

## Preface

Based on contemporaneous sources, this reference book is the first comprehensive study of William Forsyth's life and work. Its publication begins the process of correcting the many wrong assumptions and factual errors perpetuated over the last 50 years. William Forsyth can now be re-positioned as an important precedent for those interested in inter-disciplinary collaboration, cross-art form working, and city-building. William Forsyth's life and work tell us much about collaboration and the art of place-making.

As Lewis Mumford observed in 'The Culture of Cities' (1938), "Nothing is unthinkable, nothing impossible, provided it comes out of the needs of life and is dedicated to life's further development."

Worcester is perhaps peerless in how artists have shaped, defined and enriched the city over time. It has always been an extraordinary place, capable of delivering extraordinary art and cultural juxtaposition. Whether that be the result of the 87 masons and sculptors who found work there between 1747 and the end of the 19th century, or the numerous painters, modellers, gilders and decorators who worked in the many china and porcelain works up until recent times, or those who continue to arrive in the city wanting to simply capture a view or give a performance.

Although his earliest work was at Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire, for almost sixty years William Forsyth was embedded in the social fabric and physical expression of Worcester and nearby places like Malvern. He was "of this city" and made extraordinary art in collaboration with others.

### William Forsyth's Account Book

In drawer 6 of the 'private microfilm cabinet' at Worcestershire Archives there is a film of the 'Account Book of William Forsyth (Stonemason of Worcester)'. That film has been the main focus of this research. The original Account Book was manufactured by Waterlow & Sons, London. It looks to have been a 560 page Foolscap 'Broad Folio', measuring 12.5 x 8 inches, and was probably bound in Rough Calf with inside marbled covers. The pages were numbered and divided into columns for month / day / item description / sub-total / cash value in pounds, shillings and pence.

Page 1 records unspecified work with Malvern-based builders McCann & 'Everill' between 27.11.1867 and 25.08.1869 with a total value of £11/17/00. The item description begins "Account brought forward from Day Book." The lower half of this first page records unspecified work for 'John Everal Builder Malvern' between 11.03.1871 and 07.06.1876 with a value of £45/10/02. This entry is noted as "To A/C as per Day Book."

George McCann 1809–1884 and John Everal 1825–1906 were Building Contractors of Graham House, Graham Road, Great Malvern. William Forsyth first worked with George McCann at St John the Baptist Church, Eastnor, and at Eastnor Castle in the early 1850s.

The last used page in the Account Book appears to be number 534. It records William Forsyth repairing a marble ornament for an unidentified Mr Cox on 19.06.1891. The work was valued at 3/6.

Although it is not always clear, the Account Book appears to record 1,622 separate invoice events. On a decade by decade basis, these break down as:

1860s (second half only)	205
1870s	315

1880s	809
1890s (first half only)	293

Based on the number of invoices, the busiest period was between 1883 (90) and 1891 (88), with 1890 being the busiest single year with 125 invoices being issued between 6 January and 24 December. The Account Book is not in date order. Although it seems to begin in November 1867 and end in June 1891, the earliest and latest work recorded is for December 1865 and January 1895 respectively. The Account Book is not in alphabetical order. Although there is a name index, this is not complete and often makes errors in its page numbering.

Between 2011 and 2015, I initially put the Account Book in date order and re-indexed it by name. Following this, it was possible to identify about 80% of the clients by full name, address, occupation, and birth and death dates.

Once the clients had been identified, it then became possible to locate much of the work by place and context. This was subsequently checked against articles in newspapers, journals and directories of the period, as well as more recent guides and gazetteers. To-date, the research has identified that William Forsyth worked on some 89 buildings and monuments, not including individual grave markers or general building work, and that he collaborated with some 102 different architects, builders, artists and allied tradesmen.

Some of this research is now being published in summary form to mark the centenary of William Forsyth's death in Worcester on 5 June 1915. Hopefully this will allow others to gain a richer appreciation of his life and work and, perhaps, encourage a better understanding of how art supports city-building and cultural well-being processes – both then and now.

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