

Heritage information -

This leaflet is part of a series which aims to raise awareness of the heritage of Chelmsford

Frank Whitmore (1844 - 1920) Chelmsford Architect



Frank Whitmore was an influential architect in Essex in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. He was a proficient designer of domestic and public buildings and was responsible for Chelmsford's Central Park and other important buildings around the county and in Chelmsford town centre.

Little documentary evidence is available for Whitmore's life. He was born in 1844 in Wickham Market, Suffolk, but he is thought to have spent most of his life in Chelmsford. Early in his career he worked as an architect's assistant and then for the Norfolk county surveyors office. After gaining this experience, in 1863 he was selected to work for the Chinese Government to set up a new settlement. After four years he returned to England due to his father's ill health, when he was appointed as surveyor to the Chelmsford highway board and then as county surveyor for West Suffolk.

Whitmore's earliest documented work is an ornate cast iron bridge over the River Chelmer in Howe Street, Great Waltham (1871). Early in his career he also built a new primary school at Ford End, Great Waltham (1873) and restored Mashbury Church (1873).



Central Park, Chelmsford, laid out 1894

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Whitmore acted as provisional mayor of Chelmsford prior to the Borough being formed in 1888 and then as mayor in 1892-3. In 1881 he was appointed surveyor to the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation. His most prolific work was during his appointment as Essex County Architect 1900-14.

In 1882 a business consortium formed by Whitmore purchased part of the Coval Hall Estate, Chelmsford and laid out a residential development. He designed two buildings in this development both completed around 1885, Maltese House (now Courtman House, 40 Maltese Road) and a Lodge (now demolished), Courtman House is a handsome brick villa with distinctive porch and fine detailing, where he lived until he died in 1920.

Whitmore worked on several police stations around the county, the most accomplished of which is in New Street, Chelmsford (1903-1904). This uses extensive stone dressings, including a rusticated ground floor and giant order ionic columns, with stock brick and a hexagonal corner turret in a Free Baroque style.

Opposite the former police station Whitmore designed an addition to the east side of Shire Hall (1903-1904) in a similar style. In Duke Street, Chelmsford the oldest part of the current County Hall complex was also Whitmore's work (completed 1909). Common to most of Whitmore's buildings there is fine brick and stone detailing.

Whitmore's work is well documented and many of his buildings survive, mostly unaltered. Some have been recognised as being of national significance and are listed buildings and some are within conservation areas, which give control over demolition and external alteration. All his buildings are of considerable local interest due to their architectural quality, and as Whitmore's legacy.



Cast iron bridge over the River Chelmer 1871



Ford End School 1873



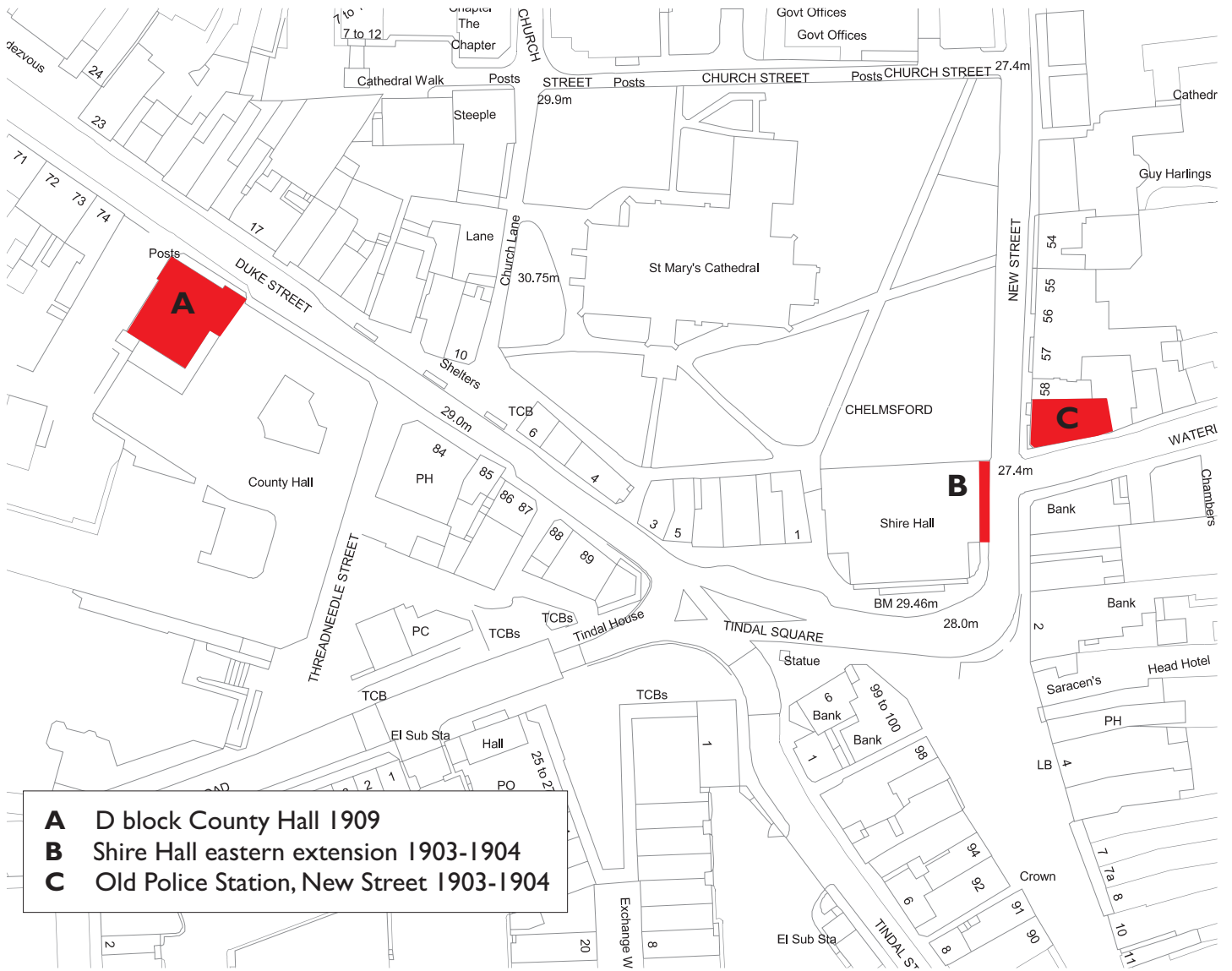
Mashbury Church restored 1873



D Block, County Hall 1909



Courtman House, 40 Maltese Road 1885



Shire Hall eastern section extension 1903-1904



Police station, New Street 1903-1904

Whitmore's documented works also include many minor projects for extensions and drainage improvements. All works known in Chelmsford Borough and other known major works in Essex are listed below in chronological order:

- Road Bridge over the River Chelmer, Howe Street, Great Waltham (1871)
- Primary School, Main Road, Ford End, Great Waltham (1873)
- Mashbury Church Restoration (1873)
- Maltese House (now Courtman House, 40 Maltese Road), Chelmsford (c1885)
- Lodge at Maltese House, Chelmsford (c.1885, demolished c.1965))
- St Mary, Steeple Bumpstead Restoration (1877-1880)
- Central Park, Chelmsford (opened 1894)
- Masonic Hall, Kelvedon (1894-1895)
- St Michael Hospital, Braintree, front ranges (1895-1896)
- Bridge Hospital, Witham remodelling (1897)
- Workhouse, Tendring Heath remodelling (1899)
- Police Station, Southminster (1901)
- Police Station, New Street/Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford (1903-1904)
- East Addition to Shire Hall, Tindal Square, Chelmsford (1903-4)
- D Block, County Hall, Duke Street, Chelmsford (1909)
- Severalls Hospital, Colchester (1910-1913)
- Police Station Maldon (1913)
- Police Station, Harwich (1913-1915)
- Police Station, Rochford (1914)



County Hall detail



Howe Street Bridge detail

No examples of Whitmore's work are known after his retirement as County architect in 1914.

References

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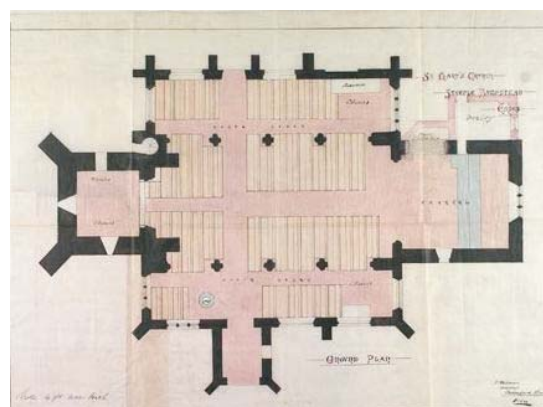
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St Mary, steeple Bumpstead, ground floor plan, 1880

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