

The Society's Casework in 1994

Review of Selected Cases

by

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As a National Amenity Society, the Ancient Monuments Society has by law to be informed of all applications in England and Wales for listed building consent where there is any degree of demolition. In any one year that will involve between 6,000 and 7,000 consultations, of which some 300 will encompass total demolition.

The following represents just a sample in which the emphasis given to churches is perhaps no bad thing in the first full year in which the A.M.S. has provided the secretariat and office for The Friends of Friendless Churches.

ST ERKENWALD'S CHURCH, SOUTHEND ON SEA, ESSEX

Sir Walter Tapper (1861–1935) was appointed Surveyor to Westminster Abbey in 1928, a fitting accolade for a man who had made his reputation largely in church design, the final recognition being the knighthood he received in the year of his death. His single most powerful design was St Erkenwald's (Figs. 1 and 2) which at the time of writing faces almost certain demolition.

St Erkenwald's potency rests in its combination of great height and sheer, largely unadorned, brick shell. There are precedents for such severity in Gothic and Renaissance Italy and there, as here, the effect was partly the result of a meagre budget. The photographs, taken from Nicholson and Spooner's *Recent English Ecclesiastical Architecture* of 1912, show the exterior before the addition of a further two bays and a new west front which introduced some decoration in the form of a wheel window and two coronae in stone on top of each tower-pier. But the overall impression remains one of a great Gothic vessel, embodying the derivation of 'nave' from *navis*-ship'.

The interior is the softer for the use of plaster surfaces and stone trim but still the eye is made to soar upwards as well as eastward. The ornamental plasterwork on the barrel vault was by Laurence Turner whilst the hangings, now removed, were by Watts and Co. The electric light fittings came from the great Bainbridge Reynolds.

The church is now a sorry spectacle, derelict after years of redundancy, its roof partly burned off (although the flèche remains in store). At the time of its closure



Fig. 1

St Erkenwald, Southend on Sea. View from south-east, 1912



Fig. 2
St Erkenwald, Southend on Sea. The choir, looking east, 1912



Fig. 3
St George's, Glascote. North elevation as existing
Twentyman, Percy and Partners



Fig. 4
St George's, Glascote. North elevation as proposed
Twentyman, Percy and Partners

well over a decade ago, it was unlisted. Now it lies in the second highest category of II*, but that growing appreciation has been in inverse proportion to the chances of its surviving. The lack of listing ruled out vesting in the Redundant Churches Fund (now the Churches Conservation Trust) and despite plans for communal use the building was sold and is now owned by a local builder.

Early in 1994 matters were brought to a head by an application to demolish which the A.M.S. strongly opposed. Several conversations followed with the builder's representative and the local Building Preservation Trust, which had prepared a scheme for joint use as a Greek Orthodox Church and ballroom. Southend Council, despairing of a solution, agreed to demolition and English Heritage recommended against a call-in by the Secretary of State. As we go to press we are sorry to report that listed building consent for total demolition has been granted.

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASCOTE, STAFFORDSHIRE (formerly WARWICKSHIRE)

Glascote was designed in 1880 by Basil Champneys (1842–1935) into whose office, the 21 year old Walter Tapper (see above) was to be articulated two years later. It is a concentrated and individual design, more interesting externally than internally.

In August we were told of a scheme by Twentyman, Percy and Partners (job architect: George Sidebotham A.R.I.B.A.), to reorientate the interior and build a new sanctuary which in external appearance looked like a new triple-gabled aisle (Figs. 3 and 4). The existing tracery was to be re-sited. We expressed some concern over the projected rebuilding of the porch but in general the scheme is one of the few in the course of the year to have displayed a clear understanding of how the original architect might have responded to the brief had he been presented with it.

However, the scheme fell foul of parking regulations and has been refused permission on those grounds. An Appeal is expected.

CROWE HALL, STUTTON, SUFFOLK

The brief for the extension of Crowe Hall (Figs. 5 and 6) was similar to that at



Fig. 5
Crowe Hall,
Stutton.
South elevation
as existing

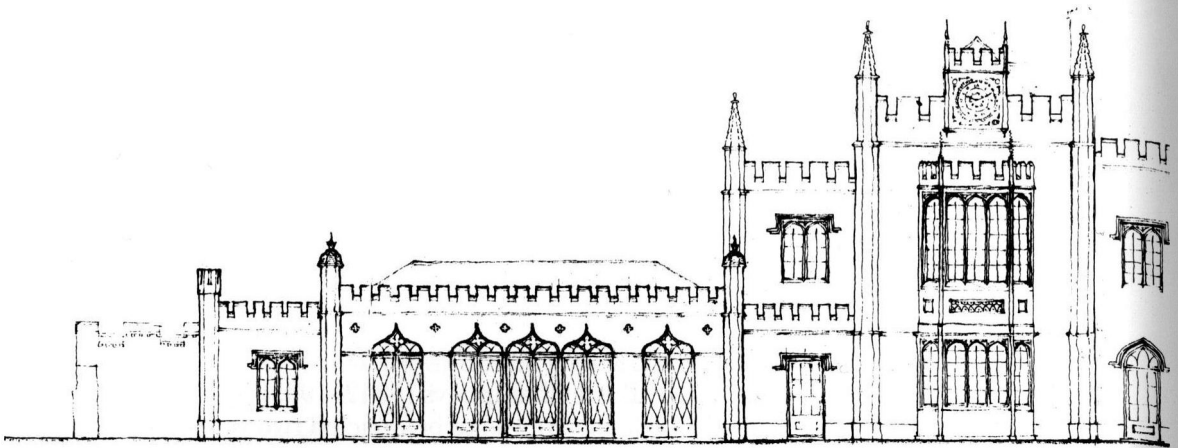


Fig. 6

Crowe Hall, Stutton

South elevation as proposed; everything to the left of the crowstepped gable is to be new
Ronald Geary Associates

Glascote in that the style chosen for the new work was intended to marry seamlessly with the existing.

Crowe Hall at Stutton, listed Grade II*, is a timber framed house substantially remodelled in 1826 in a Gothick idiom to the designs of Richard Beales, whose drawings survive. When asked to provide substantial extensions in 1993–4, Ronald Geary Associates went back to Beales and drew up a design which although not a lame echo of what he had intended, did provide an essay which could well have been mistaken for work of 150 years before. The Society's Technical Committee adopts an empirical approach in dealing with extensions—we have no *a priori* predilection in favour of either seamless good-neighbourliness or the respectful but self-confident 'frankly modern'. It depends how it is done. Here the bravura displayed and the fact that nothing of value was to be lost won us over, as it did the local authority and English Heritage who granted listed building consent. Work has started on repairs but not so far on the extensions.

FORMER PROVIDENCE CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, TOWNLEY STREET, MIDDLETON,
 LANCASHIRE

The two buildings shown in the photograph are separated by a mere twenty years but whereas the classicism of the chapel of 1859 on the left is well-balanced and carefully proportioned, that of the adjacent Sunday School, of 1879, is curiously uncomfortable, not least in the relation of solid to void (Figs. 7 and 8). Nevertheless we were concerned at the proposal to demolish the latter. Mongrels can be as interesting as thoroughbreds, especially where juxtaposition allows contrasts to be

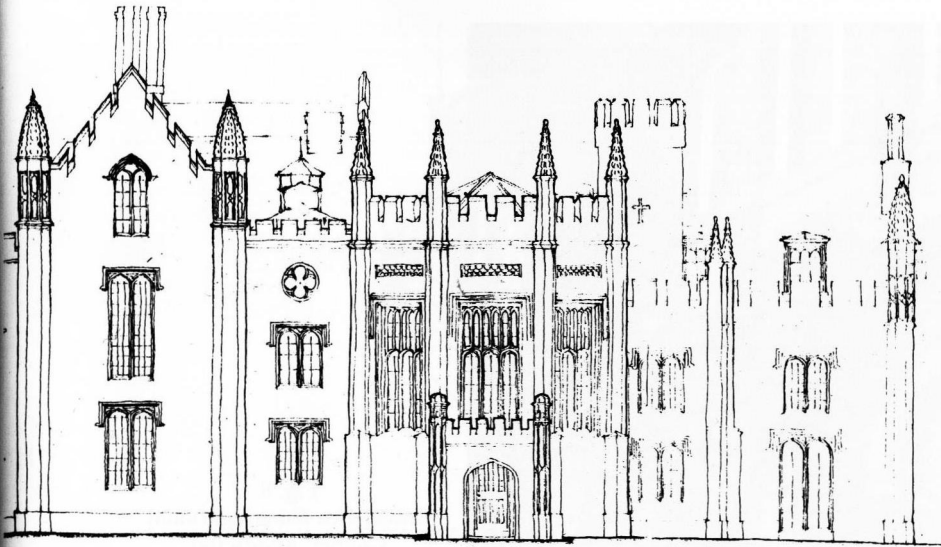


Fig. 7
Providence Congregational Chapel, Middleton
Kathy Fishwick

drawn. It would be a diminished townscape if every oddball was excised. The planners did not agree and consent was granted in order to release car parking space to facilitate the reuse of the chapel itself.



Fig. 8
 Providence Congregational
 Chapel, Middleton
 Entrance to the Sunday School
Kathy Fishwick

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, WONERSH, SURREY

The extension of a church in use is nearly always fraught with problems both practical and philosophical. The solution adopted by Richard Greening of Nye, Saunders and Partners at Wonersh, at the church where he was baptised, appealed more than many in being self-effacing in scale and in dressing the Parish Room to be provided in the language of a simple brick-built narthex (Figs. 9 and 10). The site is currently occupied by a plain lean-to under a pantiled roof, of 1913. The newcomer occupies a larger footprint which gives it a mildly disconcerting hammerhead form in relation to the nave (which is largely a post-fire rebuild of 1793 in brick). However that effect is offset by the use of half-hips in the roof, which ensures that the roofline does not extend beyond the width of the present west end.

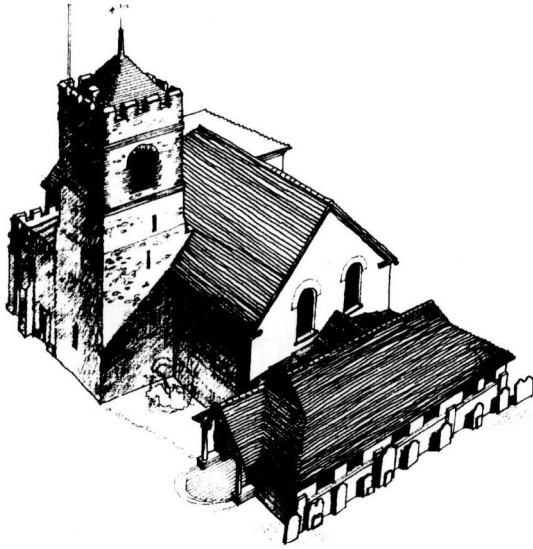
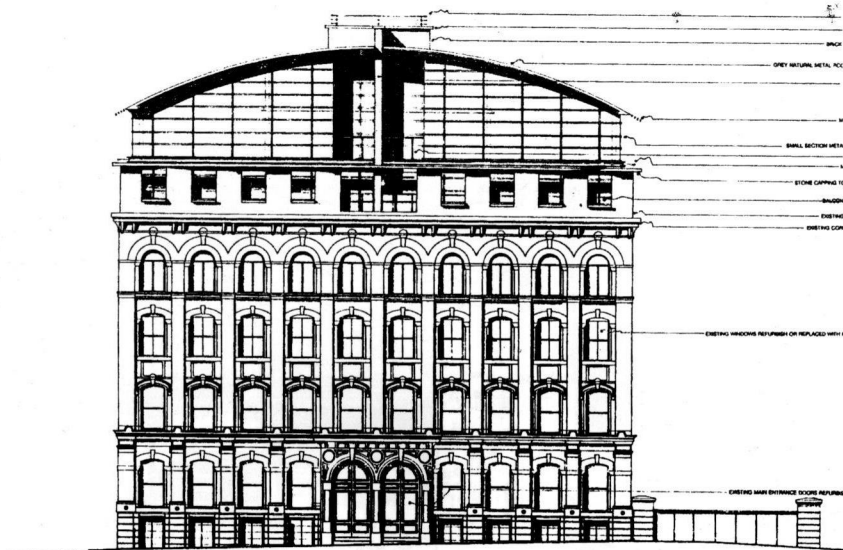
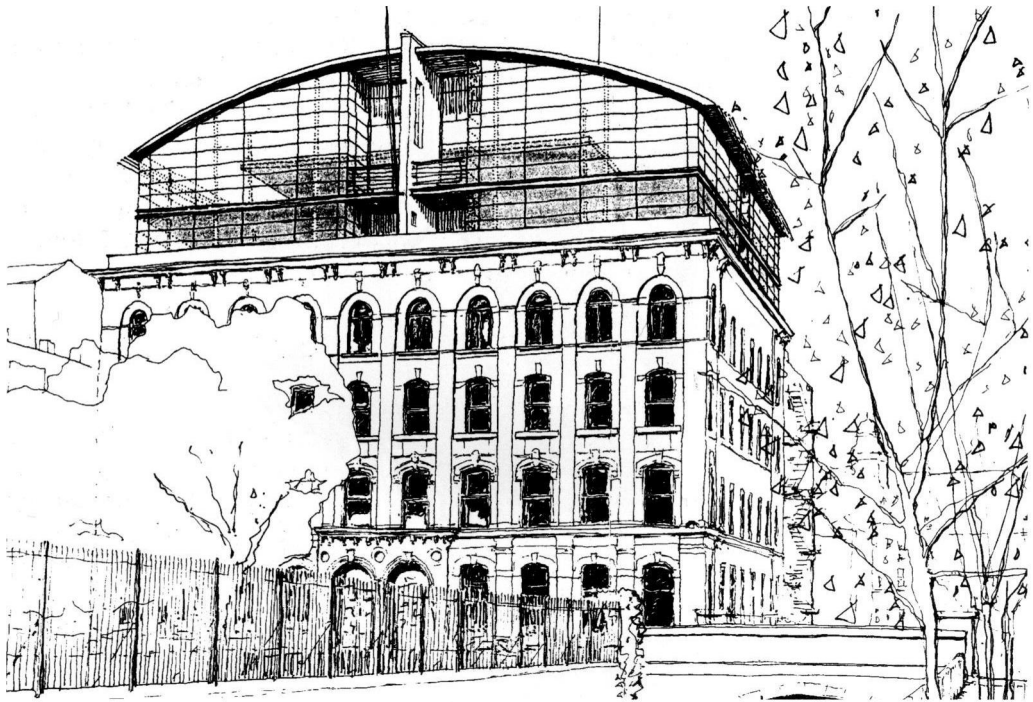


Fig. 9
St John's, Wonersh. Proposed enlargement of west porch; view from north-west
Nye, Saunders and Partners



Fig. 10
St John's, Wonersh. North elevation
Nye, Saunders and Partners



Figs. 11a and b
 42-44 Sackville Street, Manchester
 a) View from Canal Street illustrating proposed loft apartments;
 b) with the new open parapet, designed to soften the transition from old to new
Stephenson, Somerville Bell

42-44 SACKVILLE STREET, MANCHESTER, GREATER MANCHESTER

Is there a place for the architectural shotgun marriage? This example in Manchester showing a 'Manhattan Loft' astride a listed nineteenth century palazzo, is the most extreme of the year (Figs. 11a and b). The Technical Committee of the A.M.S. did not like it as originally prepared and for many, even with the new, open parapet, designed to soften the transition from the existing to the new, the cuckoo in the nest remained unpalatable. For some, there was sneaking admiration for the audacity of the match. Listed building consent was granted, but the developers have since announced that for reasons of financial viability the scheme will not be going ahead.

The architects are Stephenson, Somerville Bell of Manchester.

PROPOSED MAGISTRATES' COURT, BANGOR, GWYNEDD

Strictly speaking, complete new builds are not the concern of the A.M.S. except where, as here, the setting is historically sensitive and our comments are invited.

This design (Fig. 12) is in the sort of castellated post-Gothic now particularly associated with the design team at Gwynedd County Council's Architect's Department who were also responsible for their own offices in roughly the same idiom immediately opposite Caernarfon Castle.

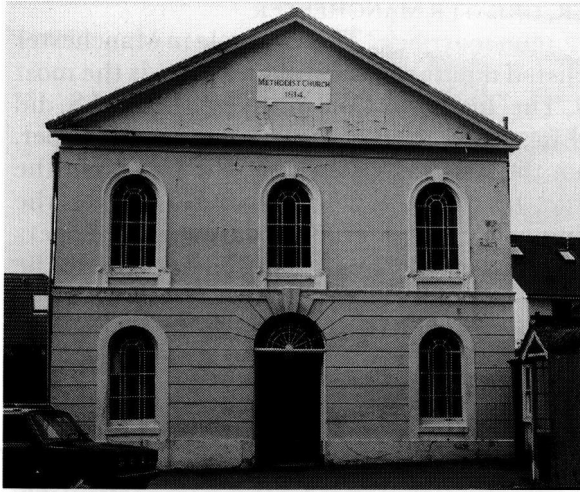
Recent years have seen a number of new Magistrates' Courts of considerable distinction and, if built, this is one that will join that select group.



Fig. 12

Proposed Magistrates' Court, Bangor

By courtesy of Gwynedd County Architect's Department



KINGSBRIDGE METHODIST CHAPEL,
FORE STREET, KINGSBRIDGE,
DEVON

We expressed considerable misgivings over the proposed redevelopment of all but the front elevation of this chapel, originally built in 1814 (Fig. 13). The interior is distinctive for its barrel-vaulted ceiling.

Fig. 13

Kingsbridge Methodist Chapel

STRATFORD-ON-AVON HOSPITAL,
ALCESTER ROAD, STRATFORD-ON-
AVON, WARWICKSHIRE

Those members who attended the excellent A.M.S. lecture on Hospitals given to us by Dr Jeremy Taylor in October 1994 will know the interest and importance of this building type. It is a type very much under threat as the large nineteenth century complexes in particular progressively are closed down.

Among the more attractive facing oblivion is the south wing at Stratford-on-Avon (Fig. 14). It was designed in 1884 by E.W. Mountford (1855–1908), best remembered for the Old Bailey, which he won in competition in 1900. Its homely scale and detailing, and courtyard plan give it more of the appearance of a set of almshouses.

In July, Frankonia Hotels applied to demolish and replace it with a huge new hotel. We strongly opposed this proposal since the structure is sound and eminently reusable. A decision is awaited.



Fig. 14

Stratford-on-Avon Hospital

THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH, CATHERINE STREET, LIVERPOOL, MERSEYSIDE
The greatest ecclesiastical loss of the year is likely to be that of the Catholic Apostolic Church in Liverpool (Figs. 15 and 16).

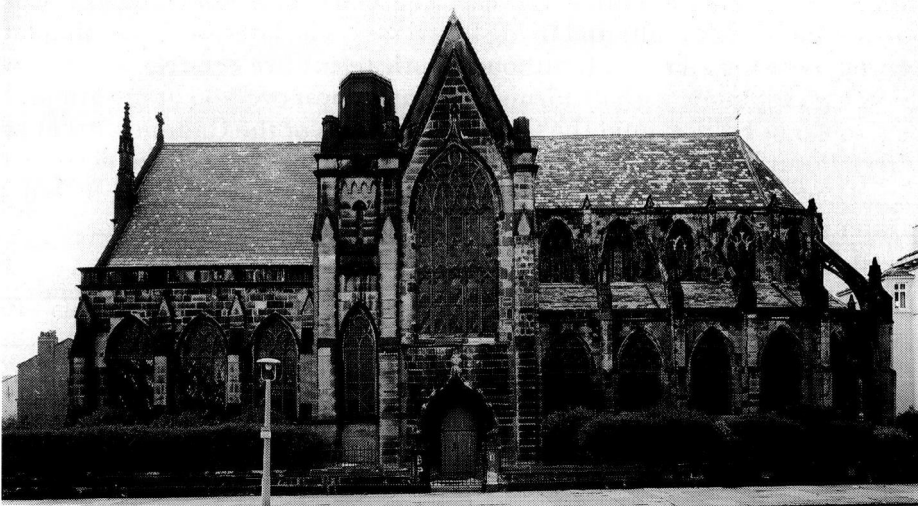


Fig. 15
Catholic Apostolic Church, Liverpool. South elevation in 1974
Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England



Fig. 16
Catholic Apostolic Church, Liverpool. Chancel from north-west in 1974
Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

This 'Church of the Holy Apostles' appears to have been built between 1840, when the east end was commenced, and 1856. The architects for the completion were E. Trevor Owen, possibly in association with G.B. Nicholls. The original intentions were very ambitious, the east end being in a full-blooded Decorated Gothic complete with vaults and flying buttresses. The later work was simpler and had an openwork timber roof, although both terms are relative and the whole complex had, complete with its furnishings, an almost overwhelming atmosphere; a grand touch of France amid the Georgian terraces of the Canning Street area.

After closure, a serious fire in 1986 took off most of the roof and destroyed the fittings. Downgrading on the statutory lists from Grade II* to II followed some years later and a 1994 application to demolish the surviving shell seems likely to be approved.

We put forward various suggestions but a sense of despair is unavoidable.