the fountain, now surrounded with shrubs. To the right is the new cabmen's shelter, and to the left the glass porch of Pulteney Hotel and a carbon-arc street light.



Right: About the same date. The pedestrian crossings are particularly noticeable here. In front of the hotel is the horse bus for its customers.



Laura Place in c.1910, showing motor taxis sharing the cab ranks with the fly carriages.

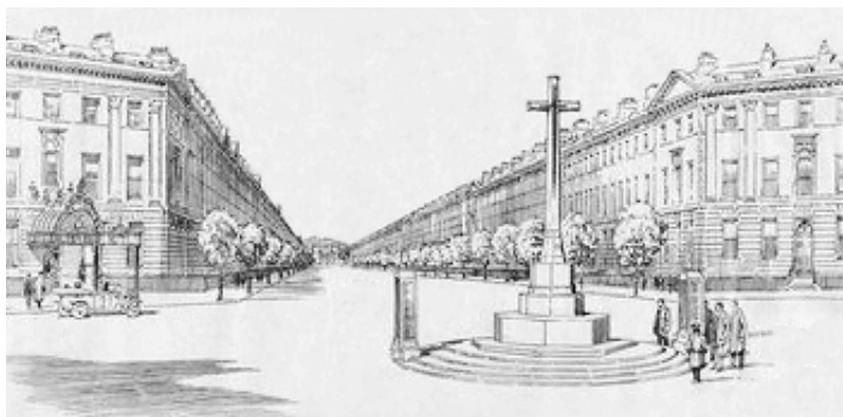


Laura Place in the early 1920s, the cabstands entirely occupied by motor taxis.

### The War Memorial

At an inaugural meeting held in 1919 it was decided that Bath should have a war memorial, but as a result of difficulties in identifying the names of the fallen from Bath it was not until September 1925 that an announcement was made of a Cross of Sacrifice to be erected in Laura Place. A sketch of this structure, designed by war cemetery architect Sir Reginald Blomfield shows that it would have replaced the fountain. However there were doubts about this location by the Council and a decision

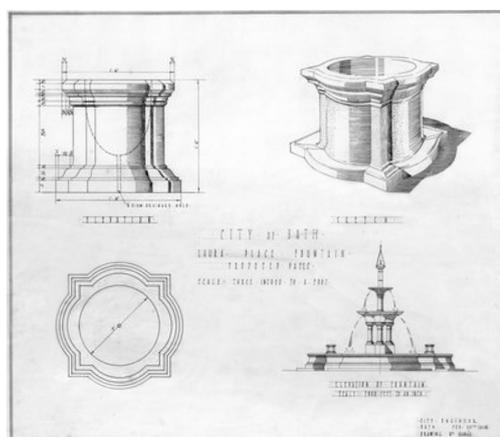
was deferred awaiting Sir Reginald's opinion. As a result, in 1926 the present site at the entrance of Victoria Park was chosen instead, unveiled by Lord Allenby in November 1927.



**Left: Artist's impression of Laura Place with war memorial, as announced in the press (right)**

### Motor Traffic

From WWI onward the fountain area was progressively simplified, presumably as the result of the increase in motor traffic. In 1931 a new design for the flower vases was drawn up, but eventually the standard design used along the parade gardens and elsewhere was chosen, four of which were placed around the basin, one on each corner. The lamp standards were removed, but floodlights were installed around the basin to illuminate the fountain at night. The rails and syphon were also removed, probably when the roadway was newly surfaced with asphalt.



**Right : Design for vases around the fountain, 1931, not adopted.**



**The fountain frozen in 1929.**



**The fountain floodlit in the 1930s.**



**The fountain in the late 1940s with upper structure dismantled.**

After WWII the fountain had become unsafe and the upper dish and pinnacle were dismantled in the late 1940s. To celebrate the Festival of Britain in 1951 the lower dish and columns were also removed, the basin being used as a flower-bed, with a large flower vase supported on the fountain pedestal. This arrangement seems to have remained unchanged throughout the 1950s during which time the present layout of parking spaces for private cars around Laura Place was adopted.



**The fountain site in the late 1950s, used as a flower bed.**



**The new fountain in the early 1960s.**

Between 1957-60 the avenue of trees in Pulteney Street was progressively removed, except for the silver birches in Laura Place which appear to have been planted separately. In 14 June 1960 a new fountain was installed in the original basin, with a single jet issuing from a small dish surmounted on a three-arm pedestal, possibly acquired from elsewhere. It was not long after this that the taxi stand was removed, including the cabmen's shelter.



**Left: The inauguration in 1977 of the present fountain in Laura Place.**

The fountain was eventually replaced, except for the basin, by the present simple design to mark the bi-centenary of the founding of the Bath and West Society. On 8 September 1977 the water was turned on by Sir John Wills, Lord Lieutenant of Avon, accompanied by Ray Roseworn, then Mayor of Bath, completing the layout of Laura Place much as exists today.