LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

The following illustrations are examples of UK Town Halls and Council Offices, details of which and their engineering Services may be found in various Sections of the CIBSE Heritage Group website.
New Town Hall, High Street/Ladywell, Dover, Kent, 1883
Architect William Burges (died 1881), then R Popplewell Pullan

Burges was a friend of Phipson, and no doubt this is how Phipson became responsible for the heating, and also for the lighting. The existing Town Hall at Dover, "anciently the Maison Dieu" had earlier been restored by Burges [TB.1861/597] with the participation of the architect Ambrose Poynter, and with Edward J Poynter responsible for the stained glass.

When a new Town Hall was contemplated, Burges was again appointed as architect, but he died before the work was completed. A review of his design [TB.1883i/43] stated: "The style is Geometrically Decorated.....The interior is decorated with colour throughout in the style adopted in Mr Burges’ own house in Melbury Road (Kensington & Chelsea).” The building occupied the site of a prison and accommodated the preservation of the original Town Hall (Maison Dieu). The work was completed by the architect R Popplewell Pullan and Mr Stiff (contractor).
The Town Hall, Birmingham, built 1831-35
Architects J A Hansom & E Welch, with C Edge

When young and relatively unknown, J A Hansom won the competition to design Birmingham's new Town Hall, beating illustrious architects such as Charles Barry and Thomas Rickman [BE/W, 113-4]. The building of the Town Hall was for the architect, Hansom (inventor of the Hansom Patent Safety Cab), a total disaster. The financial arrangements led (1834) to his bankruptcy. John Foster, a prominent Liverpool, architect was then asked to supervise the work. Later (1835), Charles Edge was appointed architect and construction continued for many years (at least till 1849). A description of the building states: "The Corinthian porticoes and side colonnades have all the authority of pure classical architecture." [BB, 37]

According to Phipson's "A Memoir" (1892): A quarter of a century ago Wilson Phipson proposed to remedy the bad ventilation of the Birmingham Town Hall. He was scarcely listened to. A few months ago he was solicited to undertake the work, just before the triennial music festival - it was his last work! According to a recent article in the Birmingham Daily Mail, the ventilation now, even when the Hall is crowded to excess, is absolutely perfect. [WWP, 15]

The article in question, taken from the Birmingham Daily Mail of Tuesday, 27 October 1891 [BLRC] is reproduced below. It deals more with the Town Hall ventilation than Phipson's death:

**THE VENTILATION OF THE TOWN HALL
SUDDEN DEATH OF MR PHIPSON**

There are many in Birmingham who will experience personal regret in learning of the painful sudden death of Mr W W Phipson. Mr Phipson was an engineer of standing and had become conversantly known in connection with the ventilation of public buildings. It is but comparatively recently that there has been applied to our public institutions a method of ventilating other than the primitive one of opening a window or door. By the modern system of equally distributed injection and extraction we get a wholesome atmosphere without draughts. Mr Phipson who was a connection of the Phipsons of Birmingham was prominent in establishing an improved method of ventilation. He ventilated several of the theatres and public buildings of London and what is more immediately interesting to Birmingham people, he ventilated and heated the Victoria Law Courts and the Town Hall. Nothing could be better than the principle by which a cool and wholesome atmosphere is continuously preserved in the Assize Courts, no matter how packed they may be, and without the slightest draught from injected air. Some strictures have been passed upon the ventilation of the Town Hall. These may have been deserved so far as relates to the temporary control of them, but not to the construction. For last night when the hall was filled, the ventilation was admirable, which shows that when the apparatus is properly worked it is efficient and suitable for its purpose. By means of it two million cubic feet of air can be passed through the hall in an hour, and during the concert last night 1,800,000 cubic feet were forced through. Mr Phipson died of heart disease.
TODMORDEN TOWN HALL

Todmorden Town Hall, Yorkshire, 1860-75
Architect John Gibson

The Classical theme, as used by J A Hansom at Birmingham Town Hall (1832), was revived by Gibson for the new Town Hall at Todmorden. No doubt because Gibson had been articled to Hansom and was therefore strongly influenced by him. Todmorden has been described [VA, 75] as “a podium on which the Roman temple of engaged columns rises.” The fact that Todmorden, a comparatively small Yorkshire town, was able to build such a large and magnificent town hall was due to a gift of £40,000 by the local industrialist Samuel Fielden and his family. [VAR, 154] The building has also been likened to the famous St George’s Hall at Liverpool (1856), “being a simplified version...a plain rectangle with an apse at one end, surrounded by a giant attached Corinthian order.”

This was another collaboration between Gibson and Phipson who is credited with the heating. [TB.1875/302-3] this being summarised as “heating apparatus: coils; hot water.” Other parties included: Messrs Robert Neill & Sons (contractor), Messrs Trollope (decorations and furnishings), Mr Strode (gas lighting) and Messrs Mintons (tile manufacturers).
BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL HOUSE

Birmingham Council House, Museum & Art Gallery, 1874-9 & 86
Architect Yeoville Thomason

Research at the Birmingham Library & Record Centre has located reference to Phipson in connection with his contract for the above buildings [Record 1460/45.56]. These records include drawings of the heating and ventilation layouts for both the original building and the extensions built to house a Museum & Art Gallery, together with offices for the Gas Company [listed in Appendix-D]. The records show the Contractor as John Barnsley & Sons, and the Engineer as Wilson W Phipson. A further reference [TB.1878/215-9] confirms Thomason as architect and Barnsley as contractor, but makes no mention of Phipson. The project is referred to as Birmingham New Municipal Buildings, and the sponsor is named as Joseph Chamberlain. The building is described as “decidedly Classical” in character and in the “columnar style.”

Phipson’s drawings show the ventilation system was of the heat-assisted type, Cold fresh air was taken in at basement level, then passed over banks of cast-iron heating pipe-coils. The warmed ventilation air then rose through the building, the vitiated exhaust air being taken through ceiling ducts into the roof space and to atmosphere. The boilers circulated hot water by gravity to the coil-banks and to a few radiator-shaped pipe coils scattered around the building in the smaller rooms.
WESTMINSTER COUNTY HALL
CARDIFF CITY HALL
See Buildings of Interest (Ventilation)
Manchester town hall, second stage competition plan, principal floor, Alfred Waterhouse, 1868 (redrawn from Builder, vol. XXVI, 1868)
BRISTOL COUNCIL HOUSE
See Buildings of Interest (Heating)