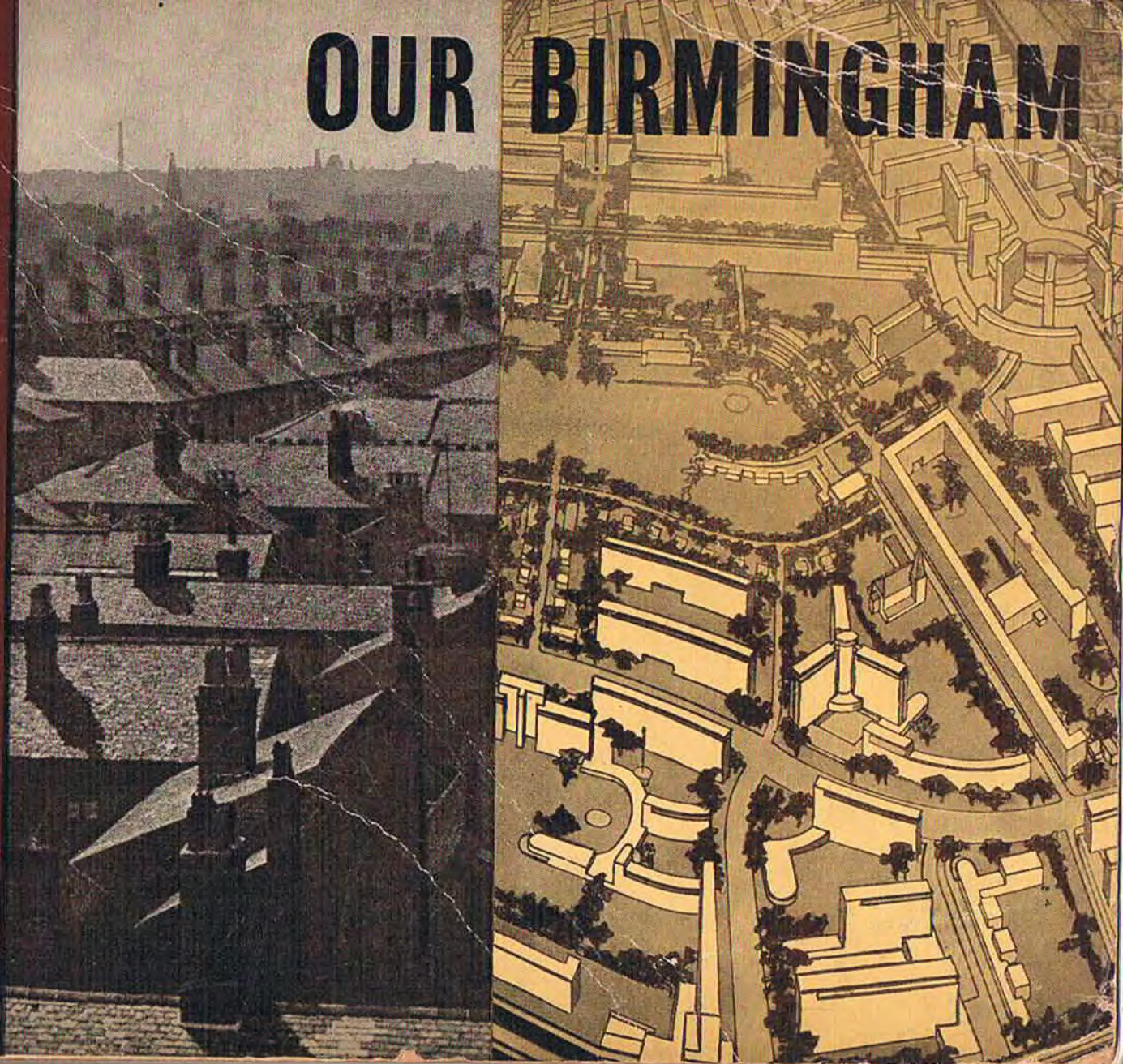


1/-
NET

OUR BIRMINGHAM

THE
BIRMINGHAM
OF OUR
FOREFATHERS
AND THE
BIRMINGHAM
OF OUR
GRANDSONS



OUR BIRMINGHAM

The Birmingham of our Forefathers and the Birmingham of our Grandsons

The aim of this book is to stimulate the interest of the young people of Birmingham in the past growth of their city and particularly in its future development.

Town planning and rebuilding, therefore, take an important part in the book. The sections dealing with this question are directly founded on information given in *When We Build Again* (Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d.). This was based on an investigation among more than 7,000 Birmingham citizens into the conditions under which they lived and worked, carried out by the Bournville Village Trust just before the war.

* * *

It is difficult to acknowledge adequately the great help and assistance we have had in the production of this book from many people.

We were encouraged by the sympathetic interest of the Birmingham Education Department in the original proposals which were discussed with a Committee of Birmingham teachers kindly convened by them.

Particular acknowledgment is made to Mr. S. E. Matts, of Gower Street School, and Mrs. Matts, for the preparation of

the historical material and suggestions for school work. The continuous help from the Birmingham Reference Library, whose staff has been indefatigable in the search for illustrations and references, has been invaluable.

We are also indebted to the Town Clerk's Department for the checking of material, and to the City Engineer's Department for permission to reproduce pictures and for access to information; to the Oxford University Press for permission to base the map of the Manor on that in Conrad Gill's *Studies in Midland History*, to Dr. R. A. Pelham for the use of his map showing the growth of Birmingham, and to the Museum and Art Gallery Committee for permission to reproduce the picture of Birmingham in 1821. Also to the following for use of photographs and drawings:—The Birmingham Estates Department; the City Architect, Liverpool; the Severn & Canal Carrying Co. Ltd.; the L.M. & S. Rly. Co.; Gloucestershire Newspapers Ltd.; H. J. Whitlock Ltd.; Paul J. Woolf (New York); Keystone Press Agency; Messrs. W. A. Green, S. R. Badmin, J. Schreiner, Thomas Sharp, A. B. Lock, W. Haig Parry; F. Willoughby Harrison; the *Birmingham Post*; the *Architectural Review*, and the British Road Federation.

Published by Cadbury Brothers Limited, Bournville, Birmingham

Trade Distributors:

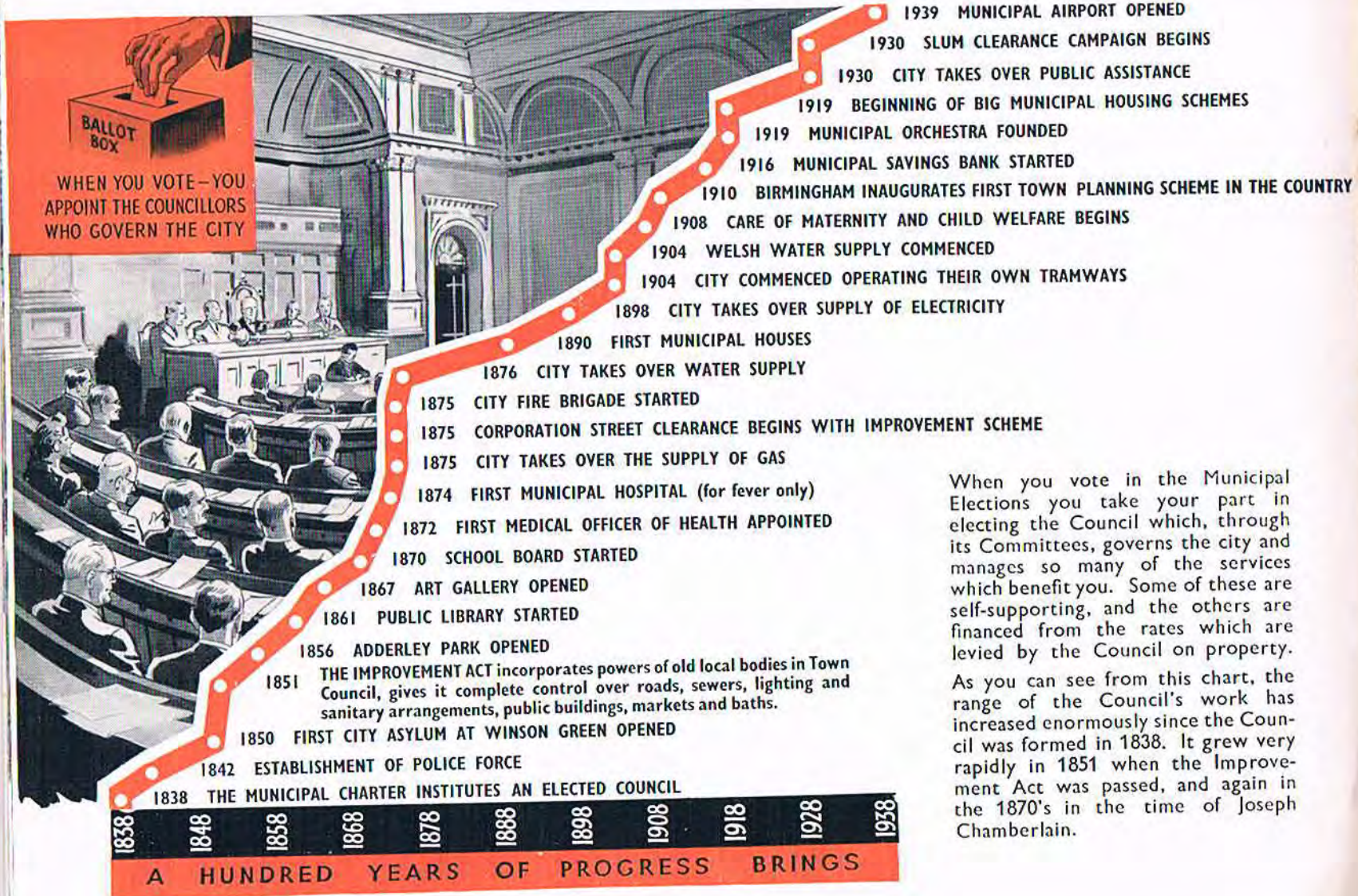
University of London Press Ltd., St. Hugh's School, Bickley, Kent

FIRST PUBLISHED 20TH APRIL, 1943

SECOND PRINTING MAY, 1943

THIRD PRINTING SEPTEMBER, 1943

THE GROWTH OF THE CITY COUNCIL — AN



When you vote in the Municipal Elections you take your part in electing the Council which, through its Committees, governs the city and manages so many of the services which benefit you. Some of these are self-supporting, and the others are financed from the rates which are levied by the Council on property.

As you can see from this chart, the range of the Council's work has increased enormously since the Council was formed in 1838. It grew very rapidly in 1851 when the Improvement Act was passed, and again in the 1870's in the time of Joseph Chamberlain.



Bad sanitation over completed nearly 1,400



Maternity responsibility was set up



Pure water over the su

COUNCIL— AND WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR YOU

CIPAL AIRPORT OPENED
 ARANCE CAMPAIGN BEGINS
 VER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
 MUNICIPAL HOUSING SCHEMES
 OUNDED
 STARTED
 T TOWN PLANNING SCHEME IN THE COUNTRY
 WELFARE BEGINS
 OWN TRAMWAYS

HEME

you vote in the Municipal
 ons you take your part in
 g the Council which, through
 mmittees, governs the city and
 es so many of the services
 benefit you. Some of these are
 pporting, and the others are
 ed from the rates which are
 y the Council on property.
 u can see from this chart, the
 of the Council's work has
 sed enormously since the Coun-
 s formed in 1838. It grew very
 y in 1851 when the Improve-
 Act was passed, and again in
 370's in the time of Joseph
 berlain.



Bad sanitation means bad health. In 1851 the city took over complete control of sanitation. Now there are nearly 1,400 miles of sewers.



Open spaces are a city's lungs. Since 1856 nearly 4,000 acres of parks have been opened.



Maternity and Infant Welfare are now among the many responsibilities of the Public Health Department, which was set up in 1872.



Birmingham has provided free education for its children since the School Board was started in 1870.



Pure water is essential for health. In 1876 the city took over the supply and now brings water from Wales.



The first municipal houses were put up in 1890. Since 1919 Birmingham Corporation has built over 50,000.

THE DECREASE IN THE DEATH RATE



BIRMINGHAM TO-DAY

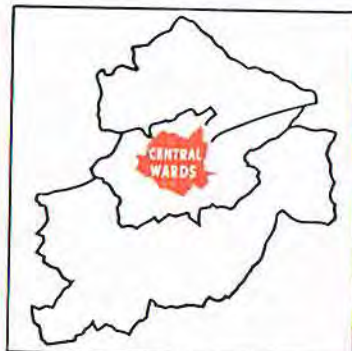
In 1936-37 the Bournville Village Trust arranged interviews with over 7,000 people in all parts of the city in order to find out what they thought about their present homes and what they would like if they could move. For instance, whether they would prefer flats or houses with gardens. Also, how far they had to travel to work, how long it took, and how much it cost, and, if they did not want to move, why they preferred their present house. A map survey was also made of the city and its surroundings.

In this research the city was divided into three rings or regions—the *Central Wards*, or the old part of the city; the *Middle Ring*, which, generally speaking, consists of those suburbs which were built up to 1914 and consist principally of "By-law Housing"—straight streets of tunnel-backed houses; and the *Outer Ring*, which has mainly been built since the last war. Here lie the great Municipal Estates. It is interesting to know that one-third of the citizens now live in houses built since the last war—a great housing achievement.

The following pages give some of the results of the research and also some of the suggestions of what could be done to improve the city when we build again.

Suggestions for Organised Work

Visit the oldest housing district near your school, and make sketches of buildings, backyards, etc. Then visit some of the Municipal estates and make sketches of houses, streets, etc. Discuss your results.



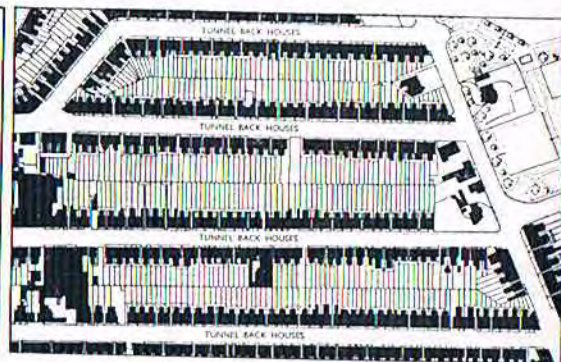
The old congested centre of city



Packed back-to-back houses and factories



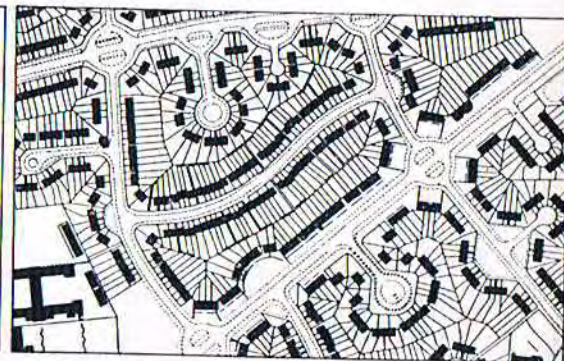
The suburbs of yesterday



The monotony of by-law housing—"tunnel-backs"



The suburbs to-day and new estates



Planned housing—better gardens and pleasant roads



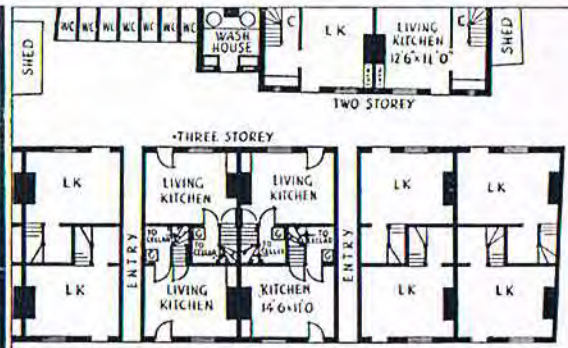
Planless congestion: factories, houses and—smoke



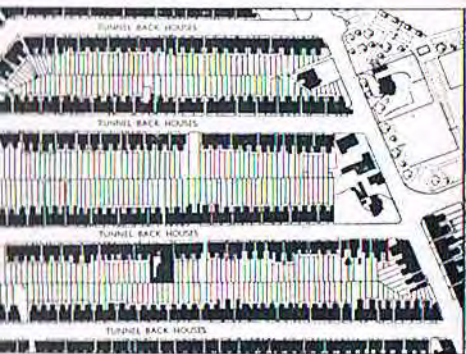
There are still 38,000 of these back-to-back houses



No hall or scullery—only living kitchen. Bad ventilation



Row upon row of tunnel-back houses



Row upon row of tunnel-back houses



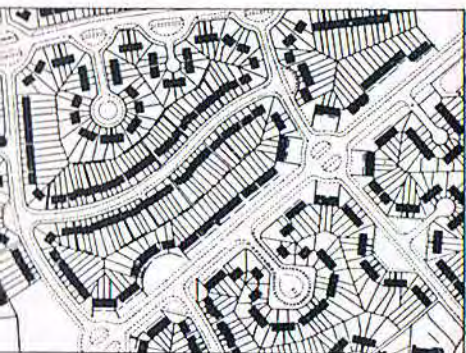
There are over 100,000 of them in streets like this



Better, but often without bathroom and indoor w.c.



Monotony of by-lane housing—"tunnel-backs"



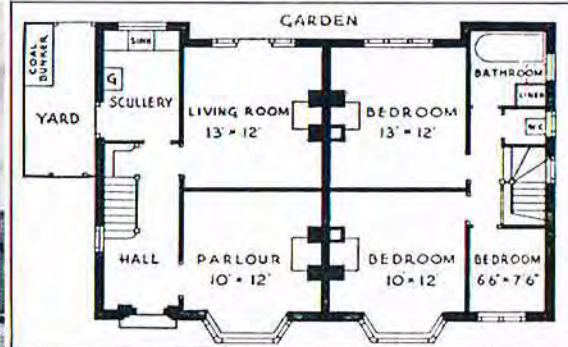
A municipal estate. Good houses—often far from work



104,000 houses of all kinds have been built since 1920



Better still—indoor sanitation, hot water and a garden





38

Birmingham to-day A Comparison of the Central Wards and Outer Ring

The Central Wards are now four times as densely populated as the Outer Ring. Central Wards, 62 per acre; Outer Ring, 15 per acre. This is an average—in many areas there are over 200 people to the acre. Overcrowding produces an enormous bill for ill-health, disease and unhappiness, which can be measured in the death rates which in 1938 were:—Central Wards, 13.3; Outer Ring, 9.3; i.e., in Central Wards three deaths to every two in Outer Ring.

Many people stay in the Central Wards to avoid long journeys to work, particularly where members of a family are employed in different parts of the city. The Bournville Village Trust Research showed that, whereas nearly 80 per cent. of the people in the Central Wards travelled under two miles to work, in the Outer Ring only 41 per cent. travelled under two miles. It is not only more inconvenient but more expensive to live far out.





people stay in the Central Wards
 avoid long journeys to work, particu-
 where members of a family are
 employed in different parts of the city.
 Bournville Village Trust Research
 found that, whereas nearly 80 per cent.
 of the people in the Central Wards
 lived under two miles to work, in
 the Water Ring only 41 per cent. travelled
 under two miles. It is not only more
 convenient but more expensive to live
 in the Central Wards.

Birmingham people have always been particularly fond of gardening. The research showed that 19 out of 20 people wanted a house with a garden. Even in the poorest quarters every tiny patch is cultivated, and all over the city the gardens are well cared for. On the new Estates there are only 12 houses to the acre, so every house has a garden of its own, and children can play in playgrounds instead of in the streets. Compare these two sculleries. The top one is in a back-to-back house. Though a cold-water tap and a gas cooker have been installed, there is no window, scarcely any ventilation, and little room to cook and wash up for a family. It is unsuitable for storing food. How much healthier and more convenient is the modern scullery below, and how pleasant to see the garden as you work.

This living room opens on to the small court, with its wash-house and W.C.s. The court is also the children's playground, so the door must often be opened—and the room is even used for the storage of bicycles. Compare it with the pleasant living room below. It is in a small house, but how nice to sit in—and it opens on to the garden.



WHEN WE BUILD AGAIN

The main approach to Birmingham (the second largest city in Great Britain) from the south-west is by the Bristol Road. This road, carrying through traffic, is not only one of the most important roads in the country, but also connects important residential and industrial suburbs with the city.

Look carefully at this diagram. The City planned for this highway a fine double road, with trams down the centre. The map shows you just how much of this plan it has been able to carry out. Why is the double road not continuous? Because when Selly Oak and Northfield were villages, houses were built up to the side of the country road. Though that road has now become a highway, the cost of compensation to the owners of the old houses prohibits the City from completing the new double road.

Make this journey on the top of a 70 (or 71) tram. There could be no better introduction to a study of Birmingham. Notice as you go out: the narrow John Bright Street, only wide enough for one-way traffic; the crowded streets of old houses packed behind the shops on either side of Bristol Street; and the number of churches.

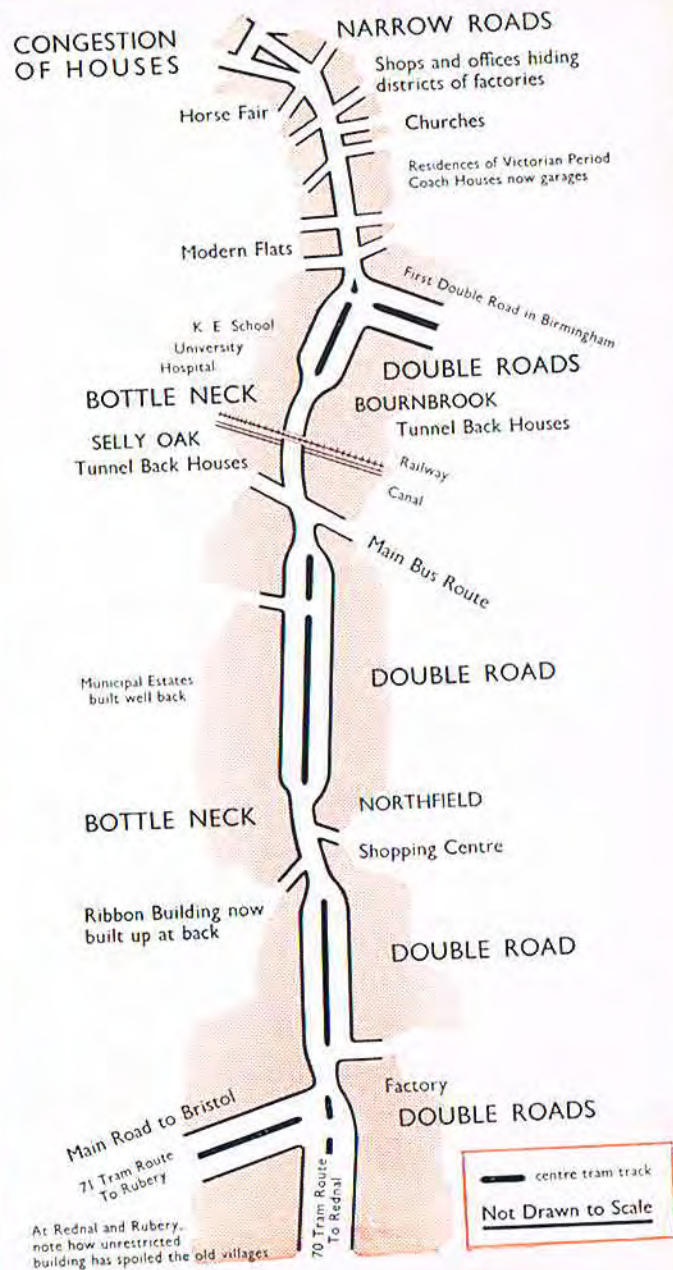
Note the change after Belgrave Road to better-class Victorian houses, the old coach-houses extended into garages. Here and there,

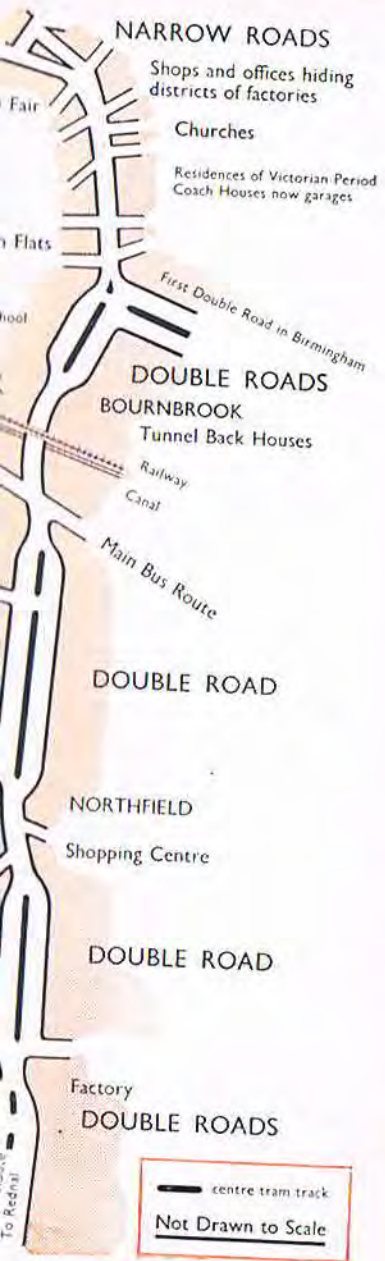


The double road at Griffin's Hill.

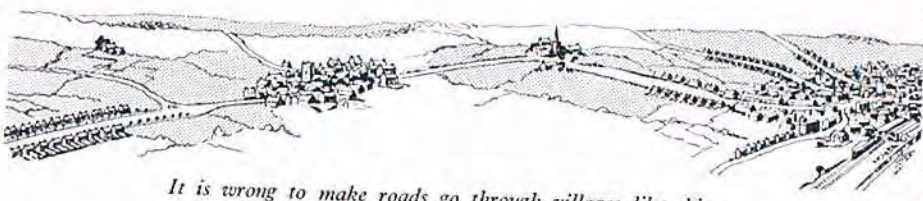


The "bottle-neck" at Northfield.





Compare these four ways of dealing with traffic. An English city. A Paris crossing. English "roundabout". American "clover leaf".



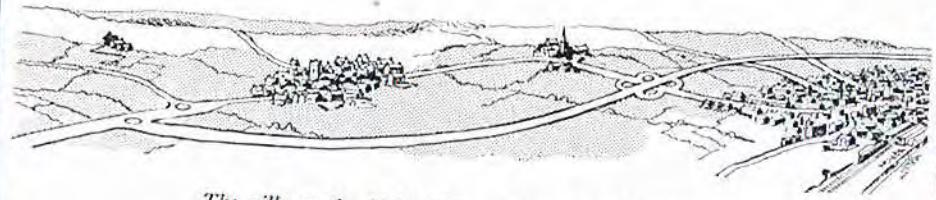
It is wrong to make roads go through villages like this.

the old houses have already been pulled down for modern houses or blocks of flats.

Not until the road reaches the parklands of the Calthorpe Estate could the double road be made. Look for the rows of "tunnel-back" houses which followed the factories at Selly Oak. Note how Bournville and the new Municipal Estates lie back from the main road, whereas, beyond Northfield, the private builder has by his ribbon-building made the new main road another street.

Suggestions for Organised Work

- 1 Take this journey on the tram and write your impressions. How does ribbon-building come about? What are the faults of the present road? How could they be remedied?
- 2 Take a trip on the top of a bus or tram along any other main road, drawing a plan and describing how the city has grown.



The villages should be "by-passed" as in this picture.



"Ribbon-building" begins along an already congested road. Just one example on a road outside London.

When We Build Again

The Jewellery Quarter as it is

The Birmingham Jewellery Quarter is famous throughout the world. It is a confined area, but it is the home of many firms. Most of the factories are very small—the traditional Birmingham type—where the master and his workmen occupy only a few rooms. The master jewellers once lived and worked in the district. Now they live further out, and their old houses have been turned into workshops. As trade grew, workshops spread over the yards, courts and gardens of the old houses, so that it is now a warren of workshops and houses.

The result is cramped and inconvenient workshops which are dark and inefficient, and housing that is unhealthy and decayed. Nor is it economical, for more than the cost of new factories has often been spent in patching and repairing the old premises.

Why isn't it all altered? Because different people own different pieces, and it is no one's business to deal with the district as a whole. The occupiers, too, have been content to put up with the conditions because they have got used to them.

How this district might be rebuilt

Look at the two plans on the opposite page. At the top is the district as it is to-day. Below it is a plan showing how exactly the same accommodation could be provided in the same area in blocks of 5-storey "flatted factories". Study carefully the big picture which shows an architect's impression of what such a building might look like. Imagine how much pleasanter and better the workrooms in it would be than in the present cramped workshops. Note the central blocks for canteens and recreation, and the absence of many small chimneys. Why should there not be green grass like this around our factories?

We are used to tall blocks for offices—why shouldn't we have them for factories and workrooms? Then every small firm might have many of the advantages now enjoyed only by big ones—good buildings, convenient power and heat, office facilities, up-to-date workrooms, and room to expand. And the workers would have better conditions to work in, as well as canteens and recreational facilities.

The three pictures of the Jewellery Quarter show the "warren of workshops and houses" as it is to-day.



When We Build Again

We have seen much that is wrong in Birmingham, and it is the same in all big cities. How can it be put right? Here we can only give a few suggestions (for more details see "When We Build Again").

From our journey on tram route 70 (or 71) it is plain that we must plan for the city as a whole—it is no use dealing with bits. It is easy to control new buildings, but the cost of purchasing and re-building old property is often prohibitive.

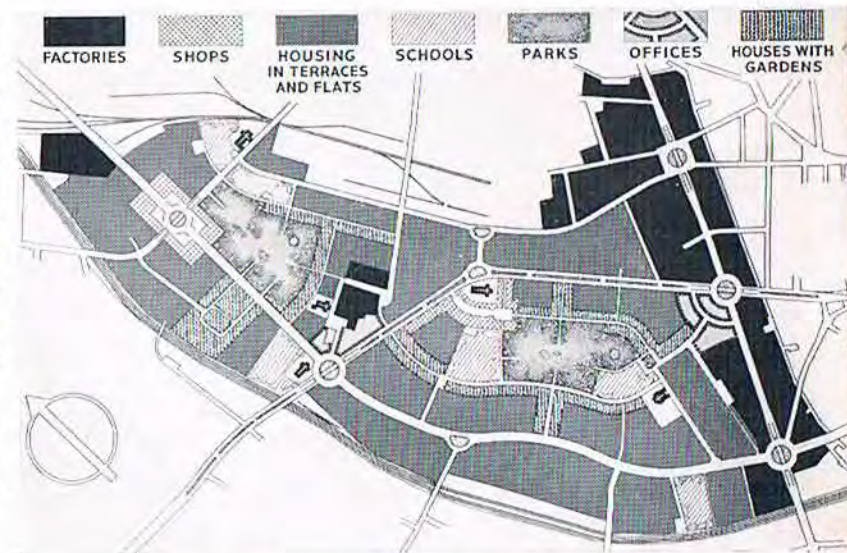
When the community gets wider powers, what should it do? The top plan is of a typical district to-day. Here about 30,000 people live. Below, you see how it might be re-planned. Study this small plan carefully. Compare it with the map of the district as it is and with the "bird's-eye" view of the re-planned district opposite. Notice, first, how the factories have been grouped together on the right, and the main roads clearly planned to avoid the residential areas, which are served by smaller roads to be used only by people going to work, to shop, and to school. The shopping and district centres lie in the middle of the re-planned area and are approached by a main road from the left. On either side of the road lie the houses—and blocks of flats to save space—with schools among them. Notice particularly the large public parks and gardens in place of the whole area packed with streets, houses and factories. Now compare this with the surrounding districts and imagine how much healthier and more convenient it would be to live in the re-planned district.

At present our cities are continually spreading farther and farther out into the country and the central areas are becoming more congested, smoky and unhealthy. We *could* rebuild them as beautiful, convenient and healthy places.

In a district re-planned in this way, not quite as many people could live and work as in the old cramped, dingy buildings of to-day. One-third of the homes and businesses would have to move. Where they could be accommodated is shown on the next page.



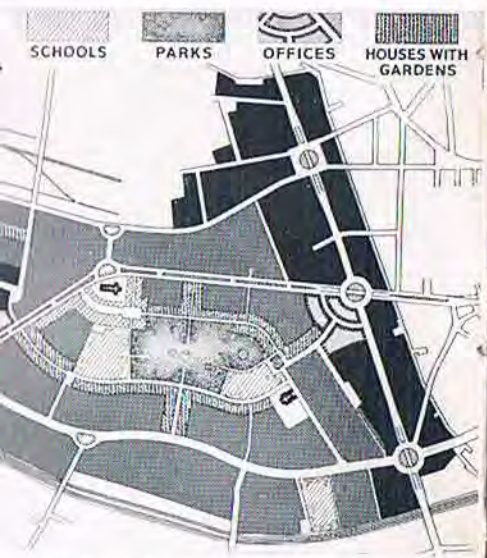
A plan of a typical part of Birmingham as it is to-day (above), and as it might be re-planned (below)



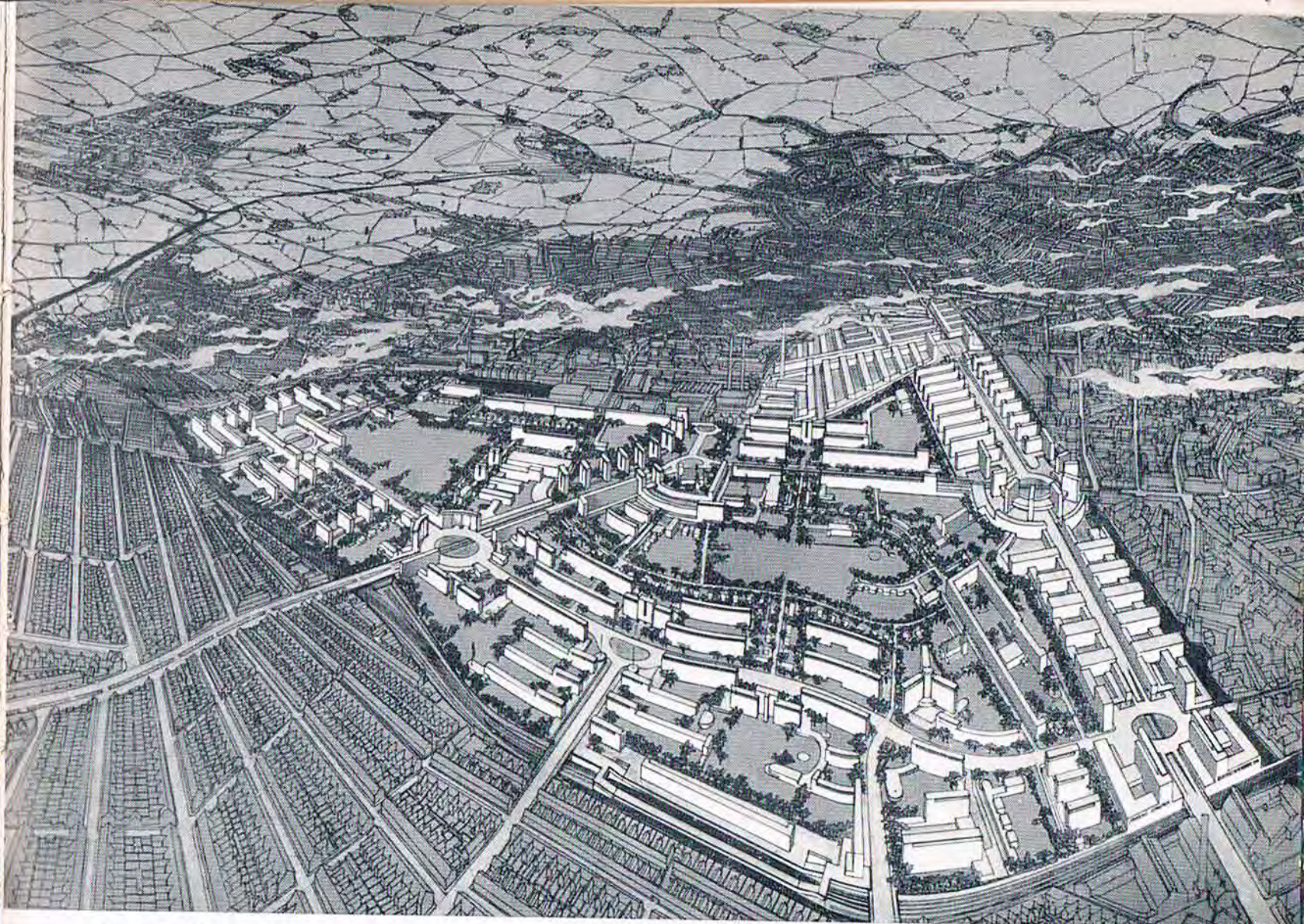
Notice how factories have been grouped together, how the traffic has been simplified, and how large parks could be made.



Birmingham as it is to-day (above), and as it might be planned (below)



grouped together, how the traffic has been improved, and how large parks could be made.



This is an architect's "bird's-eye" view of the plan shown at the bottom of the previous page. How much more convenient and healthy it would be to live in than in the congested districts that surround it. The factories are on the right. You can see a "satellite town" in the top left-hand corner, surrounded by a belt of country. Ideally, it should be placed further away from the big city.

J. SCHREINER

NEW TOWNS OR LARGE SUBURBS

The Central Wards of Birmingham, and other big towns, are overcrowded. When we rebuild, if we are not to repeat their present faults, there will not be room for all the people and the businesses which are there at present. About one-third of the people in the most crowded districts should be reaccommodated elsewhere. Where?

Up to now we have built houses in new suburbs farther and farther out, but the businesses and factories have remained in the centre. The new suburbs have been just dormitories—all the time getting larger and more inconvenient. We have shown that Birmingham is already too big. It must not be allowed to grow still bigger. Further building on the outskirts of Birmingham should be forbidden, and a green belt of fields and farms should be preserved.

Some new towns—not new suburbs—might be built beyond this green belt. Small cities that would be complete in themselves, with their own industries as well as amusements and schools. They

should be connected with Birmingham by fast roads and trains, so that it would take little longer to reach them than it takes at present to get to the outer suburbs. Such towns (of not more than 30,000-50,000 people) would protect Birmingham from sprawling still farther into the country, and themselves be far better places to live and work in than our outlying housing estates. But they would profit greatly by being specially linked with Birmingham, for they would enjoy its facilities for entertainment and education, and benefit by its hospitals and other technical and social equipment, which are much better than any isolated small town could afford.

Suggestions for Organised Work

Get a map of the district round Birmingham and see if you can find any suitable sites for new towns. What kinds of industry do you think could be set up there? Would you prefer to live in such a new town or in Birmingham itself?

Here are three pictures of types of new dwellings (besides ordinary houses) that could be provided in the congested centre of Birmingham.

St. Martin's flats. They are four storeys high, have lifts to every floor, and can house 90 people to the acre.

Two-storeyed maisonettes which can accommodate 60 people to the acre and have gardens and playgrounds for children away from the streets. Those in Great Brook Street are popular.

Some four-storeyed flats in Liverpool; some people think these are much better than taller blocks of buildings.



irmingham by fast roads and trains, so
to reach them than it takes at present
such towns (of not more than 30,000-
Birmingham from sprawling still
themselves be far better places to live
g housing estates. But they would
y linked with Birmingham, for they
ertainment and education, and benefit
cal and social equipment, which are
small town could afford.

and Work

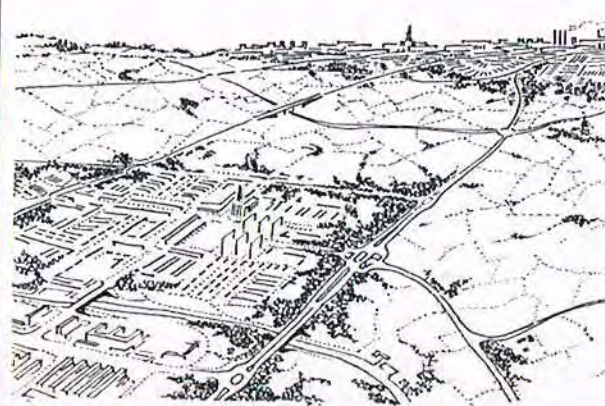
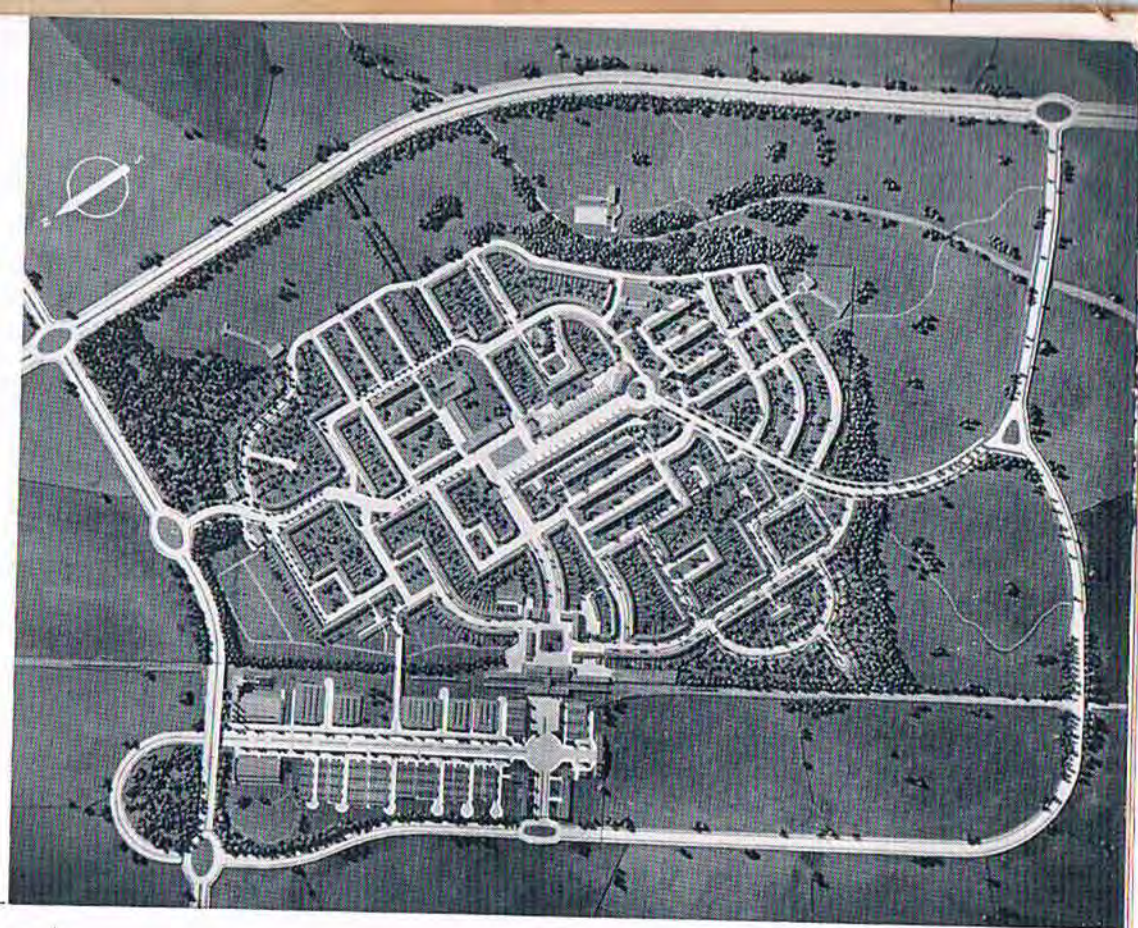
irmingham and see if you can find any
kinds of industry do you think could be
ve in such a new town or in Birmingham

ngested centre of Birmingham.

me four-storeyed flats in Liverpool;
e people think these are much better
than taller blocks of buildings.



Here is a model of a new town designed by the well-known architect, Thomas Sharp. It is only for a small place of about 10,000 people, and shows the essential features of such a town. What are these? Notice how the factories (at the bottom left of the model) have all been grouped together near to but away from the rest of the town. They are separated from it by the railway, which is thus equally convenient for both the factories and the houses. See, too, how the main road skirts the town and thus avoids the common fault of crowding a city's streets with through traffic. The shops and community buildings such as halls, cinemas and municipal offices, are in the centre. All the houses have gardens; some are in terraces and others are detached. The schools are beautifully situated among the fields and trees which completely surround the town. Study this plan carefully. What other good points can you pick out? Can you suggest any improvements?



These two pictures show a bad and a good way of extending a city. In the left-hand picture the town has extended by building houses along the roads outside the town—this is called ribbon-building. It is bad because it spoils miles of countryside for agricultural purposes and makes the roads dangerous with the unnecessary extra traffic to the houses. The other picture shows how a new town—such as that illustrated above—can be placed near the existing large city but in the country, thus avoiding miles of suburban streets.

WHEN WE BUILD AGAIN WE MUST



No more playgrounds like this



No more congested streets



No more overcrowded schools

48

BUT CREATE A CITY OF WHICH OUR



With more green play parks



With healthier houses



With sunny airy schoolrooms

N WE MUST

NOT REPEAT OUR OLD MISTAKES -



more overcrowded schools



No more dingy courts



No more drab districts



No more huddled houses

WHICH OUR

GRANDCHILDREN WILL BE PROUD



th sunny airy schoolrooms



With fine hospitals



With better factories



With good gardens

Research work done collectively in 1936 by

LOCAL HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY.

THE ACCOMPANYING FOLIO OF MAPS AND DIAGRAMS HAS BEEN DRAWN UP BY BOYS OF 13 IN THE SECOND (B) STREAM OF A SENIOR BOYS SCHOOL.

IT IS NOT INTENDED THAT THE FOLIO SHOULD REPRESENT AN EXHAUSTIVE SURVEY OF ANY FEATURE. IT IS RATHER TO BE REGARDED AS TENTATIVE IN CHARACTER AND AS REPRESENTING AN EFFORT TO LEAD TO THE APPRECIATION OF SOME FEATURES OF THE RECENT GROWTH OF AN INDUSTRIAL CITY.

THE WORK HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT ON CO-OPERATIVE LINES, ALL THE BOYS IN THE CLASS TAKING SOME PART IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MATERIAL OR IN THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION OF THE FOLIO.

Groups of scholars visited not only their own districts but congested areas and Municipal estates, and made a portfolio of sketches and plans, some of which are reproduced here. The upper classes of the school (aged 13 plus) combined to obtain from public libraries, etc., the other information required.



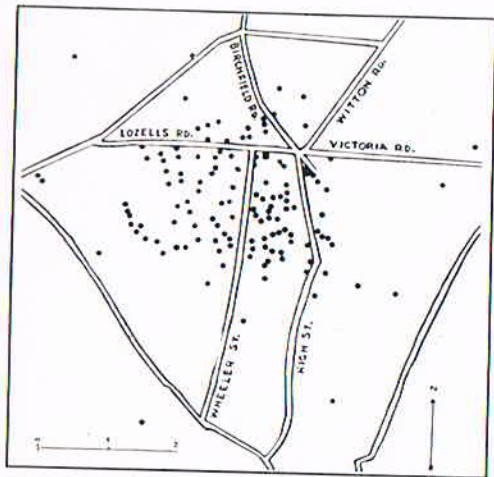
Typical Slum Houses

y in 1936 by

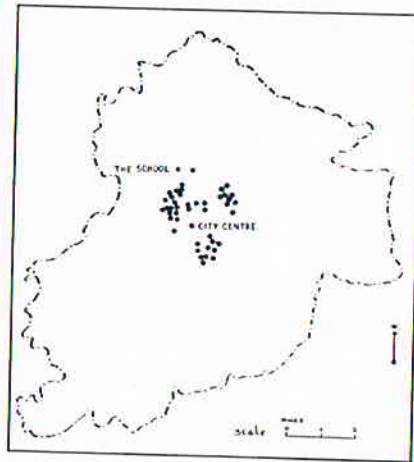
scholars of Gower Street Senior Boys' School, Aston



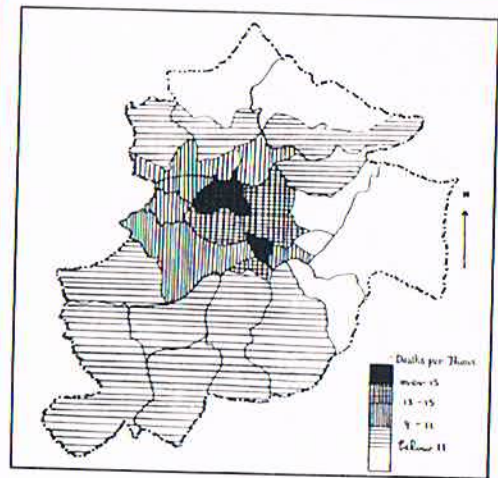
Houses



Homes of Boys in Four of the Classes.



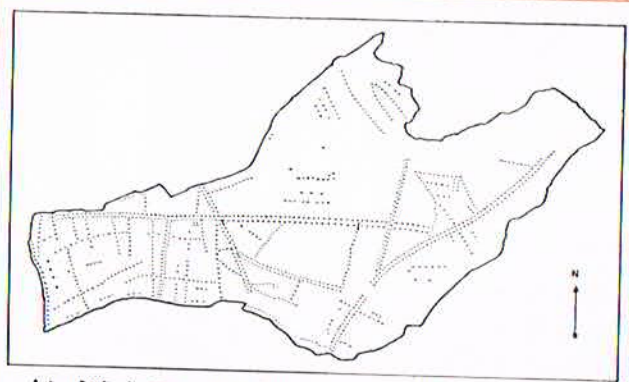
Distribution of Brasscasting Works 1897



Average Death Rate.



This Drawing was made from the window of the classroom. It shows how new shop fronts have been built on to the fronts of ordinary dwelling houses.



Aston Ward Map of all Shops. Scale-Six Inches to One mile.

Other pages from the Gower Street School Folio

The Old and the New.

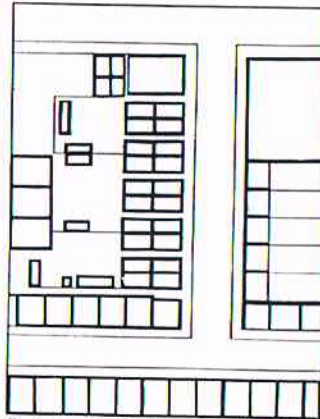


19 Century Street Network
In North Birmingham

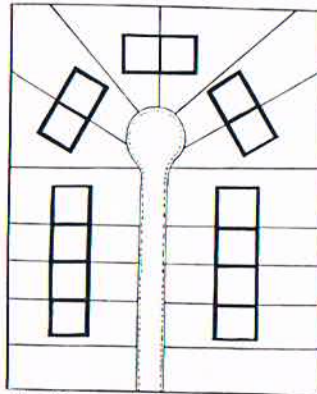


Planned Roads of New
Municipal Housing Estates
Kingstanding and Perry Common

The Old and the New 2.

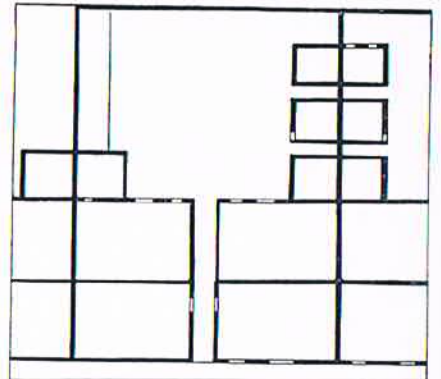


Back to Back Houses in the Old
Part of the City.

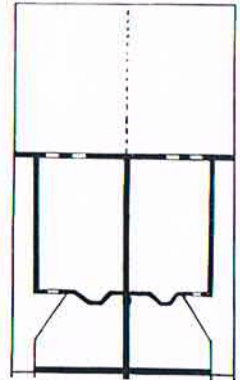


New Housing Layout on Municipal
Estate.

The Old and the New 3.

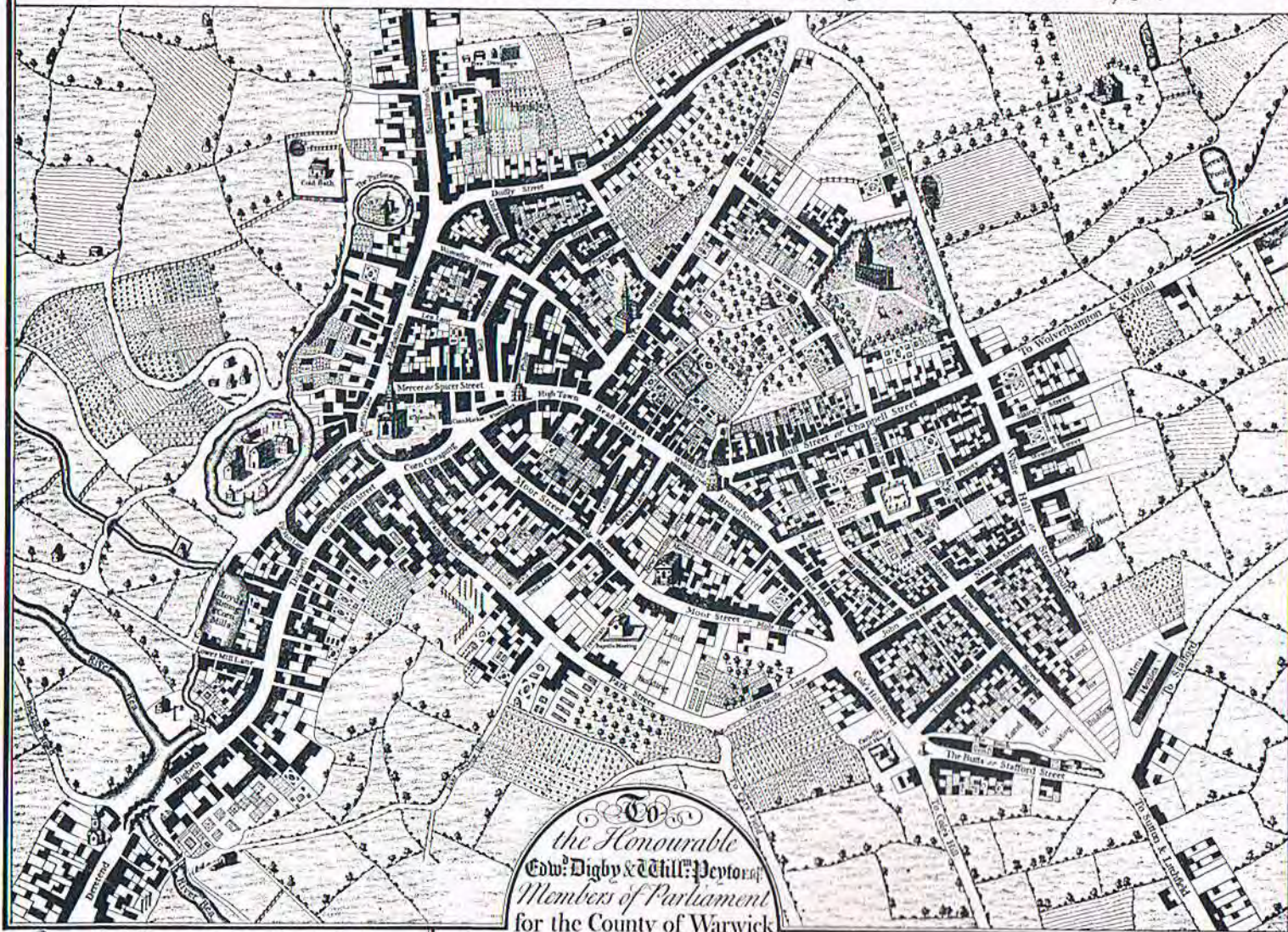


Houses and court in old part of
City



Two Houses on the
Municipal Estate

The PLAN of BIRMINGHAM, Survey'd in the Year 1731.



To
the Honourable
Edw: Digby & Edm: Deyton
Members of Parliament
for the County of Warwick
this Plate is humbly Dedicated
by their most obed^t humble Serv^t W. Worsley



In the Year 1700 Birmingham Contain'd 30 Streets, 100 Courts and Alleys, 2504 Houses, 13032 Inhabitants, one Church dedicated to S^t Martin & a Chappel to S^t John & a School founded by Edward 6th also 2 Dispensary Meeting Houses.

The Plan is the Possession of Thos^t Parkin in the Year 1728. Taken in S^t Hilling

The Increase of this Town from 1700 to y^e Year 1731 - as follows 25 Streets 50 Courts & Alleys 1215 Houses 8238 Inhabitants together with a new Church, Charity School, Market Cross & 2 Meeting Houses for a further account see p^{age} 2



BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICTS TO-DAY

This map shows the built-up area beyond the Birmingham, Birmingham & Country towns. One big urban area is clear that must be regarded as a region and not an isolated unit. You can see roads extend to the city boundaries of building.

The small circles indicate the towns shown in the map.

in the Year 1731.



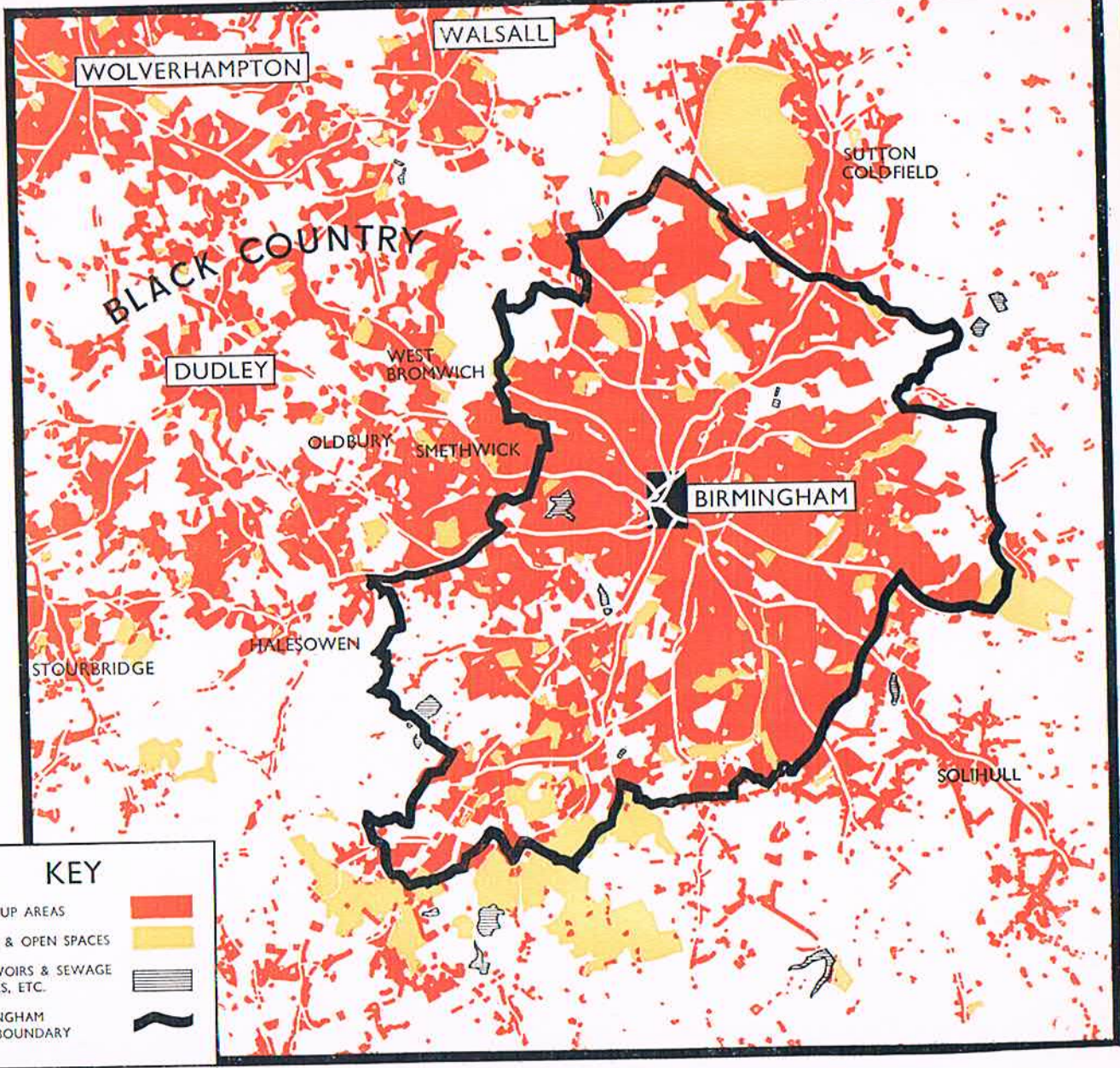
The Increase of this Town from 1700 to 4 Year 1731. is as follows 25 Streets 50 Courts & Alleys 1215 Houses 1834 Inhabitants together with a new Church, Charity School, Market Croft, & a Meeting Houfes, for a further account see p 120

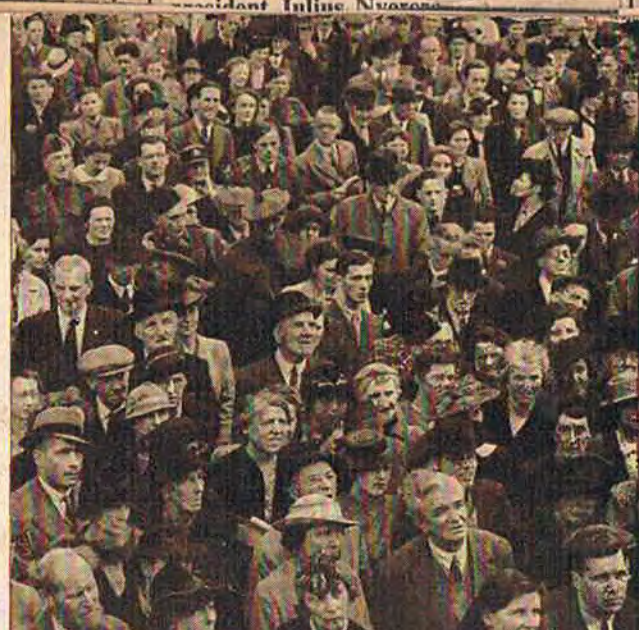
BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT TO-DAY

This map shows how the built-up area has extended beyond the boundary of Birmingham, and how Birmingham and the Black Country towns are now one big urban area. It is clear that Birmingham must be regarded as part of a region and not as an isolated unit.

You can see where the roads extend beyond the city boundaries by the lines of building.

The small black inset indicates the whole area shown in the map of 1731.





I N B I R M I N G H A M

OVER 100,000 PEOPLE
(or more than one out
of ten) still live in back-to-
back houses.



OVER 330,000 PEOPLE
(or more than one out of
three) live in houses of
this type.



OVER 350,000 PEOPLE
(or more than one out of three)
live in houses built since the
last war.

