

Conservation in 1993

A Review of Selected Cases

by

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By the end of 1993 the Society expects to have been consulted on over 7,000 cases during the year, several hundred encompassing total demolition. The examples described here are not necessarily the most important, or the most typical, but they are among the more interesting.

ROCHESTER CASTLE, ROCHESTER, KENT

In 1992 the Society was consulted on radical proposals to re-roof and re-fenestrate the Great Keep of Rochester Castle. The purpose was twofold, to conserve the internal surfaces now being eroded by the weather, and to permit more intensive use of the interior by visitors.

Rochester Castle keep is, as the listing schedule states, 'a building of exceptional significance'. It was constructed at the bridging point where Watling Street crosses the Medway and was one of the earliest Norman castles to be fortified in stone. Work began first on the bailey walls in 1087-9 under the direction of Gandolf, Bishop of Rochester, working for William II; the keep itself post-dated the granting of the Castle by Henry II to William of Corbeuil, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1127. Considerable building and repairs followed, most particularly in 1221-32, after the siege of 1216, and under Edward III and Richard II between 1367 and 1383. Further demolition and alterations occurred *c.* 1872. Constructed mainly in Kentish rag with tufa and chalk rubble, the keep now stands roofless and without its principal floors. It is one of a declining number of buildings which remain both scheduled and listed (Fig. 1).

The building is owned by Rochester City Council on whose behalf it is administered by English Heritage. The proposal to re-roof originated with the City. It has been approved in principle by English Heritage, but, at the time of writing, the details are still being discussed. If carried out, this expensive scheme will be funded entirely by the City Council.

The Technical Committee of the A.M.S. discussed the matter in some detail in October 1992 and attention was directed to a number of matters. Whilst noting that the proposed roof-pitches would be shallow, concern was expressed that they would be visible in long views of the castle, particularly where the sun catches the extensive glazing. Rochester is renowned for its long views, particularly from the motorway and from across the water. Although the roof will certainly be invisible close to, it will come more into view the further back the viewer is positioned.

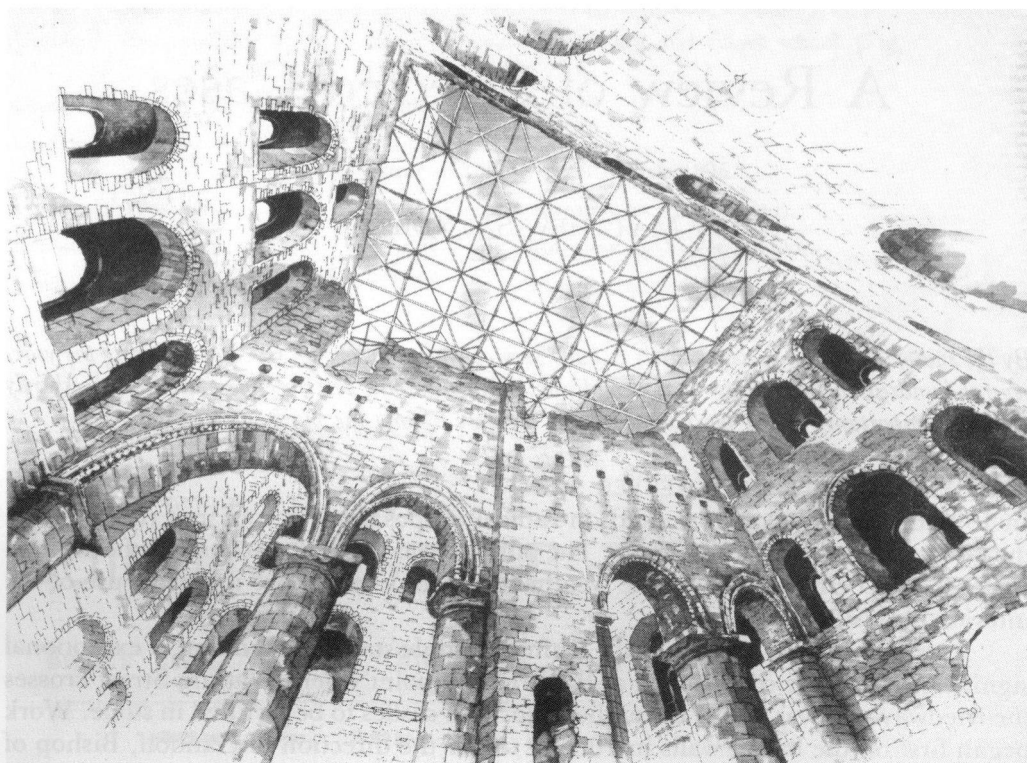


Fig. 1

Rochester Castle, Kent.

Perspective drawing of the roof of the keep

John Roland of Manning Clamp

Misgivings were also expressed over the proposed glazing of the window apertures. The present relationship between solid and void will be upset by the glazing, particularly where this catches the sun. We were concerned, too, that a false historical impression would be created, for a keep of *c.* 1130 would never have been glazed at the time of construction. Instead, we suggested the provision of shutters, if necessary with pierced holes to allow views and ventilation. This would avoid the problem of reflections from the glass and that of historical falsehood.

Whilst appreciating the philosophy which dictates that new features within an historic building should not 'sham their predecessors', the glazed aluminium space-frame proposed would have served as a massive roof light, again giving the visitor a misleading impression of how the interior of a keep might have looked. Dramatic top-lighting may have increased the visitor's enjoyment, but will it broaden his understanding? Members were also worried about the effect of the proposed changes on the existing micro-climate within the building.

Since the meeting of the Technical Committee, further technical studies have

been carried out and some of our misgivings answered. However, a year after the first consultation, a firm decision has still to be taken.

The bulk of the interior would remain open to the roof, but there are plans for new flooring at basement and upper ground-floor levels, instead of the present gangway leading from the bookshop.

The architects for the work are Manning Clamp.

CHRISTCHURCH, WATERLOO, MERSEYSIDE

Christchurch was designed by Paley, Austin & Paley of Lancaster and constructed in several stages between 1891 and 1899 (Fig. 2).

Edward Graham Paley worked in successive partnerships with Edmund Sharpe, perhaps best known for his 'pot churches' in terracotta between 1845 and 1854 and then, from 1868, with Hubert James Austin. The firm became Paley, Austin & Paley on the death of the father in 1895 and continued as such until the 1930s. The practice, more generally known as Paley & Austin, was responsible for a large number of ecclesiastical works and has been justifiably described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as 'the best firm of Gothicists in the north of England'. Christchurch, constructed in local red sandstone from Bootle and roofed in green Westmorland slates, is among their greatest works. It occupies the site of a previous church of 1840, built to serve the then developing Liverpool suburb of Waterloo. By the time the bulk of the church was dedicated in April 1893, the costs were estimated at £15,000. The nave itself had cost £7,000, of which £1,400 had been raised at a three-day bazaar in Bootle Town Hall. The construction of the tower, finished in 1899, was met entirely by James Barrow, of Beech Lawn, Waterloo.

The building is well summarized in the report by the Council for the Care of Churches, written by Donald Findlay:

The expansion of a salubrious residential suburb, the presence of a generous benefactor and the engagement of the most sensitive partnership of ecclesiastical architects in north west England, combines to produce a church of great dignity. But although there was clearly plenty of money available, Paley & Austin as usual did not allow their designs to be weakened by over-elaborate fussiness. The skilful massing of geometrical shapes in a plan which, though basically straightforward, has some unexpected features, is the key to the church's success.

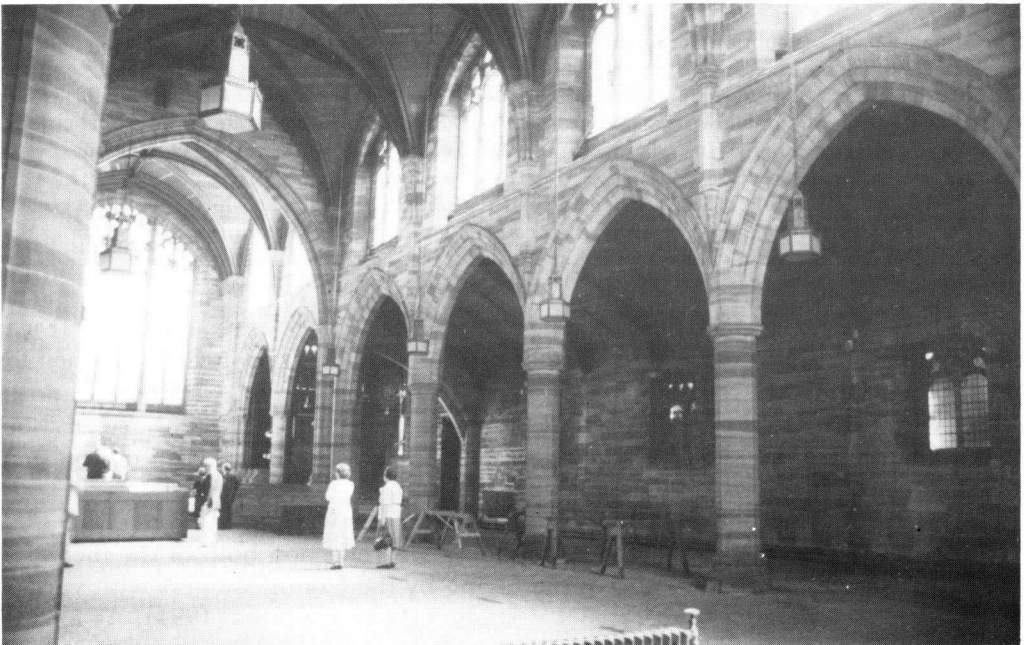
The style is the subtle blend of Perpendicular and Arts and Crafts at which this firm excelled. It is perhaps a northern equivalent of Sedding rather than of Bodley. Reminiscent of Sedding, too, are the broad east and west windows with complicated tracery incorporating both flowing motifs and panels.

Christchurch has faced an uncertain future for twelve years and more. It was declared redundant in the early 1980s, but its quality was such that the Council for the Care of Churches recommended vesting in the Redundant Churches Fund in 1981, whilst the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches—the statutory advisors to the Church Commissioners—have recommended in similar vein on no less than five occasions since 1982.

In 1981, at the time of closure, the cost of repairs was put at around £20,000. In 1993, the figure of £750,000 is being quoted, a reflection both of the increased vandalism and of decay, but also of the toying by the Commissioners with various alternative uses ranging from cable TV studio (1984) to offices (1991). As long as



Fig. 2
Christchurch, Waterloo, Merseyside
Saba Bannatyne



there was a prospect of getting the building off their hands, the option of vesting in the Fund, pressed upon the Commissioners by the C.C.C., the Advisory Board, the A.M.S. and the Victorian Society, was shunned. When the church entered its second decade of disuse, Commissioners decided, in 1993, to publish a Draft Redundancy Scheme providing for its total demolition.

At the time of writing, a firm decision has yet to be taken but we remain very confident that the Secretary of State will exercise his right to call a non-statutory public inquiry in light of the strong objections from the Advisory Board, the National Amenity Societies, including the A.M.S., and the local authority (Sefton).

Christchurch is expressive of a particular problem facing the Church Commissioners, who argue that their base has been seriously eroded by the 1987 Stock Market crash. The latest settlement for the Redundant Churches Fund was far less generous than the Fund estimated was necessary to ensure that all its existing churches—about 300 in number—are put into good repair and to allow it to be as generous on new acquisitions as it has been in earlier years. This increased financial stringency is persuading the Commissioners against the vesting in the Fund of substantial nineteenth-century churches, a policy that has led not only to a demolition scheme for Christchurch, but another for St Mark's, Leicester, the acknowledged masterpiece of the otherwise rather pedestrian architect Ewan Christian. Not that vestings have ceased. Between January and October 1993, the Commissioners announced that it was passing eight churches to the care of the Fund, including one of 1863 by Paley, at Blawith in Cumbria.

If a public inquiry is convened the A.M.S. will present strong evidence against destruction. The compilation of this account has drawn heavily upon the report on the church compiled by the Council for the Care of Churches.

BARN, REAR OF 47 CHURCH LANE, GOMERSAL, WEST YORKSHIRE

This barn, constructed in the eighteenth century with a 'polite' eye to symmetrical balance, is one of the few barns left in the area not yet converted to housing. It is listed in its own right (Fig. 3a).

At present it is used as a garage and store in connection with an adjacent house. The occupants of the latter, who claim to have owned the barn for three generations, wish to provide a residential unit for themselves within its shell. Plans were drawn up by Andrew Goodall of Martin Walsh Associates. It is proposed that all existing openings to the west be retained, although the wagon doors give way to a glazed screen, the oculi shutters removed and French windows substituted for the matching ledged-and-braced doors.

Three successive schemes have been prepared and the most radical differences are shown on the changes to the rear, or east, elevation. The first proposal, which was not approved by the A.M.S. Technical Committee, eventually became the third, minimalist, proposal, changing only the door and adding steps. All these proposals have been refused consent by Kirklees Council, although only the third, the most self-effacing solution, was formally turned down. The local authority has suggested that the building be used for purposes other than residential (Figs 3b and 3c).

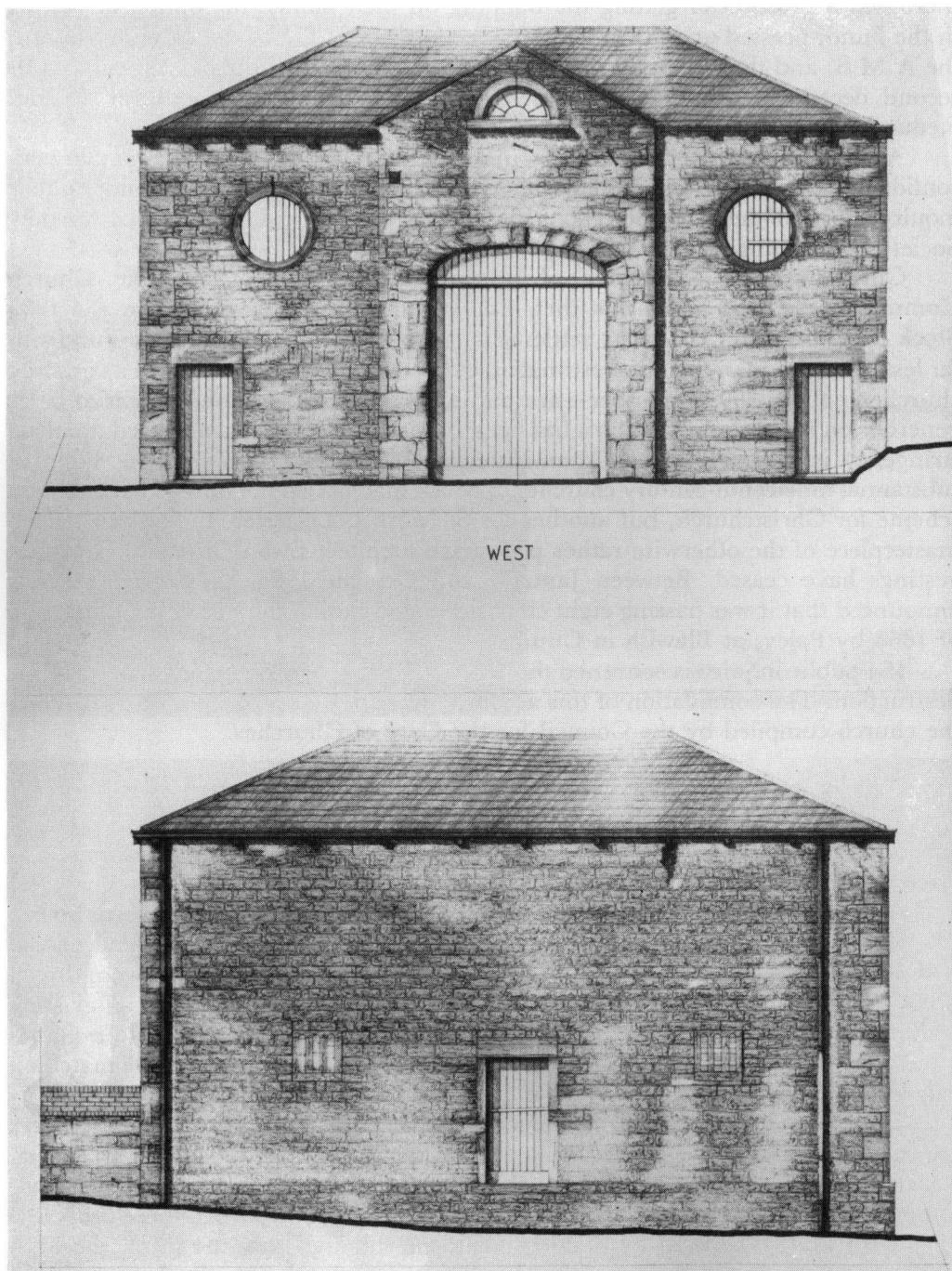


Fig. 3a
Barn at Gomersal, West Yorkshire. Present condition

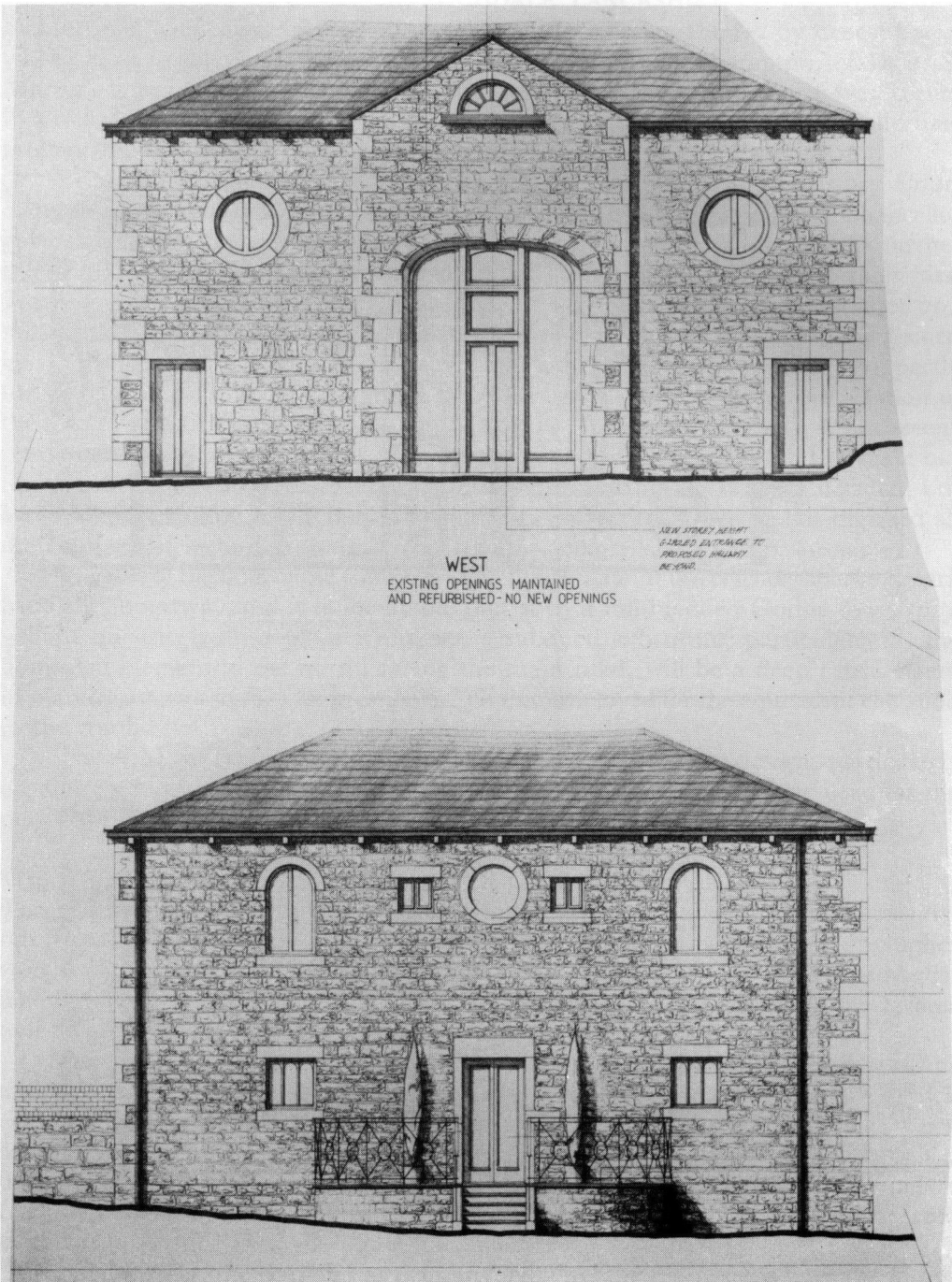


Fig. 3b
Barn at Gomersal, West Yorkshire. First conversion scheme

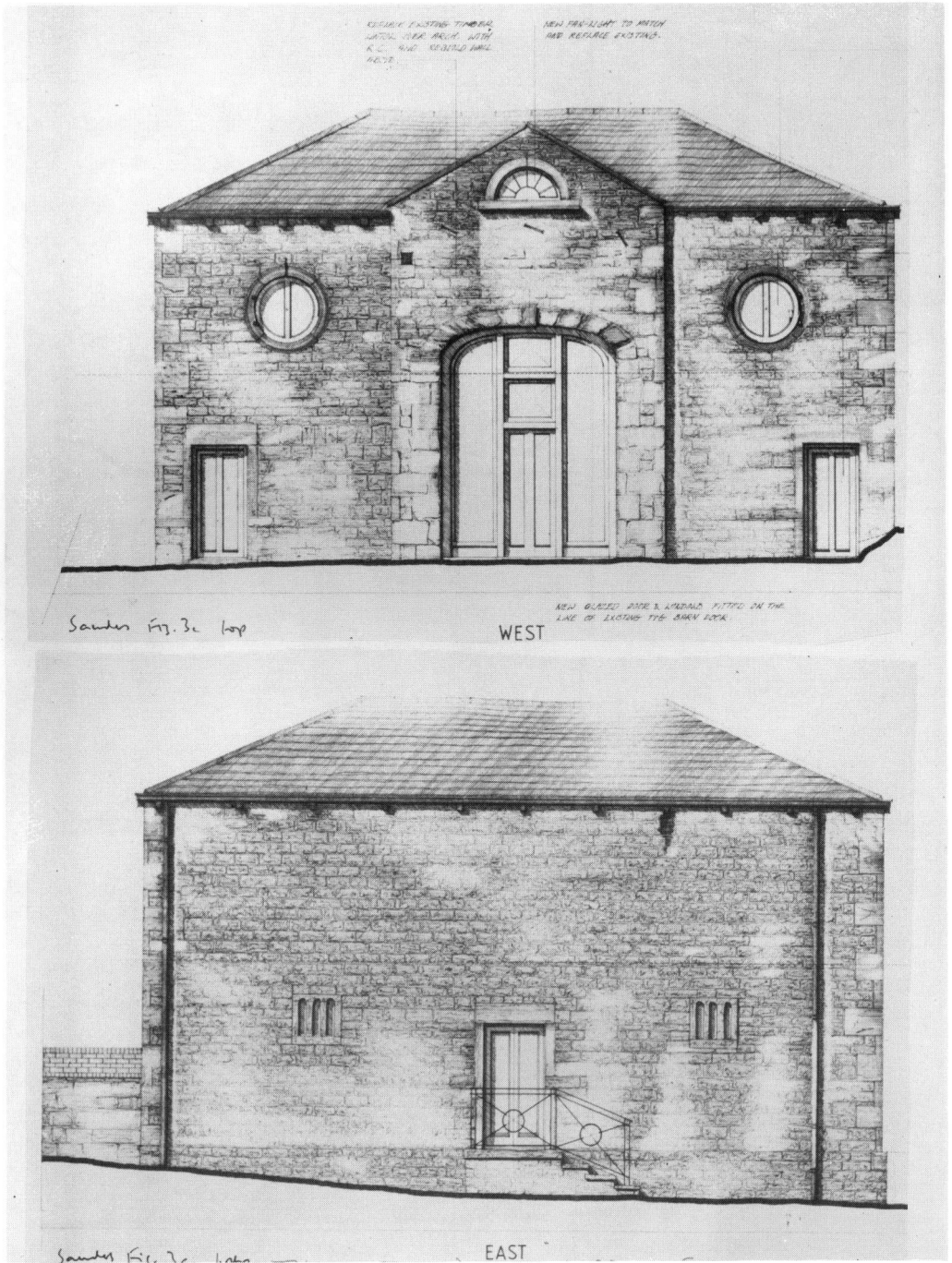


Fig. 3c
Barn at Gomersal, West Yorkshire. Third conversion scheme

ST MARTIN'S, CASTLETON MOOR, ROCHDALE, LANCASHIRE

St Martin's, Manchester Road, Castleton, was designed in 1860–2 by Ernest Bates, whose most visible work is perhaps the Town Hall, Wolverhampton, of 1869. St Martin's is best known for its splendid tower and steeple, built at the north-west corner in a rich, late thirteenth-century style, complete with canopied statuary on alternate faces of the octagonal broach-spire (Fig. 4).

Brian Blayney, A.R.I.B.A., represented the Society at a Consistory Court convened to consider a proposal to destroy the building in its entirety. The Chancellor gave permission for the removal of the body of the church, but sought further information on the condition of the tower and spire before agreeing to their loss. Fortunately, it now seems highly likely that the tower and spire will be retained and incorporated into a new church. It is hoped to retain as much as possible of the stained glass. Two bays of the internal arcade will also be kept, partly for sentimental, partly for structural, reasons in the light of the buttressing role it performs in relation to the tower. The architect, Brian Slater of Thomas Worthington & Sons, Manchester, prepared these drawings, in his own words as 'an Aunt Sally in order to tease out the comments of consultees'. The planning and massing are broadly decided, but some of the detailing is still only schematically portrayed. Once he has digested all the comments, including those of the A.M.S., firmer plans will be prepared.

The loss of the bulk of the church is very unfortunate. It is a considerable landmark from the motorway and it is inevitable that such a full-blooded Gothic town spire will sit uneasily with a plainer and more subdued substitute, particularly as the dominant element to the north, facing the main road, will be a deep catslide roof in marked contrast to the Commissioners' Gothic employed for the equivalent elevation to the south.

The A.M.S. Technical Committee has commented on the design, particularly on the relationship between the new and old and the stylistic language used for the new envelope.

THE WILLOWS, WILLOW STREET, LLANGOLLEN, CLWYD

The Willows is a house of Gothick design, said to have eighteenth-century origins, but first shown on the Tithe Map of 1844. It was once the home of Elizabeth Hughes who, with her sister Jane, served the Ladies of Llangollen from about 1810 onwards. The building retains a plaque reading 'J S T 1844', but this relates to the former nail factory behind.

The front elevation is of three storeys and twin gabled, with end pilaster-strips and a plinth. There are cusped barge-boards, with faience, and three light Gothick casement windows. The tall—and grand—porch, in a similar style, with open-work detailing and pendant, appears to be later nineteenth century, although very much in character. The pedimented and consoled door surround within the porch is in late Georgian Classical. The Gothick theme is carried on inside the house, most notably in the ogee arch-head at the top of the stairs (Figs 5a and 5b).

During 1993, the Society has been involved in long discussions over the future of the building, threatened by a road-widening scheme, in order to gain access to a development site, and has mounted a detailed argument in favour of retention.

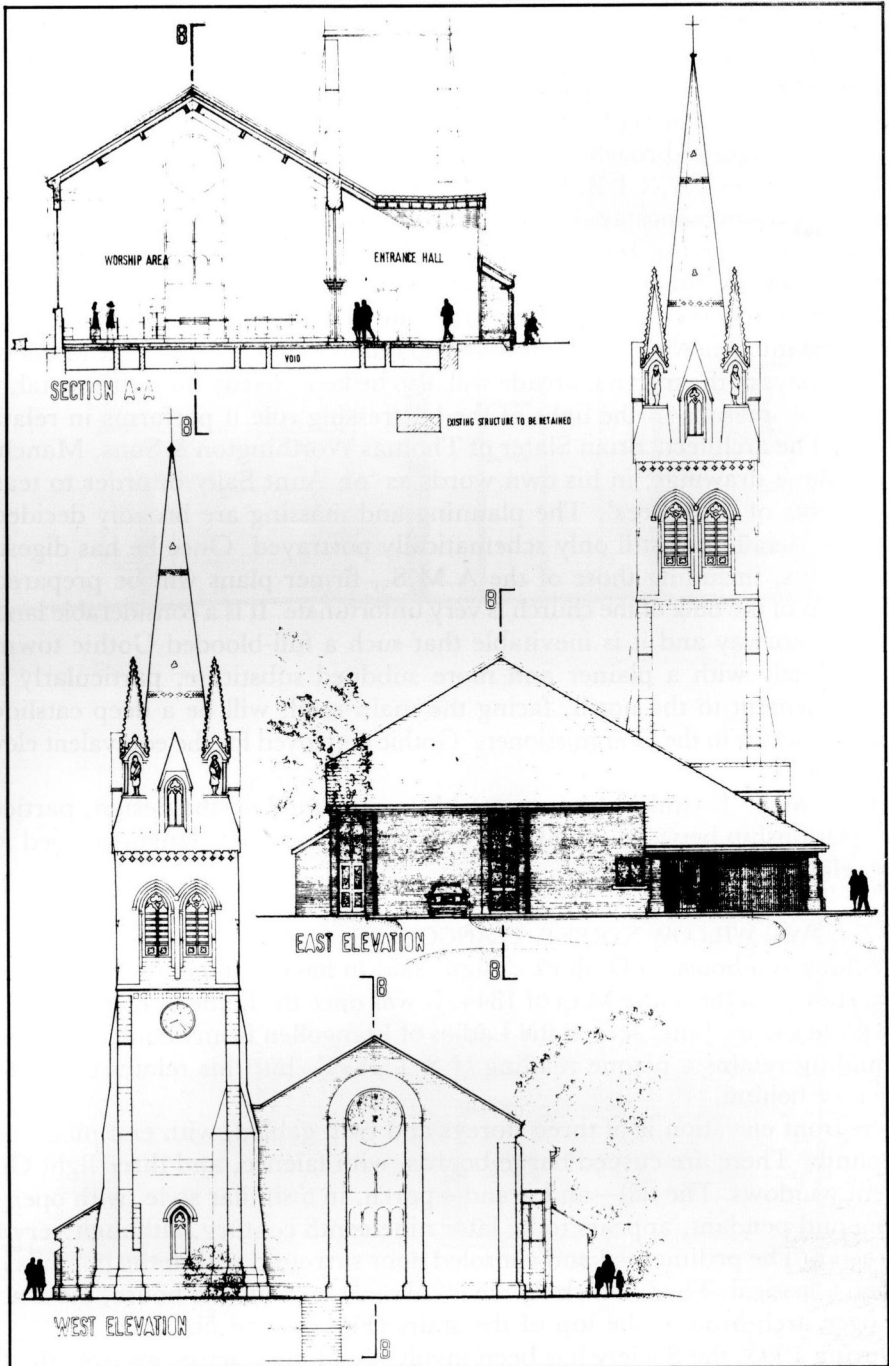


Fig. 4 (East and West Elevations)
 St Martin's Church, Castleton Moor, Rochdale
 Brian Slater, Thomas Worthington & Sons

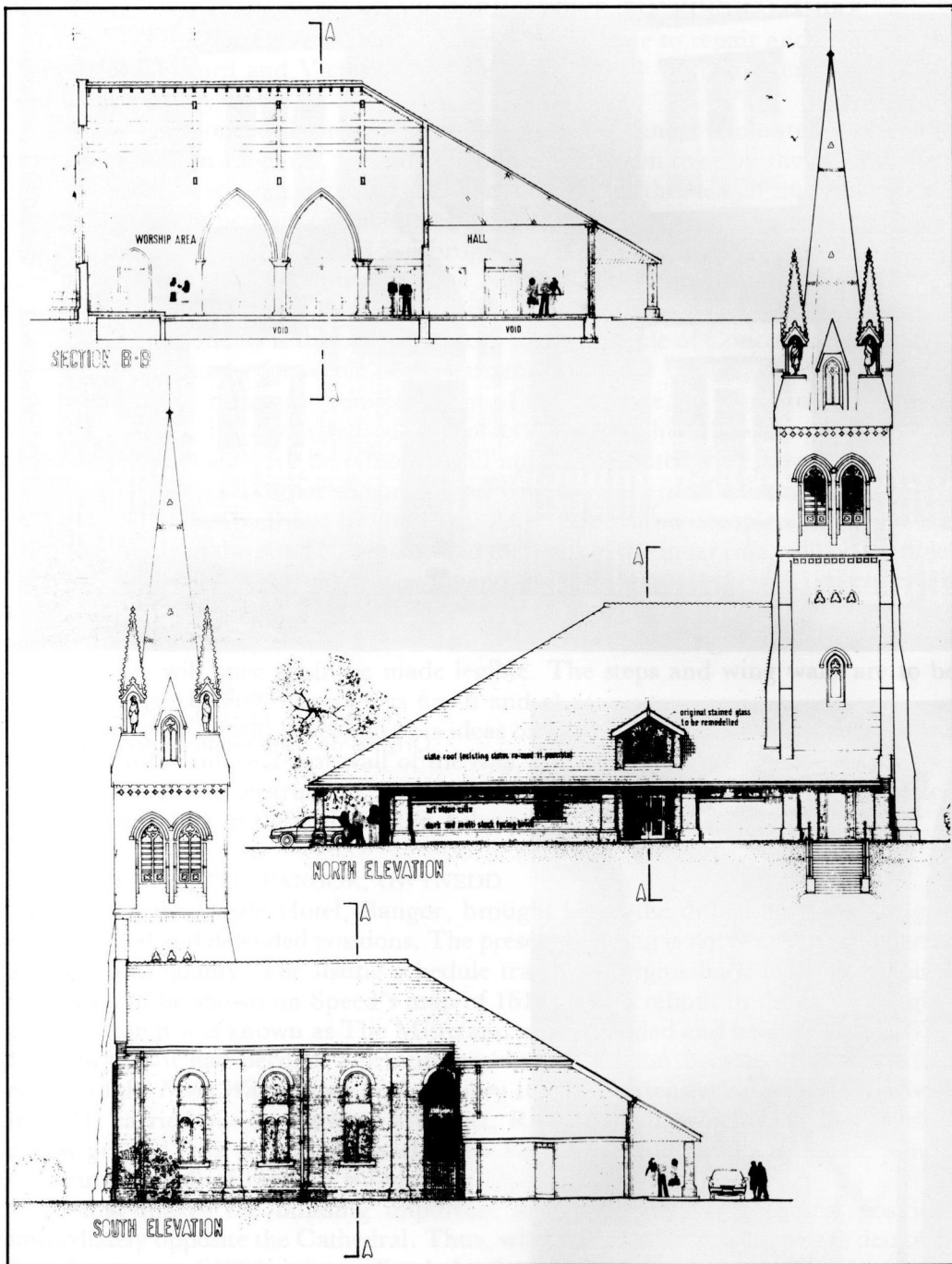




Fig. 5a
The Willows, Llangollen, Clwyd.
Original doorcase within a later porch

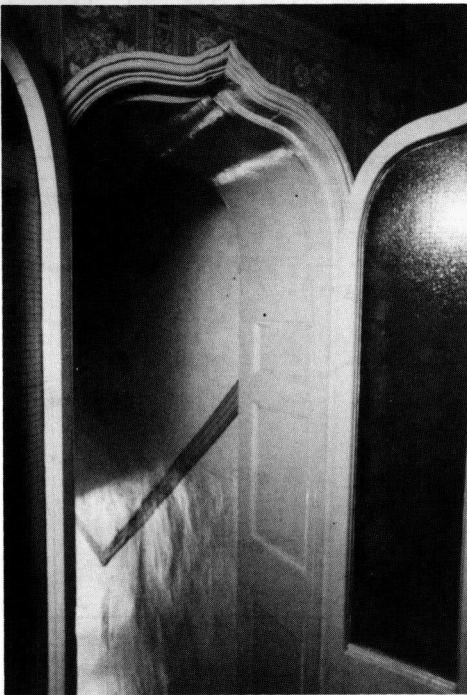


Fig. 5b
The Willows, Llangollen, Clwyd. Ogee arch at the
top of the stairs

THE TEMPLE OF CONCORD AND VICTORY, STOWE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

During 1993 the Society was able to applaud the scheme to repair and reinstate the Temple of Concord and Victory at Stowe, designed by William Kent (died 1748) and completed by Borra in 1764.

Stowe is—along with Stourhead in Wiltshire—the most celebrated eighteenth-century garden in England. In 1923 the house was taken over by the school which has, in recent years, felt increasingly overwhelmed by the task of maintaining the substantial and sometimes crumbling monuments of the gardens, designed by names as illustrious as Kent, Gibbs and Vanbrugh, working for Lord Cobham. A few years ago the gardens were taken over by the National Trust which has now embarked on a multi-million pound scheme to repair and reinstate them. One of the most ambitious components is the on-going work to the Temple of Concord and Victory. The architects, as the for whole of the gardens, are Peter Inskip and Peter Jenkins.

The project entails the reinstatement of the peristyle, so ignominiously raided by Sir Robert Lorimer, who reused most of its columns in his school chapel of 1927-8. The Ionic columns which he removed will not be reinstated, but new examples cut to take their place. In order to correspond with the pattern of existing columns the size of the 'drums' will not be uniform. After removal, a complete circuit of the building, between the outer colonnade and the walls of the inner *cella*, will be possible. The six missing statues on the two pediments are to be reinstated, with consequential repairs to the carving in the tympanum where the relief is by Scheemakers. The inscription on the entablature, *Concordiae et Victoriae*, celebrating the end of the Seven Years' War, will once again be made legible. The steps and wing walls are to be rebuilt to their original form (Figs 6a, b and c).

Peter Inskip is still developing his ideas on the reconstruction of the form of the aedicule on the internal east wall of the *cella*. Fig. 6b shows the Section as it exists and the intended reconstruction. Research is greatly helped by the survival of detailed building accounts in the Huntington Library.

THE CASTLE HOTEL, BANGOR, GWYNEDD

The case of the Castle Hotel, Bangor, brought home the difficulties in coming to easily argued and defended positions. The present building is not of any great external architectural quality. The listing schedule traces its origins back to 1691 although it appears to be shown on Speed's map of 1610. It was rebuilt in the late Georgian period when it was known as The Mitre and was expanded and heightened in 1834. Prior to that it had become a printing works where John Broster printed the first edition of the *North Wales Gazette* on 5 January 1808. An extensive remodelling followed in 1931, carried out by the local architect, Richard Hall, which gave the building a new ground floor and a substantial new ballroom, built over a dramatic plinth-cum-curtain-wall of random rubble (Fig. 7).

What makes the building important architecturally is its critical position, immediately opposite the Cathedral. Thus, when application was lodged to demolish it in the course of 1993, it immediately became clear that this was to be a significant case. When faced with such an application the A.M.S. will look critically at the existing building and subsequently and separately at any plans for redevelopment.

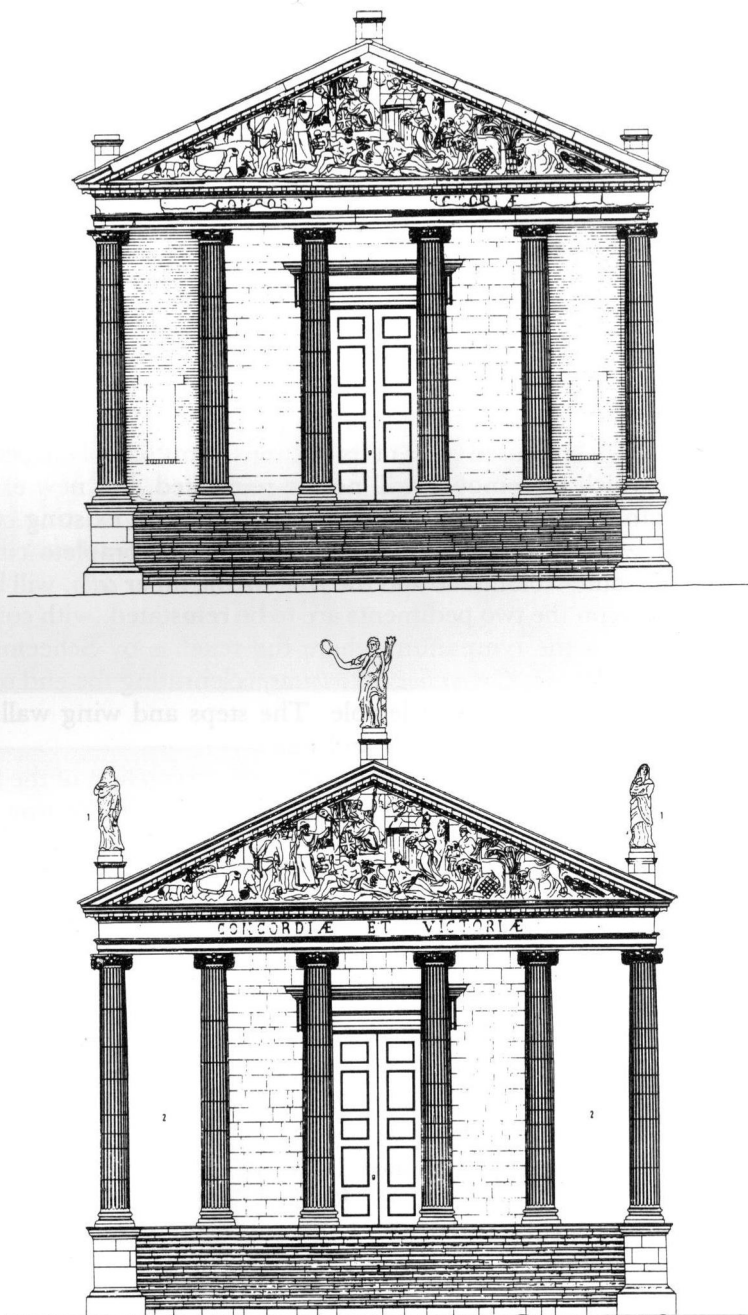


Fig. 6a
Temple of Concord and Victory, Stowe.
Existing east elevation and as proposed
Peter Inskip and Peter Jenkins Architects

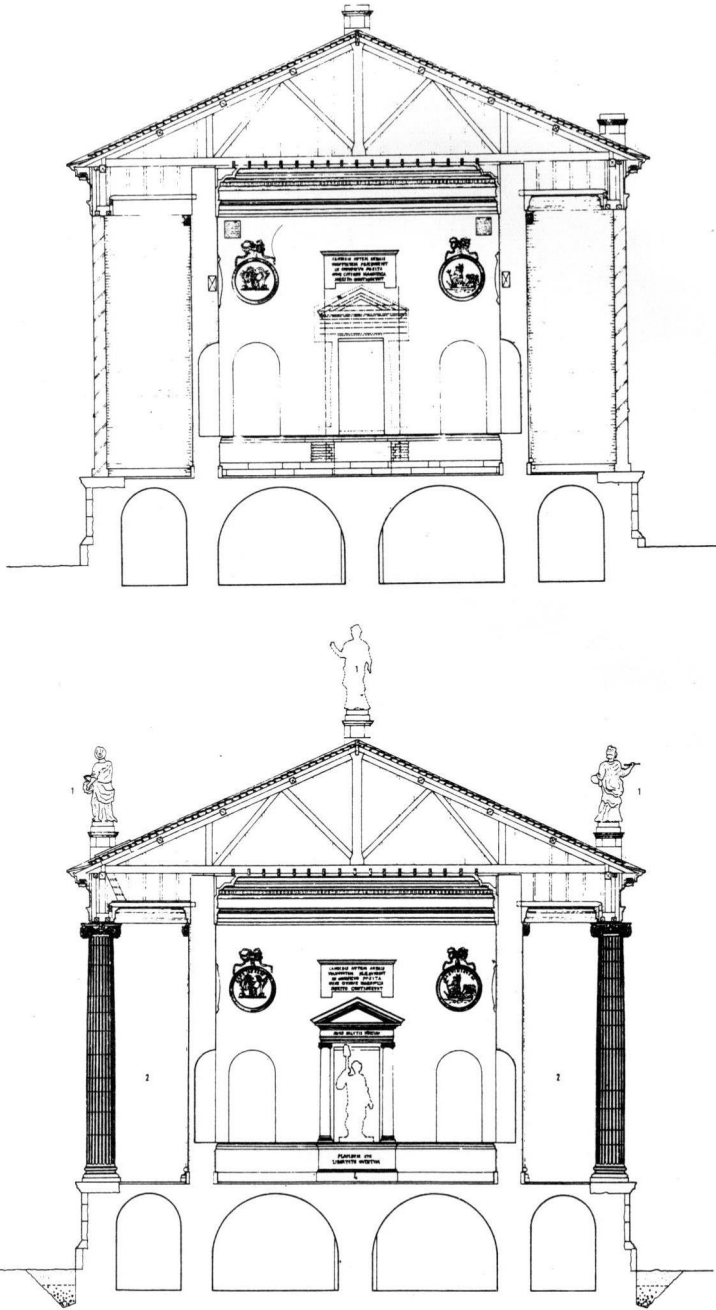


Fig. 6b
Temple of Concord and Victory, Stowe.
Existing section and as proposed
Peter Inskip and Peter Jenkins Architects

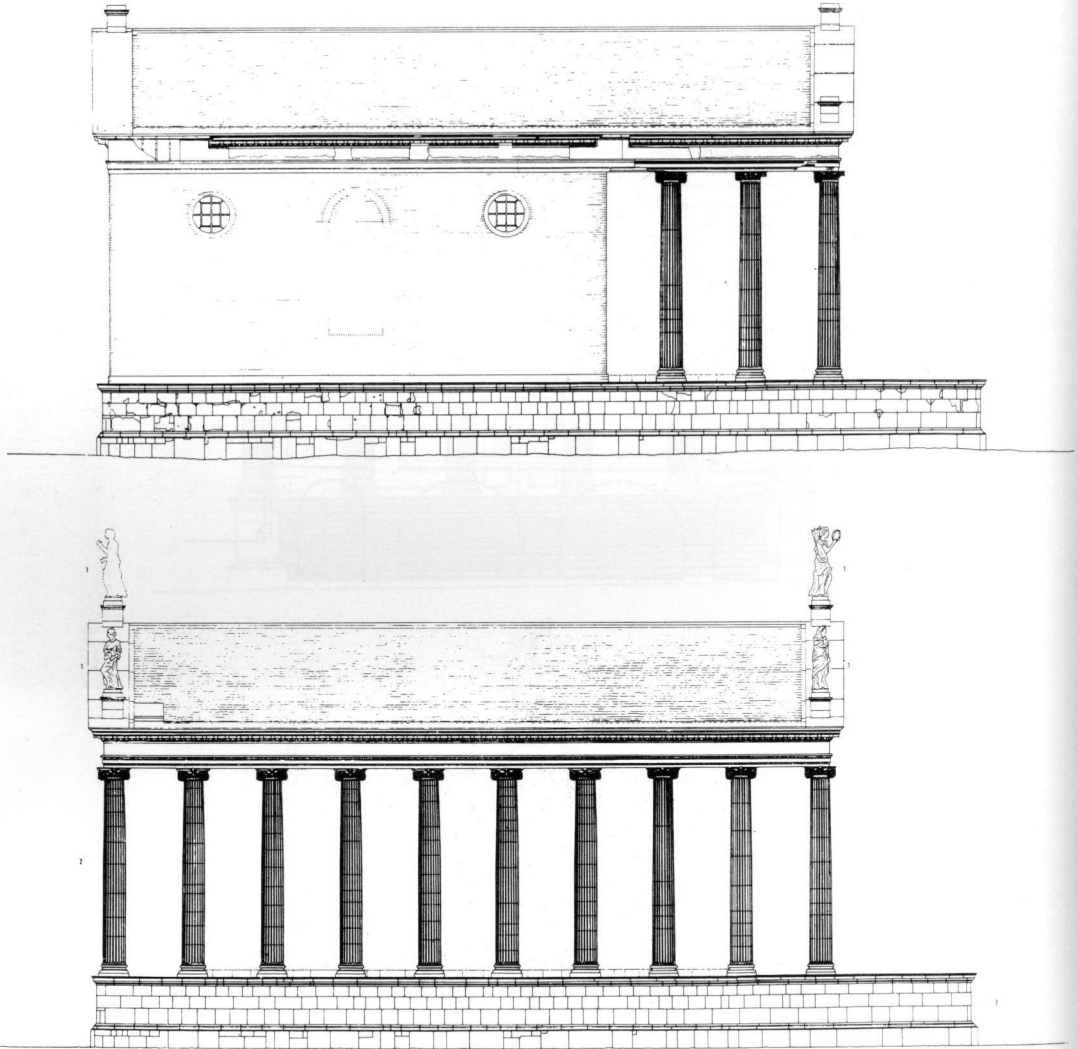


Fig. 6c

Temple of Concord and Victory, Stowe. Existing south elevation and as proposed
Peter Inskip and Peter Jenkins Architects

In order to explore the matter further we commissioned Giles Quarme, an architect based in London with considerable experience in the conversion of historic buildings, to visit the town and comment on the practicalities of repair and conversion. His visit was greatly helped on site by conversations with interested parties, including Bangor Civic Society.

He found a building, in a lamentable condition, which had suffered considerable alterations. It was also clear, however, that there was a possibility that considerable early remains were hidden inside. We thus contacted the Royal Commission on



Fig. 7
Castle Hotel, Bangor, Gwynedd

Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and they have agreed to carry out a full survey.

We then gave critical attention to the projected redevelopment, which provided a design combining Post-Modern with Neo-Vernacular, over a new sloping random-rubble curtain wall. The elevation facing the Cathedral would have had exits for a substantial multi-storey car park and for goods vehicles servicing the shops. The drawings supplied to the Society were never other than schematic but they were sufficient to instil a considerable sense of alarm. It seemed unworthy of a site that was close to the Cathedral, centrally placed, and visible in most long-distance views of Bangor. We felt this was a clear instance where the Royal Fine Arts Commission should be brought in, and after we had contacted them that Commission did request details from the local authority, Arfon, so that it might offer a critique.

Local opinion was fully persuaded that Arfon would press on and grant consent, and so we were pleasantly surprised to discover that pressure was such that, at the time of writing, consent has been refused, not just for demolition but also for redevelopment. Wounds are no doubt being nursed in preparation for a return match, but at least any subsequent decision should take place in light of clear information about the quality of the existing building and more easily understandable drawings for any redevelopment.



Fig. 8a
Waxham Great Barn, North Norfolk. The partially-
collapsed barn, October 1987
Anthony Rossi



Fig. 8b
Waxham Great Barn, North Norfolk. The restored barn, October 1993
Anthony Rossi

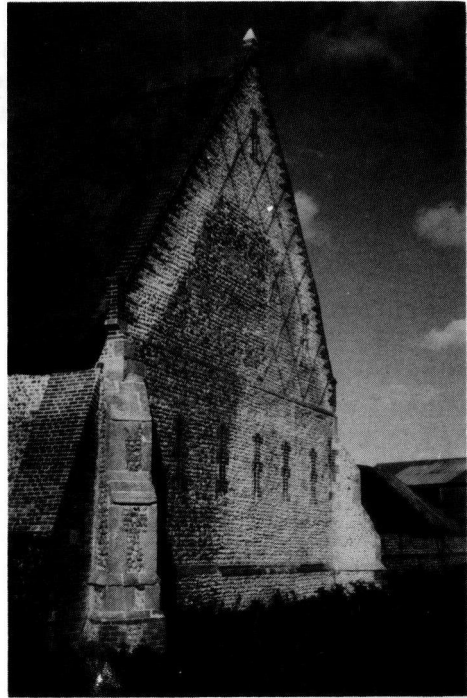


Fig. 8c
Waxham Great Barn, North Norfolk. The restored
gable, October 1993
Anthony Rossi

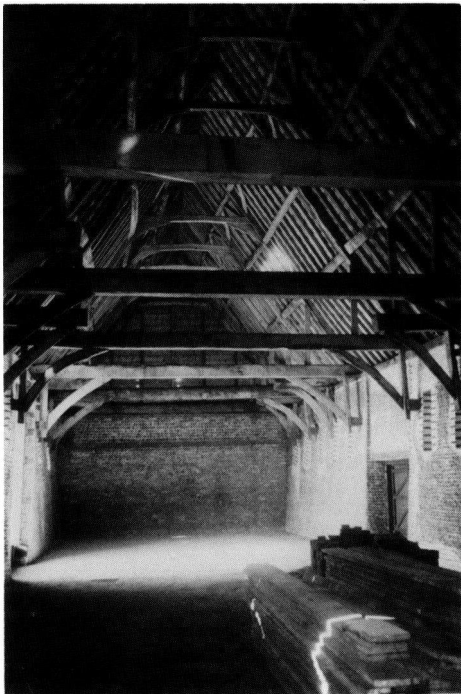


Fig. 8d
Waxham Great Barn, North Norfolk. The exterior
of the restored barn, October 1993
Anthony Rossi

WAXHAM GREAT BARN, NORTH NORFOLK

The long saga of Waxham Great Barn was brought to a happy conclusion in 1993 by the completion of repairs by the Society's Honorary Architect, Anthony Rossi, R.I.B.A., working for Norfolk County Council.

The barn, listed Grade I and of immense size, twenty-eight feet wide and more than 176 feet long, had been neglected for a considerable period until it was the subject of a Compulsory Purchase Order in 1990 by Norfolk County Council. The illustrations show the state of collapse before work began, reinstatement of the partly-collapsed gable and the magnificent internal trusses (Figs 8a, b, c and d).

ST HELEN'S BISHOPSGATE, CITY OF LONDON

One of the most publicized cases of 1993 was the Consistory Court convened to consider a substantial number of changes to the medieval church of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, in the City of London. St Helen's suffered very considerable damage as a result of the I.R.A. bomb in St Mary Axe in 1987. Most of the glass was blown out, Nicholas Stone's chaste monument to Sir Julius Caesar was badly smashed, and the roof was lifted and damaged. The parish brought in Quinlan Terry to carry out the repairs and to effect radical change. This involved the introduction of a uniform floor-level which, in turn, required the resiting of many of the monuments, the construction



Fig. 9

St Helen's, Bishopsgate. The reredos

of two new galleries at the western end, one of them to take the organ resited from the south transept, and the complete dismantling of the Tractarian East End introduced, c.1890, by J.L. Pearson. As there was already a considerable number of organizations marshalled to present the conservation case, particularly the London Division of English Heritage, the S.P.A.B. and the Victorian Society, the A.M.S. lodged written representations only. We were concerned over a number of aspects, particularly the proposed ignominious treatment of the reredos (Fig. 9) introduced, if not actually designed, by Pearson, which was to be resited behind the organ in the new gallery. The Chancellor found in favour of nearly all the changes, except the proposal to discard the reredos.

ST MARGARET'S, STOVEN, SUFFOLK

The church at Stoven received a lukewarm press in Pevsner, Munro Cautley and in D.P. Mortlock's *Popular Guide to Suffolk Churches*. Pevsner calls it 'depressing' and 'ignorant'. It was no doubt armed with such opinion that the Church Commissioners felt that a proposal to demolish would meet with little resistance, although the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches, their statutory advisers, had previously recommended on four occasions that the building ought to go to the Redundant Churches Fund. They were of this view because Stoven appears to be a complete rebuild, except for the obviously Norman south doorway. However, it became clear, after a full archaeological assessment in 1991, that it was more of a re-cladding than a rebuilding and that much original Romanesque fabric remained (Figs 10a and b). The architect for the recasting in 1849-50 is unknown (although Chantrell, who worked nearby, is a possible candidate) but, whoever was responsible, St Margaret's remains an example, rare in Suffolk, of Neo-Norman or Romanesque revival, and retains a powerful sense of rural Victorian religiosity.

The Society made detailed and strong representations against demolition. At the time of writing there seems a considerable chance that the building will be reprieved. In the course of the controversy over its fate it has been upgraded from Grade II to II*.

CHRISTCHURCH, DONCASTER, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Christchurch, built 1827-9 to the design of William Hurst, has a noble, if attenuated, Gothic interior; its tower and spire, partly remodelled in this century, act as a prominent local landmark. We are in close contact with the local civic society and the local authority, both of which are trying to find alternatives to demolition, but unless a new use can be found the Church Commissioners may well recommend demolition (Figs 11a and b).

ASKE HALL, NORTH YORKSHIRE

If anyone imagines that alterations to country houses are a thing of the past then our casework often denies it. In the course of 1992 we were consulted about a proposal, by Martin Stancliffe Architects, to carry out works of remodelling and reinstatement at Aske Hall, the property of the Marquess of Zetland. The main south elevation had been recast in the 1960s by Claud Phillimore and its appearance after his work is shown on the Survey. Stancliffe proposed to remove his solid porch and provide



Fig. 10a
St Margaret's, Stoven, Suffolk, from the south, showing the Norman doorway



Fig. 10b
St Margaret's, Stoven, Suffolk. The interior



Fig. 11a
Christchurch, Doncaster, South Yorkshire. The tower
and spire



Fig. 11b
Christchurch, Doncaster, South Yorkshire. The interior

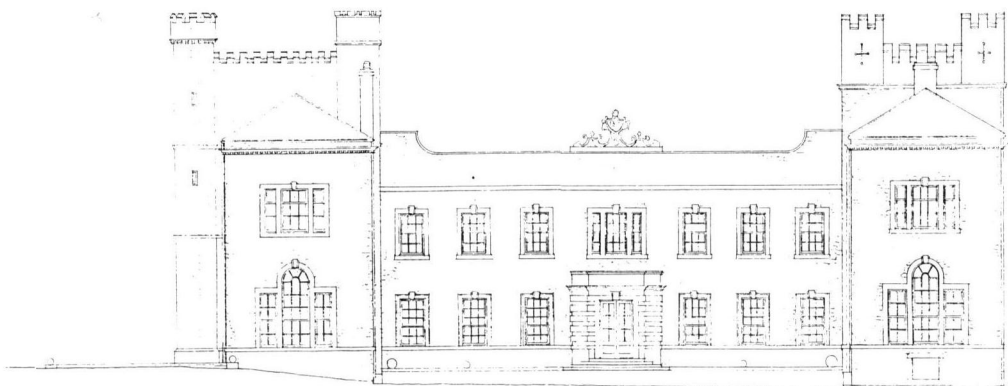


Fig. 12a

Aske Hall, Richmond, North Yorkshire. The existing south-west elevation
Martin Stancliffe Architects



Fig. 12b

Aske Hall, Richmond, North Yorkshire. The proposed south-west elevation
Martin Stancliffe Architects

a new door surround with a cleft pediment, replace the tripartite window above with one of the same dimensions as its neighbours, and reinstate, on the roofline, the cartouche moved to the rear of the house by Phillimore. The latter's schematized Venetian windows on the two pavilion towers were also to be reduced in height to the correct proportions and given a new stone surround of half-attached Doric columns and entablature. We considered the scheme acceptable. It is understood that the work has gone ahead but this has not been under the supervision of Martin Stancliffe (Figs 12a and b).

12 QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON WC1 (LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN)

12 Queen Square, Holborn, is a highly individual design of 1906 by Eustace Frere. It was built as a convent, St John's House, but has in recent years passed into university use.



Fig. 13a
12 Queen Square, Holborn

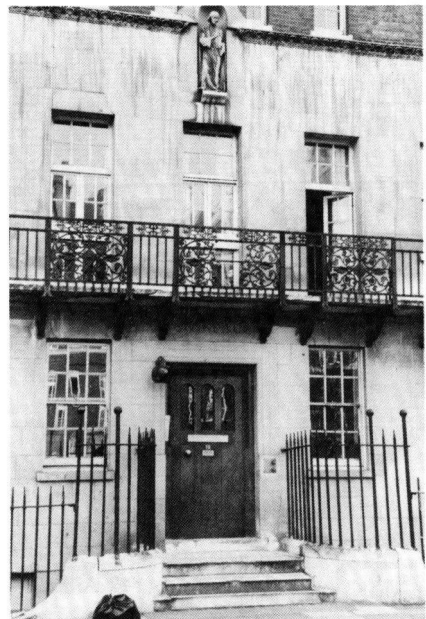


Fig. 13b
12 Queen Square, Holborn



Fig. 14a
42 Allhallowgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire
Robert Bridges



Fig. 14b
42 Allhallowgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire
Robert Bridges

The upper floors are severely cell-like, as one would expect from the use but the ground and first storeys display the Arts and Crafts Movement at its subtlest, again as one might expect just a few yards from the headquarters of The Art Workers' Guild. The first two storeys are faced in Portland stone, as opposed to the brick above, and are demarcated further by a string course, two concluding armorial quatrefoils and, in the centre, a statue of St John. The first-floor balcony concentrates attention on the central three bays, the central bay stressed by the pulling apart and slight widening of the floral motif. The entrance beneath, is marked by a simple, and original, door with three lancet vision panels, two swan-necked quadrants at the base of the railings and two pairs of railings rising higher than the others, like staffs of office (Figs 13 a and b).

We strongly resisted an application to demolish and the ground and first floors are now to be retained in the projected redevelopment.

42 ALLHALLOWGATE, RIPON, NORTH YORKS

Many of the cases referred to the Society raise the question of how to infill sites within historic townscapes. One such is the site currently occupied by a lean-to in Allhallowgate, Ripon. It lies adjacent to a terrace of varied eighteenth-century properties. The applicant's architect, Robert Bridges, decided to make the new house adopt the form of a crosswing, gable-end to the street, in the manner of the nineteenth-century unit shown further towards the viewer in the sketch. We had no objection to this but Harrogate Council refused consent. They would have preferred that any new house offered its long elevation to the street in the manner of the eighteenth-century neighbours. They also had misgivings about the detailing on which we also commented (Figs 14a and 14b).

