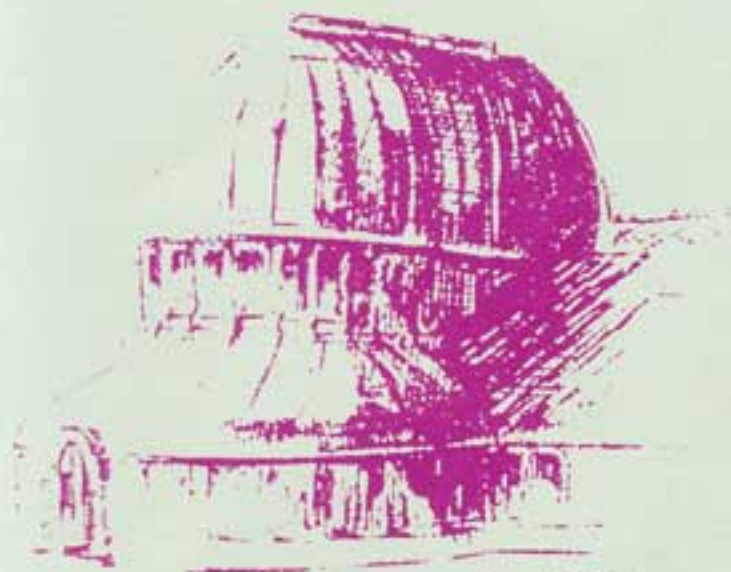


# BELFAST CIVIC FESTIVAL TRAIL



Botanic Gardens

### 3. Shaftesbury Square Southwards to the University Area

**Distance:** 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles approx.  
**Time:** allow an hour not counting stops.

The trail starts at Shaftesbury Square, the beginning of Belfast's University quarter. For those wishing to fortify themselves with a drink before setting out, Lavery's Gin Palace is an interesting place. The poets Louis MacNeice and W.R. Rodgers and the celebrated painter Stanley Spencer drank here whenever they visited their Belfast friends, the artists George MacCann and Mercy Hunter. The back mews provided a convenient route by which the pub could be approached unnoticed. It was never considered quite respectable to be seen entering a public house.

Continue up Bradbury Place noting, as you pass, Bradbury Buildings—the copper topped 'pagoda' built in 1932 by J.D. Gordon.

Entering University Road, you will arrive at the Old **Victoria College**. Since its construction in 1873 it has had an uninterrupted history as an educational establishment, most recently under the name of The Crescent Arts Centre. Although contributing a somewhat sombre presence to the largely stuccoed Crescent Square—which comprises Lower Crescent, Crescent Gardens, Upper Crescent and the Crescent

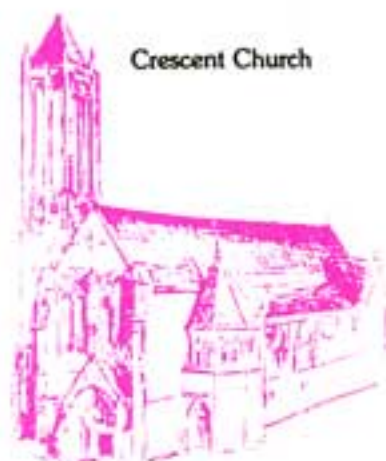


Victoria College

Church—this deliberately asymmetrical block of brown Scrabo stone seems to balance admirably the other buildings of this set. The Victoria College was established as a girls' school by Dr Byers, who reigned as headmistress until 1912. Her son, the eminent gynaecologist Sir John Byers, lived conveniently close in the

fine house, now the Regency Hotel, at the end of Lower Crescent. Past pupils of the College include the poet and scholar Helen Waddell, and the actress Cathleen Nesbitt. We have already mentioned the artist and art critic Mercy Hunter—she taught art here in the 1950s and 1960s.

Built 1885-1887 by John Benn Wilson of Glasgow, the **Crescent Church** makes a unique contribution to the townscape of the University area. This exceptional three-dimensional composition in red and buff sandstone is derived from French 13th-century forms and is crowned by a remarkable pierced bell tower.



Crescent Church

**Lower Crescent** (1852) and **Upper Crescent** (1846) were put up by Robert Corry, a prosperous builder, developer and shipping magnate, as dwelling houses for members of the rapidly expanding merchant and academic classes. Similar to Upper Crescent, but on a straight line, Lower Crescent, too, has grand pilasters and half columns rising to two floors high. Glance in passing at the Regency Hotel and continue along Crescent Gardens, a good example of 'High Victorian' (1867-1901) town housing. You will now find yourself at Upper Crescent. Certainly the finest Neo-Classical 'Bath' terrace in Ulster, Upper Crescent's concave



Lower Crescent



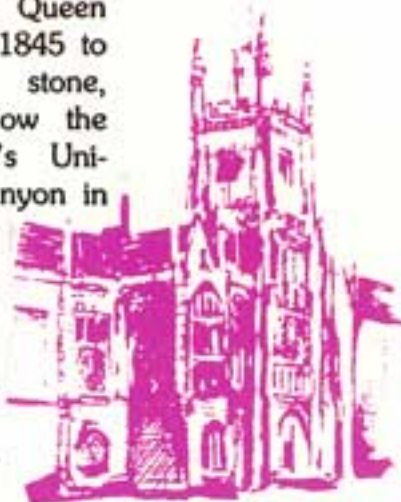
layout is emphasised by Corinthian columns at the centre and ends. Some architectural historians believe that the great Charles Lanyon was responsible for the architecture of the two Crescents. Others however think that Robert Corry, inspired by the master, had a direct hand in the design. Indeed, this enterprising builder may have been entirely responsible for the two structures. The two Crescents, along with Crescent Gardens (1896), the Crescent Church and the Crescent Arts Centre from a square around an attractive green space. It is interesting to mention that in the late 1840's, while the potato famine ravaged Ireland, the Corry's dug up the Crescent Green in order to plant potatoes for themselves as well as for their workers. Continue along Upper Crescent and Nos. 6, 5, and 4 - a fine stucco terrace built later in the century but even so, fitting harmoniously. The same can be said of the corner building at which we turn left into University Road.

Arriving at **Mount Charles** take the time to have a quick look at Nos. 2, 4, and 6, the latter two villas linked by an attractive battlemented wall. Note the small neo-classical porticos and tall chimney stacks. These three houses were virtually isolated in a rural environment when they were built in 1842. Although destroyed by a bomb in 1974, No. 2 was totally rebuilt in 1982 and now stands as an exact replica of the original house. Walking towards the main University building, be sure to glance at the vista presented by University Square.

Mount Charles Battlemented wall



Named after the young Queen Victoria who arrived in 1845 to lay the foundation stone, **Queen's College** (now the centrepiece of Queen's University) was built by Lanyon in the collegiate-Tudor style. The central tower is said to be modelled on that of Magdalene College, Oxford. Charles Lanyon's assistant, W.H. Lynn, was largely responsible for the detail.



Queen's College

Turning left at the main entrance gate and passing through the tower you will find yourself in the tall, well-lit and beautifully atmospheric entrance hall. Look up! The gallery and first floor are reached by a staircase on your right. Halfway up on the hidden side of an arch you will find Colin Middleton's remarkable painting of St. Patrick, which is 25 feet high and only 4 feet wide.



Gargoyle—Old Library

Return to the entrance hall via the steps and pass through the left hand door out into the tranquil collegiate atmosphere of the quadrangle, with its views of the buildings beyond. Looking at the cloisters to the right, a chimney breast is decorated with blue brick to make the pattern 'VR (Victoria Regina) 1848'. Keep to the path running centre left and then follow the turnoff



(left) and walk towards the glass bridge which connects the (unfortunate) modern bookstack tower block with the **Old Library**. This building was designed by W.H. Lynn and constructed in two stages between 1864 and 1913. After the Gothic manner of Ruskin, it demonstrates brick and polychrome stone-work, gables, gargoyles,—don't miss the gargoyles—banded tiles, ornamental tracery and an interesting skyline. The first-floor interior demonstrates how the modern can be sympathetically married to the old. Return to our pathway and turn left down University Square.

**University Square**, widely regarded as one of the finest terraced streets in Ireland, was built 1848-1853. Now owned by the University, it had earlier housed so many doctors that it became the Harley Street of Belfast. Note especially the doorways with their Doric columns and elliptical fanlights. It is heartening to see how well the bays, which were added earlier this century, have matured.



Doorway—University Square

Cross Botanic Avenue to the main gate of the **Union Theological College** (formerly the Presbyterian College). Opened in 1853, colonnaded facade by Lanyon,



Union Theological College

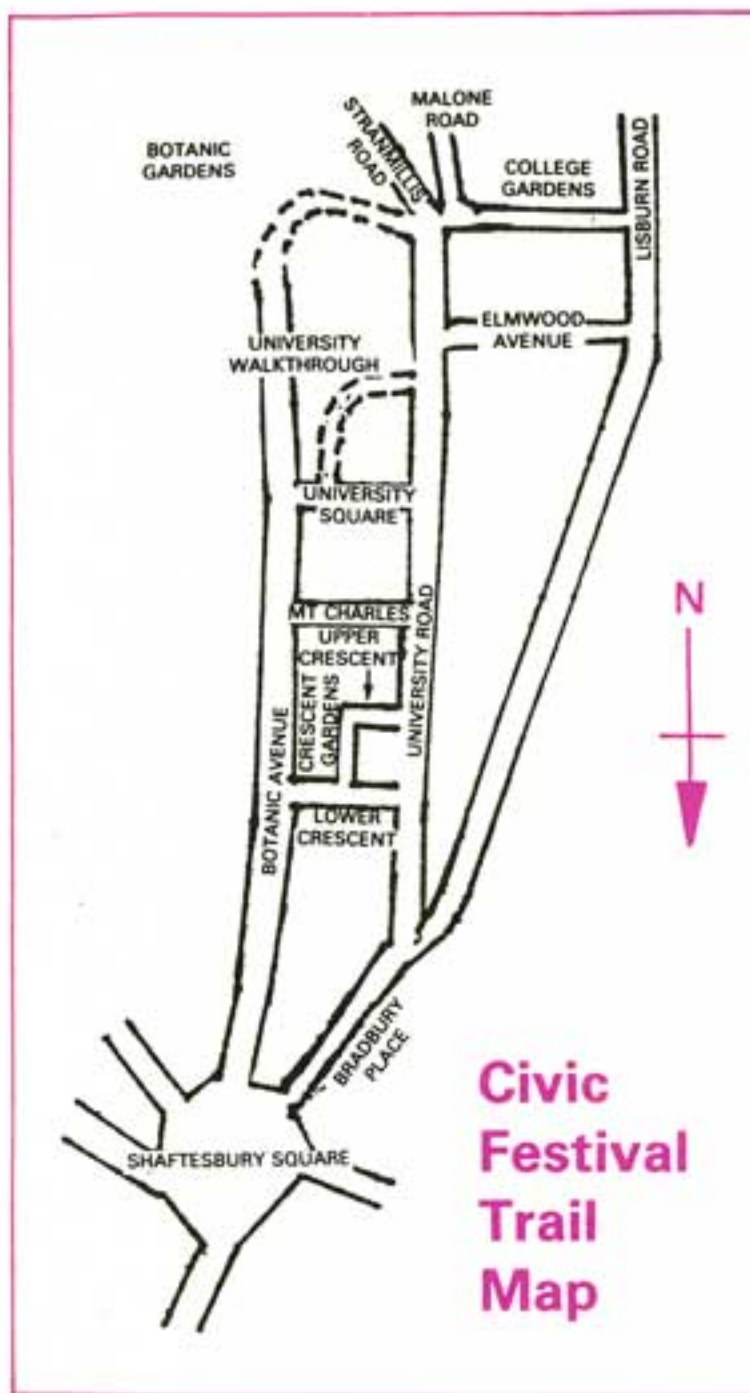


UNIVERSITY SQUARE

TURN RIGHT INTO UNIVERSITY SQUARE



CROSS BOTANIC AVENUE TO UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE



**Civic Festival Trail Map**

Sponsored by Belfast Civic Trust,  
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and

**VIRIDIAN**

it boasts a particularly splendid upper floor library. The building was sufficiently grandiose to make it an appropriate temporary home for the Northern Ireland Parliament until the huge Parliament Building at Stormont was completed in 1932.

Palm House



Back outside the front gate and facing University Square turn left and walk up to the Botanic Avenue entrance of **Botanic Gardens** which were opened in 1827. Notice the Gate Lodge (1865) as you pass. On a pleasant day trailers are advised to explore the gardens, which are well worth a separate visit. Take a break on the grass oval where students congregate when the sun comes out.

Next, make your way to the **Palm House**, the construction of which was begun in 1839 and represents the earliest surviving use of curvilinear glass and cast iron in the world. Although Charles Lanyon was the architect, Richard Turner, the famous Dublin iron-founder, who went on to build the Palm House at Kew Gardens, Glasnevin and Killikee House, must be given special mention. He was also partly responsible for London's fabulous Crystal Palace (1851).

Giant  
Water Lily  
Tropical  
Ravine



Do follow the Palm House with a look at the **Tropical Ravine**; the warm, humid "jungle" environment of the interior is especially enjoyable on a cool day. The attendant might well oblige you by pulling the chain

that lets flow a miniature waterfall. The citizens of Belfast are much indebted to Belfast City Council for the recent refurbishment of both structures. They are open for the inspection of the floral residents Mon.-Fri: 10.00a.m. to 5.00p.m.; Sat.-Sun: 2.00p.m. to 5.00p.m.



Ulster Museum

Designed in 1911 by J.C. Wynne, and completed in the late 1920s, the **Ulster Museum** is built of Portland stone with fine Ionic columns. The Botanic Gardens side exhibits the unusual carved prow of a rowing boat. Note the figurehead. The extension of rectangular concrete forms was added to good effect in 1971 following a competition won by Francis Pym. Exhibitions on local history are well worth seeing.

With the intention of leaving the museum (and the Botanic Gardens) by the Stranmillis Road gates, pause on your way at Lord **Kelvin's Monument**. Kelvin (1824-1907) invented the Kelvin Scale, the absolute scale of thermodynamics.

ENTER  
BOTANIC  
GARDENS



FACING UNIVERSITY  
SQUARE, TURN  
LEFT INTO  
BOTANIC AVENUE

BOTANIC AVENUE



BOTANIC GARDENS  
PATHWAYS

VISIT  
ULSTER  
MUSEUM

BOTANIC GARDENS  
PATHWAYS



Methodist College

Cross the road to observe the grandeur of **Methodist College**. Erected 1865-8, the main College building exhibits the eclectic High Victorian style which complements admirably the main University building. Continuing along College Gardens, notice to the right the outstanding Victorian terraces of this quiet cul-de-sac. On your left is the **McArthur Hall** (1887-91). Designed by Sir Thomas N. Deane & Son of Dublin, it represents the most important work in Ulster of this famous family of architects. The fine Tudor exterior is only surpassed by its spacious and elaborate interior.

Gate Lodge

Walking the full length of College Gardens note particularly the curious **Gate Lodge** at the corner of the Lisburn Road and College Gardens. Looking just like a Germanic fairytale castle, would it not make a wonderfully eccentric pied-a-terre?



Passing the Gate Lodge, walk down the Lisburn Road until as far as Elmwood Avenue, where you turn right.

To the left observe All Souls Church and the fine examples of the University building programme of the 1930s and continue down to the corner of Elmwood Avenue and University Road.

The splendid landmark of **Elmwood Hall** (to your right) was built in a broadly Italian Lombardic style in 1862. It was constructed as a Presbyterian church by John Corry, the architect and son of Robert Corry of Upper and Lower Crescent fame. Recently converted by the University into a concert hall, the interior makes a charming musical venue.

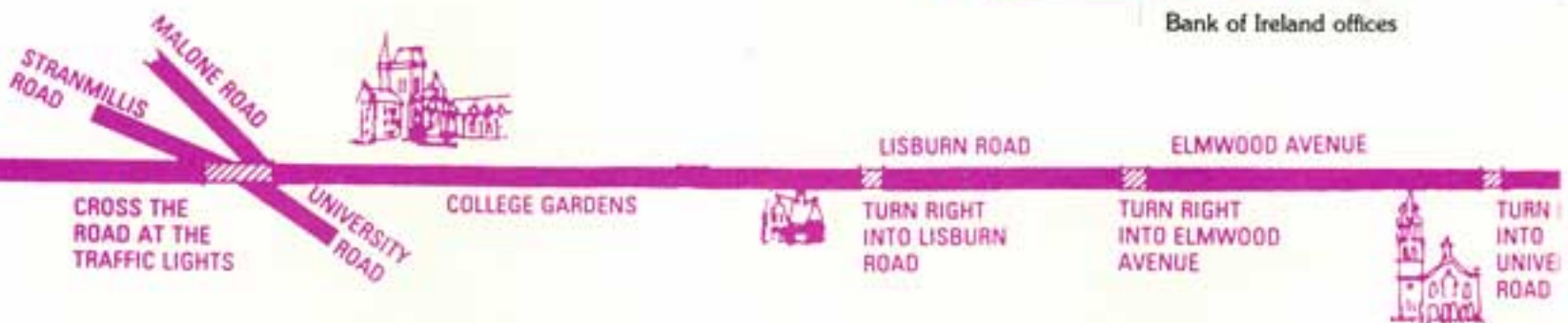
Elmwood Hall



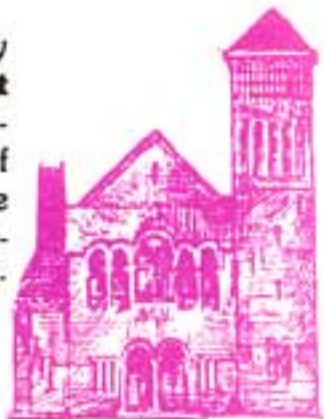
Passing the Student Union block, continue down University Road noting the many examples of mid-19th century terraced housing. Observe the Ionic columns of the **Bank of Ireland offices** at No. 31, which was originally a chemist's shop.



Bank of Ireland offices

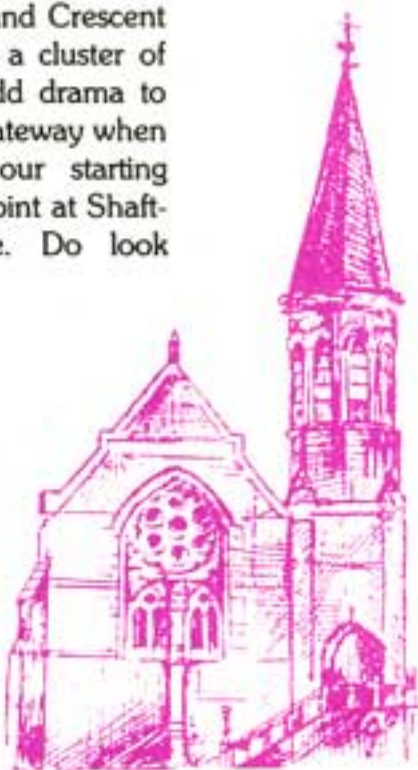


Constructed in 1865 by W.J. Barre, the **Methodist Church** displays the influence of Ruskin's love of Venetian architecture. The tall, slender campanile certainly adds grace to the University area.



Methodist Church

Keeping to the left-hand side of University Road, make your way to the **Moravian Church**. Built in the same Scrabo stone in 1887, it stands comfortably opposite the Crescent Arts Centre and the Crescent Church. Its pinnacled tower, with those of the Methodist and Crescent churches, form a cluster of spires which add drama to the skyline: a gateway when viewed from our starting and finishing point at Shaftesbury Square. Do look back.



Moravian Church

