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St Paul, Bow (1956) Robert Maguire & Keith Murray

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Programme

With *Ecclesiology Today* you will find this year's programme of visits, which provide an excellent opportunity to visit churches all over England in the company of like-minded enthusiasts. Our thanks to Chris Webster for organising all this. He is always open to ideas and offers for visits, so don't hesitate to contact him with any thoughts for the future.

The programme also allows you to mark in your diary the date of our annual conference, now very much a fixture in the first weekend in October. This year the working title is *The smaller twelfth-century church*. We are hoping to look at the art, architecture, liturgy, design, mode of operation and social function of parish churches in their infancy.

[I hope I'm not alone in believing that this width of approach is a distinctive feature of the Society? To my mind, 'Ecclesiology' is not just ecclesiastical art-history, but an attempt to connect every aspect of church buildings to their purpose. Am I sticking my neck out? Comments, please, on a postcard . . .]

Annual report for 2000

Every year, at our AGM in the early summer, the Council presents an annual report on the previous year. Due to some crossed wires, we didn't include the report for the year 2000 with our September issue of *Ecclesiology Today*. You should find it with this edition.

Multiple choice

Anyone with an interest in churches has no shortage of Societies from which to choose, and I suppose that most of you reading this probably belong to several (I certainly do). The Council felt that it would be worthwhile to open up better channels between the various Groups, and in November Dr James Johnston, the member of Council with special responsibility for external relationships, organised a discussion forum to which were invited representatives of some twenty specialist Societies and organisations. The evening was useful and enjoyable, and may well be repeated.

One hundred and twenty-five years

Our thanks to those who have suggested ways in which we might celebrate our 125th anniversary in 2004. The Council will be giving some serious thought to this over the first part of 2002. All further ideas welcome.

Trevor Cooper
Chairman of Council

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CHURCH DESIGN SINCE 1950

Robert Maguire

2Since we live in a time of accelerating change, one of the problems we have is that the last fifty years has seen more change in the design and layout of parish churches than is at first apparent to the eye. This is because although the vast majority of them *look modern* - in the sense of some variation of Modern Movement style (or aberration of it) - the spatial concepts involved have shifted according to changing ideas about the nature of worship, of the nature of the Church as a body, of its relationship with the unchurched world outside, and also according to the differing degrees of understanding of those matters by their architects, and lastly (and sadly) of the differing degrees of understanding of what the Modern Movement in architecture - the milieu in which they thought they were working - was about.

Trinity Church,
Poplar (1950-1)
Cecil Handisyde

St Paul, Bow Common was my first church and indeed my first building, on which I collaborated with Keith Murray, who then became my partner. It was designed in 1956, took a little time to be accepted by various authorities, and was finished and consecrated in 1960. That puts it at the beginning of the major changes.

But it really is necessary to put St Paul's into the context of the changing scene both before and after, otherwise I will only be perpetuating certain historical myths. So first let me provide a very rapid and probably rather oversimplified skip through the chronology, with some typical examples. Then second - again, all too hasty - let us consider what we were about when we designed St Paul's. I will just add that of course my ideas too have changed since then - it was more than half my lifetime ago - but some things have remained constant. I will comment a little about that at the end.

The Ascension,
Crownhill,
Plymouth (1956)
Potter & Hare

St Paul, Bow (1956) Robert Maguire & Keith Murray

A quick chronology

The stripped-down Romanesque, Gothic or Georgian forms of the thirties - laid out so clearly before us in the book *Fifty Modern Churches* - give over quite easily to the simple rectangular forms of post-war modernism.

Trinity Church, Poplar, 1950-1: Cecil Handisyde, Festival of Britain showpiece: top quality for the period. A Congregational church (it became a Methodist church in 1974), but note the tall dossal and cross so beloved of 1930s Anglicans. Here, we have the plan of a standardised church designed by Basil Spence for Coventry Diocese in the early 1950s. Note the long thin altar on the east wall, the choir in a vestigial chancel, the serried ranks of seats ranging backwards out of earshot. As yet, we have no new awareness - at least none made explicit in the buildings - of the nature of the life of the Church.

When we look at Trinity Church, it is easy to see how a little recess and a couple of big sliding doors could shut away the furniture at the east end, and leave us with a hall. Thus, in the frugal post-war years, a great mass of dual-purpose buildings were put up on the new housing estates [although Trinity did have a separate hall]. They were not liked: people came to church on Sunday mornings to be greeted by the smells of Wills Woodbines and stale beer from the night before. Mostly, they have become parish halls.

The Ascension, Crownhill, Plymouth (1956): architects Potter and Hare. Here the altar is freestanding within a square sanctuary, and given symbolic importance by a baldachin. A stylistic debt, certainly, to Coventry Cathedral, but its real inspiration is Sir Ninian Comper's St Philip's, Cosham, which the grand old man, so profoundly understanding Eucharistic worship and the Church gathered as the Holy People of God, had completed in 1937.

Our Lady of Fatima, Harlow (1958-60) Gerard Goalen

St John the Ermine, Lincoln (1963) Sam Scorer

So here we see a physical expression of something happening. That 'something' in very broad terms can be described as the Liturgical Movement - although I realise there will be many for whom the term suggests too Roman Catholic and too continental a movement for them to be happy with. But I am referring to a revolutionary set of connected ideas which stemmed from theologians of many Christian persuasions, and had its roots in Early Christian scholarship.

We come then to St Paul's, Bow Common. Keith and I came from rather different directions to each other and to the established church architects of the day. At 25, I was then a rebellious Roman Catholic able to stomach only the Olivetan Benedictines of Bec, in Normandy, and who as a student had sat at the feet of Rudolf Wittkower and John Summerson; Keith at 27 was an odd-ball High Church Anglican designer who had a great familiarity with the Bible and an amazing knowledge of the Early Christian world, who had just read Dom Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy*. I think I can honestly say that consciously at least, St Paul's owed nothing to what any of the mainline churches here were doing at the time. I think one of the factors that recommended us to our Marxist vicar client was our sheer rebellion.

What we were trying to do at Bow Common was to create a space - to set apart a place - in which the congregation could come to perceive that they were one Body, the Mystical Body of Christ. We were concerned not to frustrate, through an inappropriate setting, the intentions of Eucharistic worship. I think it was this frustration we had felt, because of so much indifference in the buildings and churchmanship we had experienced, that gave rise to our anger.

St Paul's has a straight bounding wall around a near-square plan, and a colonnade within that, forming a continuous ambulatory. The freestanding altar sits under a baldachin and the whole space is largely lit from a great lantern above the altar. There are no fixed seating positions.

All Saints, Clifton (1965) Robert Potter

Holy Family, Blackbird Leys, Oxford (1864) Colin Shewring

St Margaret of Scotland, Twickenham (1967-8) Williams & Winckley

As I've been asked to 'compare and contrast', as they say in degree-course exam papers, I will pass some comment on other church designs from this important point of view - the one-ness of the Christian Body - as we go along.

A small handful of Roman Catholic architects had become influenced by continental Liturgical Movement churches, particularly in France and Germany, and some fresh, lively work was produced in England around the same time as Bow Common. Gerard Goalen's 'T'-shaped church of Our Lady of Fatima at Harlow, resplendent with its Buckfast Abbey glass. My only serious criticism of this - and it is serious - is that God's Holy People are divided, like All Gaul, into three parts.

The spirit of Liturgical reform was slow to reach the Roman Catholics of Scotland. Two of the very best of our architects, Andy Macmillan and Isi Metzstein, the young partners in Gillespie, Kidd and Coia, built a whole stream of RC churches in the Sixties on unreformed plans. Not being themselves Christians, they inadvertently allowed themselves to be misinformed on the major question for a Modern Movement architect: just what is the building for? Sadly, it seems that one by one these carefully-wrought art-works - for they are indeed that - is being demolished or lies desolate.

In England the Sixties became a time for experiment in plan-shapes. I believe the true main issue became over-simplified, degenerating into a question of seeing and hearing well what was going on 'up front', and having satisfied that quite easy brief, architects were searching for new structural forms as exciting as the discarded Gothic. For instance, Sam Scorer's wedge-shaped church, St John at Ermine, Lincoln (1963) covered by a great hyperbolic paraboloid shell; and - a

St Philip & St James, Hodge Hill (1967-8) Martin Purdy

far cry from his earlier Crownhill church - Robert Potter's All Saints at Clifton (1965), the very muscular modernism of the day.

About the same time, Colin Shewring's church of the Holy Family at Blackbird Leys, Oxford. An oval building, again covered by a hyperbolic paraboloid, but this one compressing the sanctuary by its lowness. The congregation is divided into two; the division is accentuated by the well-meaning position of the baptistery and by the sagging underbelly of the whale.

Again unfortunately with a divided congregation, but a building that by contrast really lifts the spirit, is Williams and Winckley's RC church of St Margaret of Scotland at Twickenham. This is late 1960s architecture at its best.

At this point, 1968, there lands a bombshell. An Anglican group at Birmingham University centred around the theologian J G Davies, produced a written manifesto in book form, and a manifesto building to go with it, which in effect discarded all that had developed from Bow Common onwards. The title of Davies' book was *The Secular Use of Church Buildings*, which today we would understand to mean how to recycle redundant churches; but what Davies meant was, essentially, that church buildings should be secular in character, catering as social centres for the non-Christian communities about them; centres which the Christians could also use for worship.

Completely rejected was the idea of the church proper as a set-apart place, propounded by Maguire and Murray and Peter Hammond. It was the church proper itself which was to be the social centre proper.

The manifesto building, St Philip and St James, Hodge Hill, architect Martin Purdy, is a multi-purpose space which can be subdivided by sliding screens to form smaller halls and rooms. And there, in the middle rather incidentally, is a very Anglican sanctuary: not capable of being screened off at will like the netball or the old people's tea-party or whatever else you wished to do in the building, but permanently on view.

I first visited Hodge Hill with Gilbert Cope, the Director of the Birmingham Institute and a long-standing friend; and when we came to the sanctuary there was a table-tennis table and some teenagers playing, just in front of it. ‘Gilbert’, I said ‘this is the most marvellous social centre, but I don't understand why this little altar set-up has to stand here all the week looking so prim in contrast to everything around - why can't you bring in a trestle-table and a nice white tablecloth on a Sunday, and just get going with the Eucharist like everything else here?’ ‘Ah’, he said. ‘The altar sanctifies the ping-pong!’ ‘But Gilbert, the ping-pong isn't in need of sanctification; it's OK already - it's just... ping-pong.’

Now, of course, many if not most churches of the post-war years had some rooms and a hall attached which were and are intensively used. Some have a considerable amount of such accommodation. The departure point of the Birmingham group was that the church itself - the building, that is - should change its nature. This signalled a re-emphasis (not at all a new awareness, mind you) on social service as a main Christian responsibility. It also - although this really became more explicit a decade later - signalled a realisation within the Church (as a body) that it was in an essentially missionary position. The two are different: one has to distinguish motives.

Hodge Hill has been most influential in drawing attention to these issues. But the main trumpet blast has not been taken up: not many altars have been set up in, as it were, the netball court. But many netball courts, youth clubrooms, meeting rooms, party rooms and so on have since been developed by Churches.

And so to return to Bow Common. In 1958, Keith Murray and I put on a sort of double-act audio-visual show at a Theological Conference at Swanwick using almost entirely everyday, secular images to sketch out, as it were by tangential lines, the idea of set-apart space as a deep need of the human psyche. As we were addressing theologians, we started with the statement: 'The Church does not need buildings'. We said that if you want to celebrate the Eucharist, what you need is a loaf of bread, some wine and a cup. And perhaps a trestle-table; but a rock or a tree-stump will do as well, according to whether you are doing it in the school hall or the desert or a field. All you need for baptism is some water: that's all there was, after all, at the most famous baptism ever. We then went on to say that if you are keen to build a church, you are setting apart a place (like Sunday is - or was - the setting apart of time). Otherwise, we said, build a community hall, and bring out a trestle-table.

We then went on to consider the nature of set-apart places; and that essentially was the analysis, and then the synthesis, that went into St Paul's, Bow Common.

Now the fact that lots of Christian people are keen to build a church seemed to justify the activity - but why? The conclusion we came to was that the Christian community needed a

St Paul, Bow (1956) Robert Maguire & Keith Murray
Photograph courtesy of Martin Charles

domain, a place peculiar to itself, that reflected its own nature and in some way re-formed it as a community constantly; a place consecrated to God; whence it is sent out into the world. You will see immediately the distinction - this the place of the Christian Body, and although public it is not secular.

Although we were Modernists, we had come to perceive - partly through the more scholarly of our tutors - that there were symbolic functions that buildings had to serve. This was of course long before Postmodern theorists set up trite one-to-one correspondences between meanings and stock architectural features by virtue of semiotic, so-called 'references'. Our interest in this question of 'setting apart' led us to recognise a set of architectonic devices, timeless and essentially non-stylistic, that achieved just that, but with different degrees of emphasis, subtly different nuances.

Consider for example the cloister - a backing wall and a colonnade or arcade, arranged around a rectangle. As different in style and proportion as, say, S Georgio Maggiore and Monreale, or Gloucester. Cloister - the very word - 'to cloister' has become almost synonymous with 'to set apart'. Yet take the same two elements and put them the other way around a rectangle and you have: a peristyle - very good for large public processions around the outside.

St Paul's, Bow Common, uses these two devices, the bounding wall and the encircling colonnade. But it uses them in a way which achieves other objectives at the same time. The columns are slender, but they are white, and lit mainly by top light from the centre. One therefore feels well enclosed when one is in the central space, the colonnade reading as the main enclosing element, yet when one is in the ambulatory one does not feel excluded by the columns because of the light drawing one, as it were, to the central space.. This means that small congregations and large ones both feel the church is the right size for them. Also, the ambulatory has the spatial character of being a continuous processional delineation of the set-apart place as a whole. Consonant with this, there is a processional path set in its floor. I should add that this East End parish has a great tradition of doing processions.

The central space, as you see in the plan, is three bays wide and four bays long, and the altar in its square sanctuary space, and the lantern directly above it, are centred on the three bays by three bays towards the east end. Incidentally, the three by four proportion governs all the principal relationships between elements in the building. There is nothing pseudo-sacred about this, but it does, as Alberti or Palladio would say, lend harmony to all the parts.

Hanging from the edge of the lantern opening in the flat ceiling is a square corona supporting lights; this is made of off-shelf rolled steel sections, and it works like a series of balance-arms on fulcrums. I should say that I was very keen on Alexander Calder at the time (as I am still) and was making serious mobiles. The corona and the lantern over define the sanctuary area: there is no step and no communion rail, only a change of paving material.

There are however two steps up to the altar. Put an altar on the floor of the church, and it looks as if it could be on casters, able to be trundled anywhere like a buffet trolley. Raise it on a step or two, and the worrying sensation has gone. But steps have been such a subject of church rubrics in the past, especially relating to the sanctuary of a church, where various numbers of steps from time to time have been laid down precisely. On looking into these the reason appears to be the analogy with the holy hill, hilltops having been seen as very holy places, even symbolically in the Old Testament as the dwelling-place of God, as in Psalms 15 and 24.

Assuming that such symbolism still has some deep-seated psychological or spiritual meaning - and I think there is a good case to be made - the question for us was 'How many steps

do you need to make a symbolic holy hill?' At Bow Common we came up with the answer, two, which is one less than both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were stipulating at the time. Actually I now think one step is enough to fix an object spatially. But it does not make the object special. If you are designing a cenotaph, or the Albert Memorial, as designers have always known, you need more than one step.

There is a baldachin over the altar. Now, this is a very unmodern thing to do, because of the rationalist argument that columns get in the way of the view. The real purpose of many canopies, from those over statues on the outside of cathedrals to Prince Albert sitting out in Hyde Park, is to enhance the importance of the person or object or activity covered. An altar is necessarily limited in size because its height is fixed, and when you bring the altar off the east wall, it becomes a wall if it is of any great length. The canopy gives visual importance to something which is of great intrinsic importance but dimensionally slight.

St Paul, Bow (1956)
Robert Maguire &
Keith Murray
Photograph courtesy
of Martin Charles

In the photograph the seats have been arranged to the west of the sanctuary and the sanctuary enjoys immense space. This is the crux of the planning of St Paul's. No seats were ever shown on any plan: the idea was to leave this to the parish and to provide them with moveable seating (in this case four-seat bench pews of light weight, since church chairs at the time, as indeed now, were hideous). Moreover, the parish had been experimenting liturgically - not with alternative texts (this was after all 1956) but with ways of expressing what might be summed up in the phrase ‘the priesthood of all believers’. Of realising itself as One Body - the same principle as informed the architectonic forms defining the space.

What it had arrived at was that during the Synaxis, or Ministry of the Word, the congregation would sit. There would be a certain amount of movement as, for example in the Catholic tradition, there would be a procession with lit candles at the reading of the Gospel, which would take place at the western end of the church. Preaching would be from the floor, westward of the altar.

Then, at the beginning of the Ministry of the Sacrament, the entire congregation would leave the seats and stand in the great space gathered around the altar. They would stay there until they had received communion, which they also did standing. When everyone had received communion - and not until, as we do at a meal - they would return to their seats

It really is for this reason that St Paul's was revolutionary. That was all, already, in place, in the hall in which they had been worshipping. Where we came in was to interpret that extraordinary understanding of what it was all about, in terms of the physical reality of a building.

The font was just inside the door. This is a traditional position and neither we nor the parish had re-thought it, as we did in our very next church. But we had to re-think the form of the font. We came to the conclusion that the real symbol, in baptism, is the water itself. So our fonts have always been straightforward containers for water - a lot of it. At Bow Common the bowl is a 19-gallon standard Doulton's stoneware 'copper' cast into a block of concrete; when the slate slab is raised by a chain-hoist bought from a nearby docklands firm, the broad surface of the water reflects the light from the lantern, as you enter. The cover is raised every Sunday morning, and the font kept full.

One last but vital point about St Paul's and about all our subsequent churches. Most discussions about planning for modern liturgy start with assertions about seeing well and hearing what is going on; and so, proceeding within the classic modernist rational disciplines, churches usually end up without columns (which are said to get in the way of the view) and often with plans which are wedge-shaped like lecture theatres, or half-round or nearly so like an amphitheatre, or of course (Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral being the most flagrant example) circular.

Liturgy, however, is not lecturing, nor theatre, nor is it is a circus. And if one produces a building whose spatial characteristics have been developed for one of these uses, liturgy will tend to be forced down that road - it can easily become, through misunderstanding, a kind of lecture seminar, and in particular, theatre. Throw in a fervent choir and an ambitious organist, and parish worship aspires to the Albert Hall. The nature of Christian worship is otherwise, and the Eucharistic liturgy properly involves complex relationships between all present (and of course I include God in that).

But this does not itself generate architectural form. However, these complex relationships actually seem to look after themselves - the liturgy itself being the dynamic relationship generator - in certain kinds of interior space which, we observed, possessed a definable character. The trouble has been to find the words actually to describe this definable character. I have opted for

'inclusive space', that is a space within which, wherever a person is situated and no matter how many others are also in the space or where they are situated, that person feels included in whatever is going on.

Buildings in which I have experienced this with intensity are the Pazzi Chapel, Santa Fosca at Torcello, Hosios Loukas near the road from Athens to Delphi. It is independent of style, and it resists easy prescriptions like 'a dome will work'. It is a question of the way structure defines space, and the way the delineation of that space is achieved by quality of light. But one cannot generalise; and if I say that we have found that centralising structures (and I don't mean centralised plans) seem to offer the best possibilities, I have to qualify that at once by saying that there are many that don't, and conversely there are wonderful historical examples that defy that description. Inclusive space has been our quest in all our subsequent churches, with various degrees of success.

Robert Maguire is a practising architect and the above article is an amended version of a talk he gave to the Society in 2000.

LETTERS

From: David Bushell

I enclose a pre-publicity leaflet about my church's patronal festival annual lecture - King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells. I hope there is room for publicity in the January edition of *Ecclesiology Today*.

In adition to the annual history lecture on 26 January 2002 at 2.30 pm, there will be, as usual, a classical music concert in the church in the evening.

King Charles the Martyr church is mainly a *Book of Common Prayer* church (8.00, 11.00, 6.30) with common worship at 9.30.

The church is the oldest, and oldest building, in Tunbridge Wells. It was built in 1676, extended later in the C17 and again in the 1880s. Its most famous feature is the plaster ceiling, put in two stages in the C17, one by Henry Doogood, a plasterer working with Wren on St Paul's Cathedral.

As it happens the *Times* featured our church last Saturday [17 November].

Finally, should your readers wish to know more of the architecture of King Charles the Martyr, a new (2000) history of the church is now available. It was written by Dr John Fuller, a former churchwarden. The book is called *The Church of King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells: A new History* ISBN 0-9538479-0-X. It costs £7 inc p&p (or £5 in person at the church).

61 Culverden Down
Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN4 9SL

Ed: The lecture is titled 'The Most Proper Day of All the Year' Sermons commemorating Charles I's death on January 30th 1649 and will be given by Dr Clare Jackson from Trinity College, Cambridge

ERNEST GELDART: PRIEST-ARCHITECT

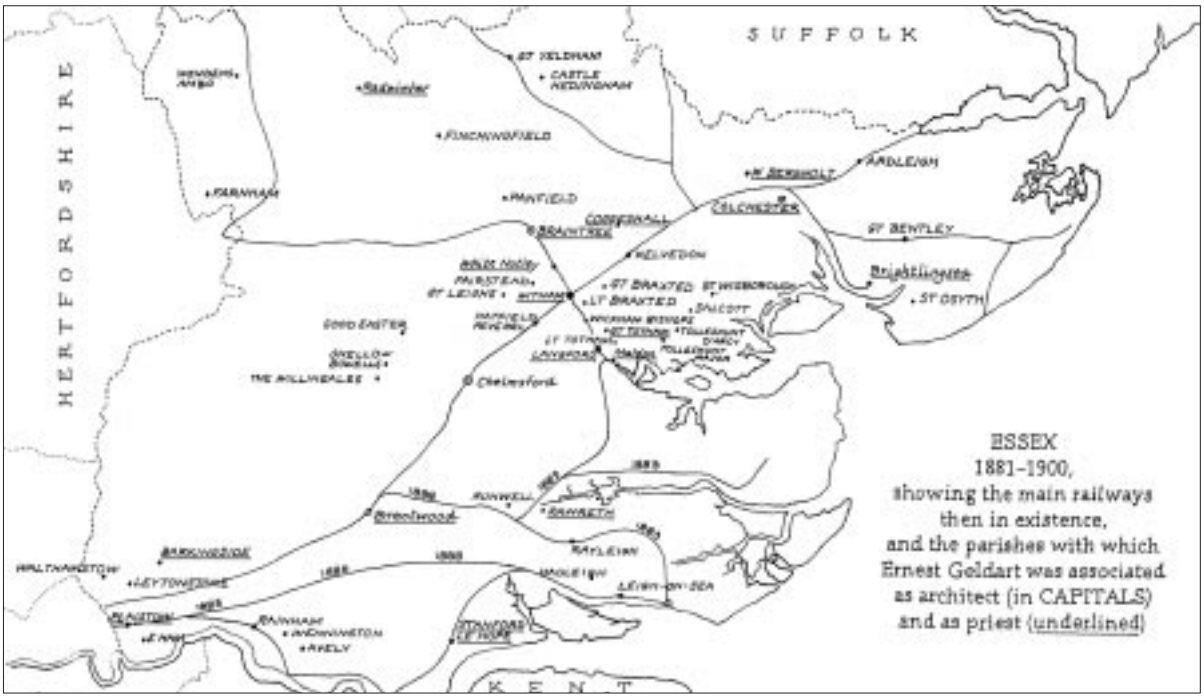
James Betley

The name of the priest-architect Ernest Geldart is one which will be known to many members of the Ecclesiological Society. Born in 1848, he entered the office of Alfred Waterhouse in 1864 to train as an architect, but in 1873 took Holy Orders. After curacies at St Andrews, Plaistow and in Surrey he became rector of Little Braxted, Essex, in 1881, where he remained until he retired on grounds of ill health in 1900. He died at Holmbury St Mary, Surrey, in 1929.

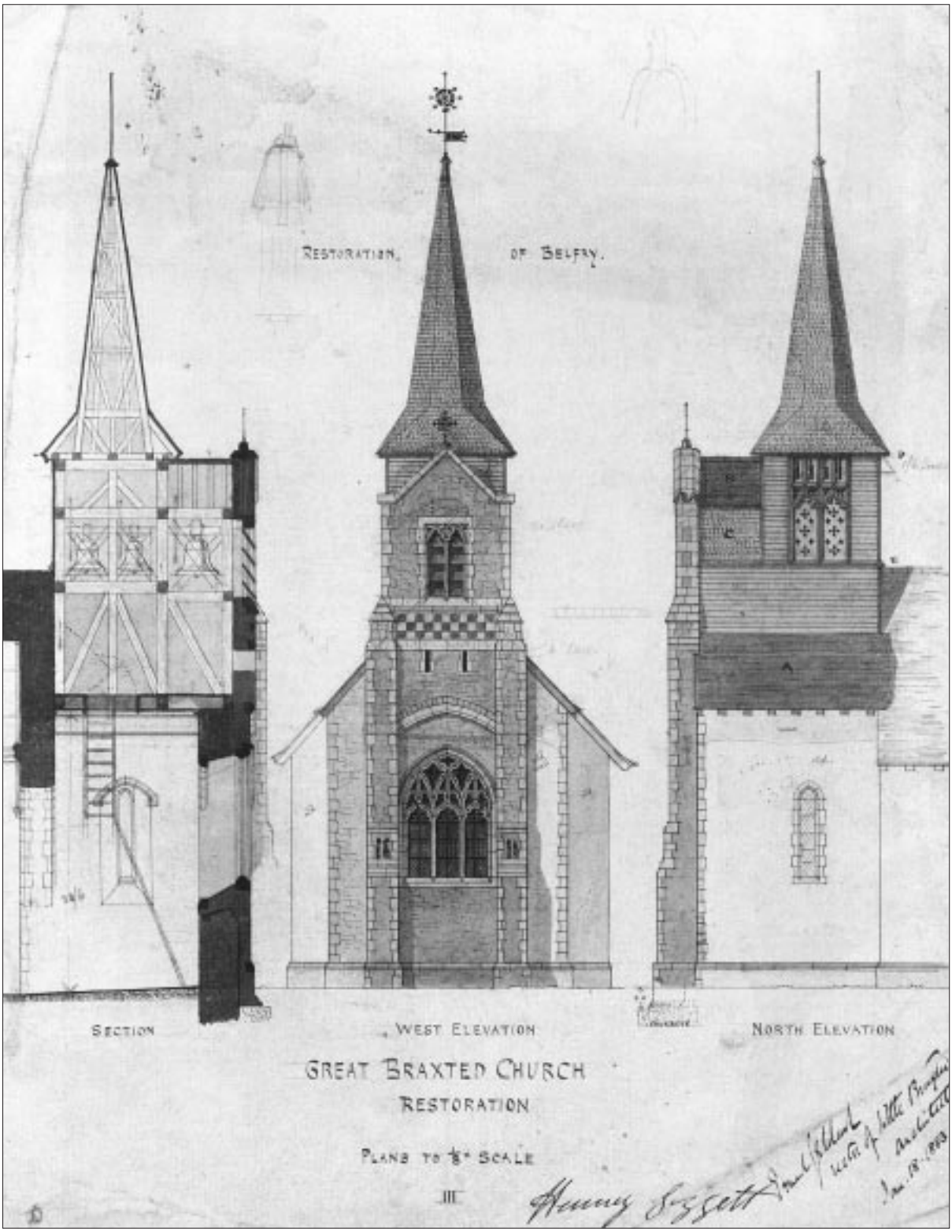
St Nicholas, Little Braxted: contemporary view from the south east about 1886 showing the north aisle and vestry added by Geldart in 1884 (Courtesy British Library 4705.CC.14(3)).

Throughout his career as a priest he continued to practise as an architect and designer, being principally involved with schemes of church furnishing and decoration. His best-known work is the monumental reredos in St Cuthberts, Philbeach Gardens, but the greatest concentration of his work, 57 projects out of a total of 163, including the restoration and decoration of his own church at Little Braxted, is to be found in Essex.

The latest volume of *Essex Archaeology and History* (vol 31, 2000, pp 169-194) includes an article by James Bettley which examines Geldarts work in Essex and places it in the context of his life as a whole. It includes colour illustrations (thanks to the award of a Dorothy Stroud Bursary by the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain) and a gazetteer of his works in the county. As well as outlining his career, the article explains how Geldart successfully



St Nicholas,
Little Braxted
Current view of altar
and east end
Photograph by
James Bettley



All Saints, Great Braxted.
Contract drawing for the rebuilding of the western end, 1883
(Courtesy RIBA Drawings Collection)

managed to combine the two careers, and examines the iconography and symbolism that was such an important element of his decorative schemes.

Geldarts splendid wallpaintings and other decorations at Little Braxted were sensitively restored by Donald Smith in 1989-92. Now urgent work needs to be done to the roof, after part of the ceiling of the apse fell in last year, and the church (which has a congregation of only 20 regular worshippers) needs to raise £70,000. Further information is available from the rector, Canon George Howden, 1 Church Road, Wickham Bishops, Witham, Essex CM8 3LA, tel 01621 891360, who would be grateful for any donations.

Off-prints of the article are available from the author, Dr James Bettley, The Old Vicarage, Great Totham, Maldon, Essex CM9 8NP, in return for an A4 SAE (44p) or a cheque/postal order for £1.

SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT

Graeme Watson (ed), *Celestial Anthems: Poems by John Cennick*, Culver Press 2001

John Cennick (1718-1755), poet and hymn writer, was born and brought up in Reading, and became one of the most significant figures of the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival. After a troubled youth he underwent a conversion experience and was one of the first itinerant Methodists and one of their first lay preachers. As one of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival he travelling widely across the south of England preaching and founding congregations. He later joined the Moravian Church and worked in England, Wales and Ireland. He died, nationally famous, in 1755, and although he is still honoured within the Moravian church he is largely forgotten by other Christian communities.

This edition contains an introduction to his early life in Reading, a selection of his hymns, plus his poems and prose. These describe his early life in Reading, his conversion, and his discovery of a religious vocation. Although primarily a hymn writer, Cennick produced a number of longer, meditative pieces and two of these are reproduced in this little book. There is also a carefully edited selection of his most striking and distinctive hymns, some printed for the first time since the 18th century. Remembered today as the author of the advent hymn "Lo! He comes, with clouds descending", but Cennick produced many other works.

The text is illustrated by Ruth Farelly, and the volume has been designed to reproduce the feel of Cennick's original books (size 95x148mm). 128 pages. Sewn-bound. It is available, price £8.50, from G Watson, 33 Palmer Park Avenue, Reading RG6 1DN

HENRY WOODYER: GENTLEMAN ARCHITECT (1816-96

The long awaited book on Woodyer is about to appear and will be with all those who ordered a copy by the end of January, or first days of February, and it promises to be a lavish treat.

The University of Reading had hoped to publish the text somewhat earlier but several strokes of good luck have conspired to delay thing. First sales have been excellent and already over 400 copies have been ordered. The planned production order of 500 copies has been hastily upgraded to 600. More significantly the University has been successful in attracting funding from a number of bodies and this has enabled 32 pages of colour to be introduced. Wonderful I hear you say, especially at a pre-publication price of just £18.95. The bad news was that much of the design had to be redone so as to gather the colour pages in such a way as to make the printing process practicable. No doubt in a few month's time the agonies of the delivery process will be forgotton, honest! If you want a copy of the book you had better move fast as this looks like an edition that will be sold out as soon as it is produced. Phone 0118 9318347 or e-mail Linda.Hone@btinternet.com.

The other good news is that English Heritage are mounting an exhibition of Woodyer's work at the National Monument Record in Swindon. This opens on Saturday 9 February and ends on 7 April. Admission is free and the exhibition will be based on a wonderful collection of photographs by Gordon Barnes who spent many years researching Woodyer's works but died in 1985 before he could finish the great work. English Heritage are also hosting a one day conference on Woodyer which will take place at the STEAM Museum in Swindon on Friday 15 March. Admission (including lunch, coffee and tea) costs £18. Phone 0118 9318347 or e-mail eames@tamesis.demon.co.uk for further information or to make a booking.

Finally, there will be a book launch for the Woodyer book at the Berkshire Records Office on February 26th. If you want to attend the conference then e-mail lyngriffiths@aol.com.

Eastbourne Hospital Chapel (1873-4)
One of the images that will be displayed at the National Monument Record Exhibition

The Woodyer signature

W FRANK KNIGHT OBE (1885-1972): ECCLESIASTICAL ARTIST CRAFTSMAN

Simon O'Corra

Frank Knight in his studio

No one can deny the importance of metalwork in Church art and furnishings. Gold, silver, bronze, iron and copper have all been used over the centuries. The twentieth century's modern movement and its technological innovations permeated the ecclesiastical world. However, this was not true in the case of W. Frank Knight, one of the most significant ecclesiastical artist-craftsmen of the century. He took the art of the ecclesiastical metalworker to new heights, using sometimes ancient techniques and formulas. In an interview for a local newspaper Frank Knight said: 'We can only strive to be as good as the fifteenth century artist. It is impossible to be better. For the march of progress has cost us plenty in terms of instinctive craft. This job, despite modern machinery, is essentially a craft.'[1]

Someone asked me recently who was more important–the designer or the maker? My initial response was that they are a team and one could not work without the other unless, as sometimes happens, the designer is also a maker or vice-versa. However, after giving it some thought I had to add that in the case of Frank Knight he was not only an excellent metalworker but also an accomplished interpreter of a designer's work that somehow brought out something extra in the design. The fact that Frank's business was successful and that he ultimately created successful designs himself is proof of his skill.

Frank Knight was born in 1885 at Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. The early years of his working life were spent as an electrical engineer at Heysham Docks Power Station, near Morecambe. In his spare time Knight attended the Morecambe School of Art, where his interest in ecclesiastical metalwork began. Later he moved from Lancashire to Derby to become Chief Attendant with the Midland Railway Power Station. Here he lodged with his brother Percy, who was foreman at the Rolls Royce works and he continued his hobby of metalwork in an upstairs room.

After some years Frank Knight started up in business on his own and moved back to his native Northamptonshire from Derby. He began his business in the village of Finedon and he became an engineer for the local shoe factories where his nephew Harold joined him. This work

Mercurial gilded altar frontal featuring a peita at Westminster Abbey designed by Sir Ninian Comper

Tabernacle with door of bronze mercurial gilt on silk damask at S Cuthbert's RC Church, Blackpool, designed by Sir Ninian Comper

became his mainstay enabling him to develop and maintain his metalwork business in his spare time. In 1919 he obtained premises in Grant Road, Wellingborough and there he created a workshop. He soon began to obtain orders and became a friend of the first vicar of S. Mary's, Wellingborough, Mr Watts, who later introduced him to Ninian Comper, architect and furnisher of S. Mary's.

The ecclesiastical side of the business became a separate entity after World War II and moved, with the twelve silversmiths, to premises in Park Road, Wellingborough. At this address some of the major commissions were executed including the restoration of items of church furniture which had suffered war damage. With the help of many people and organisations, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and the Goldsmith's Company new church furnishings were produced. The Queen Mother donated money for the Nurse's Memorial Chapel in Westminster Abbey. The architect involved with this project was Sir Albert Richardson who designed the casket holding the Book of Remembrance, made by Knight, with names of all the nurses who lost their lives during the war.

Commissions for other designers

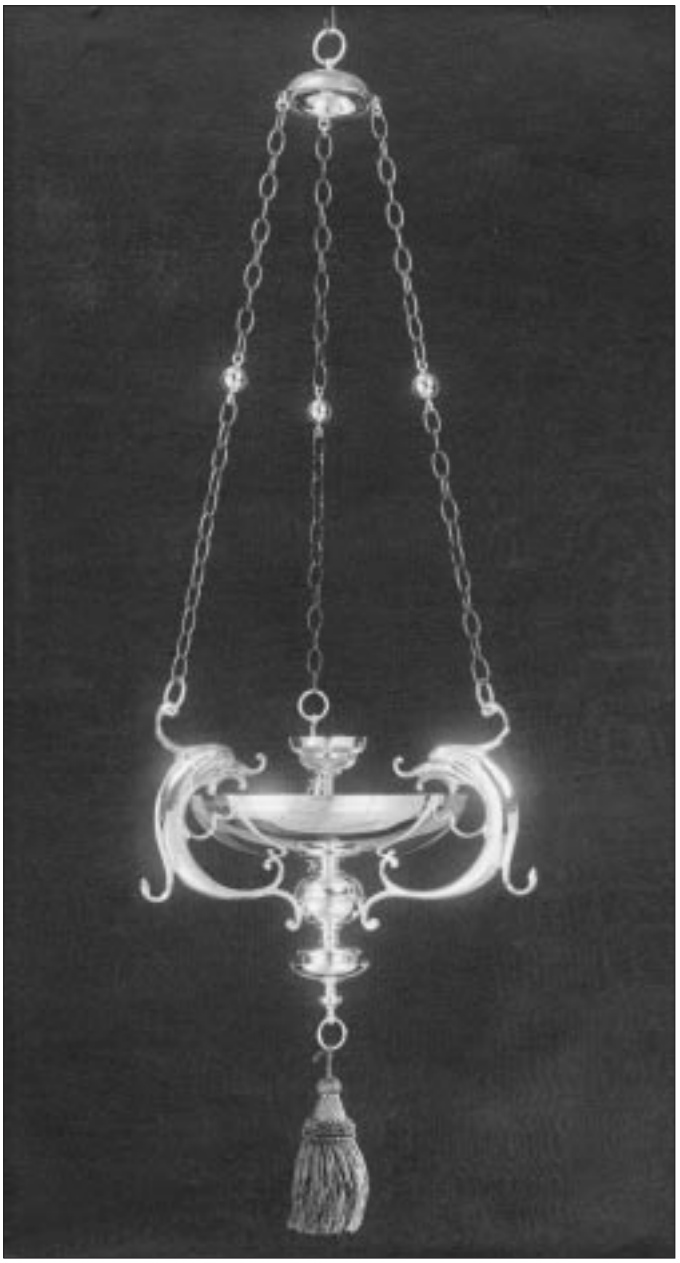
Thurible of copper mercurial gilt for Chichester Cathedral designed by W H R Blacking

Corpus figure in bronze designed by Hugh Easton

Sir John Betjeman considered S. Mary's, Wellingborough to be one of Ninian Comper's architectural masterpieces. Frank Knight was entrusted with some of the decorative metalwork for the church. Comper was an exacting man and Frank Knight skilful metalwork met his demanding standards. A lifelong friendship grew from these early commissions. Other commissions include the metalwork in the Unknown Warrior's Chapel at Westminster Abbey (1931) including a mercurial gilded altar frontal featuring a pieta. A similar frontal displaying the annunciation can be found in the Pusey House Chapel, Oxford (1937) and another in gold leaf at S. Mary's, Wellingborough made from the wooden pattern of the one at Pusey House. The Roman Catholic church of S. Cuthbert, Blackpool, contains a tabernacle made to the design of Ninian Comper, which has a door depicting Comper's trademark dolphins of bronze mercurial gilt on silk damask. Perhaps better known is the 7ft high silver tabernacle suspended above the high altar at All Saints, Margaret Street, London (1928) also executed by Knight. In addition, Frank Knights made the ironwork, (another medium at which the company excelled) for screens at Downside Abbey (1930).

Along with the work for Ninian Comper at Westminster Abbey, Knight was also responsible for the British Legion Torch, the RAF Chapel and the lectern lights donated by the Mothers Union and designed by Sir Albert Richardson. Subsequent to the completion of this work Frank was

Tabernacle designed for St Alban's, Holborn



Sanctuary lamp available in either silver or silvered copper

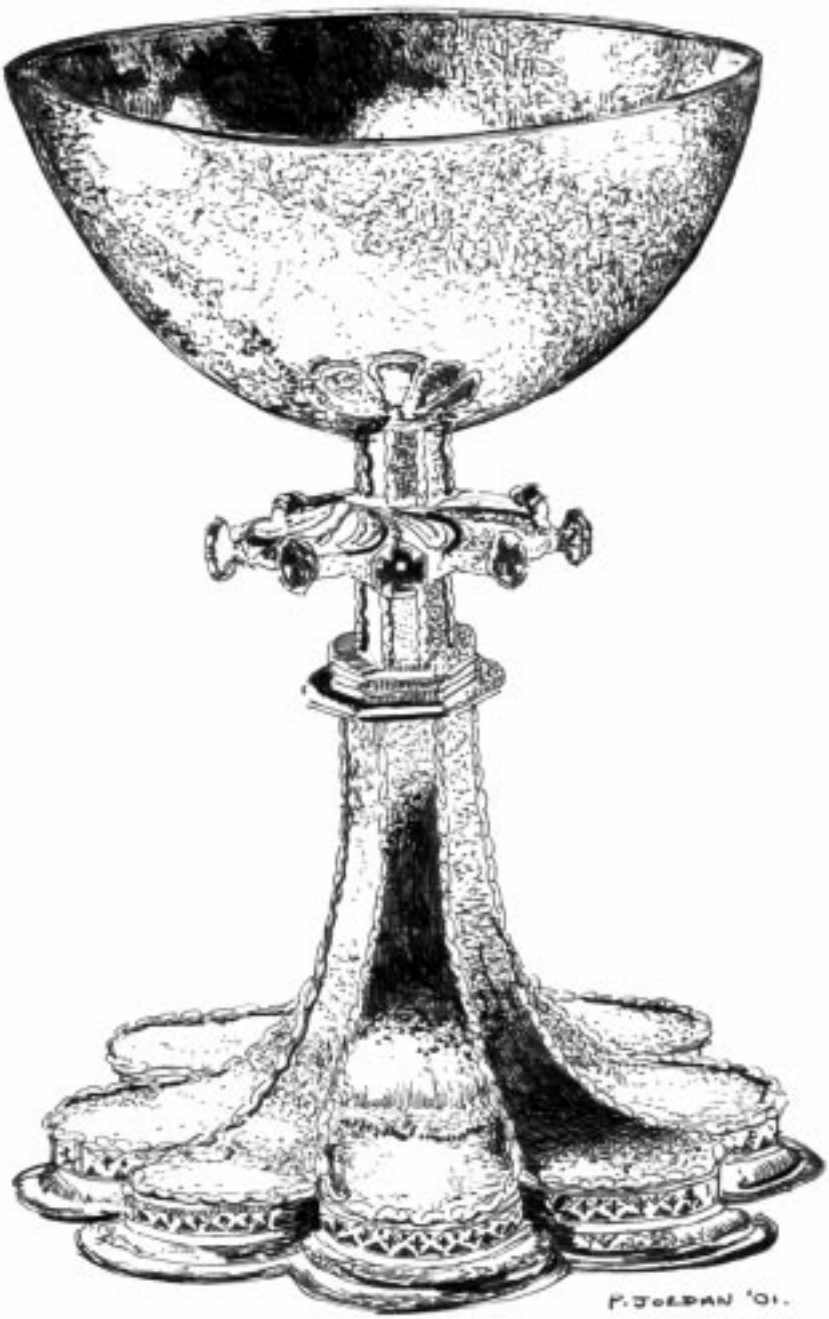
made an Honorary Freeman of Westminster Abbey. However, the crowning achievement of Frank's career came in 1962 when he was asked to create the high altar set for S. Paul's Cathedral to the designs of Stephen Dykes-Bower. This work involved six men for two years. The height of the altar cross is 17'6" and the two candlesticks are 6'4" high. The metals is bronze, silver plated and mercurial gilded – an old Egyptian formula that used 160 troy ounces of pure gold for the outer coating (of which more later). On completion of this work Frank was awarded the OBE. Commissions were also received from other architects, including a thurible of copper mercurial gilt for Chichester Cathedral by Randall Blacking, and a corpus figure in bronze for Hugh Easton.

Eventually Frank executed more pieces to his own designs, both for individual Commissions, and for the "off the peg market", including a tabernacle designed and made for S. Alban's Holborn and a sanctuary lamp available in either silver or silver red copper. One can trace elements of the work of other designers present here but he achieved a distinctive of his own.

Techniques – mercurial gilt

An ancient technique that Frank Knight employed was mercurial gilding using mercury, nitric acid and gold. The recipe was complex, time-consuming and potentially dangerous. Keith Chambers (one of Knight's metalworkers) described the recipe as follows:

> Prepare a nitrate of mercury to be used later but keep it tightly stoppered. Then cutting some gold into small pieces and placing it in a crucible and heating it until the crucible reddens mix in some mercury stirring with an iron rod until a pasty mass is formed. Empty the crucible into a bowl of clean water and proceed to wash the amalgam by kneading it between finger and thumbs to remove surplus mercury. Then put the amalgam into a chamois-leather squeeze out the surplus mercury through the leather. The excess mercury can be used again. Take your object to be gilded and de-grease it before dipping the work in the nitrate of mercury prepared earlier. Taking a small wire brush, dip first in the nitrate before picking up a small quantity of amalgam and spreading it evenly over the surface to be gilded. Heating the object on an iron plate allow the



Drawing of a chalice with pierced tracery and jewelled knop by Paul Jordan

mercury to evaporate using strong extraction and making sure that no fumes are breathed in. If the work appears spotty repeat the process by dropping strong nitric acid on the bare spots and plunging the object in a weak pickle of 5 parts water to 1 of acid and then covering the defective parts with amalgam before repeating the firing process.'[2]

Lower portion of a silver tabernacle at All Saints, Margaret Street, London designed by Sir Ninian Comper.

This highly dangerous technique is now banned internationally, but the surface of the magnificent altar ornaments at S. Paul's, for instance, should be as good in 2000 years time as it is today as the gold is fired into the molecular structure of the metal.

Frank died in 1972 and Brian, his son, continued the silver-smithing business for some years though he has recently retired to focus on other things. As well as ecclesiastical work Brian Knight introduced commemorative items to mark such occasions as the centenary of Sir Winston Churchill, the Silver Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Wedding (1981).

Frank Knight was an astounding master of his craft, creating items of either architectural or natural quality, all made possible by an excellent team of silversmiths, metalworkers and enamellers. His work has grace, elaboration and attention to detail, as witnessed in a chalice with its pierced tracery and jewelled knop. Truly a man and a team (both men and women) gifted by God.

(Grateful thanks to Brian Knight and Keith Chambers for their memories and photographs)

Notes

1 'Goldsmith's art adorns churches all over the world' Rik Butcher, *Northamptonshire Advertiser* February 17th 1967

2 Keith Chambers, *The recipe for mercurial gilding*.

TWO CHURCHES COMPARED: ST JOHN BAPTIST, WINDSOR AND ST JAMES, READING

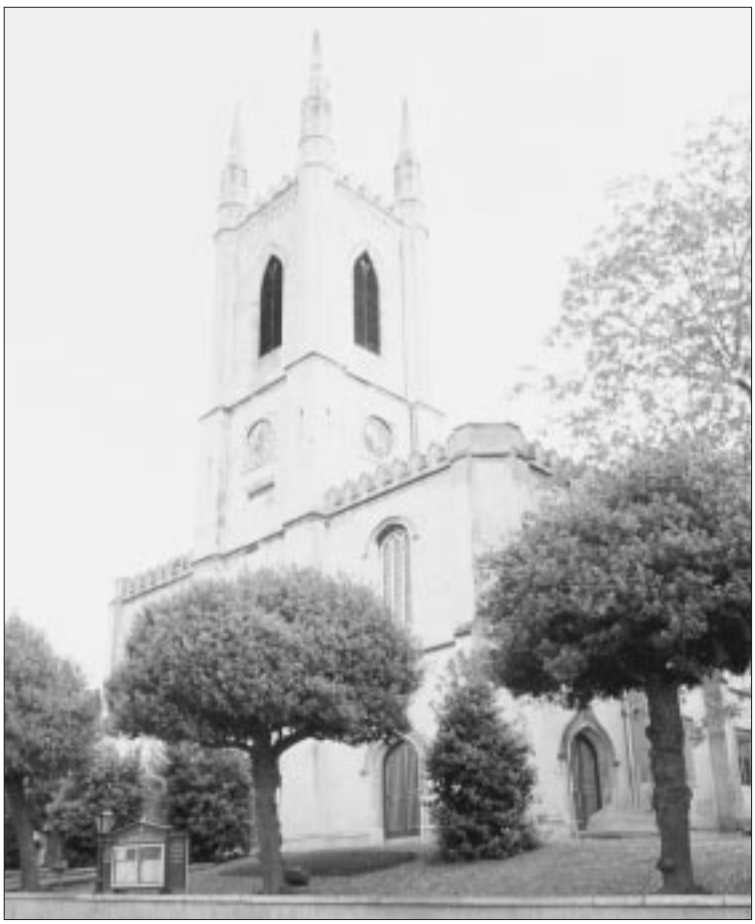
Gerard Flynn

This article considers two churches which were built within twenty years, and rather more miles, of each other. They are different in style, and in ecclesiastical and liturgical purpose. Both of them have had to extend and adapt in subsequent years to meet the needs of population growth and liturgical change. Between 1820 and 1822 the parish church of the new part of Windsor, Saint John Baptist, was built by Charles Hollis. Between 1837 and 1840 the Roman Catholic Church of Saint James was built in Reading to designs of Augustus Welby Pugin.

Later adaptations are also worthy of examination. The building of Saint James was the result of the changed situation of the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century in England, and the adaptations at Saint John Baptist point to the liturgical influence of the Oxford Movement within the Church of England.

Saint John Baptist, Windsor

This church benefits from the industrial revolution, in that it has iron piers supporting its three galleries and there is an iron roof. In this it anticipates stylistically some of the railway stations which were built in the Victorian era. The building followed the demolition, in the early nineteenth century, of a previous mediaeval parish church. This was described at the time as ‘a



St John the Baptist, Windsor
(1820-2)
Charles Hollis

St John the Baptist, Windsor. The east end after extension and reordering by S S Teulon

spacious, ancient but ill-built fabric'. Repairs were proving ineffective. Sir Jeffry Wyatville, an architect who worked extensively on Windsor Castle for George IV between 1820 and 1830, supervised the building work of Charles Hollis, a local practitioner. The original estimate of £9,000 was far wide of the final cost of £14,040 17s 3d. It is a Regency Gothick church, of brown stone and faced in smooth ashlar. Pevsner tells us that in its proportions and details it is typical of the 1820s. It was a simple rectangular shape, accommodating box pews and galleries, as well as many artefacts and memorials from the previous church, including railings to the south chapel carved by Grinling Gibbons. These were originally made for the chapel at Windsor Castle. (It is interesting to note that the high cost of renting pews at Saint John Baptist led to the building of a daughter church in Windsor parish, All Saints, in 1862-1864, with Sir Arthur Blomfield as architect.)

The ecclesiastical emphasis, expressed in the pews and especially the galleries, was on preaching from the pulpit. During the course of the nineteenth century there were shifts in emphasis in the Church of England towards the sacramental; towards the altar, and away from the central importance of the pulpit. The eucharist was brought more to the heart of worship. At Saint John the Baptist this led in 1869-1873 to the rebuilding of the chancel and its enlarging with a polygonal apse. This work, in the decorated style, was undertaken by S S Teulon.

Saint James, Reading

J. Mordaunt Crook refers to one of Pugin's churches, Saint Giles in Cheadle, as 'a machine for praying in'. This is a useful image to have in mind when considering one of Pugin's rare Norman style churches, Saint James in Reading. This was built in 1837-1840, close on the heels of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

St James, Reading (1837-40) A W N Pugin

There had been a strong tradition of Catholic worship in the area of Reading, and the surrounding country, throughout the centuries since the Reformation. Texts such as *Thames Valley Papists* (Hadland) give clear accounts of this recusant history. But it was only with the passing of the Act that a venture such as the building of this sort of church could be embarked upon with confidence. When the foundation stone was laid on 14th December 1837 the town of Reading was host to the first public act of Catholic worship in the better part of three hundred years. A copy of an unidentified contemporary newspaper article, kept in the parish archive of St James, gives a good account of the occasion, alluding also to the role of Pugin:

> *The founding of a new Catholic Church*, on the RUINS of the Ancient Abbey, at READING.
>
> Thursday last was the day appointed for laying the foundation stone, and independent of the grand and impressive spectacle which is so peculiar to the ceremonial of the Catholic Church, there was an association of recollections and circumstances, which attached to this event a more than ordinary share of interest. The re-consecration of a spot, which above seven centuries before had been hallowed by our first Henry with a similar distinction, the rebuilding of a sacred edifice, and restoring its primitive worship, its dedication to the same Saint James, and the institution of this work, which is to retain the ancient character of architecture, at the generous and almost sole cost of an individual (James Wheble Esq.), who in the restoration of his own civil rights was able to commence it during the period of his enjoyment of the Honourable Office of High Sherriff of the County…
>
> At this time there could not have been less than between two and three thousand persons present …
>
> At a particular part of the ceremonial, the Bishop (Thomas Griffiths, Vicar Apostolic of the London District)

St James, Reading
Interior

and his Clergy (sixteen in number) moved round in procession under the canopy, to bless the foundations of the future church. When the procession returned, the Bishop, assisted by Mr Welby Pugin, the architect, descended from the platform to perfect the interesting ceremony, by placing the first stone of the building. The Te Deum was then sung in thanksgiving; the clergy returned in procession, and the people retired highly edified and delighted with what they had heard and seen.

The building, as we see, would be on the site of the old Benedictine Abbey, which had dominated the life of the town until the Dissolution in 1538. Pevsner argues that it was this proximity to the Abbey ruins which would have determined Pugin to use the Norman style which 'he would never have chosen even a few years later'. The intention was to use stone from the walls of the old Abbey for the new buildings. In the walls which separate the church from the Forbury Gardens, and in the adjacent presbytery there are preserved examples of the Abbey stonework. The Norman is a style which Pugin used sparingly; one other example is at Saint Michael's in Gorey, County Wexford. Pugin's general preference was for a Gothic building. Just three years after Saint James was opened he would write that 'Gothic is not a style but a principle'. (*An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* 1843)

The flint facing of the church reflects the flint of the abundant ruins: it is interesting to consider the fact that this flint would have been the infill of those Abbey buildings, and that they would have had another smoother stone facing, which is still evident, if only very occasionally.

The ravages of time and predators have made flint the vernacular for that part of the town; the presbytery and the school next to the church were subsequently built in the same material.

Saint James was built in a way that reflected the sacramental theology in which the Roman Catholic Pugin was steeped. The immediate focus on entry to the church was, and still is, on the apse, with the altar at its heart, emphasising the centrality of the mass, the eucharist, to Catholic worship. Originally just the nave accommodated the congregation, but, with population growth came the need for aisles which were added on the south in 1925 and the north in 1962. (Another cause for reflection is on the changing nature of the townscape, and the town centre population, in the last twenty years. In 1987 the then parish priest, Anthony Pennicott, wrote that 'Now a new era has begun as the houses and people that once surrounded St. James's have been replaced by commerce and concrete'.

Commerce has helped to ensure a regular midday mass congregation on weekdays of up to seventy people, with workers taking time out for worship. But it is also evident, with several town centre building projects of new apartments, that residential properties are re-emerging around the church.

Where Saint John Baptist provided an auditorium, Saint James presented an opportunity for worship of the sacrament and perhaps a somewhat more numinous experience. Both churches were simple in design. Saint James consisted originally of little more than the apse, the nave and the sacristy. The font had originally greeted worshippers as they entered. It is made from the "Reading Stone", an intricately carved block of limestone, found during excavations in the Abbey ruins in 1835. It was probably a carved capital from one of the pillars of the Abbey. Positioned thus, as in so many Christian churches, it reminded worshippers of their sacramental reception into the Church, as well as marking their physical entry.

In 1925 the south aisle, the Lady Chapel, was opened and was decorated with stained glass by Harry Clark, above the altar. The former wall was opened up with six semi-circular stone arches which respect Pugin's Romanesque design. At the same time an ambulatory around the apse was introduced, with the effect of extending the available space. In aesthetic terms it similarly respects the original design, with Norman styles arches, and reflects the monastic setting of the church with echoes of a cloister. It was in 1925 that the narthex was introduced, similarly for space reasons, and again it is in keeping with the design. Shortly afterwards M. O'M., of Liverpool, wrote an article in *The Parishioner*, under the heading, "Round the churches, St James Reading":

> Apart from the accidental grandeur of its position St. James, with its graceful bell turrett [sic] clearly seen above the trees is a most attractive feature in a handsome town… Comely as the exterior of the building is, it is likely to be forgotten by whoever enters, indeed the thought may arise that like the King's daughter its beauty is all within, for St. James Reading, is a triumph of utilitarianism combined with perfect dignity, a triumph most unfortunately not always achieved when the severity of a Pugin design is drastically interfered with. The short but lofty nave originally ended in a shallow apse. Today the high altar is surrounded by a richly arched cloister which, suggesting gracious depth to the perspective, reveals one of those touches of architectural genius not too frequently revealed in these islands, at least not in our day.

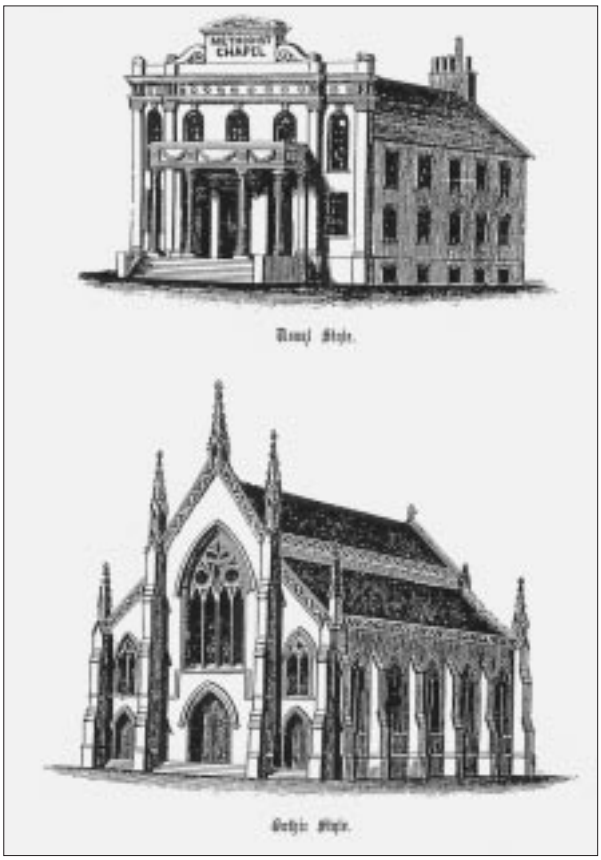
In 1962 a rather functional extension, flat roofed, with a suggestion of an apse to accommodate the repositioned font, and four stained glass windows celebrating holy people of local significance, was introduced as the north aisle.

Conclusion

These two churches, whose architectural histories are briefly sketched here, point to some significant conclusions. They originate in local demands for places of worship. Saint John Baptist replaced another church, whose congregation had been intent on preserving it until this proved impractical. Saint James was the response to locally expressed calls for a church, in a nation which had once again given a legal status to the Catholic faith. In both instances money was found to meet the costs with a mixture of small and large, generous benefactors. The designs of the churches related to the varying emphases of the theology that informed the communities. With time these emphases might change, and the shift in the Anglican Church was generally towards the altar, where the preaching of the word had previously predominated. In time, again, daughter churches arose, because of economic need in Windsor, and because of the spread of the population in Reading. Saint John Baptist and Saint James, like so many churches, have grown almost organically, but have endeavoured to respect the basic designs of their architects, Hollis and Pugin.

A METHODIST CHAPEL AS IT SHOULD BE

A W N Pugin (1812-52) stressed the linkage between architectural style and religion, arguing that only the Gothic style, the style of our Christian forefathers, was suitable for a Christian church. Classical Churches were not only unsuitable for the British climate, but were also symbolic of the paganism that was the religion of the culture from which they came. Hence to build a Christian church in the pagan style was both illogical and blasphemous.



But Pugin was not alone. In 1850 Frederick Jobson published his *Chapel and School Architecture*, and this attempted to apply the same logic to Methodist building. He wrote ‘let us not dishomour the religion we profess, by imitating Pagan temples in the erection of buildings where “the blood of bulls and goats” is not to be shed’. Whereas ‘But who, on seeing a Gothic chapel, has had any difficulty in determining its appointed purpose? Its ecclesiastical form made known its use, at first signt, and without any possible mistake. What can more manifest the fitness and propriety of erecting buildings for Christian worship in the Gothic style of architecture?

Jobson’s book was republished in 1991 and makes interesting reading, not just for its strictures on church architecture but also for what it says about school designs.

It is available from the Methodist Publishing House, Peterborough ISBN 0951562118.

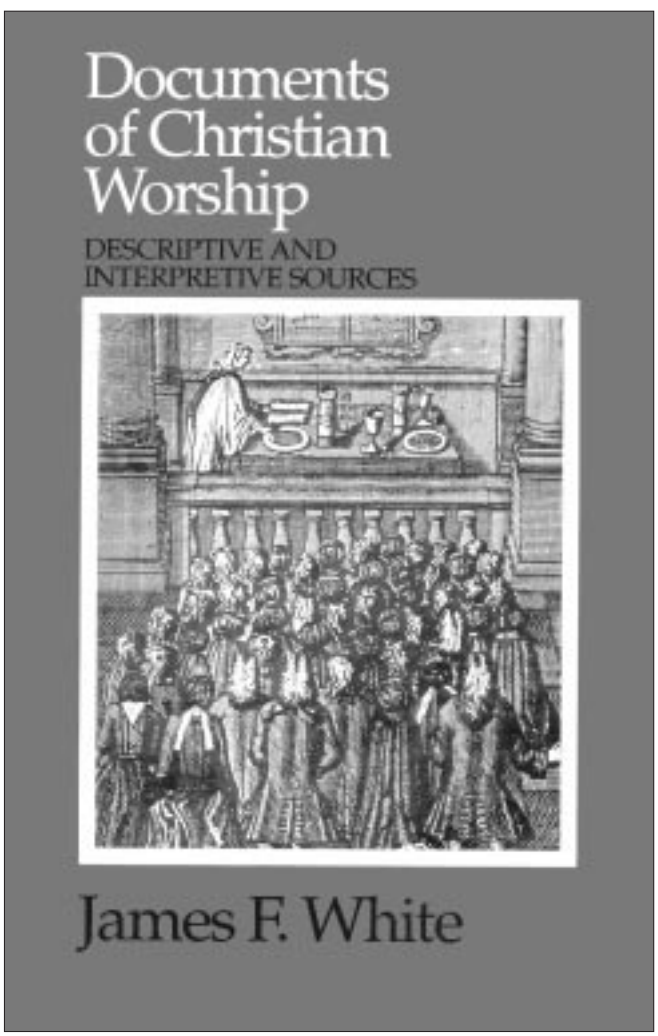
BOOK REVIEWS

James E. White: *Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources*
(T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1992, xii + 257pp., 30pls, £15.95. Pbk, ISBN 0 567 292185).

Let this book fall open half way through and you will wonder whether the front-matter is still running or the appendices have begun early. Continuous prose is not its style and one should not expect from it 'a good read'. It is not a compilation of original sources. Nor, except in its selection and classification, is it a commentary upon them. It is, however, an extensive reference work and an index to 'documents' in the broad sense that includes monuments of stone as well as words on paper. Literary sources tend to be selected because they are normative; architectural examples because they are typical or illustrative.

The book consists of nine sections called 'chapter', covering such topics as the teaching of public worship, daily public prayer, sacraments, rites of initiation and the eucharist. The typical content of each chapter is a short collection of biblical quotations pertinent to its subject, an annotated list of sources, excerpts from them and a bibliography of the secondary literature. The selection, in fact, is sporadic: there is only a page or two of Cranmer and nothing at all of Comper.

Of special interest is the chapter entitled 'Space as communication'. The first part of this section is given to thirty pages of photographs and diagrams illustrating 'the vocabulary of liturgical space'. They are informative, though not well reproduced. They show interiors and exteriors of places of Christians worship from a range of its western traditions including Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist and Quaker. Examples are from both sides of the Atlantic.



Professor White's habit is to treat spaces in terms of their distinctive functions and he talks of 'gathering space', 'congregational space', 'movement space' but not, significantly of private space. Simple plans of the churches, chapels and meeting houses that are illustrated show the promotion or relegation of ritual functions within the compartments of the building. But the conception of a church as a production line with rooms or spaces for each stage of a process is contentious. It understates the holistic principle of sacred geometry in Christian architecture. The church as well as its fittings are expressed and perceived not merely as accommodation but as prayer in themselves.

The narrowing of space from the people's entrance to the sanctuary, the orientation of the church to the rising sun, the elevation of the east end and its altar, the cruciform plan of many churches and the devotional inclination of the apse in some, the closure to the laity of holy places, the concentration of natural and candle light and the upward thrust of the pointed arches and spires are not about ritual function but about a devotional expression. The author deploys a kind of phenomenological vocabulary that diverts from sacramental purpose to logistics: he points not to the font but to 'baptismal space', not to the high altar but to 'altar-table space', not to the focal point but to the area around it, not to the light of the candle but to its boundaries.

Wide-ranging though the illustrations are, the book is an account of worship that is grounded on a reformed theology, in collective behaviour rather than private devotion, in the process of induction and confirmation rather than in individual piety, in shared acts and meanings rather than in the contemplative way. The recesses, lonely altars and shrines of the medieval church and its forebears constitute a tradition of Christian devotion that barely features in White's scheme.

Roger Homan

J. Robert Wright: *Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue* (Eardman, Michigan, USA, 2000, 314 pp., £40.99, hbk ISBN 0 8028 3912 6). (Alban Books, 79 Park Street, Bristol, BS1 5PF)

Completed by 1915 to replace a building destroyed by fire in 1905, St. Thomas's is one of the foremost ecclesiastical structures in New York City. Its main architect was Ralph Adams Cram, whose practice of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson was responsible also for the remodelling and completion a few years earlier of New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Cram's involvement inevitably resulted in an uncompromisingly convincing essay in full-blown Gothic Revival. The restricted width of the available site precluded the construction of projecting transepts but the design amply compensates for this by the impressively soaring height of its interior and the richness of its ornamentation. A single tower tops the facade, which is adorned with much sculpture, including tracery and statues of St. Thomas and flanking apostles. Within, a spectacular stone reredos, rising to a height of 80 feet above the altar, dominates the east end, with statuary carved by Lee Lawrie; there is also some vivid stained glass and a noteworthy pulpit and organ case.

However, Robert Wright's new book is not solely concerned with the church's art and architecture. It is, in fact, a meticulously researched study into the history of the parish, together with the congregations, rectors and others who have shaped its development. In addition, it aims to be of value for its reflection of the whole Episcopal Church in the United States and for its insights into the challenges of church life against the background of modern culture. The authoritative text is supported by some good illustrations, and the book may be recommended as a valuable new resource for the student of American church history, art and architecture.

As a grim addendum to this church's history, St. Thomas's leaped into the public eye when a memorable televised service, attended by a number of international dignitaries, was held there shortly after the collapse of New York's World Trade Centre, with great loss of life, in the appalling terrorist attack on 11th September 2001

Kenneth V Richardson

Robert Dunning: *Somerset Monasteries* (176 pp., 90 pls, £15.99, pbk ISBN 0 7524 1941 2).
Michael Thompson: *Cloister, Abbot and Precinct in Medieval Monasteries* (160 pp., 18 pls, £16.99, pbk ISBN 0 7524 1936 6).
Alison Taylor: *Burial Practise in Early England* (192 pp, 100 pls, £17.99, ISBN 0 7524 1487 9).

These three splendid books are all produced to a very high standard by Tempus Publishing of Stroud, Gloucestershire. The authors are experts in their chosen fields: Robert Dunning is the Somerset County Council Archivist, editor of the Victoria County History of Somerset, and a well-respected writer and local historian; Michael Thompson is a former Head of Ancient Monuments in Wales with many years of experience working on ruined monasteries, and has written books on castles, medieval halls and medieval bishops' houses; and Alison Taylor, FSA, is a recognised authority in archaeology, with responsibility for the publications of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and for editing the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, as well as being the author of books on Cambridgeshire.

Somerset Monasteries is a scholarly and thoroughly researched account of the origins and development of monastic life from early times up to the Dissolution, with extensive appendices including a gazetteer of Somerset religious houses and a comprehensive bibliography. Although centred on Somerset, the coverage is actually much wider in its scope, so that the book is recommended for the general reader as much as for the local academic student.

Cloister, Abbot and Precinct is in some ways a sister volume to the one on Somerset monasteries. In essence it deals with the relationship between the origin of the cloister in western monasticism, the place of the abbot within it, and the assumption of his later role in the outside world. In its broad and diverse scope, the book also explores the monasteries' response to the massive social upheaval in the later Middle Ages. There are appendices on various aspects of the subject, and the work is profusely illustrated with some excellent plans and perspective drawings as well as photographs. The student of monasteries will find this a valuable resource.

Burial Practice in Early England draws extensively on recent finds from Sutton Hoo and other excavated sites and is a detailed survey of funerary customs and monuments in England from prehistoric to late Saxon times. As such, it is perhaps on the outer fringe of ecclesiology, but it is of particular value to those wanting to know more about the origins and ancient traditions of funerary practice which resulted in the wealth of monuments and memorials which we see in and around our churches today. Again, the book is directed at the general reader as much as the academic student and professional archaeologist, and there is a range of good illustrations to accompany the clear narrative.

Kenneth V Richardson

John Leonard: *Churches of Herefordshire and their Treasures* (Longaston Press, Longaston, Herefordshire, HR3 6QH, 2000, 226 pp., 289 pls, £12.95, pbk ISBN 1 873827 91 1).

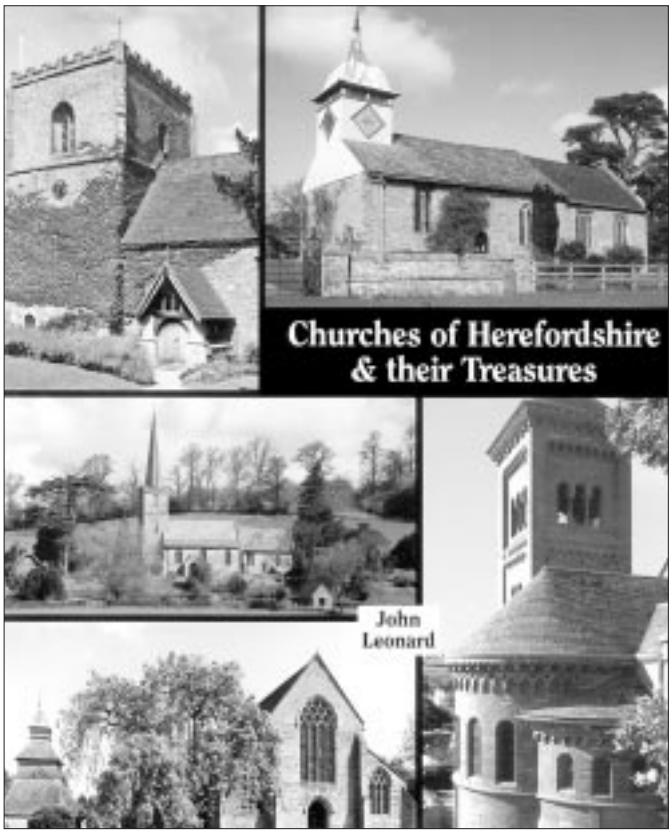
Herefordshire is the latest in the list of counties to have its churches and their fittings examined by John Leonard. Much of the book comprises a thoughtfully selected gazetteer in which the unfamiliar reader is guided by Dr Leonard's system of awarding stars to imply differing levels of

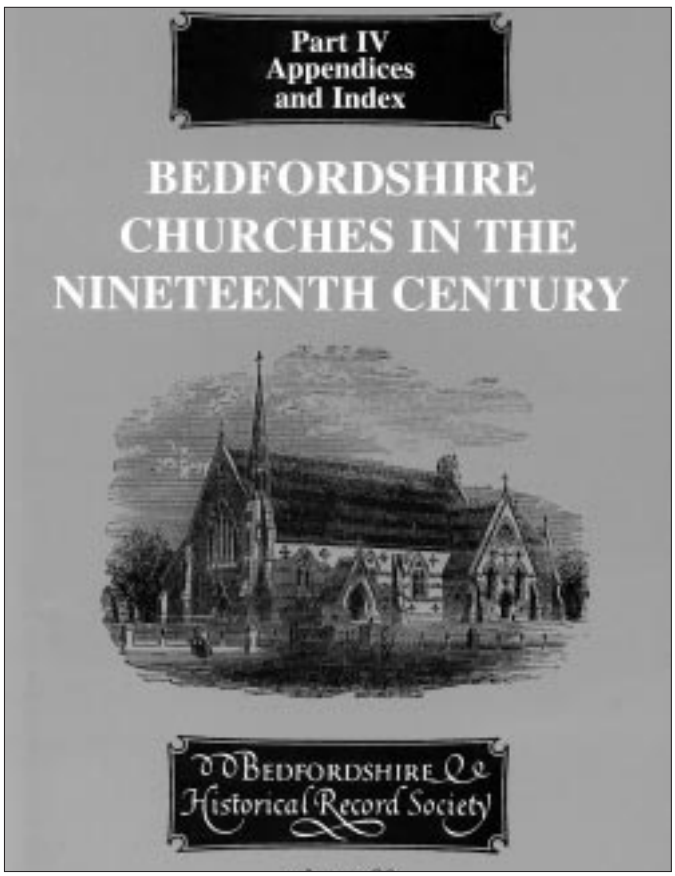
quality. Earlier chapters deal with more general topics such as ‘Towers and Spires’, ‘Fonts’ and ‘Wall Paintings’. These have a tendency to rehearse background material which is, at times, excessively basic. However, they also serve to reveal interesting material about local stylistic developments and regional craft traditions.

Many readers will already be familiar with Lethaby’s church at Brockhampton, the pretty - and highly unusual - Rococo of Shobden or the remarkable blend of medieval and Laudian at Abbey Dore. However, Herefordshire possesses many more ecclesiastical gems as the book reveals for those willing to explore the county, while the ‘armchair traveller’ will be well satisfied by the book’s near 300 illustrations.

My one complaint against this otherwise useful and informative book is that in order to find the entry for a particular medieval church in the gazetteer, one needs to know the region of Herefordshire in which that church is situated. The potential for frustration is compounded because finding the location in the gazetteer of post-Renaissance buildings is dependant on the reader’s knowledge of the century of construction, rather than the structure’s geographical location.

Christopher Webster





Chris Pickford, *Bedfordshire Churches in the Nineteenth Century*, *Part ICV Appendices and Index*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society vol 80, 200 pp, pbk, ISBN 0851550649.

As Chris Pickford says in the Preface, this final volume completes the series on Bedfordshire churches and means that now

'the churches of Bedfordshire are arguably as well documented as those in any other county in England'. However, not content with the three volumes that go before, this final one also contains details of a further sixty-one churches and mission rooms that did not find their way into the earlier catalogue.

The whole series is well illustrated, wonderfully researched and a real essential guide to all those who live in or visit Bedfordshire and have an interest in the churches of that county. What a shame so many other counties do not follow the example.

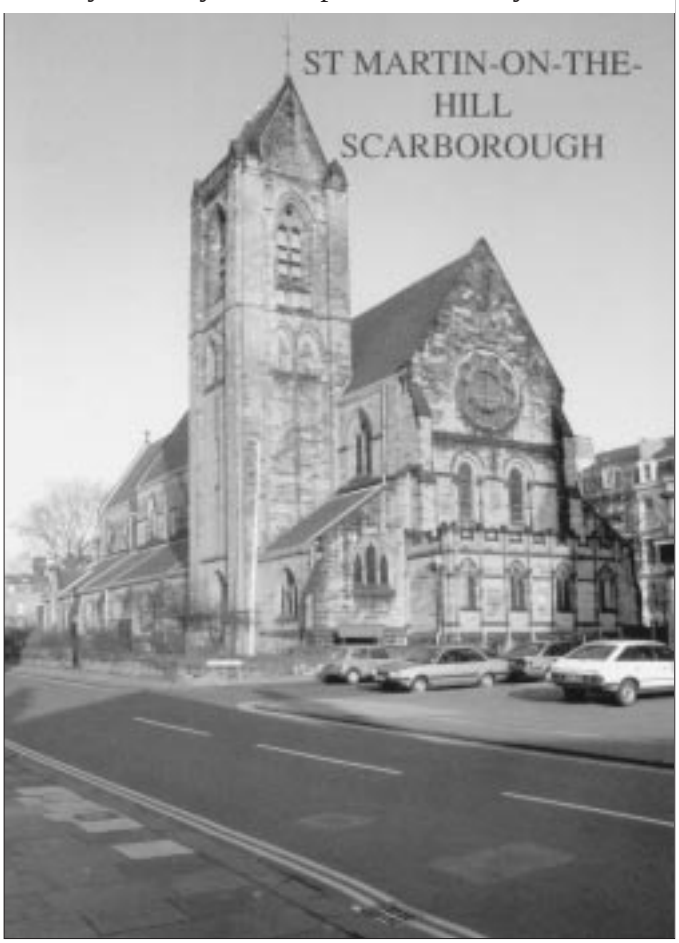
John Elliott

David Crouch, *St Martin-on-the-Hill Scarborough*, 15 pp.

Although this church guide was published in 1992 we have only just come across it is included here rather belatedly because it is so good.

The church was designed by G F Bodley and built in 1861-2. Pevsner described it as 'an early but admirably mature work', and, with St Mary's, one of just two churches which 'can be of general interest' in the town.

However, like visitors to Brighton's S Michael and All Angels, most will be looking for the Morris & Co stained glass rather than an early Bodley masterpiece and they won't be disappointed.



The church is full of spectacular stained glass, many windows being examples of the earliest glass which was produced by the firm. The east window (1861-2) has depictions by Ford Madox Brown and Rossetti and the west window (1862) is exclusively by Ford Madox Brown. There is also a painted Annunciation by Rossetti on the pulpit which makes this something of a feast for lovers of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts & Carfts Movement.

The guide is beautifully illustrated in colour and also well written. Scarborough may not hold the attraction that it did in the nineteenth century, warmer overseas destinations having largely replaced the English seaside spas as places to relax in. It is also somewhat off the route north, though as Pevsner would have said, it is well worth a diversion.

John Elliott

WALPOLE OLD CHAPEL, HALESWORTH, SUFFOLK

Walpole Old Chapel in Suffolk, owned by the Historic Chapels Trust, was re-opened on 20 October in a ceremony performed by the Chairman, Sir Hugh Rossi. It is now available for community activities, for hire and for occasional services of worship. Visitors are welcome but should contact a local keyholder who will give them access.

This Grade II* chapel appears to have been a typical timber framed Suffolk farmhouse with walls of wattle and daub. It was enlarged and converted to a Meeting House sometime in the late seventeenth century. Since then it has changed little and the galleried and box pewed interior vividly conveys the setting and atmosphere of dissenting worship at that time.

The £80,000 repair and upgrading of the Chapel has been assisted by English Heritage, the National Lottery Fund, grant-giving Trusts and local contributions. The project involved a painstaking strengthening of the galleries to allow them to be occupied by the public, and the stabilisation of the south gable using traditional craft techniques. A small new building housing a kitchen and WCs has been constructed close to the site of a former stable. The burial ground is being managed along lines suggested by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Chapel exterior. RCHME Crown Copyright

The architect to the project was Anthony Rossi and the main contractor, Ian Richardson. HCTs Local Committee will arrange suitable events, including a Carol Service each December. You can get details from 01986 798308.

The Historic Chapels Trust was established in 1993 to take disused chapels of outstanding architectural quality and historic interest into its ownership. The Trust now has thirteen chapels

Chapel interior
Courtesy RCHME
Crown Copyright

in its care throughout England. Its remit embraces Non Conformist chapels, Roman Catholic churches, and synagogues, all of Grade I or II* status on the Statutory Lists. Subscribing friends are welcome and receive two newsletters each year.

Jenny Freeman, Director of HCT, hopes that 'the public will respond to the project by visiting Walpole Old Chapel and by attending the lively programme of concerts and other activities which are now taking place there'. English Heritage has described the quality of the workmanship in the Chapel as exemplar.

The chapel is located south west of Halesworth and just to the north east of Walpole. For information phone Christina van Melzen on 01986 798308

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