

J. S. Crowther in Manchester

by

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Manchester city centre, after a period in the doldrums, is full of confidence. Its cotton warehouses and commercial buildings give it a particular character and have proved versatile in a changing world, so that today it can be seen as one of the most successful and enjoyable urban environments in the country.

The zone immediately outside the centre, that commonly called the inner-city, is a region of flux, only partaking of the new confidence and prosperity here and there. Hulme, immediately to the south-west of the centre, has plumbed the depths of despair and dereliction, and required emergency action, not once but twice since the second world war. Today it has a brave face: The New Hulme. Cheetwood is only a short walk to the north from the frantic regeneration around the cathedral and St Anne's Square that followed the IRA bomb of 1996, but the change as one walks under the Victoria station viaduct is startling. Suddenly the city centre buzz evaporates and its prosperity seems illusory. There is an air of impermanency about the cash-and-carry businesses and van-hire garages. Only Strangeways Goal looks as though it is here to stay. Ardwick is the area visitors to Manchester look over from the train as it approaches Piccadilly station from the south-east. On the one side great stacks of containers in what was a bus and tram depot, on the other the half-occupied offices of a mail-order firm.

In such places, where the urban fabric is often so threadbare, the few buildings that survive the cycles of dereliction, destruction and renewal have a particular poignancy and resonance. They are always vulnerable, as the splendid but gutted Nicholls Ardwick school by Thomas Worthington presently demonstrates. These are the places where the three great inner-city churches of Joseph Stretch Crowther (1820-93) were built – St Mary's Hulme, St Alban's Cheetwood and St Benedict's Ardwick.

ST MARY'S HULME 1853-8 (Figs. 1-2)

This was Crowther's first major job after he set up on his own as an architect. With his partner Henry Bowman he had set forth his architectural creed in the two magnificent volumes of *Churches of the Middle Ages*.¹ Now he set it forth in brick and stone and wood for all to see – just as Pugin had done, although strapped for cash, in his St Wilfrid's Hulme nearby.

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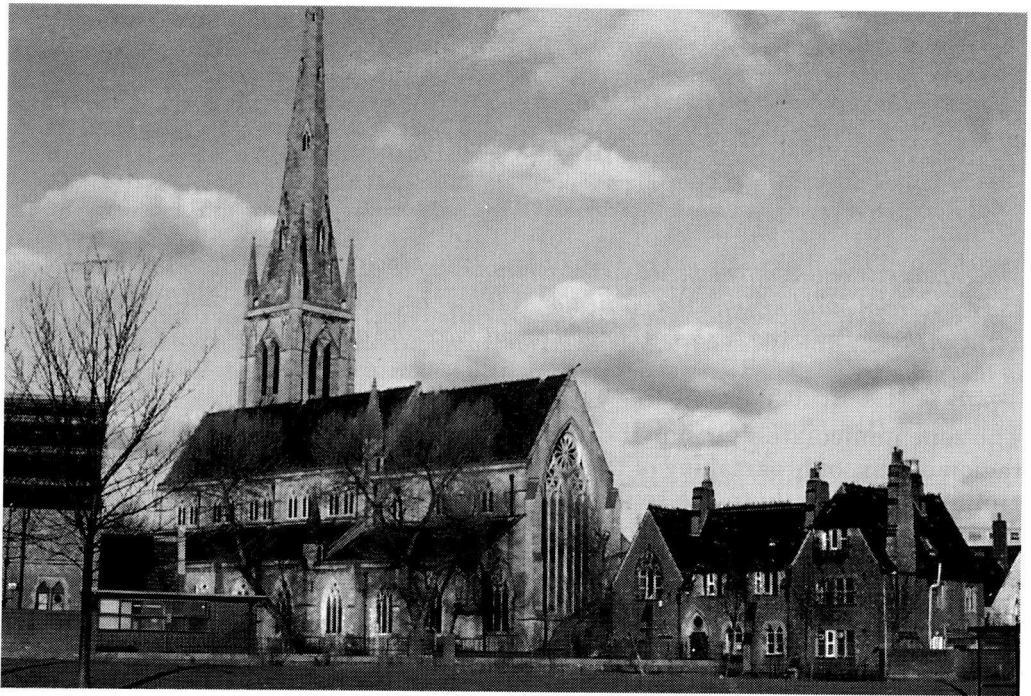


Fig. 1

St Mary's Church and Parsonage, Hulme

Churches of the Middle Ages was one of the great source books for the style of the moment, which was Decorated Gothic. Crowther had a problem with his own source book here, because the style that he wished to revive is virtually absent from the place where he wanted to revive it. A pretty conundrum. Lancashire gothic is Perpendicular, late, black, long and low and tough-looking, not golden and soaring, and not Decorated. For the examples of the 'best' period presented in *Churches of the Middle Ages* Bowman and Crowther had turned to Lincolnshire and Crowther's native Warwickshire. St Mary's Hulme is a built demonstration of all that was golden and soaring and Decorated, and it looks like a Lincolnshire church in Manchester. Tracery, gargoyles and paterae, mouldings and profiles, gable crosses all come from *Churches of the Middle Ages*. The steeple is an attenuated version of the medieval one at Newark. A couple of miles away in Salford, Matthew Hadfield was using the selfsame prototype for the central steeple of his St John's RC cathedral, a curious situation which becomes curiouser when we note Hadfield's name on some of the plates of *Churches of the Middle Ages*.

Appearances can be deceptive however. If the church is examined from a functional point of view it becomes clear that Crowther had his own agenda and his own preferences; he was alive to the contemporary requirements of a populous

suburb in an industrial city; and he had at the back of his mind a different prototype, much closer to home and altogether surprising. The ground plan of St Mary's is nothing like the Decorated examples from which the style is taken. It is a pure rectangle 140 feet long by seventy feet wide, within which the north-west tower is contained, twenty-four feet square and with its spire soaring to 241 feet high. Only the two porches protrude. This means that the aisles are continuous from one end to the other and that the chancel is as wide, and as high, as the nave. In between chancel and nave are four turning staircase turrets, each rising to a conical top at parapet level. Here we can see both practicality and personal preference. Crowther has obtained the biggest envelope possible on a constricted site, and he has given the churchwardens no excuse for not dealing with leaves in the gutters. He also clearly liked simple modular proportions and he liked the punctuation given by the stair turrets; they are both trademarks. The near-equal heights of nave and chancel enabled him to achieve another trademark feature and one which more than anything else gives a sensuous nobility to the building – an enormously tall chancel arch. It is '... a noble specimen of ecclesiastical architecture, and does very great credit to the architect, Mr J. S. Crowther of Manchester' noted *Manchester Faces and Places* in 1892, drawing attention to the 'chancel arch 52 by 24 feet the largest opening of its class in any modern church in the country'.

The prototype must be Manchester Cathedral. This has the continuous aisles and rectangular plan, the continuous roofline allowing the chancel arch to be as tall as possible within the envelope, and the stair turrets. Crowther was in fact a great admirer of the old church, as was to become clear much later on in his life, but its Perpendicular style was inadmissible in the 1850s and he only allowed a couple of plates of the woodwork into *Churches of the Middle Ages*.

Photographs taken in the late 1960s show St Mary's Hulme, by then black as the Ace of Spades, standing amid the puddles and brickbats of what was supposedly the biggest slum clearance in all Europe. History repeated itself in the 1990s when the infamous deck-access Crescents came down in their turn and the church was half hidden behind a vast pile of crushed concrete. Through these cataclysmic changes the survivor was given extra poignancy by the little group of ancillary buildings that stand at its foot, all brick, all gothic and all by Crowther. A little island, charming in its solitude. Parsonage, schoolhouse, and two schools frame and anchor the soaring verticals

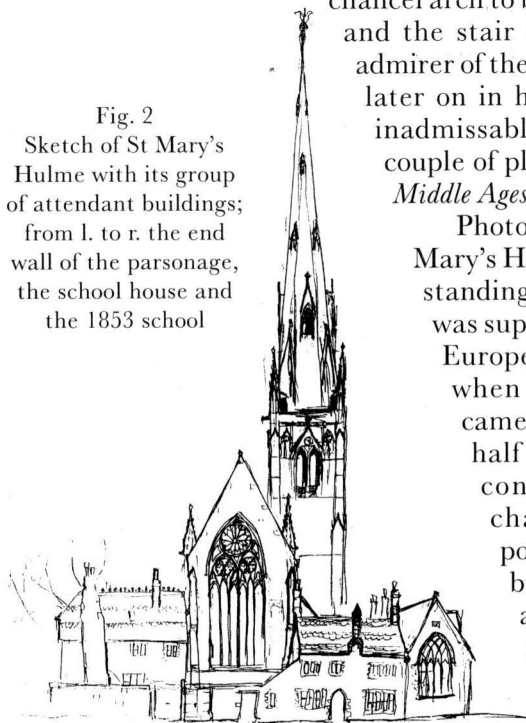


Fig. 2

Sketch of St Mary's Hulme with its group of attendant buildings; from l. to r. the end wall of the parsonage, the school house and the 1853 school

of the church, their warm brickwork and domestic proportions the necessary counterpoint. The parsonage, a neat piece of domestic gothic in header bond is a simplified version of Crowther's own house at Alderley Edge. The schoolhouse with its cylindrical chimney displayed by the front door shows that he had studied Vicar's Close in Wells. The school provides with its intersecting tracery a nicely judged contrast to the geometric tracery of the church. Across the road the second school is dated 1875. Here Crowther – it is almost certainly still by him – has moved with the times, using a bit of polychromy in the brickwork and plate tracery in the windows.

A brief biography² may be in order here, although there is still much that is unclear about his life and character. Joseph Stretch Crowther was born in 1820 of a Warwickshire family. Evidence in family names and in some of the examples chosen for *Churches of the Middle Ages* points to the area of Berkswell and Temple Balsall near Coventry. He sometimes subtracted two years from his age so there is some doubt about the exact date as well as the place of his birth. His obituary states that he was partly educated in Cambridge, whatever that means. A possible interpretation is that his was a non-conformist family and he was therefore not permitted to graduate. He seems to have had contacts among the students of Trinity College, where the Camden Society was hatched, because many of his earliest works, especially in Westmorland, were for clergy of exactly his age who had graduated from Trinity. He took up his articulated apprenticeship with Richard Tattersall in 1838, and was assistant to Henry Bowman from 1844 and his partner from 1846-51. In 1853 he built his own house, Redclyffe Grange, in the new railway settlement of Alderley Edge fourteen miles south of Manchester. He was to live there for most of the rest of his life, retaining ownership of Redclyffe Grange, but moving to a much bigger house called Endsleigh. Both are extant and it is hard to see why he should have abandoned the leafy heights of Redclyffe Grange, which is a charming house clearly intended as a manifesto of his belief in domestic gothic, for the much more serious Endsleigh down on the plain.³

John Holden says in his obituary for the RIBA that 'he was a man of singularly retiring disposition, highly educated and of cultured taste, but difficult to move when he had once made up his mind'. He was unmarried, so it says in every census return, and no whisper of anything else was ever published. But just so can the most surprising aspects of a man's life be lost. In 1891 he married his housekeeper, Richanda Barber, then aged twenty-two.⁴

Crowther's known work is all in and around Manchester, or in and around Kendal and Windermere. The notable exceptions come right at the beginning and end of his architectural career: Leeds Unitarian chapel of 1847 (with Bowman), and St John's Scunthorpe, 1891.

ST ALBAN'S CHEETWOOD 1857-64 (Fig. 3)

If at St Mary's Hulme Crowther built a demonstration of his architectural creed, here at Cheetwood we have something more profound, a demonstration of his own religious convictions. It is recorded that he took no fee at St Alban's, that he sang

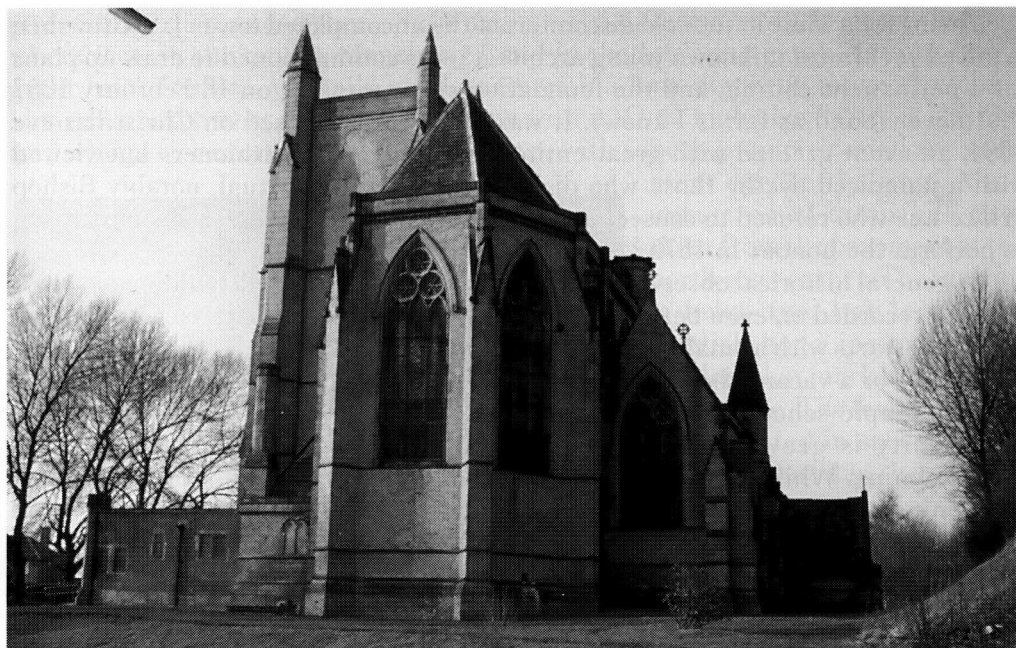


Fig. 3

Unflattering view of St Alban's Cheetwood from across Waterloo Road, with its uncompleted tower. The stair turret rising above the clerestory has lost its conical cap

in the choir and sometimes played the organ. It was his church. It is possible that his fervour was that of the convert. Bowman was a Unitarian, so was Thomas Worthington who was apprenticed to the firm, and much of their early work was Unitarian churches. St Alban's was the highest of high Anglican churches, and Cheetwood was just such a place where the highest Anglo-Catholicism would manifest itself – splendour in the slums.

This was once a pleasant breezy hillside settlement dotted with cottages and gardens and dominated by Strangeways Hall with its parkland and lake. The imagination falters at such an image today but old maps prove it, and a place like Crab village at Blackley, two or three miles to the north, recaptures something of the sort. This gave way in the 1840s to a noisy district of incredible activity, with dense housing for workers at Strangeways prison and Boddington's brewery interspersed with brickworks busy burning the bricks to build more houses. Here the new parish was formed. The prime mover was the Dean of Manchester, Dr Bowers who, unlike his Bishop, was greatly influenced by the new spirit of the Oxford Movement.

In January 1856 the Rev. John Edmund Sedgwick was appointed to the then non-existent church. St Alban's was to become his life's work, to which he devoted his personal fortune and for which he lived a spartan life, celibate, often fasting,

even living for a while in the cold discomfort of the uncompleted tower. J. S. Crowther, 'a gifted yet almost unknown young architect', was commissioned to draw up plans for a permanent church, and the foundation stone was laid on 18 February 1857 (but never found as far as I know). It was ready to be opened on Christmas eve 1864, an event greeted with great enthusiasm amongst parishioners but viewed with a jaundiced eye by those who disliked its 'advanced' ritual, notably Bishop Prince Lee who refused to consecrate it. It was left to his successor, Bishop Fraser, to perform the honour in 1875.⁵

A general historical observation may be made here. If church building histories are well recorded or, even better, are within living memory, a pattern can be seen. The story starts with a small group of people worshipping in makeshift premises, a hut maybe or a vacant shop. Soon they feel able to build something of their own, often a simple school building that can double as a church. All the time the community is growing, and the desire for a permanent church become overwhelming. While it is building enthusiasm grows with it, and the occasion of its opening is celebrated with the greatest joy.

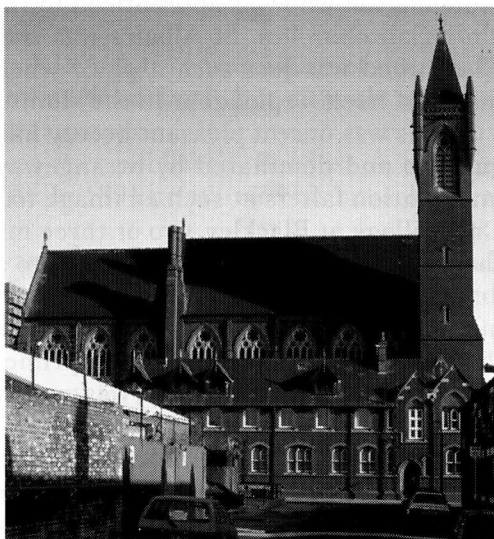
This however is the high point. The church does not then go on from strength to strength, but declines from that moment on. If the church is opened before it is fully complete, the fall-off in enthusiasm can be such that it never is completed.⁶ St Alban's itself is a good example. The 225-foot steeple – what a sight that would have been from the city below – was left as stump. Most of the intended external carving was left in the lump. The overall design however was a purposeful one, dominated by the completely level roofline and the high three-sided apse. The north-east chapel, rather engagingly, was a miniature version on the main church, complete with its own stair turret and gable crosses.

Although the exterior was incomplete, the interior was fully realised, and highly memorable. The steep arches, tall windows and immense chancel arch gave it an air of peculiar solemnity. The decoration, carved and – originally – elaborately painted and frescoed, was carefully controlled and crisply executed.⁷

ST BENEDICT'S ARDWICK 1877-80 (Figs. 4-5)
Crowther's churches up to this time were visually aloof from their surroundings. Their fine stonework, medievalist carvings and elaborate traceries seemed to inhabit a different world, and a different age, from the long terraces of grimy brick cottages and the shiny setted

Fig. 4

St Benedict's Ardwick, with its domestic range in front, and Bennett Street



streets that surrounded them. St Benedict's is a different story. It clearly belongs where it is, in the city, in Manchester, and in the late nineteenth century. It is a great brick basilica, virtually unadorned, with a long domestic range stretching along Bennett Street and entirely at one with it. Only high above does it blossom into a huge clerestory, a veritable glass cage with superb geometric windows and a

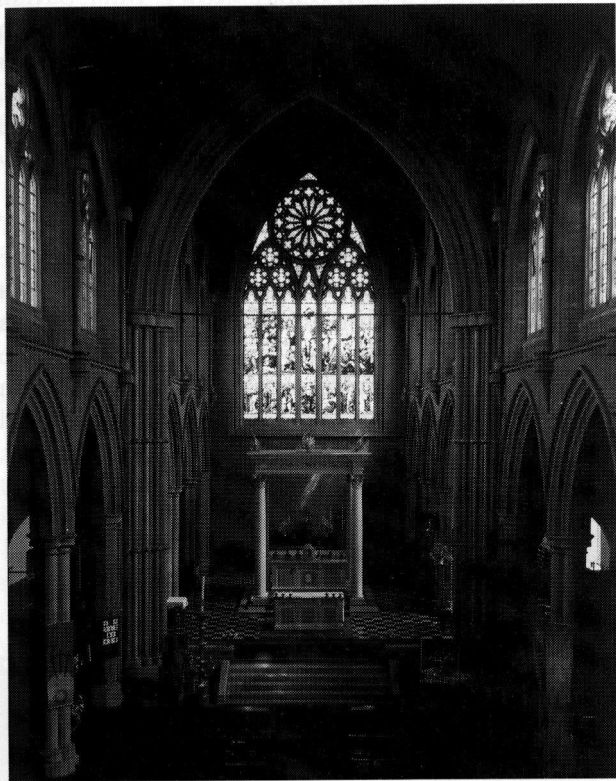


Fig. 5

St Benedict's Ardwick interior. The chancel has, of course, been re-ordered. The carved stone reading desk of 1901 on the north side is by Cecil Hardisty who was a parishioner

great rose to the west. A tall unbuttressed campanile rises sheer from the pavement at the north-west corner. The interior is brick too, but laid in an English bond instead of the headers that mark the whole of the outside. The few mouldings are executed in specials, with stone only used in the piers, in the windows and in some corbels and shaft-rings. The plan is a perfect rectangle without even buttresses or porches to break its clean footprint. Crowther has adjusted his proportions, making the aisles relatively narrow and dark and the nave very wide and triumphantly lit. There is a magnificent double hammerbeam roof, but again it is all size and structure – no decoration.

St Benedict's was commissioned and paid for by the Bennett family, timber merchants, who took a very great interest in both its ritual and its architectural form.

We lost no time in setting to work to discuss the details and, first, as to whom we would employ as an architect. My father's resolve was soon in the papers, and one member of the profession wrote calling our attention to the success he had had in building Cheap churches, and pointing to several: we know them only too well as being also – the other thing!

To be able to design a Church, an architect must be a Churchman. To be able to design one where it is intended that 'full Catholic ceremonial' shall be carried out requires a man who understands what you mean by the term. By 3rd October we had settled on Mr Crowther as architect.⁸

If we look for influences that have shaped this, Crowther's only real High Victorian design, we should not disregard the Bennett family themselves. Nor the two other brick basilicas in the area, St Francis Gorton (1866-72) by Edward Pugin and St Cross Clayton (1863-6) by Butterfield. Both of them use the common material of the neighbourhood but rise sheer above it. However St Benedict's was not completely without precedent in the architect's own oeuvre either. Bury parish church was rebuilt in 1870-6: at first sight little different from St Mary's Hulme in its highly wrought golden stonework and Decorated tracery, all derived from *Churches of the Middle Ages*. Its interior however clearly anticipates St Benedict's. Here too, bare brick of superb quality, but bare nonetheless, is on show and the aisles are relatively suppressed in favour of the very wide nave.

A CROWTHER HOUSE (Fig. 6)

Houses are always difficult to attribute, but it seems that the only Crowther house in the city apart from those associated with the churches is Gartness in Victoria Park. It is immediately recognisable, and like nothing else in the Park. Gothic is used in an organic way and carried through from the conical-roofed tower to the arches that articulate the interior. It is built of non-industrial-looking bricks laid in an unusual bond of three header rows to one of stretchers, and set out with its end



Fig. 6

Gartness, Victoria Park. The front door is under the tower on the far side

not its front to the road. Enough of his villas survive elsewhere to be able to identify three Crowther plan types. This is his middle-sized one. A spine corridor links the family rooms at the sunny end of the house to the service quarters at the other end. This is lit indirectly by a tall window to the main stair, which is set to one side halfway along. He often lit the ends of the corridor directly too, by setting the front and back doors to one side. Here there was instead a large conservatory. A Manchester preoccupation, but long gone alas.

Gartness was for many years the Manchester branch of Toc H (their account of its opening in 1921 called its style 'somewhat nondescript!'). More recently a hostel for homeless people, and, although battered, little altered. Very soon it is to be vacated and converted to luxury flats; how much will survive remains to be seen.⁹

THE CATHEDRAL (Figs. 7-8)

There is no commemoration of Crowther in Manchester Cathedral, nor is his name mentioned in the current guide book. The other main players in its architectural history are all there, from wardens Huntingdon and Stanley who were responsible for the transformation of the church after it was elevated to collegiate status in 1421 to Hubert Worthington who repaired it after extensive bomb damage in 1940. And yet if you should wish to see the last great work of J. S. Crowther, and his most arduous and difficult, stand in the nave of Manchester Cathedral and look around. The forest of slender columns receding duskily into the distance, which is its most immediately memorable feature, the tall clerestory with its elaborate surface panelling and huge five-light windows, the outer walls, the chancel arch, are all Crowther. The porches are his, both of them two-storey and lavishly decorated, and the south-west baptistry which is presently the shop. And so, at the east end of the church, is the Fraser chapel and the monument to that popular bishop.

Why the amnesia over this particular building episode? From what

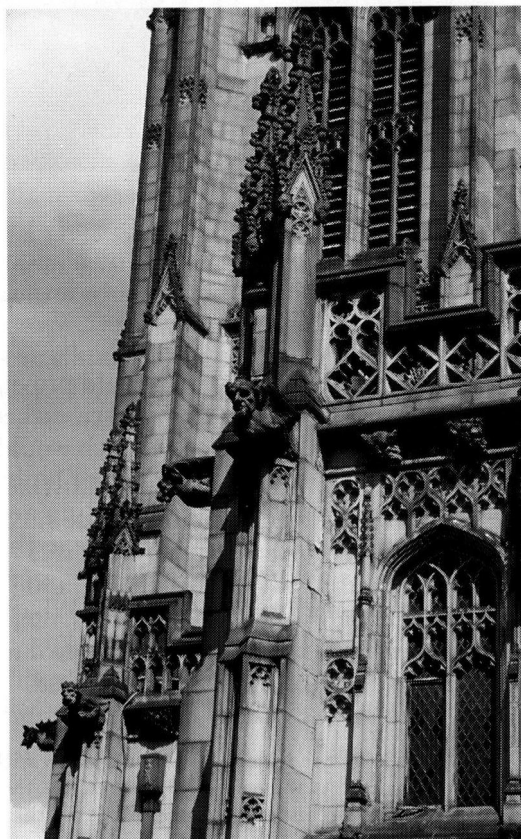


Fig. 7

Manchester Cathedral – detail of south porch 1891. The prominent gargoyle is clearly a portrait, perhaps of the donor, Mr James Jardine

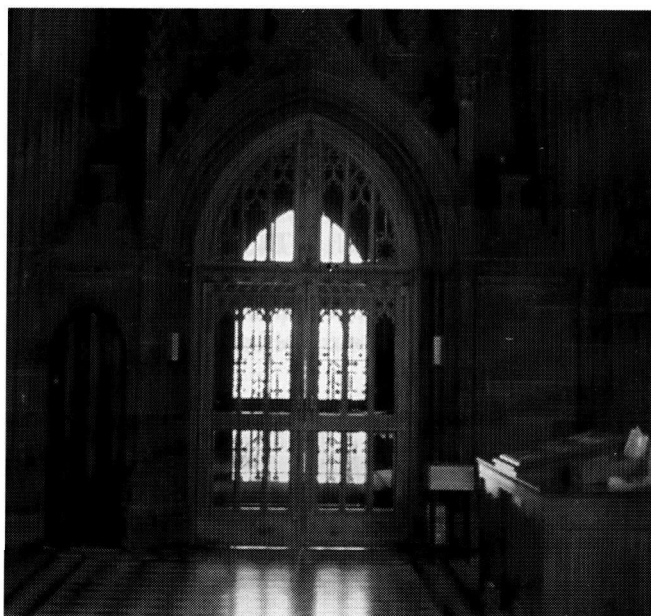


Fig. 8

Manchester Cathedral. The inside face of the north porch of 1888. The door leads up to the muniment room. The plate glass in the gothic inner door is original

we understand of Crowther's character he would have deprecated any memorial, but his part in the history of the cathedral is in some danger of being lost to view altogether, and this would be unjust.

The explanation must lie in the nature of the work. When in 1421 the parish church of Manchester was elevated to collegiate status a series of rebuildings and embellishments was set in train. So far-reaching were they, that the design and plan of the pre-existing church can only be recovered by archaeological methods. As a young man apprenticed to Richard Tattersall, Crowther had studied and made measured drawings of this church, 'little thinking

of the inestimable value they would prove to be in the far distant future'.

When in 1847 it was elevated to cathedral status no such transformation took place. Many felt that the old church would not do, and the arguments rumbled on for years as to whether to extend it or build a new one. Meanwhile some restoration work was done, notably the rebuilding and heightening of the tower in 1862-8 by J. P. Holden. But by 1882 it was clear that Manchester, unlike Liverpool twenty years later, was not going to build a new cathedral. So Crowther, then in his sixties, was commissioned to make it good. What he found can be told in his own words:

The greatest havoc was wrought in the interior early in the present century under a pretext of improvement, when the beautiful columns and arches of the nave, the superincumbent clerestory, the great choir arch, the piers and arches of the north aisle or Trinity chapel, and the tower arch and the wall above it, were hacked over with a pointed pick, and then coated with cement three-quarters of an inch in thickness. As an inevitable consequence, the mouldings and architecture were ruined and thrown out of all proportion, and the stability of the structure itself seriously imperilled.

This was the work of John Palmer in 1815; the parish church of Ashton-under-Lyne still exhibits comparable treatment. Crowther's solution, and we can perhaps imagine the despair he felt, was to take down the greater part of the nave and rebuild it, 'stone for stone and line for line'. In the course of this operation he came

across a good deal of re-used stone hidden in the old masonry which stimulated an attempt at an archaeological reconstruction of the building's history. This, with forty plates, was published after his death as *The Cathedral Church of Manchester* (from which the above quotes are taken), the text being completed by John Holden and the book seen through the press by Crowther's neighbour at Alderley Edge Dr Frank Renaud.

The rebuild it has to be admitted is a little dispiriting, and was not universally acclaimed at the time. The stonework is too precise, the texture and tooling are exactly the same throughout. The concept of rebuilding in replica is itself a dispiriting one. It is all now, moreover, very dirty. However, the two porches, the baptistry and the Fraser chapel are new work. Here the problem is perhaps that Crowther was too respectful. Not for him the startling Bauhaus porch which shelters the Romanesque portal of Freiberg cathedral in eastern Germany. He simply carried on where warden Stanley left off.

DEMOLITION OF ST ALBAN'S CHEETWOOD 1998 (Fig. 9)

What is the future of these buildings, especially the three great inner-city churches? One answer has been provided all too forcibly by the demolition of St Alban's, Chetwood.

The decision in 1995 to close St Alban's was not just a product of a gradual decline in strength and enthusiasm but the result of its high church position, meaning that the congregation was fatally split on the issue of the ordination of women. The diocese started the usual procedures for re-use or disposal of the building, but any such civilised measures to preserve it were immediately forestalled by unofficial dismantlers who stripped the slates off the roof, using old mattresses on the ground far below to bounce them off. The officials of the Diocese found that they simply could not keep it secure and nor could they allow anyone to kill themselves. It had to go.

It was a melancholy business, but not without interest as the church yielded up its secrets, and not without aesthetic and emotional compensation either. The great surprise was that for a couple of weeks St Alban's was transcendently beautiful. This was written in my notebook:- '19th January 1998, 4 o'clock, a caterpillar digger bashing down the N aisle. S aisle already gone, low sun shining right into the church. I suspect it has never looked better. View from the altar platform – raised up many steps – westwards is truly splendid with the great height of the roofs – not totally dark up there either – and sun picking out the crisp mouldings of the arcades, the v. detailed floral and zoological capitals, the golden colour of the round piers. Hugely tall W window still has all its glass.'

Tintern Abbey in Chetwood! – this is not altogether an idle conceit. Tintern is after all the ideal ruin, more beautiful in ruin than when whole. This was certainly true of St Alban's, with its roof thoughtfully peppered with holes to let in little motes of light, the south wall demolished to allow the sun to play full on the structure and the wind to blow through it. Even the time of year was fortunate since the rare sun's rays were all but horizontal. The romantic painters and poets loved Tintern



Fig. 9

St Alban's Cheetwood under demolition, 19 January 1997, from the west

for its sense of Transience, which CADW and its forebears have effectively postponed. The sense of transience at Cheetwood was overwhelming, and given yet more power by the unlikely setting for such a romantic scene.

The methods of the demolition men were very instructive. On 11 February, I wrote 'Huge fire glowing. About five of them up on a scaffolding taking down the N clerestory. Bricks and stones showering down one by one. They shimmied up the rood turret to get onto the scaffolding – medieval style and just what Crowther would have liked'. Medieval builders must have economised on scaffolding and ladders in exactly this way, using the hidden stairs and passageways they were building into the structure for access. As the church came down so the piles of reclaimed bricks and stones grew; there were at least four bricks to each stone although not a single brick had been visible. The church had a cavity wall bridged by occasional flat stones. The outer skin was brick with a stone face, the inner skin all brick.

The tower was the last to go. By this time the contractors were fully alive to the second-hand value of the moulded arches and carved capitals at its base. How to demolish the tower while protecting them? The solution adopted was an unconscious illustration of a still more ancient technique, which was to ramp the whole thing up with soil and then drive the digger up the ramp.

One final puzzle: amongst the rubble at the end of the demolition was one stone that clearly had nothing to do with St Alban's church. When cleaned up it proved to be a piece of Ionic frieze with a running honeysuckle motif, beautifully executed and as crisp as yesterday. Where can it have come from?

The only explanation I can come up with takes us right back to the pioneer days of the church. The 125th anniversary history of the church records 'At this time Strangeways Hall was demolished to build the new Assize Courts and Prison (both by Alfred Waterhouse). Fr Sedgwick and the men of the parish hauled the remaining timber and bricks up Waterloo Road to finish the first parish school. This little building was erected by their own hands in just six weeks'. When the school was demolished its foundation stone was preserved, loose, in the tower. Maybe a solitary stone of Strangeways Hall was preserved at the same time. Stranger things have happened.

Houses are now being built on the site. And yet the story of St Alban's Cheetwood is not over. A lock-up shop nearby bears the legend 'Anglican Catholic Church of St Alban'. So it seems that the congregation have, after all the architectural adventures, gone back to the tent stage.

As for the others, St Benedict's is in full use as a High Anglican church. But not, it seems, for much longer. Is closure inevitable? St Cross Clayton proves that it is not. That church has been sensitively reordered and seems set for a new lease of life. Because it is by Butterfield the building itself has finally become an asset by attracting grant aid, turning round the long process of decline.

St Mary's Hulme has been secularised and tentatively converted to business and residential use, although the very scale of the building seems to be overwhelming the puny efforts of the developers. It might be hoped that St Mary's could be the cathedral of the New Hulme, but failing that, is secularisation and subdivision of the interior necessarily disastrous from an aesthetic point of view? The example of St Paul's Methodist church in Didsbury proves that it is not. This highly ambitious gothic church, built to a 1874 design by H. H. Vale, was converted to offices in 1990 by Downes and Variava. By retaining the open space of the crossing, which is crossed by flying bridges linking the various office spaces, and making those spaces transparent, the architects have actually managed to enhance the volume of the church. It can be done.

CONCLUSION

A mixed conclusion then. Those great Victorian churches which have survived thus far in our cities can have a viable future as churches. Alternatively they can be converted to other uses without total loss of the qualities that make them great. But they are also vulnerable. As for the cathedral, like the inner-city churches it has found itself in a sea of change. On one side the glass ski-run of the new Urbis centre which will 'Celebrate the City'. On the other the old Shambles, after various indignities dismantled and resited in a different order outside the Dean's office, where they look attractive but with a touch of Mickey Mouse about them. The juxtaposition, coupled with the suspicious newness of Crowther's and Holden's

cathedral work, might make a stranger wonder where the cathedral itself has been moved from. It is a reticent building, not yet participating in the changes that surround it, and not giving up its visual, historical and spiritual rewards – and they are manifold – easily. Part of that reticence is due to the singularly retiring disposition of Mr Crowther.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Published 1845-6. Analysed in 'The puzzle of Churches of the Middle Ages' by Mathew Hyde, *Victorian Society Annual* (1996).
2. *MA Thesis*, Matthew Hyde, Keele 1992. For Crowther's late marriage thanks to Ken Broadhurst, and see his *will* Chester 3 April 1893. Crowther died at Southport on 25.3.1893.
3. Crowther had a considerable influence on the railway settlements of Alderley Edge and Windermere. For the former see the author's *The Villas of Alderley Edge*, Silk Press (1999).
4. The most useful obituaries are *Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society Annual Report* 7 (1893), 232, probably written by Frank Renaud. *RIBA J* (4 May 1893), 339, written by John Holden.
5. The St Alban's Cheetwood consecration row is robustly described in church histories e.g. *125 years at St Alban's* (1981) and splendidly summarised in *The British Architect* (3 July 1874), 11.
6. This observation was prompted by a study of the fourteen or so churches of Wythenshawe, all built since 1934.
7. *Builder* (1865), 142 and church histories. Pevsner admired the church in his *South Lancashire* (1969), 338 and pl.74, and it has featured in recent publications of the *Transactions*.
8. Article by Bennett, T.A., 1805 in the parish magazine, quoted in *The Jubilee Book* (1930), 15. The drawings for St Benedict's are preserved in Manchester Central Library
9. It has just come to light that Langdale Hall in the same street is by Henry Bowman. It was built in 1846-8 so dates back to the partnership with Crowther. In its gothic style, inside and out, it is a very interesting precursor of Gartness. Thanks to Clare Harwell for this and see *Civil Eng AJ* (Jan 1846), 4.