

The Influence of the Victorian Parsonage on English Domestic Architecture

by

ANTHONY JENNINGS

The Victorian parsonage could be said to epitomise the characteristics of English domestic architecture, with its traditional materials, its combination of substance and modesty, and the practicality of its living arrangements. This paper identifies a particular stage in the development of the form and style of the Victorian parsonage, and some specific architects as the most characteristic. It suggests that the Victorian parsonage, and these in particular, can be said to have influenced the subsequent development of the English house. It explains why this may have been so, and what factors may be said to have made the Victorian parsonage particularly influential.

The early 19th century was a big period of change. The social background of the time was one of dramatic population increase, and the growth of industry, which spelt rural decline, gave rise to migration from the countryside to the rapidly expanding towns and cities. At the same time, with the long dominance of Georgian Classicism drawing to an end, there arose a great appetite for reappraisal of medieval architecture, in the search for a more English style.¹ This new research gave rise to much debate about which style was most appropriate, not only for architecture in general, but for specific types of building, including the parsonage and other types of domestic house – a debate that was aired in publications such as those of John Britton and J.C. Loudon. The prevalent mood of this crucial time for English architecture was one of an odd mix of romanticism and enlightenment, which began to reject not only Classicism but the historically inaccurate Gothic that had survived from the 18th century (Fig. 1).

The pioneering publications, with their views and drawings of the great old houses, had as part of their aim the attempt to make the Gothic respectable, not an easy task against such a long devotion to Classicism, as well as to give more consideration to the domestic house. This proved all the more difficult because, despite his researches, Britton found it hard to come up with a proper historical model for the small house in the Gothic style,² though T.F. Hunt's detailed studies of Tudor forms were rather more helpfully scientific.³ These researches were also part of the growing idea that the national character more truly manifested itself in domestic architecture than in the great public buildings, with their polite style and foreign influence. Loudon also noted that in a cottage, the

Anthony Jennings is the author of *The Old Rectory: the Story of the English Parsonage* (Bloomsbury, 2009), and a number of law books. He is Director of Save Our Parsonages and the Rectories and Vicarages Trust, and on the committee of the Patrons Consultative Group. He is a member of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee and a trustee of Bourne Preservation Trust.

windows were of different dimensions and not symmetrical, that the Gothic style tries to make the most indispensable features also the most attractive, and that turrets and projections, in supplying closets and service areas, are there for convenience rather than mere decoration.⁴ These ideas were influential on the fundamental change that was taking place in the philosophy of house design, getting away from the 'from outside to inside' classical design philosophy, which required the internal plan to conform to an imposed external symmetry, to the idea that the practical requirements of the internal layout should dictate the exterior. Favoured exterior features were mullions, hood mouldings and tall chimney stacks, in a style we call Tudor Gothic, which, as research became more rigorous, evolved into a more historically accurate form of Gothic. Because the Gothic required no symmetry, the 'gable and bay' design so characteristic of the Victorian detached house began to develop in the 1830s, and was to influence not just the later Victorian house but the whole subsequent course of domestic architecture.

The early research did not necessarily just point to the Tudor Gothic style. All medieval building was seen as relevant, and the old tradition of English vernacular building, epitomised by the stone Cotswolds house with its gable and mullion, hard to date, resistant to foreign influence even when it acknowledged Renaissance features, was an important part of the new climate of research. It came to be known as Old English, and had never fully died out in pockets of the country. When G. Poulett Scrope wrote about 'national character' in the *Quarterly Review*, saying that it 'attaches itself to domestic architecture', and the 'Old English style' is 'particularly appropriate to country buildings', he was not thinking of Tudor Gothic in particular (Fig. 2).⁵

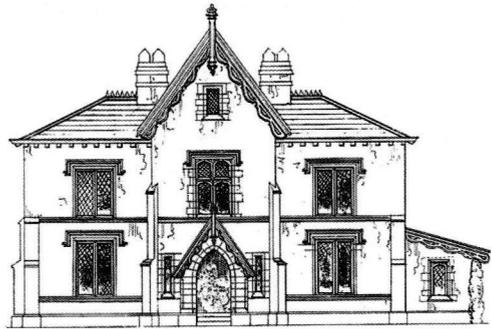


Fig. 1

The former vicarage, Tewkesbury, front elevation, (mainly c.1827); the Regency transition from Gothic to Tudor Gothic, still symmetrical.

Drawing by S.W. Daukes, 1846, *Diocesan Records at Gloucestershire Record Office*, ref: GDR/F4/1 Tewkesbury



Fig. 2

Stanton, Glos., former rectory, (1838); typical early Victorian Tudor Gothic.

Photograph, Glyn Jones 1992

A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin were two of the most passionate advocates of the Gothic style, despite the fact that they had fundamental disagreements, partly derived from their differing religious allegiances and partly from

their architectural beliefs. Despite these ideological differences, neither of these key figures was content with Tudor Gothic, and both shared the conviction that true Gothic architecture was based, historically and philosophically, on more appropriate principles than Classicism and was more rigorous. They were able to convince many others of this, including the most influential architect of the time, George Gilbert Scott. That takes us to the key period for the Victorian parsonage, the 1840s. We should however not forget that the thread of Classicism was to continue, and, despite the Gothicists, it was still a time of eclecticism that also embraced Renaissance and Italianate styles, which remained popular. This period of gestation and change was finally to give rise, in the second half of the 19th century, to the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which we shall call the Domestic Revival for the purposes of this paper.⁶

THE PARSONAGE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

A parsonage may be defined as a dwelling house for clergy ministry; in medieval and pre-Reformation times this was a priest's house, later known as a rectory or a vicarage. It was a dwelling house like any other, albeit with a specific duty. It not only served as the priest's living space but supported his pastoral duties to the community and enabled him to receive guests as part of the tradition of hospitality, even if it only had space for the visiting archdeacon or bishop. Since the priest was for much of the medieval period supposed to be celibate, it also had to have separate accommodation for his servant or housekeeper, but did not need space for a large family. However, it grew in size after the Reformation when more family space was needed. By the mid-19th century it usually had to be substantial, both for symbolic and for practical reasons; it had to accord with the enhanced status of the parish clergy, and to accommodate the typically large Victorian family and its servants, as well as sometimes space for religious instruction and general education for local children. In short, by this time the parsonage was second only to the manor house in size, design and quality.

The population growth of the early 19th century, which led to a boom in house construction, meant an even greater boom, pro rata, in parsonage construction, because there was by now a huge shortage of parsonage houses. This was for a combination of reasons: the chronic clerical pluralism which was at last coming to an end; the long period of Georgian decay; the need for more clergy; and the city growth that gave rise to demand for the new urban parsonage. There was also the new phenomenon of the urban clergy house to accommodate a college of celibate clergy. Until the Victorian period, even through the late 18th-century agricultural and industrial revolutions, the story of the parsonage had still essentially been that of a country house in a rural environment.

In terms of style, the mainstream development of the parsonage during the 19th century had the following chronology – the continuing Regency classicism and the lingering Gothick (sometimes called 'Strawberry Hill') of the 1810s and 1820s, (with a fashion for the Italianate in the 1820s and 1830s); the Tudor Gothic dominance of the 1830s; the mature Gothic that developed in the 1840s; the High and Muscular Gothic of the 1850s; then the Domestic Revival from the 1860s and 1870s, together with the Queen Anne Revival towards the end of the century. These changes were remarkably dynamic in such a short period of time compared with what had gone before. A radically

new philosophy was required not only for the change from the Gothick to the Tudor Gothic, but again from the Tudor Gothic to the mature Gothic of Pugin and Butterfield. It is also very significant that, even by the 1850s, the Domestic Revival was starting to show early signs of superseding the mature Gothic; indeed, its beginnings can be traced even to the 1840s, as we shall see. This change from High Gothic to Domestic Revival seems once again so substantial in terms of both style and philosophy, yet when we look at the buildings we see quite a seamless process of evolution. The 1840s can be said to be a key decade for this reason.

The changes were not at all superficial but affected the entire architecture of the house and its internal plan and layout. Timothy Brittain-Catlin has done a well-researched categorisation of the plan and arrangement of rooms of the early Victorian parsonage and has shown how it evolved.⁷ Broadly, the central-corridor hall plan of the Classical house gave way to the L-corridor and back-corridor plans of the 1830s, leading on to the 'pinwheel' principle of design at Pugin's 'The Grange', Ramsgate (1843). His theory is that the narrow central corridor never suited the major central bay of the Classical facade and that this was one factor in the evolution of the Gothic, to which it was more suited since Elizabethan houses had narrow central bays. The back-corridor, developed to address this problem, had to have the door at the side, leading to much greater attention being paid to the side elevation, and was another manifestation of the move away from the Classical importance of symmetry. And as the Gothic style developed in the 1840s, the more imposing staircase hall began to appear.⁸

The architects who designed these parsonages were of various types. Some were eminent London architects also associated with the most prestigious public commissions. Some were particularly favoured by the Church and the gentry. Some had specific appointments, either as architects to the Church Commissioners, or as favoured by their diocesan office for parsonage work. Many did not specialise in parsonages. By far the most were architects of regional or local importance only, though some of these were highly competent. Some designed many parsonages, some few. Some were ideologically committed to the Gothic style, some not.

George Gilbert Scott, who was born in 1811, the year before Pugin, with his Ruskinian vision, grandeur and solidity, was hugely influential, and attracted such eminent pupils as G. E. Street, William White, G. F. Bodley and T. G. Jackson. He admitted his indebtedness to Pugin. 'Pugin's articles excited me almost to fury, and I suddenly found myself like a person awakened from a long feverish dream, which had rendered him unconscious of what was going on about him'.⁹ His manner changed to reflect Pugin's influence, with his wide staircase halls giving access to multiple rooms around them. Examples of these are his parsonages of the 1860s at Tydd St. Giles (Cambs.) and Christ Church, Ealing (since demolished). His parsonage at Hillesden, (Bucks, 1870), though later than these and the early groundbreaking parsonages we shall discuss later, is still highly advanced in its mature English manner, with Domestic Revival and Mock Tudor features that would not look out of place, but for its far superior design, in a suburban Surrey estate of today.

Ewan Christian, (born 1814) was the most prolific of the parsonage architects, with 380 to his name, as well as a number of other clerical houses, though none outstanding.

He was influenced by Pugin and Butterfield, as exemplified in their parsonages at Rampisham and Coalpit Heath respectively, discussed below.

J. L. Pearson (born 1817) was a pupil of Ignatius Bonomi, then worked for Anthony Salvin, another fine parsonage architect, then for Philip Hardwick, so he had a very good training in a wide variety of architectural styles before he studied Pugin and French and German Gothic. He went from High Gothic to Domestic Revival in the 1860s to 70s. His Braintree (Essex) parsonage of 1855 is 'stylistically utterly self-effacing, indeed like Butterfield's contemporary houses which similarly depend on vernacular tradition. Pearson was to develop the vernacular tradition further than any other of his generation'.¹⁰

Among numerous others were the many regional and local parsonage architects of the early to mid-Victorian period. These included John Dobson (Newcastle and the North), William Parsons (Leicestershire), John Hayward (Devon), the Brownings of Stamford, C. J. Carter and James Fowler of Louth, the Kirks of Sleaford (Lincolnshire), William Wilkinson (Oxford), Richard Rowe (Cambridge), and a little later John Douglas (Cheshire). George Wightwick of Plymouth designed ten parsonages in Cornwall, the versatile William Donthorn nearly twenty mainly in Norfolk, and he devoted a whole volume of architectural drawings to parsonages.¹¹

Philip Webb (born 1831) apparently designed only three parsonages,¹² but his Red House at Bexleyheath (1859) has been described as the first perfected Domestic Revival house. It was not a parsonage, but had the attributes of one. Webb, although Street's pupil, was influenced by Butterfield, and drew his buildings. Red House can be seen as a continuation of Butterfield's domestic Gothic, as well as that of Pugin and Scott. It emphasises modelling as distinct from applied detailing; a signpost to the direction in which architecture was travelling.

Immediately after leaving Street's office in 1862, Norman Shaw (born 1831) went on sketching trips with W. E. Nesfield, from which 'immediately the "Old English" style emerges'.¹³ His cottage design of 1862 has all the 'studied clumsiness' of Coalpit Heath,¹⁴ and he learned his hipped gable and timbered style from Butterfield, but he must be counted as crucial to the development of Domestic Revival, Queen Anne Revival and thus the future of the English house as a whole, as well as the future of suburban estate planning with his Bedford Park estate in Ealing.

THE INFLUENTIAL PARSONAGES

To identify specific influential parsonages, we need to look for chronologically early houses that anticipated later developments. This leads us to consider several more architects. S. W. Daukes, who was born in 1811, the year before Pugin, little known by comparison with many, deserves a mention for his fine parsonages such as that at Toft (Cams.), designed as early as 1844.¹⁵ Although still superficially in Tudor Gothic manner, this is a forward-looking house, contemporary with Pugin's early designs, sharing aspects of their internal layout, with grand stair window, a far cry from the old central corridor plan, and very practical. Its external appearance, too, could be said to exemplify the image of the Victorian parsonage

S.S. Teulon and R.C. Carpenter were both born in the same year as Pugin (1812) and both were influential. Teulon was mannered and French but considered eccentric.¹⁶

This has tended to detract from his merits. Pevsner determinedly perpetuated Teulon's 'rogue' myth in the Introduction to the Buildings of England volume for Lincolnshire, yet in a specific comment has to praise his 1853 rectory at South Thoresby as 'picturesque and yet robust'.¹⁷ Carpenter, authentic, medieval and 'churchlike', excelled with his tall parallel range houses with the massing of churches, ecclesiological combinations of plainness and rich detailing, exemplified by his Monkton Wyld parsonage (Dorset).

Pugin himself only designed two Anglican parsonages, though he also did eight Catholic presbyteries and two more clergy houses. He considered the Gothic to be the only style that could be used for these buildings, declaring anything classical to be 'pagan', a selective reading of history: Thompson's comment that 'through the neglect of church building after the Reformation, Gothic had acquired a special association with churches' is more plausible, and historical, than Pugin's determinism.¹⁸ On the principles of architecture, however, he was more rational. In 1841 he said that 'there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety', and that details should 'have a meaning or serve a purpose'.¹⁹ These are important statements, both because they introduce a concept of morality, and because of his idea of functionalism. He substituted 'propriety' for the 'delight' of Vitruvius and Wotton, and carefully defined the role of details so as not to outlaw decorative detailing, unlike the modernists, provided it is appropriately handled and symbolic. In fact he said 'all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building'.²⁰ He welcomed 'enrichment' provided it helped to express the qualities of the material being used. These qualities are well exemplified by his parsonage at Rampisham (Dorset).

William Butterfield, a protégé of Scott's office, born only two years after Pugin, added another dimension to Gothic, more English than Pugin's but equally sure that the exterior of a house should always be subservient to the interior. Coalpit Heath (Glos.), perhaps his greatest achievement in domestic architecture, was also his first parsonage. Ruskinian, and more Old English than High Gothic because he sought to anglicise its inevitable foreign influences, he emerges as an original of the Domestic Revival. He was more flexible than Pugin in his detailing, foreseeing the return of the sash window that Pugin scorned, and seems to have realised at an early stage that Gothic would have to evolve into something less ideological. His clergy house for All Saints, Margaret Street, Marylebone, (from 1852), and his rectory for St Paul's Covent Garden in Burleigh Street (1859), are classic examples of the urban parsonage. His fine country parsonages, of unfailing interest in their variety, included Great Woolstone (Bucks., 1851), and Alvechurch (Worcs., 1855); besides Coalpit Heath, of which more later. Great Woolstone, in particular, goes far beyond Pugin's houses in terms of design development on the journey towards Domestic Revival. The massive Alvechurch was a good reflection of Victorian segregation of society – private library and prayer room, drawing and dining rooms with an ante-room for the reception of guests, separate dressing rooms upstairs, and servants confined to their own north wing with separate staircase, servants' hall, and butler separate from housekeeper – the sort of arrangement Pugin was trying to get away from so far as possible.²¹ Yet his parsonage at West Pinchbeck (Lincs., 1848) is astonishingly reticent and simple, as are those at Cowick, Hensall and Pollington (Yorks), all of 1854, as domestic and different from the High Victorian image as they

could possibly be. By the time of Dropmore (Bucks., 1866), barely a trace of Gothic remains. His secular houses and cottages were also memorable, an important part of the 'English or Farmhouse school',²² which was a vital part of the basis of the ubiquitous Edwardian semi of the London suburbs with its simple rectangular or L-shaped plan, and still shows its influence today.

Henry Woodyer (born 1816) was a pupil of Butterfield, who took up his ideas and tried to develop them. His houses had interesting and sometimes eccentric features, exemplified by his rectory at Highnam (Glos., 1851-2, see further below). G.E. Street (born 1824), after a brief period of articles with Owen Carter in Winchester, came to London to work in the office of Scott. His pupils included E. and J. Sedding, Philip Webb, William Morris and Shaw, so he is another key link with the domestic architecture that was to follow. His muscular Gothic gave rise to his finest parsonage when he moved to Wantage (Berks.), where he was architect to the Oxford Diocese. He was later heavily influenced by his studies of French, German, Flemish and north Italian Gothic, but his parsonages are often notable for their comparative plainness.

These architects designed houses that were key to what was to become known as the 'Victorian parsonage style'. These must include Butterfield's vicarage at Coalpit Heath (1844), Pugin's rectory at Rampisham (1845), both early for houses in what was to become the parsonage style, and Street's vicarage at Wantage (designed 1846). Teulon's North Creake (Norfolk) (1845) and Carpenter's Monkton Wyld (Dorset, 1849) are both also important houses, if perhaps too ecclesiological in their manner to be quite so central to future trends. George Devey's cottages of 1850 at Peshurst Place (Kent) show very early Domestic Revival characteristics, but they are not parsonages. Was there anything earlier? Perhaps we should include Pugin's 'The Grange', Ramsgate, a parsonage in all but name (1843, completed 1844-5). And there is his Catholic presbytery for Our Lady and St Wilfrid at Warwick Bridge (Cumbria), of c.1840, even earlier, and remarkable at a time of resolutely Tudor Gothic. It is a dour, simple, Gothic sandstone box with hipped roof and pointed but severely plain Gothic windows (Fig. 3). Might it just be seen as the first house of the Domestic Revival? It has a staircase hall and a cross-corridor giving access to the main rooms. The brevity of its description in the *Buildings of England* volume suggests that its significance has not yet been fully appreciated.²³ It is difficult



Fig. 3

Warwick Bridge, the Presbytery, (c.1840); early Puginian Gothic.

Photograph, flickr/stoneroberts

to find any earlier key houses of the kind we seek. Scott's houses of the 1830s are still classical, and the parsonages of Wyatt, Ferrey, Pearson and White date from the 1850s, a little later than these key houses; though also influential, all predating and prefiguring Webb's Red House of 1859, usually taken as the first mature Domestic Revival house. Woodyer's Highnam is of 1851, also just a little later. However it is sufficiently archetypal to justify its inclusion as one of our four exemplar houses below.

Coalpit Heath (Gloucestershire, 1844, William Butterfield)

The former vicarage at Coalpit Heath, for St Saviour's Church (also by Butterfield), is instantly memorable. The treatment of the first-floor windows set under the overhanging eaves, and the chimney breast on the front elevation, and even the buttresses so far predating Voysey, clearly foreshadow the Domestic Revival and give it a startlingly modern appearance for its date (Figs 7, 8). It is of rubble blocks of local Pennant sandstone with high quality limestone ashlar dressings, flush with the rubble (Fig. 4). While Butterfield has in no way attempted slavishly to reproduce the Cotswold Old English vernacular, either in its massing or detailing, he has

been deeply sensitive to the local context. Internally, the plan (now altered) put the three main rooms along the front elevation with a narrow passage leading to a staircase described by the present owner as 'functional rather than decorative' in the centre of the house, so it is not of the Pugin pinwheel design, and features no staircase hall of the kind Pugin originated (Fig. 5). The front (south-east) elevation masks three cross-ranges to the back elevation (Fig. 6), enclosing a small internal yard, two of these wings having later Victorian extensions; the north-east enlargement of the drawing room as a study being done in thoroughly sympathetic manner by William Robertson in 1863. It was described in *The Ecclesiologist* as follows: 'a very unaffected parsonage is a building by



Fig. 4

Coalpit Heath, front elevation detail.

Photograph, author 2013

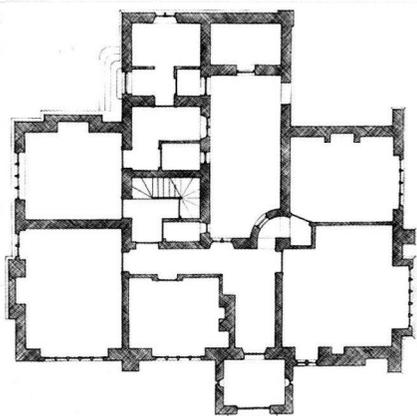


Fig. 5

Coalpit Heath, ground floor plan.

Drawing, M.G. Clews 1965 (NMR)



Fig. 6

Coalpit Heath as it was in 1968.

Photograph, G. Barnes, 1968 (NMR)



Fig. 7

Coalpit Heath, front elevation.

Photograph, Anthony Brookes 2013

Fig. 8

Coalpit Heath, front elevation.

Drawing, M.G. Clews 1965, National Monuments Record (NMR)

Mr. Butterfield at Coalpit Heath, near Bristol. We think he has succeeded in giving the peculiar character required for such a building'. Thompson notes that 'the parsonage at Coalpit Heath is clearly modelled upon the local Cotswold vernacular tradition', but also sees the differences – the more elaborate windows, external chimney breast, window cut into it, and the Welsh slate roof.²⁴ It is also highly praised in the *Buildings of England* volume, which states:

the former vicarage ... is in many respects yet more remarkable than either lychgate or church ... It is a seminal building, archetypal of hundreds of Victorian parsonages. The functional Puginian development of its elevation from its ground plan seems almost a premonition of Philip Webb's Red House, built some 15 years later; the lie of the long ample roof even foreshadows Voysey.²⁵

Praise indeed. Finally, Hill notes that, together with the church and lychgate, it has 'generally been considered ... as marking the dawn of the High Victorian age in architecture, the end of Puginism'.²⁶

Rampisham (Dorset, 1845, A.W.N. Pugin)

The former rectory at Rampisham is a development of Pugin's 'The Grange' and, unlike many of his buildings, has an immediate aesthetic appeal, heightened by its medieval texture of rough vernacular local stone with golden Ham Stone dressings round the windows and porch. Outside, the elevations all differ. The sides to the south and west are domestic and simple with plain square mullions (Figs 10, 11). The front, however, with the steep pitch of the gables, the height of the chimney stack, and the ecclesiastical tracery of the oratory and staircase windows creates a feeling of medieval solemnity and repose (Fig. 12), only heightened by stooping to enter through the low pointed arch of the front doorway into the contrastingly high ceilinged porch interior, creating a powerful

mood which was no doubt Pugin's intention. Inside, the ante-hall of the porch leads to one of Pugin's classic early staircase halls, from which the main rooms radiate internally, moulding the form of the exterior (Fig. 9). The main rooms are individualised by different ceiling treatments of their timber joists and different fireplaces, though the door architrave mouldings all comply with Pugin's simple formula, an equalisation which extends to the clever integration of the service areas behind to the north.

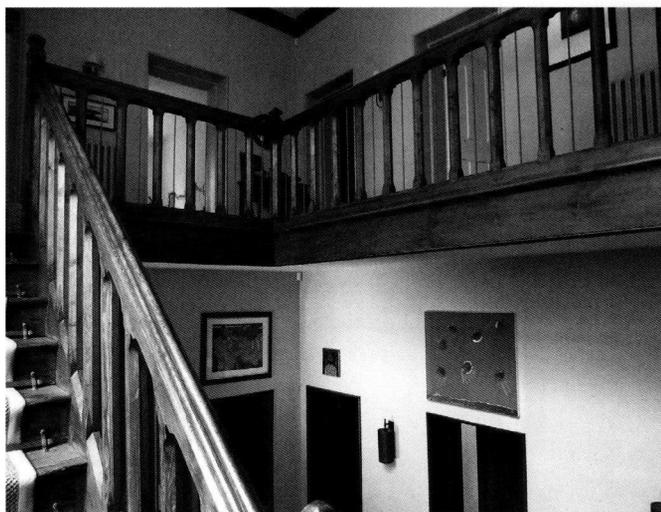


Fig. 9
Rampisham, staircase hall.
Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 10
Rampisham, south elevation.
Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 11
Rampisham, west elevation.
Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 12
(9) Rampisham, entrance (east) elevation. Contrast
with the more domestic south and west elevations
(Figures 10, 11).
Photograph, author 2013

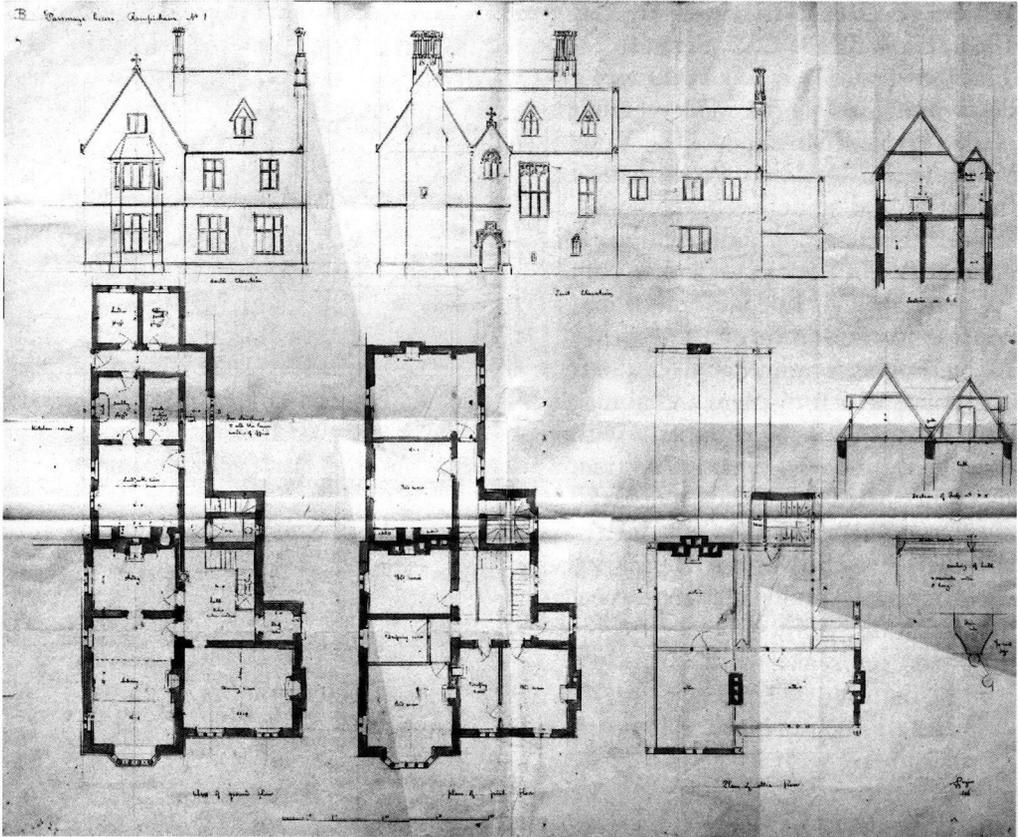


Fig. 13

Rampisham, elevations and plans, drawings by A.W.N. Pugin, *Wiltshire & Swindon Archives*, D28/6/11

Pugin saw the house as a whole, not as a box with services separated and hidden at the back, in the Georgian manner (Fig. 13). As with 'The Grange', the open stair well gives views upstairs in ways which Victorian propriety normally eschewed, and here his philosophy of domestic life seems to have broken away from the more conventional planning of Butterfield, Street and Woodyer. Indeed, like 'The Grange', the house was seen as offending social hierarchy in that all classes had to use the front door and hall from which the main rooms radiate, and above is the open gallery, from which there was a clear view of the bedroom doors, offending Victorian propriety. It may be worth observing that, though this seems progressive, it has not necessarily been followed in the subsequent development of English house architecture, which has tended to remain more conventional where size has permitted. The house has been described as 'as progressive as Butterfield's Coalpit Heath parsonage of the same year',²⁷ and as 'almost certainly the model for Butterfield'.²⁸

Wantage (Berkshire, designed 1846, built 1849, G.E. Street)

The former vicarage at Wantage, a house built for the prominent member of the Oxford Movement, the Revd William Butler, is by contrast of fully ashlar smooth limestone, but still a highly individual creation. It echoes Pugin's ideas in conveying an atmosphere both of medieval repose and of modernity, while succeeding as a practical dwelling. It is a house which displays the almost paradoxical traits of simplicity with complexity, modernity with tradition, substance with delicacy. Again, the elevations all differ. The front, to the south, is powerful but plain, with its small medieval flush lancet windows and pointed arched front door and doorcase, with no porch, simply detailed (Figs 14, 15). The east elevation, by contrast, is much more complex with its gabled roofs, leading to the service areas to the north (Fig. 16). Entering the front door, you come immediately and rather unexpectedly to the main staircase hall, quite modest but wide, leading to the main rooms to the west, the drawing and dining rooms, but not radiating from it in pinwheel fashion. Internally, the house is now divided, making reading it more difficult, but the hall and major rooms remain in one occupation, divided from the study and service rooms. The staircase leads to a galleried landing from which the bedrooms extend at both sides, subtly separated by a sub-landing through a segmental arch. To the east there is a former chapel with simple ornamentation to convey its purpose.



Fig. 14

Wantage, front (south) elevation.

Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 15

Wantage, front elevation detailing.

Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 16

Wantage, east elevation. Contrast with the front elevation (Figure 14).

Photograph, author 2013

Highnam (Gloucestershire, 1851, Henry Woodyer)

The former rectory at Highnam has been described as being ‘full of characteristically original invention’.²⁹ It is part of a group with the church, school, and excellent church lodge, also by Woodyer, but across the road, and built by the patron, Thomas Gambier Parry, the ecclesiologist and father of the composer, Sir Hubert Parry. Like the others, it is of local stone, a lias mudstone of a distinctive blue/grey with pinkish tinges, dressed with a finer yellow limestone for the quoins, doors and windows, some of them lancet and some of more detailed Early English type. As with the other houses, the elevations all differ, the front with its prominently individual projecting central gable, the side less emphatic with a projecting bay, the back much more elongated in its massing (cf. Figs 17, 18). The polygonally arched doorcase in the entrance porch, in combination with the lanceted staircase tower the other side, gives a quirky touch suggesting a more playful architect’s imagination than that of the designers of our other exemplars. The impression is not lessened on entry, where the small outer hall leads to a larger central hall, set at rightangles and running across the house to the contrastingly unpretentious staircase leading to the stair tower at its other end. The central hall is floored in diagonally striped tiles in Victorian medieval manner. Upstairs, the first floor is equally spacious, and there is a small landing stair leading to a sequestered further landing on the third floor under the roof, with lower ceiling under steep eaves and free-standing roof trusses.

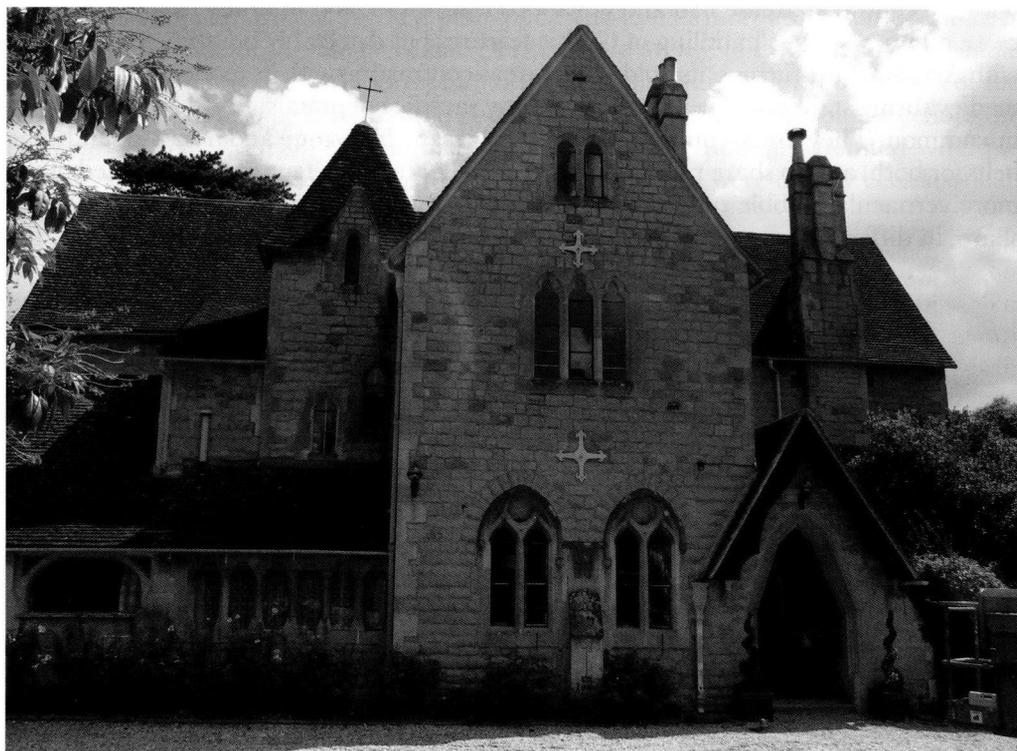


Fig. 17

Highnam, front elevation. Note the polygonally arched door of the entrance porch (right).

Photograph, author 2013

From here servants' bedrooms radiate on all sides, giving an extraordinary glimpse of life as a domestic servant in Victorian England. Another fascinating feature of this house is the former separate door prominently situated on the front elevation, which originally led to a waiting room where parishioners would sit until called into the adjacent study (Fig. 19).

The four major houses described in detail here, therefore, share many common characteristics but are subtly different, foreshadowing the future in their individual ways. Coalpit Heath may be summarised as a vital precursor of the classic English house. Rampisham is more Gothic in flavour but equally innovative with its new pinwheel design and egalitarian detailing. Wantage comes somewhere in between, lacking the pinwheel but with central staircase hall and advanced features in its traditional cloak; Highnam more mannered in its handling of Gothic features but detectably pointing to the future with Arts & Crafts fittings, its bold access areas contrasting with its modest staircase and medievalising staircase tower, but without any sacrifice of practicality. They have much in common. They are all on, or close to, the Jurassic limestone and Triassic sandstone belts (or both) and so share rich local materials. Three of the four are constructed of the more vernacular rubble rather than ashlar, albeit with ashlar dressings. They also all share, in differing degrees, traditionally Old English door and window treatments, the

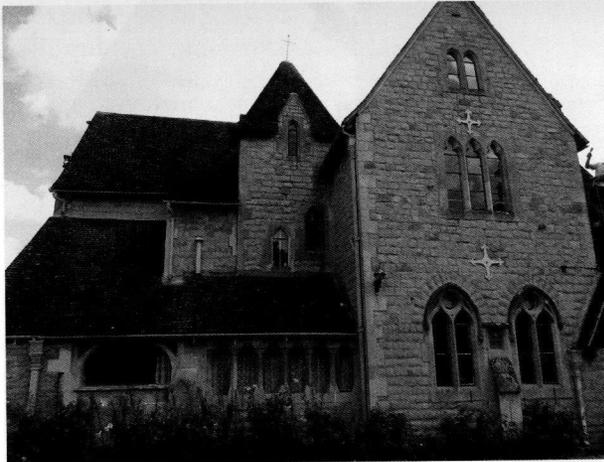


Fig. 19

Highnam, detail of front elevation showing former parish waiting room.

Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 18

Highnam, contrasting rear elevation.

Photograph, author 2013

latter mainly boldly sculpted in broadly Early English manner but flush rather than with projecting mouldings. Yet they are all progressive, employing new design ideas, and emphatically belie the reputation for unnecessary adornment accorded to Victorian architecture by the Modernists. Both Rampisham and Highnam were constructed by Pugin's favoured builder, George Myers of Lambeth. Like Pugin's 'The Grange', which Hill sees as 'prescient of so much that was essential to the Arts & Crafts house',³⁰ all these houses were

designed on the new rational basis of external articulation reflecting the interior requirements, without excluding aesthetic considerations: each exterior, though subservient, is nonetheless satisfying as well as respectful of its setting. Despite their strong convictions, their architects never espoused dogma such as might require ornament to be outlawed; indeed they paid close attention to secondary detailing.

THE VICTORIAN 'PARSONAGE STYLE'

Does the architecture of a parsonage have characteristics that distinguish it from any other house? It was widely believed by the early 19th-century theorists that the parsonage should look as if it is inhabited by a clergyman, whether by making use of the physical characteristics of medieval Gothic churches or by some means.³¹ The medieval priest's house, if he was wealthy, also had arched or cusped windows in the same manner as the church, but that was the practice of the time; the Victorian architect consciously applied such details of style. It is true that the theorists of the early 19th century applied their ideas not just to the Gothic, but to the Classical parsonage of the Regency tradition. Thomas Dearn had said of two of his late Georgian elevations that the 'more sober and dignified' was 'appropriate for a rectory or vicarage-house'.³² Robert Lugar thought the parsonage should have the character of a 'genteel residence'.³³ Despite these ideas, the Classical parsonage often looks little different from the gentleman's house next door, worldly, elegant and urbane. It could perhaps be said that its more secular appearance is rather appropriate for the late Georgian clergyman in an age of Enlightenment, unable or even unwilling to rival his more assiduous Victorian equivalent in his studies of the Scriptures. It can also be said that the pediment of the Georgian parsonage echoes the classical church. Even so, Gothic medieval features like mullions, pointed windows (cusped and perhaps traceried), turrets and gabled porches were openly ecclesiastical, and J. B. Papworth wrote:

The parts of this design are supposed to be selected from the church itself to which the vicarage house belongs, and which it should correctly assimilate... The practice of designing the residence of a clergyman with reference to the characteristics of the church to which it belongs...is desirable, not only as relates to a tasteful advantage, but as it becomes another and visible link of connection between the church itself and the pastor...³⁴

That became the prevalent view of the architects of the 1840s and the High Goths. *The Ecclesiologist* was clear that there is 'a particular character as clearly appropriate to the Parsonage-House, as that which marks the sacred edifice itself'.³⁵

In conclusion, while the Victorian parsonage has generally conformed to the wider formal and stylistic developments over the years that have been applied to any other houses of its size, and is dateable by the same stylistic rules as its secular equivalent, it is evident that it has more 'ecclesiological' features in its height and massing, and in its detailing. This alone makes the Gothic parsonage, with its lively roofline and window tracery, sometimes almost a smaller version of the church alongside it, the easiest to identify from its architecture. Thus G.E. Street's parsonage at West Challow (Berks.) is described as: 'red brick and unmistakeably parsonical'.³⁶

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PARSONAGE

Pugin, in his *Apology*, had observed that, with the growth of the middle classes, 'the smaller detached houses' of the suburbs were becoming a feature of the age, a class of house that had not hitherto widely been seen.³⁷ The key parsonages that we have examined above epitomise the requirements of that domesticity, in their practicality, their adaptability, and their flexibility to cope with coming ways of living. Circulation space, for example, once considered secondary, was now recognised as important to practical living, allowing as it did access to both private and public parts of the house, so that parishioners could have access to a meeting place without too much disruption to the incumbent's private life. This kind of thoughtful planning became integral to design ideas for houses in general. Theorists like Loudon and Pugin and architects like Scott and Butterfield had been the first to give detailed thought as to how the small domestic house should look. Pugin said 'the smaller detached houses which the present state of society has generated should possess a peculiar character'.³⁸ Brittain-Catlin has observed that 'architects of the period were now using Pugin's principles as the basis for the design of their smaller houses, and the work that emerged forms part of the definitive canon of the English architecture of the high and late Victorian eras'.³⁹

The architects of the Victorian parsonage claimed universal validity for the Gothic style; it was seen as important that it was not just for churches and major public buildings. In 1853, Butterfield adapted what has become known as his 'parsonage style' in order to design his only large country house, Milton Ernest Hall (Beds.). Patently ecclesiastical Gothic houses were built in the suburbs of many towns, of which the villas along the Banbury Road and the Norham Manor Estate in north Oxford, laid out by William Wilkinson from 1860, are such good examples. By the time of Webb, Shaw and Nesfield, there was intense interest in trying to find the appropriate secular version of a house based on the parsonage style, and these efforts sprang mainly from the philosophy that had created those Victorian houses exemplified by the ones we considered above.⁴⁰ The ideas were realised primarily in the architecture of the detached house, but they inevitably influenced speculative builders who applied them to the estate semi-detached and the terrace, in scaled down, reconfigured and mass-produced form. The 'Old English' tradition behind the Domestic Revival (which embodied the philosophy of craftsmanship and quality of materials of the Morris school, the influence of Ruskin, and the idea that architecture was about character, not style) came largely from the application of the lessons learned during the Gothic heyday. This Domestic Revival philosophy was of even wider importance, extending to ideas about planning and the garden suburb, a tradition continued by Voysey and Baillie Scott, and Parker and Unwin, at the turn of the century, when it infused the Garden City movement. Voysey in particular is seen as a key link to the early Modernist movement, though he himself denied it (Fig. 20). In short, the Old English was starting to look modern. And the Victorian parsonages of the 1840s that we have discussed above seem to have been the earliest manifestation of these ideas. Sir John Betjeman has pointed out that the new idea of the planned suburb created a need for medium sized houses in their own grounds to cater for the newly prosperous, and smaller houses and cottages that avoided an institutional appearance. Here the designs of earlier parsonages proved influential. They were seen as an archetype (Fig. 21).⁴¹

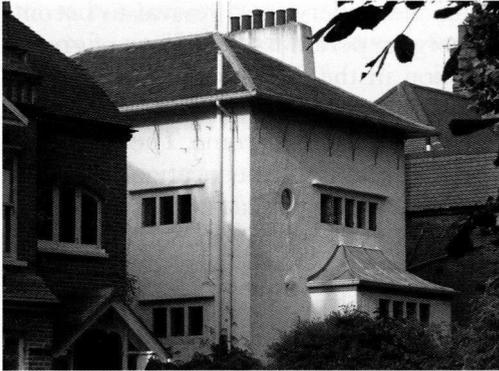


Fig. 20

No. 14 South Parade, Bedford Park, by C.F.A. Voysey (c.1890). Note the window mullions flush with the wall plane, as at Coalpit Heath (cf. Figure 7).

Photograph, author 2013



Fig. 21

The vicarage, St. Peter's Ealing by Morley Horder (1910). The later development of the parsonage: Domestic Revival with Tudor thrown in.

Photograph, author 2009

Hermann Muthesius, a pioneer of German modernism, is famous for his detailed exploration of the essential characteristics of the English house at the turn of the 20th century.⁴² He was particularly taken with the Domestic Revival house and its respect for tradition, and how it exemplified the reaction to the threat of the machine age while also being progressive in its own way. The Domestic Revival strove to get back to the vernacular tradition in its use of natural materials. This was what had always been respected by the early 19th-century theorists: we saw that Loudon had noted 'the facility with which...the Old English style accommodates itself to the opportunities and means of building prescribed by the diversified circumstance and locality'.⁴³

Muthesius analysed the internal layout of the English country house in detail, and explained how it differed from continental practice in fundamental respects, prescribing that the dining room, drawing room, library and billiard room were to be considered the essential ground floor rooms apart from the service areas; and noting that, in contrast to the continent, all the rooms on the upper floors apart from the service rooms were described as bedrooms. He noted the importance of the orientation of rooms, and that the master bedroom should always have a separate dressing room. He emphasised the importance of the hall and that rooms should be separate, self-contained compartments accessed from a hall and corridor, and not be interconnecting in the continental manner. All this he explained in the context of the English character, its fierce independence and concern for individual privacy. The more we read, the more we think of those Victorian parsonages of the 1840s.

If the parsonage was so influential, why should this have been so? In the typical English village, the parsonage, ever since the creation of the parish system and possibly earlier, was generally its third most important building, ranking after the church and the manor house. The parsonage was also at the hub of the village by virtue of its position alongside the parish church, and in that setting it could be said to have symbolised the community itself.⁴⁴

In early Victorian times the Church of England underwent a revival to become again a fundamental bedrock of society. The Georgian period had been one of greater latitudinarianism, giving rise to Victorian reaction in the form of the orthodoxy of the Tractarians and the Ecclesiologists in the 1830s and 1840s. The more central an institution is to community life, the more influential its buildings become. The traditional importance of the Church in learning and research, and thus in education, also went through a revival. The Victorian parsonage was often designed as one of a group of buildings that included the church, the church hall and the village school, reinforcing the centrality of the parsonage house to English culture. The clergy were also leaders in the race to achieve greater social acceptability for themselves.

For all these reasons, the architects of parsonages in these middle years of the 19th century also included the greatest and most eminent of their day. The best known and most prolific of the Goths were also those specialising in ecclesiastical works, and even the architects of the great municipal buildings also turned their hand to parsonages, which were among the very few small houses deemed worthy of their attention. This could not be said either of the Georgian period before it, or of periods after it, to anything like the same extent.⁴⁵ These are good reasons for us to expect the designers of secular houses to have given great weight to the study of parsonage design.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks must go to the following for sharing their time and knowledge so generously: at Coalpit Heath, Anthony Brooks and Andrew Brander; at Rampisham, Graham Booth; at Wantage, Chris and Penney Thompson, and Alix Roos; at Highnam, Debbie Fenton. For their assistance with the illustrations, to Anthea Jones and the Revd David Craven.

NOTES

- 1 There had been earlier revivals, for example by Batty Langley in his textbook, *Gothic Architecture* (1742), or Horace Walpole with his Strawberry Hill (1748), but the new research was rigorous and more focussed.
- 2 J. Britton, *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* (from 1807).
- 3 T.F. Hunt, *Designs for Parsonage Houses, Alms Houses, etc.* (1827), and subsequent work.
- 4 J.C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (London, Paris etc., 1833), 1113.
- 5 G. Poulett Scrope, 'Old English Domestic Architecture', *Quarterly Review*, xlv (July, 1831), 471-2 and 474.
- 6 This term is also used in a more limited sense, but it is as convenient as any to describe post-Gothic non-classical architecture, the term 'Arts and Crafts' having wider application.
- 7 T. Brittain-Catlin, *The English Parsonage in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Spire Books Ltd, 2008).
- 8 *Ibid.*, ch.1.
- 9 G.G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (London, 1879), 88.
- 10 A. Quiney, *John Loughborough Pearson* (Yale University Press, 1979), 87.
- 11 G. Worsley, *Architectural drawings of the Regency Period, 1790-1837* (André Deutsch, 1991).
- 12 J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (John Murray, 1981), Appendix B.
- 13 A. Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (Yale University Press, 1976), 28.
- 14 P. Davey, *Arts & Crafts Architecture* (The Architectural Press, 1980), 38.
- 15 Mentioned in the exalted company of Butterfield's Coalpit Heath and Carpenter's Brasted in *The Ecclesiologist*, vol. iv (July 1845).
- 16 P. Thompson, *William Butterfield* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 350, says his 'inconsistent' detailing was perhaps explained by having a busy office without close supervision of assistants.

- 17 N. Pevsner and J. Harris, *Lincolnshire*, Buildings of England series (Penguin Books, 1964), 59, and main text, 372. Pevsner, in his distaste for some Victorian architecture, sympathised with Goodhart-Rendel's purist approach.
- 18 Thompson, *Butterfield*, 85.
- 19 A.W.N. Pugin, *Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841), Lecture 1, 1.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 21 Thompson, *Butterfield*, 109.
- 22 Thompson, *Butterfield*, 355 and 358, the term being first used in *Building News* 12, (1865), 657.
- 23 M. Hyde and N. Pevsner, *Cumbria; Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness*, Buildings of England series (Yale University Press, 2010), 663.
- 24 Thompson, *Butterfield*, 83.
- 25 D. Verey and A. Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*: Buildings of England series (3rd edn, Yale University Press, 2002), 314.
- 26 R. Hill, *God's Architect* (Allen Lane, 2007), 298.
- 27 J. Newman and N. Pevsner, *Dorset*, Buildings of England series (Penguin Books, 1972), 356.
- 28 Hill, *God's Architect*, 356.
- 29 Verey and Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, 539.
- 30 Hill, *God's Architect*, 293.
- 31 For example, John Carter's *Views of Ancient Buildings in England*, (1786-93) and *The Ancient Architecture of England* (1795-1814), R. Lugar's and J.C. Loudon's early works (1805 and 1806), John Britton's *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* (1807 onwards) and Thomas Rickman's *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England* (1817). These pioneers of the Gothic style were writing quite some time before Pugin and his supposedly ground-breaking ideas.
- 32 T. Dearn, *Sketches in Architecture*, vol.2 (London, 1807).
- 33 R. Lugar, *Villa Architecture* (London, 1828), preface, ix.
- 34 J.B. Papworth, *Rural Residences* (London, 1818).
- 35 *The Ecclesiologist*, No. XXIII (June 1843).
- 36 G. Tyack, S. Bradley and N. Pevsner, *Berkshire*, Buildings of England series (Yale University Press, 2010), 608.
- 37 Hill, *God's Architect*, 291.
- 38 Pugin, *Apology*, 38.
- 39 Brittain-Catlin, *English Parsonage*, 250.
- 40 'I have tried to.... show how, in architecture, the ideals of Pugin and Ruskin and Morris grew from the Gothic Revival': Davey, *Arts & Crafts Architecture*, 6.
- 41 J. Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture* (John Murray, 1972).
- 42 H. Muthesius, *Das Englische Haus* (Wasmuth, Berlin, 1904, 1905).
- 43 Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 927.
- 44 Church and parsonage together make 'a feature in the villagescape to which the continent has no parallel': Nikolaus Pevsner, Foreword, in A. Savidge, *The Parsonage in England* (SPCK, 1964), xiii-xv.
- 45 Butterfield's smaller secular and estate houses were exceptional, though also influential.