

# The Society's Casework in 1995

## Review of Selected Cases

by

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*Local planning authorities in England and Wales have been obliged to consult the Ancient Monuments Society on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either total or partial, since 1972. In recent years the number of part-demolition cases has steadied to around 6,000 a year and those for complete destruction, to about 250.*

*The cases illustrated here are not necessarily the most important of the year but they are among the more interesting. Almost all of them are taken from the part-demolition rather than from the total demolition category. In choosing cases to illustrate we are very limited by the availability of good quality illustrations. We would like to be able to show some of the horrors that have come in as supposedly serious proposals to alter or extend historic buildings. However, as the architect's blessing is required for the reproduction of his or her efforts, on a number of occasions this has been refused once it has been made clear that any text would be disapproving. Perhaps in future years we should be bolder and show just how deplorable is a worrying amount of present-day design. As it is, most of the cases here reviewed have received varying degrees of approval or neutrality from the A.M.S.*

*Unless otherwise stated, the drawings have been prepared by the architects for the scheme. They are named in the text and all have granted copyright consent.*

### THE WOOL EXCHANGE, MARKET STREET, BRADFORD, WEST YORKSHIRE

The Wool Exchange at Bradford constructed between 1864 and 1867, and now listed Grade I, symbolizes more than any other building the wealth and importance that Bradford had gained by the mid-nineteenth century on the back of the wool trade. So important was it held to be in prospect by the good burghers of the city that prior to offering the commission (to Lockwood and Mawson) they invited John Ruskin, no less, to address them on the subject. The wind was taken out of their sails by a tirade from the great man which now lives in the history books as a rather foggy declaration of Ruskinian belief in the fundamentals of good architecture. He berated them for expecting him to act as an 'architectural man-milliner' who would suggest to them an appropriate style which would embody the civic pride they aimed to capture and consume the £30,000 budget they had set aside.

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A rather more predictable outburst would have been provoked had Ruskin seen the proposal which landed on the desk of the Society early in 1995.

The Exchange occupies a tight triangular site bounded by Market Street, Bank Street and Hustlergate. The centre of the elevation to the latter had been left open by Lockwood and Mawson. It was infilled in 1896 by a deliberately plain masonry block attempting architectural neutrality between the two powerful Gothic bookends of the original. The 1995 proposal envisaged the redevelopment of this section as part of the conversion of the central hall into a bookshop for Waterstones. In line with the philosophy adopted, either consciously or through shortage of resources, by the original designer of 1896, the architects for the new scheme, Dempster Thrussell and Rae (of Bradford), chose an insertion in dramatic variance with the original flamboyant Gothic, in the form of a transparent, structural glass wall. This bold approach, which will allow views into the hall, will be subservient to the structure of 1864 and clearly visible as a modern 'intervention'. The Technical Committee of the A.M.S. discussed the case at some length and although comment was passed on the detailing it did not balk at the principle of this approach. Neither did English Heritage and listed building consent was granted.

The clients, Maple Grove Developments Ltd. of Preston, should have started work on the scheme by the time these *Transactions* have been published and hope to complete within twelve months.

#### CONISHEAD PRIORY, ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA

Conishead Priory, lying some two miles south-east of Ulverston, is a vast mansion in an elaborate late-Gothic style built between 1821 and 1836 by Philip Wyatt on the site of a twelfth century Augustinian priory. The client was Colonel Thomas Braddyll, but only twelve years after its completion the fortunes of the family had declined to such an extent that the 1,100 acre estate had to be auctioned. After passing through several owners, it was bought in 1878 by a syndicate of Scottish doctors who converted the house into a hydropathic spa. Between 1920 and 1970 it belonged to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organization which modified it for use as a convalescent home for Durham coalminers. Thereafter it remained empty until the building's present inhabitants, the Manjushri Mahayana Buddhist Centre, moved in and commenced a restoration programme in 1976 which is now approaching completion. So far, they have spent £923,000 on conservation and development, of which £102,000 came in the form of a grant from English Heritage.

The Centre has proved popular and it has now outgrown the confines of the Philip Wyatt building. In 1994, plans were conceived for a substantial new structure to provide retreat rooms and a new 'Gompa' (Tibetan for 'temple'). This would be large enough to house 1,000 people with a further 1,000 capable of being seated within the remaining open areas of the former kitchen garden (Figs. 1-3). The designer was J. Mark Tole, himself a Buddhist, formerly of Manchester but now resident at the Centre. The language is predominantly Buddhist and Tibetan, both in geometry and iconography—as in the placing of Victory banners in bronze on the columns marking the angle changes of the octagon, and the two deer facing the

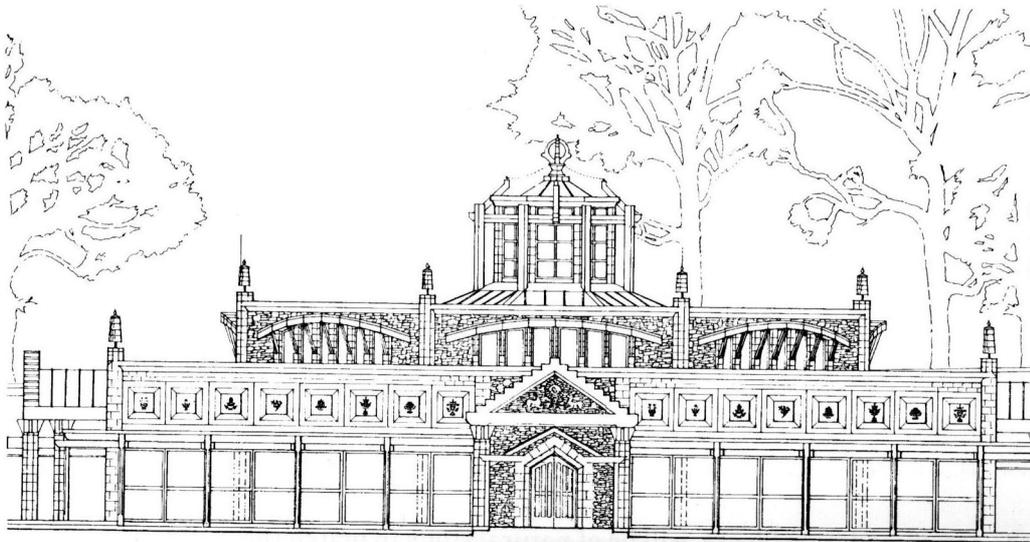


Fig. 1  
Conishead Priory, Ulverston. Exterior of the Gopma as designed in 1994

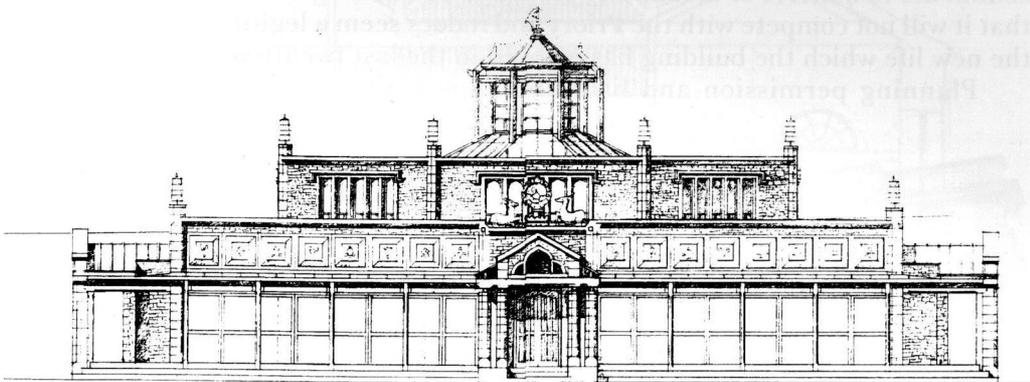


Fig. 2  
Conishead Priory, Ulverston.  
Exterior of the Gopma following the addition of 'Tudorbethan' windows

dharma wheel (which symbolizes the teaching of the Buddha). However, the client for the scheme, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, himself from Tibet, felt it important and in accordance with Buddhist teaching that the design should owe something to the tradition of the country where it was to be constructed. The first designs were more clearly eastern in their feel but in view of the client's observations, the scheme for the octagon which was finally approved included 'Tudorbethan' windows under label stops directly borrowed from the Priory. The outer walls, both of the hall and

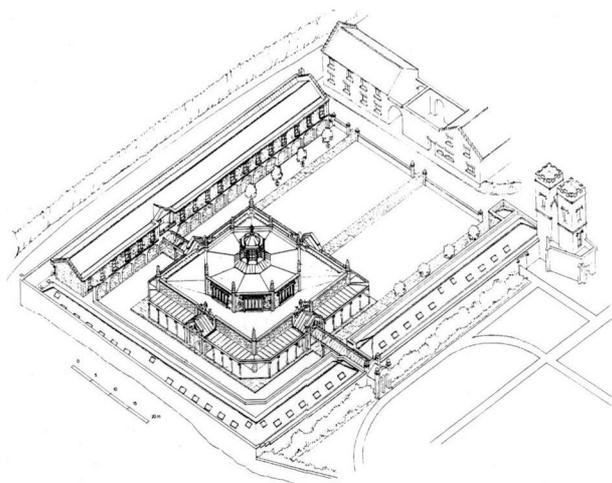


Fig. 3  
Conishead Priory, Ulverston.  
The Gopma with, to the right,  
the beginning of the original  
Wyatt Building

the accommodation blocks, will be of natural stone to match the colour of the listed building.

Following a site inspection, and a discussion of the case by the Technical Committee, we felt able to approve the proposal in principle and limited our comments to matters of detail. The scale and positioning of the newcomer means that it will not compete with the Priory and it does seem a legitimate expression of the new life which the building has enjoyed in the last twenty years.

Planning permission and listed building consent was granted, work has commenced and the clients hope that the Gopma will be completed by December 1996.



Fig. 4  
Former Congregational Church, Monmouth

#### FORMER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, GLENDOWER STREET, MONMOUTH

There is no doubt a book to be written on the prevalence of Baroque Survival well into the Victorian Period. Just such an example is this rich design of 1844 in Monmouth. However at this stage the primary concern is not the more esoteric need to find a suitable stylistic tag for the building but the more pressing requirement for a new use. Its dilapidation after years of disuse is now very serious (Fig. 4).

When a chapel is irreversibly redundant as a place of worship, the Society always promotes as a first resort a new use

which would exploit its nature as a purpose-built auditorium, whether as a concert hall, gallery and meeting room or more prosaically as open-plan offices, auction room or market hall. Schemes which involve subdivision are always second best. However, in this case, when faced with a proposal by the conservation architect, Graham Frecknall, to adapt the building as offices, a single townhouse and two flats, the architectural imagination displayed in the scheme, as well as the overwhelming imperative to find a solution, allowed us to welcome the proposal in principle (Fig. 5). We expressed some misgivings over detailing and we had to regret in particular the loss of the present spatial volume. However, as the cross-section indicates, the office space to be created within the ground floor retains the gallery and its columns, whilst the other principal feature of the interior, the decorated ceiling, is also kept over the new staircase hall to the flats above. The area above is opened up to offer very unusual views of the roof trusses.

It is essential that problems over access are overcome to allow this enterprising scheme, for which consent has now been granted as we go to press, to be implemented.

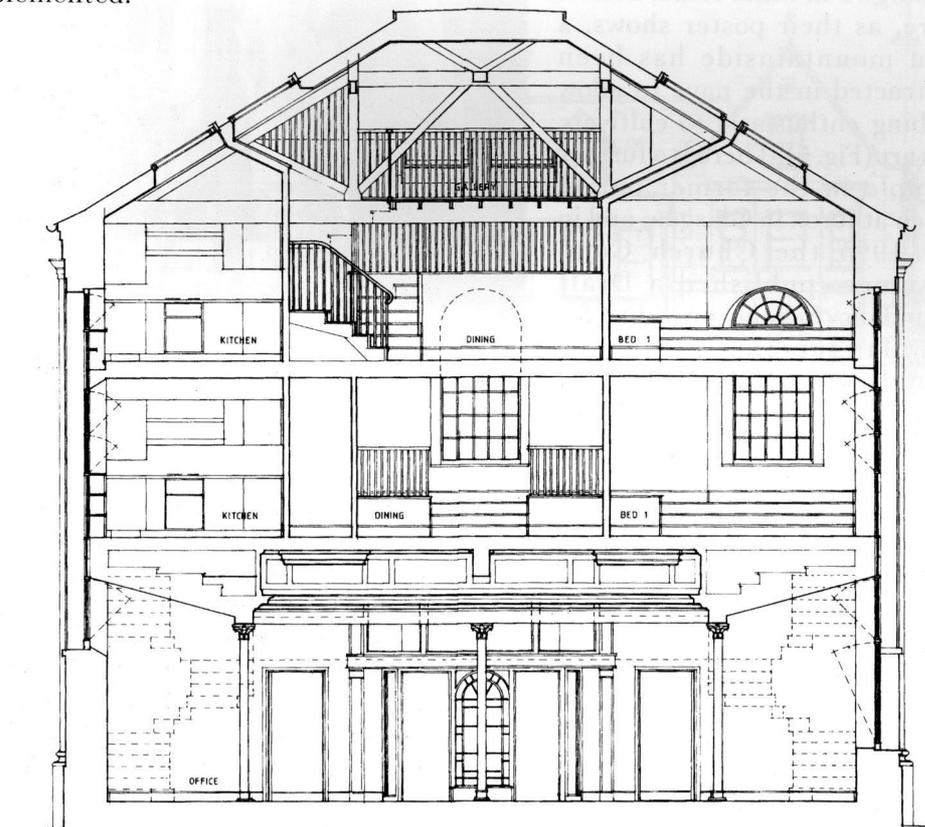


Fig. 5  
Former Congregational Church, Monmouth.  
Cross-section of proposed design for offices and housing

ST ANN'S CHURCH, WINWICK ROAD,  
WARRINGTON, CHESHIRE

Some new uses for redundant churches may be reversible; they may avoid horizontal subdivision; they may allow chancels to remain untouched; yet even with all these advantages, there is something about the increasing fashion for forming climbing centres in former churches that makes them seem, in one of Ivor Bulmer-Thomas's choicest adjectives, 'unseemly'.

The trend was begun at St Werburgh's in Mina Road, Bristol where, as their poster shows, a sham mountainside has been constructed in the nave to allow climbing enthusiasts to cultivate their art (Fig. 6). There is a further example in the former parish church at Ibrox in Glasgow, and in May 1995 the Church Commissioners published a Draft Redundancy Scheme providing for a similar function within the redundant church of St Augustine's in Plymouth (designed in 1898 by Charles King).

More recently, planning permission was granted for another within a much more sensitive architectural space—John Douglas's great church of St Ann in Warrington, built in 1868 and listed Grade II\*. In a programme broadcast in August 1994, Channel 4 referred to climbing and mountaineering as 'generally accepted to be the fastest growing sport in the U.K. today', and it is one with its own corporate champion in the form of the British Mountaineering Council. Although the scheme at St Ann's was backed by seed money from Cheshire County Council, the conversion, which was granted planning permission in the summer, is a commercial proposition. When the building was placed on the open market, offers in excess of £75,000 were invited for the freehold interest.

As at St Werburgh's, a giant jagged mountainside will be constructed on one side of the nave. It is claimed that it can be dismantled at any future date without damage to the existing fabric. The chancel area would remain untouched, although

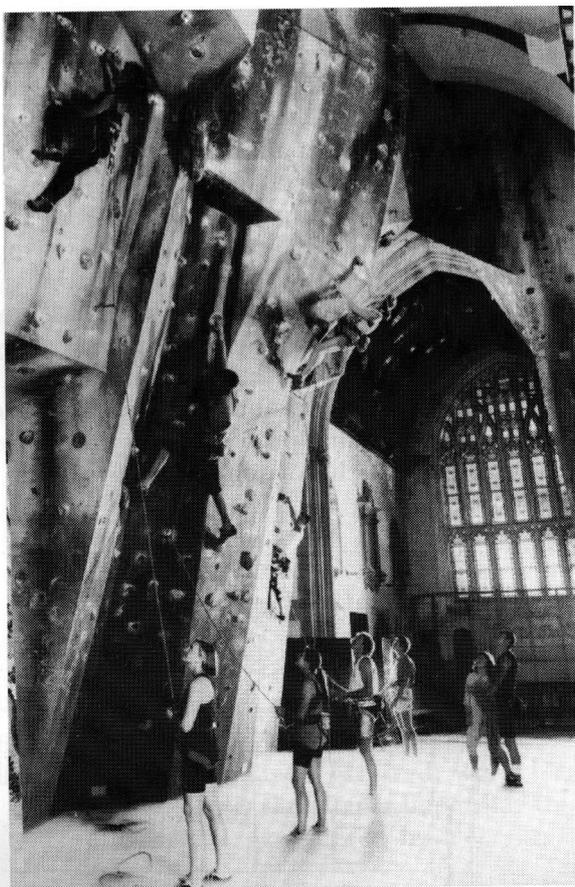


Fig. 6  
St Werburgh's, Bristol

the church authorities are to take out the organ and the pulpit. The company promoting the scheme, Arete Synthetic Ltd. of Sale, propose that the chancel will provide 'a rest and viewing area to the nave and main climbing activities'.

EDMONDTHORPE HALL, EDMONDTHORPE, LEICESTERSHIRE

On reading the many consultations referred to us, the initial step is to separate the survey plans, showing the building as at present, from the proposals which show the projected changes. On looking at the drawing of the north elevation of Edmondthorpe Hall, we initially thought that this must show the building as it stands (Fig. 7). However it soon became clear that it illustrates instead one of the year's most ambitious schemes for reconstruction. The Hall itself, originally constructed *c.* 1620, remodelled *c.* 1700, and much altered in 1868-9 by the architect R.W. Johnson, had in fact burnt out in 1942. The ruins were in turn largely demolished in the 1980s.

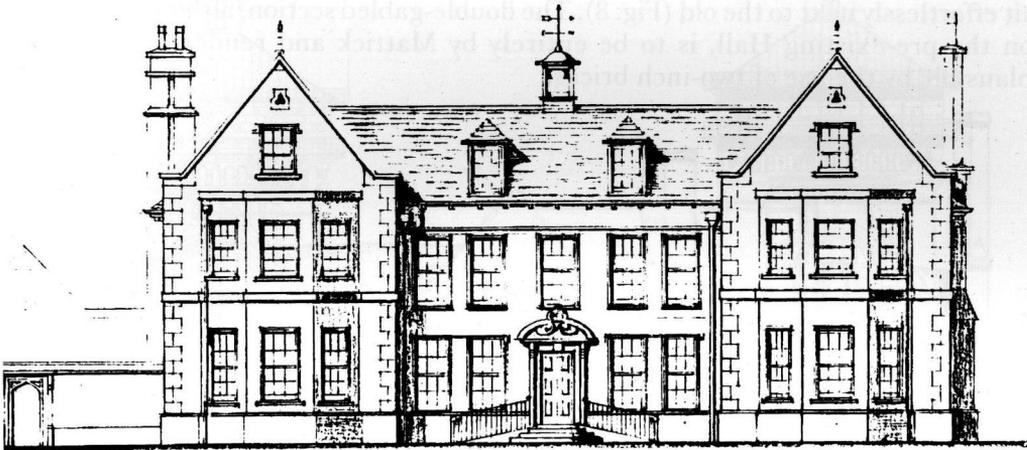


Fig. 7

Edmondthorpe Hall, Edmondthorpe. Proposed north elevation

What is now being proposed by the clients, Mr and Mrs A.J.P. Pochin and their architects, Sawday Associates of Queniborough, is the construction of an entirely new house incorporating surviving features from the old hall and linked to the existing listed outbuildings. Original footings will be preserved and in one case a floor panel inserted to allow a view of an old column base beneath the new floor level. The style adopted would be plausible for the seventeenth century, although the two-tier verandah planned for the south elevation is clearly later in inspiration. The reconstruction is intended to be accurate, based on surviving drawings of the Hall. The original cellars have been plotted to permit preservation, and the construction of the new build, which has now been granted planning permission, will be preceded by an archaeological excavation.

## STUNTNEY OLD HALL, STUNTNEY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Whilst the scheme at Edmondthorpe must be the largest scheme of reconstruction referred to us in 1995, that proposed for the Old Hall at Stuntney runs it a close second.

At present the building is a travesty of its earlier appearance. Already largely demolished at the time of Pevsner's description in *The Buildings of England*, the remaining early seventeenth century stump is now severely vandalised and largely roofless. A decade ago we were informed of an application to demolish even that, and although the proposal was resisted, it has always been clear that the future of the building can only be guaranteed by re-use, preferably as a house. Given its much-reduced size, the presumption has been that reoccupation would be accompanied by an extension. The scheme along those lines that was sent to us in 1995 had been prepared by the architect-builder, Stephen Mattick, who has already made a considerable reputation in the area. His proposed new build offers a seamless conjunction with the vernacular tradition. The drawing indicates how the new will sit effortlessly next to the old (Fig. 8). The double-gabled section, although modelled on the pre-existing Hall, is to be entirely by Mattick and rendered even more plausible by the use of two-inch bricks.



Fig. 8

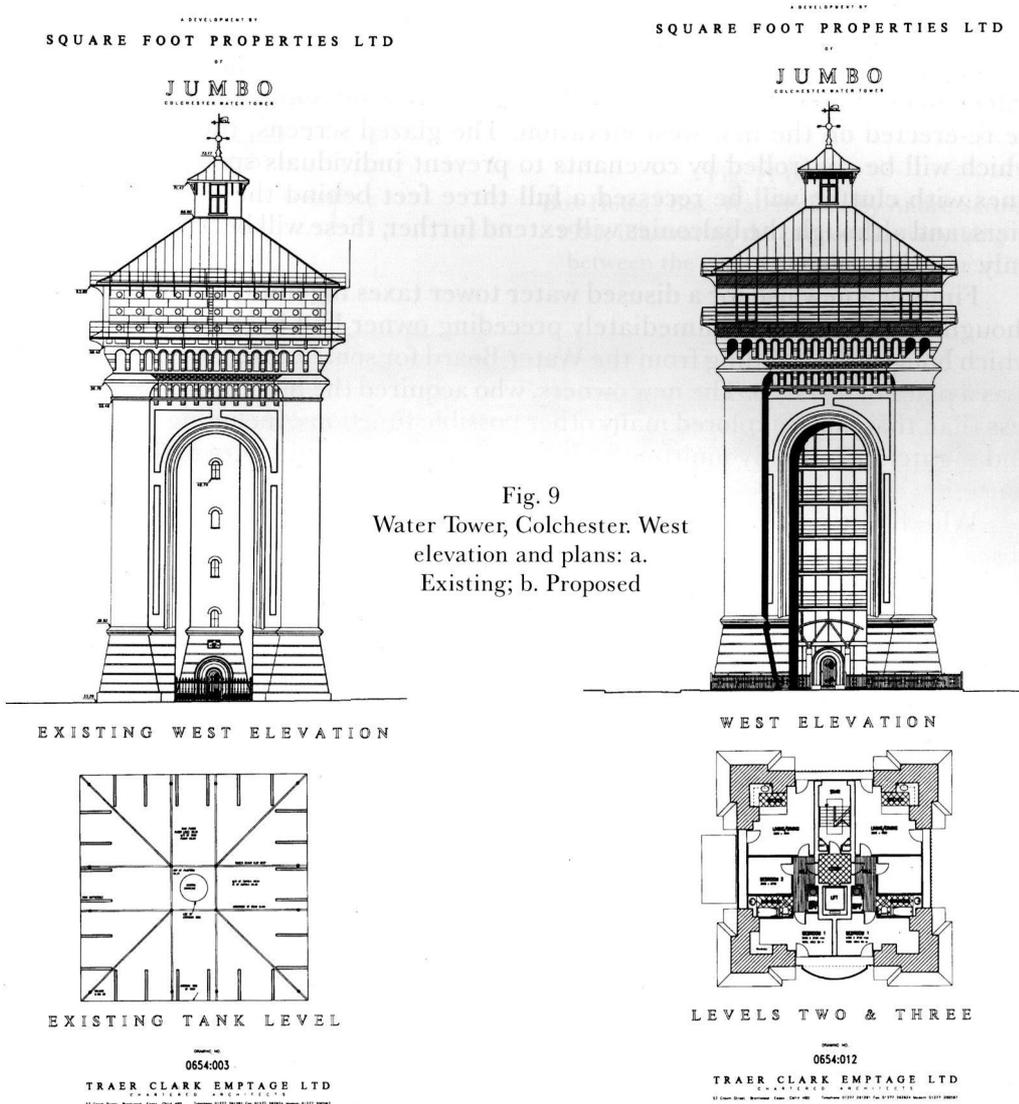
Stuntney Old Hall, Stuntney. North west elevation showing the proposed building—only the gable wall to the far left, with the quoined door, is seventeenth century

Planning permission has been given, and following completion this reconstruction, incorporating a much-abused and much-reduced listed building, should provide a fine new landmark in the village.

WATER TOWER, BALKERNE PASSAGE, COLCHESTER, ESSEX

This scheme really does take the accolade as the most extraordinary referral of 1995.

It is not stretching credulity, nor indeed to downgrade Belcher's great Town Hall, to say that the Municipal Water Tower in Balkerne Passage is one of the great architectural experiences of Colchester. Opened in 1883 and designed by the Borough Surveyor and Engineer, Mr C. Clegg, it rises to some 110 feet. It dominates the skyline from nearly all views and, close to, its extraordinary, gargantuan scale takes the breath away. It seems to have been as much a symbol of municipal pride



as a practical effort to store water with sufficient 'head'. Whilst the model might well have been the imperial grandeur of ancient Rome, the syncopated brick arches at the corner piers owe a lot to the English Baroque of Vanbrugh. To Pevsner it was 'painfully assertive'. Maybe, but it is also extremely powerful, architecturally consistent and expressive of the Victorian pride and audacity of a leading town.

In September we were informed of plans by Square Foot Properties Ltd. of Battersea to convert the listed structure to provide nineteen dwellings.

The conversion proposals, prepared by the architects Traer Clark Emptage Ltd. of Brentwood, also encompass some part-demolition (Figs. 9 a-b). The bulk of the new accommodation is to be provided by demolishing and replacing the tank with two new floors and infilling the space between the four great round-headed arches which support it. The central service core which provides access to the crown will be demolished, although the round-headed door surround and the plaque will be re-erected on the new west elevation. The glazed screens, the appearance of which will be controlled by covenants to prevent individuals spoiling their clean lines with clutter, will be recessed a full three feet behind the outer face of the piers, and although the balconies will extend further, these will be for service access only.

Finding a new use for a disused water tower taxes ingenuity to the limit, even though in this case the immediately preceding owner had been the Prayer Trust which bought the building from the Water Board for some £150,000 in order to use it as a place of worship. The new owners, who acquired the building for appreciably less than that, have explored many other possible functions, including a restaurant and nightclub, but only multiple residential use seems to them to make economic sense.

Whether it makes architectural sense is perhaps a matter for each individual observer, but we felt on balance that the scheme was an exciting one which combined the best of twentieth century glazing technology with the conservation of an idiosyncratic, bombastic masterpiece of Victorian engineering.

#### BOX HOUSE, BATH ROAD, BOX, WILTSHIRE

As is evidenced by our stand over St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate (see below), we do not equate conservation with conservatism. There are occasions when 'interventions' at an historic building can be both 'frankly modern' and acceptable. Yet in some cases referred to us the historicist architectural language employed has been handled with such confidence and scholarship that it seems the most obviously right thing to do. The ability of such schemes to win over the sceptic is the stronger when the standard of draughtsmanship employed is exemplary. Just such an instance arose in August when we were informed about the plans by Robert Adam Architects (also known as Winchester Design) to extend the existing hotel within the Grade II listed Box House. (Robert Adam Architects acted as consultants to the applicant, H.O. Architects of Bath. The job architects are Robert Adam and Ross Sharpe.)

Box House, constructed between 1810 and 1820 for the Reverend I.W.W. Horlock, patron and vicar of the village, was used as the Vicarage until 1874 when

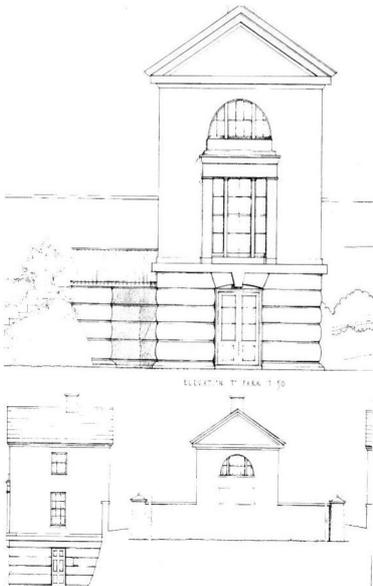
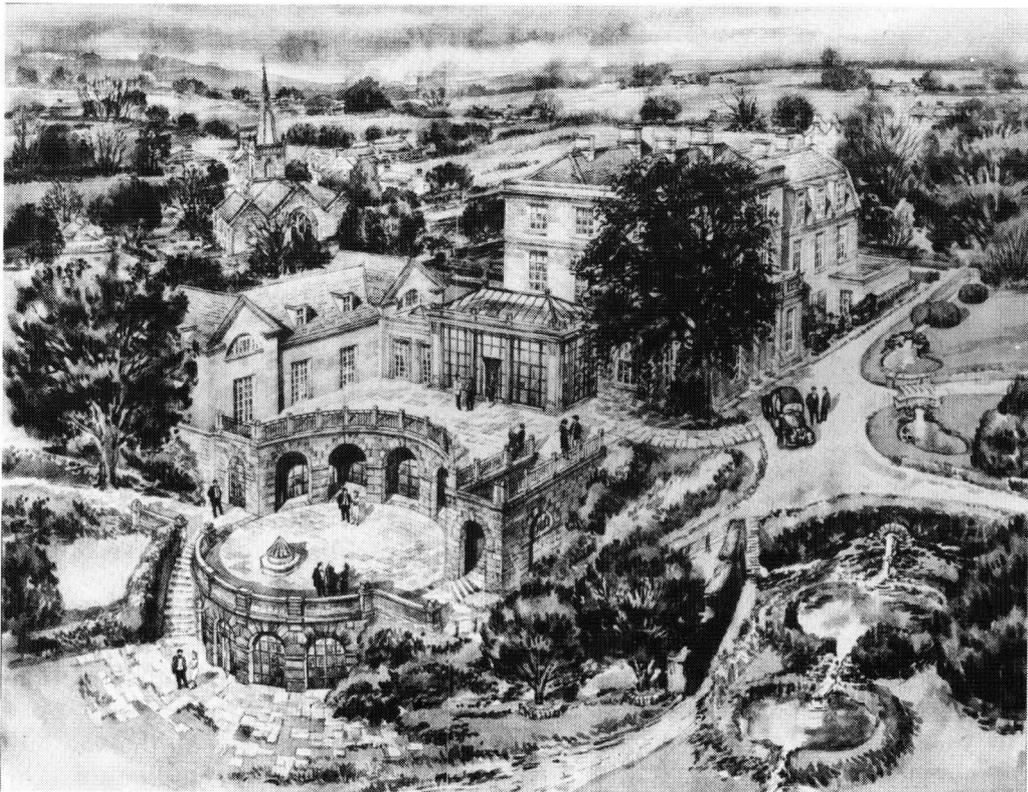


Fig. 10 (left)  
Box House, Box. Proposed Palladian Lodge

Fig. 11 (below)  
Box House, Box. Watercolour by André Serov,  
1995, illustrating the proposals; everything  
between the viewer and the house is new



his son, the Reverend H. Horlock, retired. The ground floor extension to the south-west is mid-nineteenth century.

Adam proposes an extension in the neo-classical language which would have been well understood by the original, unknown, designer, and in the projected lodge the Palladian classicism is equally scholarly (Figs. 10 & 11).

At the time of writing the application had not been determined.

#### 20-21 QUEENHITHE, LONDON, EC4

As the City of London fights back against what it regards as the threat from Docklands, certain City fathers seem prepared to sacrifice even listed buildings. One such is this fine Edwardian Baroque composition at Queenhithe (Fig. 12).

The design was conceived with an excellent command of proportion and hierarchy of detailing, spoiled now only by the later reglazing of two of the sash windows, without their glazing bars, on the fourth floor. The more elaborate ground and first floors are faced in Portland stone. The transition between the stone and the brick of the upper four floors is marked by a central coat of arms and two

balconies set within the recessed second and fourth bays. The outer bays, defined not just by their projection but also by the quoins, rise to copings in the form of inverted arches with ball finials. The composition is given a centralising focus by the giant Diocletian window on the upper floor with its rubbed brick tripartite keystone.

The building represents the only note of humanity, or at least human scale, in a part of the City which was devastated in the War and has been ruined since by the widening and tunnelling of Thames Street and redevelopment, particularly in the sixties, of a quality which still makes the heart sink. The building opposite Nos. 20-21 with its stained concrete and inhospitable walkways demonstrates precisely why so many of us have become conservationists.

On its immediate site, the listed building now lies in splendid isolation. Everything else between Upper Thames Street, Queenhithe and Bull Wharf Lane has been cleared. The

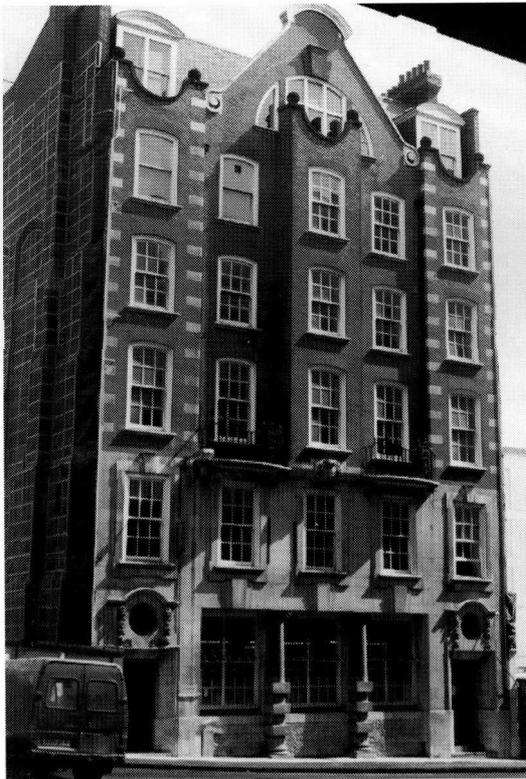


Fig. 12

20-21 Queenhithe, London EC4

proposal is to redevelop the whole site, demolishing Nos. 20-21 in their entirety.

We have argued strongly that the retention of Nos. 20-21 and the redevelopment of the remainder of the empty site is feasible and desirable. A decision is awaited.

ST ETHELBURGA'S CHURCH, BISHOPSGATE, LONDON EC2

Undoubtedly the 1995 case which attracted the deepest controversy involved the rebuilding proposals for St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate, devastated by the I.R.A. bomb of April 1993. The case is particularly important from the point of view of conservation philosophy and so it is dealt with here at some length.

St Ethelburga's, which became a Guild church in 1954 but had been declared redundant before the bomb, is listed Grade I (Fig. 13). Its earliest fabric dates from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, although it was constructed on the site of an older church and incorporated some of its materials. It was one of only eight City churches constructed before the Great Fire of 1666 to survive. Given its unselfconscious, almost vernacular, quality and diminutive doll-like scale, exaggerated by its overbearing neighbours, it was certainly one of the most loved. Since the late nineteenth century, it had been in the vanguard of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England representing, before its closure, a form of churchmanship at the other end of the spectrum from that at St Helen's, Bishopsgate, which lies no more than a hundred yards to the south-east.

The image which St Ethelburga's most easily conjured up in the mind was of the unselfconscious west front constructed in ragstone with stone dressings and an eighteenth century ragged-edged heightening in brick. There was a central pointed-arch doorway of indeterminate, but certainly medieval date and the whole was topped by a late eighteenth century two-stage rectangular bell turret, surmounted by an ogee roof with a weathervane, dated 1671 (transferred from a small steeple which the bell turret had replaced). Until 1932, the front was obscured by two shops of *c.* 1570 and *c.* 1613 with a tunnel-like porch giving access to the doorway and later upper-storey accommodation extending across the whole of the front, masking the west window. Had it survived barely a decade longer, the ever growing conservation movement would assuredly have prevented removal. As it is, the bulk of the structure, including the doorway, was re-erected in the Museum of London where it can still be seen.

The bomb demolished the whole of the west front, although elements of the masonry and woodwork were retrieved, as indeed was the bell. Inside the diminutive interior, no more than fifty-six feet long and thirty feet high, there was, prior to the blast, a four-bay arcade dividing the nave from the single aisle, a roof with gilded cherubim corbels renewed in the 1830s, two cinquefoil headed piscinas on the south wall of the chancel and aisle, a five-arch wooden screen by Sir Ninian Comper of *c.* 1912, supporting a rood loft and, by the same hand, a plain western gallery with spiral stair, altar candlesticks and standards. There was a series of four striking stained glass windows by Leonard Walker, dedicated between 1928 and 1947. Three of these commemorated Henry Hudson who took communion here, together with his crew, in 1607 before setting out on his quest for the North West Passage, while



Fig. 13

St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate. Elevation in 1962, photographed by Gordon Barnes

*RCHME*

the fourth was to the Reverend W.F. Geikie-Cobb, Rector at St Ethelburga's between 1900 and 1941. There was also an unusual window of 1936 by Hugh Easton at the east end of the aisle, dedicated to Harriette Geikie-Cobb, the rector's wife, showing three figures of Love, Joy and Peace in an idealized landscape; and a five-light eastern window by Kempe of 1878. There were three pieces of fifteenth century glass in a western window and four pieces from the seventeenth century in the sanctuary and chapel. All of Comper's work and all the glass appears to have been irreversibly destroyed, but still remarkably intact is the reredos in the form of a painted mural beneath the east window depicting the crucified and risen Christ, St Luke with a patient, and St Ethelburga with children, painted by Hans Feibusch in 1962. The artist is still painting in his ninety-fifth year and is the subject of a celebratory exhibition which is touring the country in 1995-6.

### The Rebuilding

Despite the recommendation of the Templeman Commission on the Churches of the City of London that the remains of St Ethelburga's should be bulldozed, the former Bishop of London, Dr David Hope, decided after a period of reflection that this should not happen. Instead he instituted a 'Conservation Development Competition' in July 1994 to tease out imaginative responses to the challenge. The three-fold brief was to 'reuse an element of the site for the purpose of continued Christian worship or prayer, to create some form of memorial to those who died in the bombs of 1992 and 1993', and to construct vestry offices either on or off the site for the parish of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, to whom the previously redundant St Ethelburga's was conveyed as a chapel of ease on 1st March 1992. The assessors, chaired by Lady Howe, were Sir William Whitfield, former Surveyor to the Fabric of St Paul's Cathedral and a distinguished conservation architect, and Mr Trevor Osborne, former Chairman of Speyhawk, a property developer with an established reputation in the conservation field. Ten proposals were submitted before Christmas 1994 and these were whittled down to a shortlist of five. Three of these included, as the brief originally intended, commercial offices, the income from which was supposed to pay for the rebuilding, but in the end the assessors rejected all of these and narrowed the choice down to two, neither of which contained offices for letting.

The first of these, drawn up by Rothermel Thomas and Richard Griffiths Architects, had been commissioned by the Friends of St Ethelburga's (Figs. 14a-b) who had dispensed with a commercial element because they claimed to have raised the money required in the form of promises, relying particularly on the large amount of money available from the Kitchin Charity. In their own words,

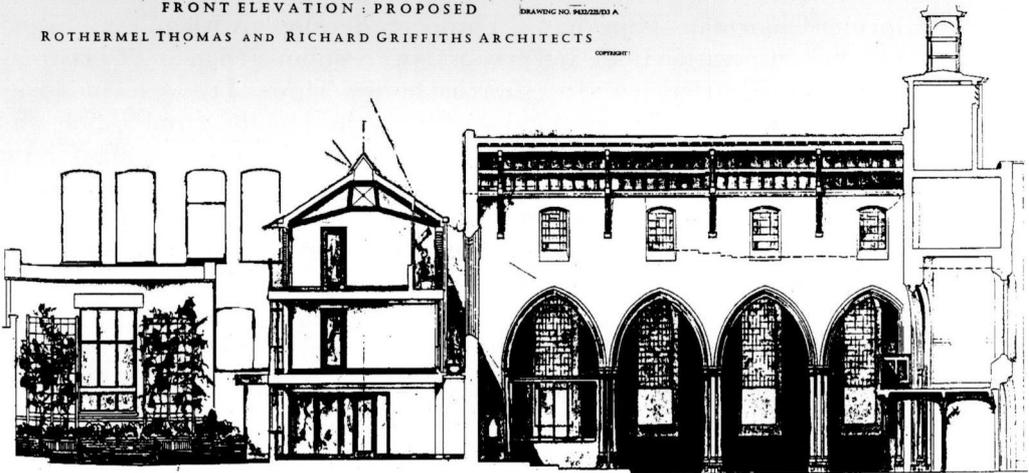
The intention of the Friends is to rebuild St Ethelburga's in form and spirit, carefully conserving the parts which survived the bomb, recreating the external form of the church and adding new elements as an expression of hope for the future. The south aisle and arcade, the east wall and parts of the north wall which survived would be conserved in their existing state, retaining the texture of age and the scars of the explosion.

The front elevation and remaining parts of the north wall would be rebuilt to



Fig. 14  
 St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate.  
 Proposed scheme by Rothermel  
 Thomas and Richard Griffiths.  
 a. Front elevation  
 b. Longitudinal section

ST. ETHELBURGA WITHIN BISHOPSGATE  
 FRONT ELEVATION : PROPOSED  
DRAWING NO. P822828ED A  
 ROTHERMEL THOMAS AND RICHARD GRIFFITHS ARCHITECTS  
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ST. ETHELBURGA WITHIN BISHOPSGATE

LONGITUDINAL SECTION : PROPOSED

SCALE 1 : 100

their original form, although the render previously applied to the Bishopsgate elevation would be put back. So would the reconstructed bell turret. Internally, the walls would be rendered and limewashed incorporating salvaged stones in the window surrounds. The floor of the chancel would be repaired, whereas that of the nave would be refloored with stone slabs. The roof would be an entirely new structure in oak supported by new carved corbels. The distorted leadwork and fragments of glass from the east window would be retained with new glazing fitted to the external surface of the mullions:

This new glazing, symbolizing rebirth, would be the subject of a contemporary craft commission—by contrast, the other windows would be of plain glazing with heavily reamed handmade glass in order to give a good level of natural lighting inside the church. However the pattern of the leading would also offer scope for creativity.

The parclose screen which survived the blast would be retained; so would the eighteenth century font which would be repositioned in the aisle to the south of the chancel. There would be an entirely new oak screen to the chancel and an oak gallery structure and entrance lobby. A memorial to those killed by the bomb would be provided on the Bishopsgate elevation next to the passageway which would provide independent access to the St Helen's vestry to be erected behind the church, to the east. This would be in a three-storey block aligned north-south.

The rival to this scheme was by Blee Ettwein Bridges, the architectural practice of Sir Basil Spence reformed in 1993. Their approach was dramatically different (Fig. 15). In their scheme, the fabric of the building which survived the blast, including the Hans Feibusch mural, would be retained but enveloped within a new masonry and glazed screen to Bishopsgate and covered by a new roof of ogee section. A gallery, presenting an asymmetrical quadrant profile to the retained nave would abut the retained tower arch which would be left in its incomplete post-bomb form.

The assessors plumped for Blee Ettwein Bridges and their reasons are worth quoting at length:

1. An established principle of conservation is to conserve as found. Applying this principle to the post-bomb remains of St Ethelburga's church, we consider that the reconstruction offered by the Friends of St Ethelburga's has less architectural relevance than the Blee Ettwein Bridges approach which re-interprets the church in an innovative way. We suspect that reconstruction would necessitate a great amount of demolition and replacement, the result being largely a reproduction rather than a restoration. We believe that the Blee Ettwein Bridges approach of stabilising the ruins, with the support and advice of engineers Whitby and Bird, will succeed in the retention, stabilisation and conversion of a greater part of the surviving fabric. This approach appears to carry less risk and is a more robust and truthful response to the challenge.

2. The retention of the ruins within a new structure is a more poignant architectural statement than extensively rebuilding the pre-bomb church. The architecture comprised in the Blee Ettwein Bridges approach is, throughout, more exciting and imaginative, particularly in the treatment of the interior. This approach is also more suited to the type of modern re-use which we understand to be required by the City community. By contrast, despite our request to the Friends of St Ethelburga's for further modifications to the design to the east of the re-built church, the revised

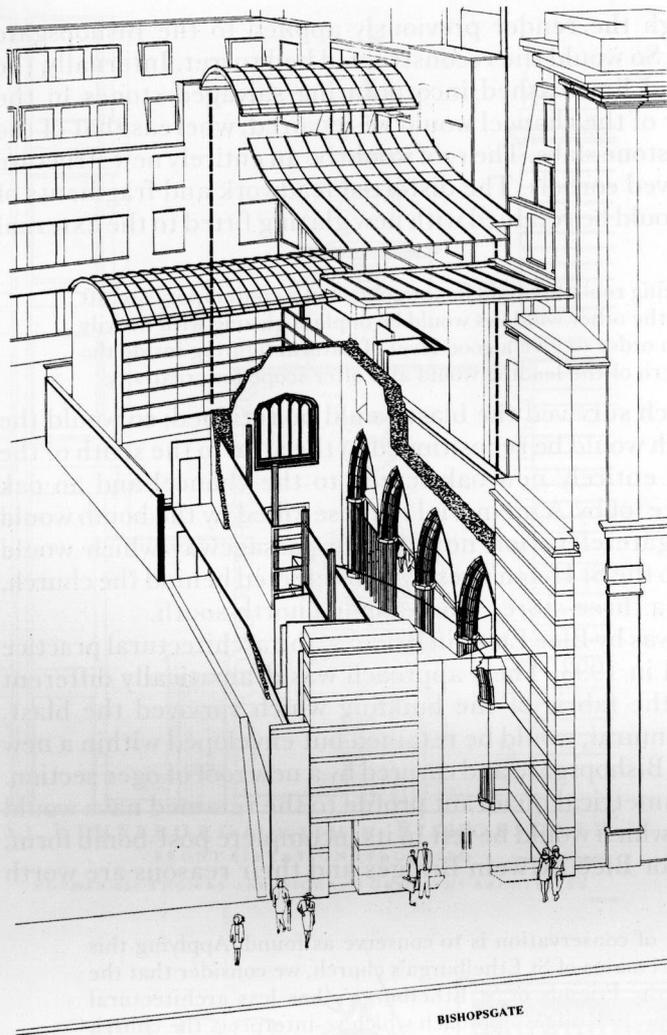


Fig. 15  
St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate.  
Proposed scheme by Blee  
Ettwein Bridges—cutaway  
aerial perspective

scheme does not display the architectural flair shown in the Blee Ettwein Bridges scheme.

3. In the Blee Ettwein Bridges scheme, the featuring of the remains of the bomb damaged church would act as a relevant monument to those who died in the 1992 and 1993 bombs. A reproduction of the church would be a less pertinent commemoration.

4. Although there are some elements of the Blee Ettwein Bridges scheme which may need resolution with the Corporation of London planning department, this architectural practice is sufficiently resourceful to be able to overcome planning-related design problems. Blee Ettwein Bridges' response to our request for further information was immediate and comprehensive.

5. While the Friends of St Ethelburga's restoration approach could generate sufficient charitable donations, we consider that the quality of the architectural approach comprised in Blee Ettwein Bridges' scheme combined with the useful City facility that would be created, could, if handled appropriately, stimulate the donation of sufficient charitable funds to enable its implementation.

6. The inherent quality of the Blee Ettwein Bridges proposal should attract an appropriate sponsoring body which, to date, the architect has been unable to assemble.

7. The Blee Ettwein Bridges scheme is a progressive and contemporary statement which would carry St Ethelburga's church into the next century and which is more appropriate than straightforward rebuilding.

For the above reasons we consider that the Blee Ettwein Bridges scheme is the approach which is most likely to meet the identified needs of the Church and the City community.

As yet the winning design has not been submitted to the Corporation of London for listed building consent and planning permission—indeed at the time of writing its details are still being developed—but the lodging of the Richard Griffiths scheme with the Corporation in June led to consultations with the A.M.S. and the other national amenity societies. A number of different views were expressed within the Society's Technical Committee but a consensus did eventually emerge. Given the importance of this case, members may be interested in the enclosed extracts from the letter which resulted:

The majority of the Committee was unenthusiastic about, although not hostile to, both of the schemes.

The Friends' scheme is not the tame replica which some of the press have described. The front elevation is rebuilt in facsimile but with a lime render which it would probably have had when first constructed and with a more attractive frontispiece to the wall giving entry into the side passage. Internally, the Comper screen and gallery would not be recreated, the glass would be to a new design and the previous ceiled roof of the 1830s would be replaced by a new openwork system of trusses designed to a similar but not identical configuration. Whilst appreciating that, the majority of the Committee felt the scheme was overly conservative.

The Blee Ettwein Bridges alternative offered a radically differing approach. The post-bomb remains are preserved almost like a museum piece within a steel and glass envelope, the latter being given a particularly complicated roof structure of ogee section over the bulk of the nave with a mono-pitch with a slight upward incline to the westernmost bay. The Committee was distinctly unhappy about the proposed front elevation and the curious quadrant shaped gallery.

They felt that the mixture of solid rusticated masonry and a sheer glazed screen, abutted against a further expanse of rusticated masonry running along the return with the Mewès and Davis neighbour, appeared unresolved both in its relation to the street and to the gallery. Many felt that the previous attraction of St Ethelburga's was not just its scale which the B.E.B. scheme respects, but its doll-like form when seen between its towering neighbours. The newcomer seems hard edged and offputting by comparison. If we have understood the proposal correctly, the new

gallery cuts across the first bay of the arcade and runs across the remainder of the nave in the form of a quadrant. This would give unexpected views of the medieval columns but does seem a geometrically perverse intervention, challenging the sense of repose.

Faced with these two alternatives, the Committee came to the view that the most satisfactory solution would be the preservation and stabilization of the ruins as they survived the bomb, and their retention unaltered, being neither rebuilt in near replica nor cocooned within a glass and steel box. The intended vestry space for St Helen's can still be built beyond the retained east wall, whilst if a further Christian presence were required, the ruins could lend themselves to the occasional open air service which is already seen at a number of former church sites within the City. This scheme would be considerably cheaper and would not require the launch of a sizeable appeal to City companies, trusts and, indeed, the Corporation. This does seem to be a relevant consideration given the agreement of the Bishop of London to the launch of a City Churches Trust with a brief to seek outside funding, and the pressing need faced by certain intact churches like St-Mary-at-Hill, which needs to raise money for the reinstallation of the magnificent fittings which remain in store following the repair of most of the fire damage. It was felt that the reconstruction of the tower would help to reinstate the townscape, but equally that it would involve a degree of reconstruction which would provoke misgivings and which would reduce the amount of sun, lighting and brightening the ruins. It was felt that any floorscape which survived the blast should be retained and that any new landscaping should be hard rather than soft.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which opposes what it considers to be 'shamming' as well as destruction, wrote to the Corporation in the following terms:

The S.P.A.B. has almost always stood against attempts to recreate in facsimile historic buildings that have been very extensively damaged. We accept that there may be cases where limited restoration to reconstruct damaged parts of a building or architectural feature may be wholly appropriate. More extensive work, we believe, may go a long way towards recreating general form and detail, but can never hope to replicate the patina of age and the characteristics unique to the original craftsmanship. Restorations which attempt reconstruction in facsimile may involve work of the highest standard, perhaps equal in skill to that of the original, but inevitably fail to retrieve subtle, but still fundamentally important historic qualities. In our opinion, a far more honest approach to the treatment of badly damaged buildings is for the new work, while respecting the old, to be more distinctly of its own time.

The Corporation of London decided in the end to grant planning permission for the Richard Griffiths scheme, although this did not affect the decision of the Bishop announced before his departure to take up the Archbishopric of York in September that he accepted the assessors' view and backed the B.E.B. scheme. He considered that the design would symbolize 'death and resurrection' in the face of terrorism and that 'just to do a restoration and put things back the way they were would make Bishopsgate squeaky clean and clinical'. The Archdeacon of London, the Venerable George Cassidy, who will have a critical role in carrying the project further, added: 'By juxtaposing the very best of modern British architecture with the standing historic remains of the medieval church it will be a reminder of the

atrocities. It will make a Christian statement about resurrection and new life coming out of death and destruction'. However that is not yet the end of this complex story for the B.E.B. scheme has, at the time of writing, yet to receive planning permission and listed building consent or the blessing of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches. Even more critically, it will only be built if the funds can be raised.

The concluding chapters to this case have yet to be written.

By far the most comprehensive account of St Ethelburga's, taking the story up to 1994, is given in *The Past, Present and Future of St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate*, published by The Ecclesiological Society (ISBN 0 946823 10 3). Further information can be obtained from: Kenneth Richardson, 3 Sycamore Close, Court Road, Mottingham, London. SE9 4RD

