

The Society's Casework in 2005:

Review of Selected Cases

by

MATTHEW SAUNDERS

Local planning authorities in England and Wales have been obliged to consult the Ancient Monuments Society (and the other National Amenity Societies) on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either total or partial, since 1972. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to about 5,000 a year and those for complete demolition to around 120. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by application for total demolition in 2005 (the last full year at the time of writing) was 127 (fourteen of them in Wales). This compares with 120 in 2004. A full list of these cases can be obtained from the Society's office and website. The cases discussed here include some of the most interesting, although in choosing them we are necessarily limited by the availability of illustrations capable of reproduction. The drawings have been kindly supplied by the architects of the various schemes and have been reproduced with their permission. As in previous years coverage embraces both ecclesiastical and secular cases. We deal with the latter first.

As you can see from the statistics mentioned above, the overwhelming majority of cases concern not total but partial demolition and this in turn is very often extension or the breach of a wall as part and parcel of a scheme of extension. Ways of adding accommodation onto an historic building cause as much controversy as anything else, both practical and philosophical. Many of the following secular cases reveal different approaches to that challenge.

KEMEYS FOLLY, COED-Y-CAERAU,
KEMEYS INFERIOR, NEWPORT, GWENT.

This folly stands on the crest of the steep escarpment of Kemeys Graig overlooking the Usk Valley to the north and the Bristol Channel to the south. A prospect tower in that position seems first detectable in the seventeenth century although it was described as 'ruined' as early as 1756. The present



Fig. 1

Kemeys Folly, Coed-y-Caerau,
Kemeys Inferior, Newport, Gwent

Matthew Saunders is Secretary of the Ancient Monuments Society.

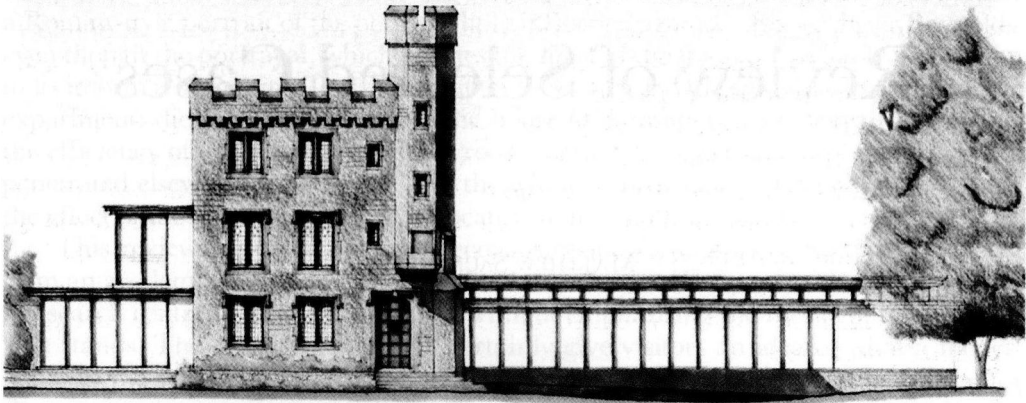


Fig. 2

Kemeys Folly, Coed-y-Caerau, Kemeys Inferior, Newport, Gwent

battlemented tower was rebuilt between 1911 and 1912 by the High Sheriff, T. E. Watson, maybe to his own designs following a severe fire. The walls are in coursed local limestone rubble, the windows and entrance door surrounds dressed in Bath stone. The interior retains a high-level frieze running round the dining room showing hounds in hot pursuit, harking back to the folly's former status as a hunting stand. Some twenty years ago the building was extended in a semi-Gothic language but using cement render. Now it has passed into the hands of a young couple who have employed the architects Davies Sutton of Cardiff 'to heighten the presence of the existing folly by removing the sprawling poor quality extensions and replacing them with a rationalized and subservient solution'. Figure 1 shows the front elevation as existing and Figure 2 shows what is intended. The tower is reduced to its roughly square footprint to emphasise its original verticality and the 1980s work is taken off. The elevation to the right sweeps slightly away from the tower in a quadrant and is composed of aluminium framed glazing set over a natural stone plinth with an expanse of render just beneath the tree. The same palette informs one of the half-storey extensions to the left where the smaller bathroom and dressing room sit over the larger living and dining room. We felt, on balance, that this was a good scheme which recovered the central architectural virtues of the tower. The new build is substantial in footprint but is light and airy in form with the general use of glass allowing it to circle but not envelop the structure of 1911, which would still be clearly visible through the glazed 'skirt'.

WEST PORTHOLLAND, FISH SHEDS AND COTTAGES, BURYAN, NEAR ST AUSTELL, CORNWALL.

On the north side of the approach to West Portholland Beach is a surviving complex of mostly ruined buildings of considerable interest. Part is listed as 'two' (actually three) lime kilns. These are described as eighteenth century but recent research by Ken Isham in his work on the building type in 2000 has found reference to a specific lease for a kiln at that spot made in October 1805. Further investigation by the Historic Environment

Countryside Advice Service of Cornwall County Council points out what seems to be the remains of two fish cellars, one of which may originally have been a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century fumados for the smoking of pilchards which were exported to Spain and Italy in the late medieval period.

In June 2006 we were consulted on a scheme by the Caerhays Estate through surveyors, Stratton and Holborow, to adapt the most ruinous section of all to provide two holiday units. The listed element would be completely excluded. The Stratton and Holborow scheme shown on Figure 3 was clever and quite gentle, the only obviously new 'intervention' being the monopitch above the roof immediately adjacent to the lime kilns. The doors would be traditional ledged and braced, there would be no domestic external curtilage and the new roof supported on simple trusses would be covered in galvanized steel sheets.

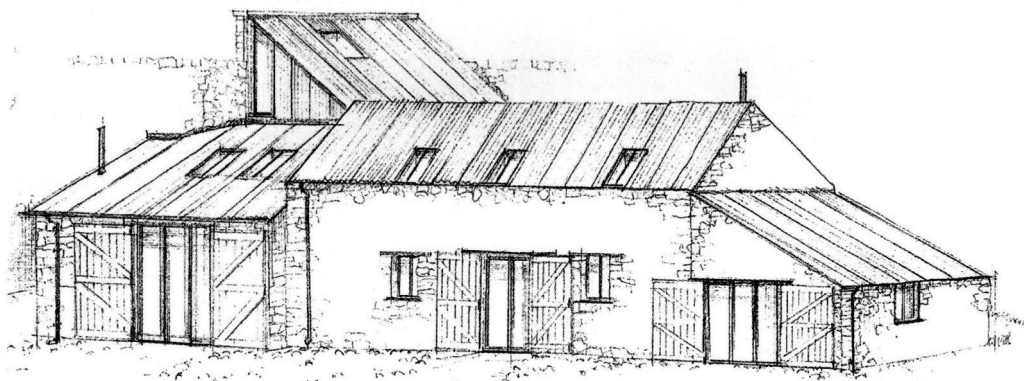


Fig. 3

West Portholland, Fish Sheds and Cottages, Buryan, nr. St Austell, Cornwall

If a conversion scheme is felt to be the only way to prevent further decay, a scheme along these lines could be effective. However, as we said in our original letter, 'there is a quiet poetic attractiveness to the present ruination as it is gradually smothered by nature and as the walls become pegs for local fishermen and rests for upturned boats. Reconstruction might well be at the expense of this present pleasing melancholy air'. We also pressed for a clear relationship between any development and the repair work to the kilns themselves which is clearly needed.

THE OLD POST OFFICE, WHITTLESEY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

Whittlesey is apparently a town in trouble. Not only is the George Hotel empty but so is the Old Post Office, probably Whittlesey's most significant and certainly its most prominent secular building. Built *c.*1725 it was used as the town's Post Office between 1913 and 1998 and has been derelict and boarded up ever since. Seventy years of occupancy by the GPO was not especially beneficial, although the institutionalisation of the interior did retain the original staircase and much of the panelling. What was highly regrettable,

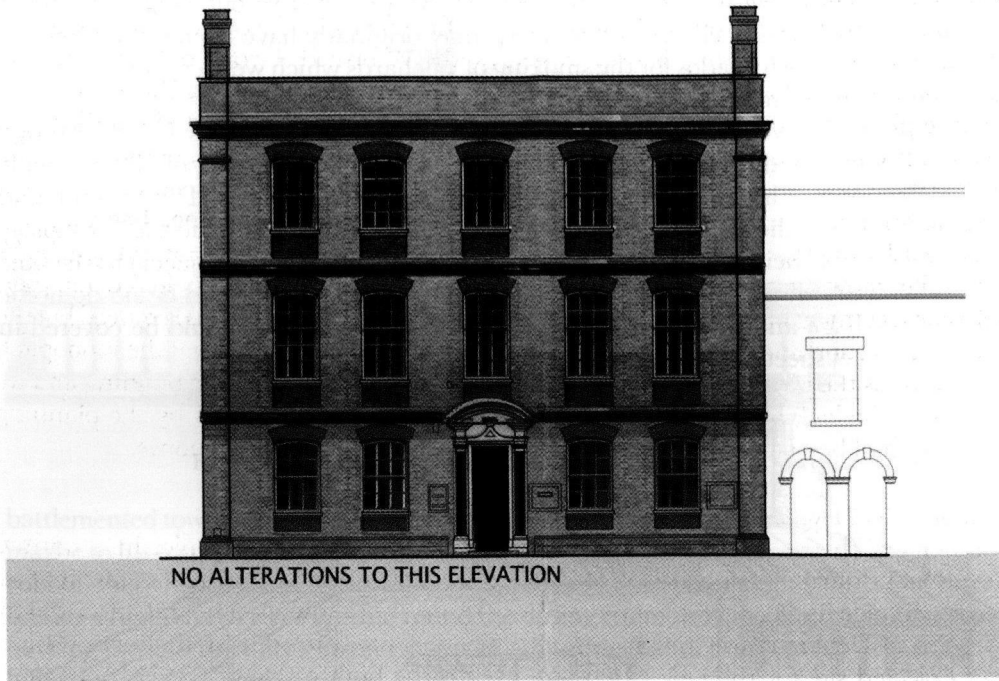


Fig. 4

The Old Post Office, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, front elevation

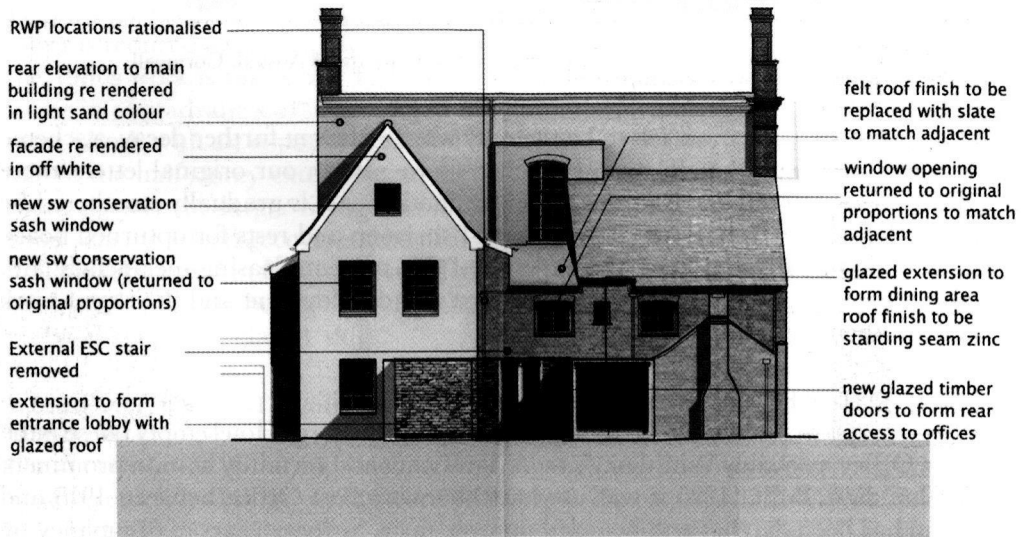


Fig. 5

The Old Post Office, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, rear elevation

however, was the demolition of the eighteenth-century stables behind. These had helped to frame the rear courtyard and contributed to the setting of the outstanding medieval parish church. The building is now owned by the Whitfields Group of Swavesey who have commissioned Ruddle Wilkinson of Peterborough (job architect, David Watts) to prepare plans to provide four new dwellings within the Grade II* listed building and seven in two new ranges running either side of the courtyard. We thought the new build in its critical position lying between the Post Office and the church promised a design of some originality which would help to heal and enrich the townscape. The very fine colour wash drawings prepared by Ruddle Wilkinson, sadly reproduced here only in black and white, show the quality of the front elevation which is to remain unaltered and their welcome treatment of the rear elevation facing south. Ugly 1980s work is removed but the sense of accretion and, indeed, that of visual ill discipline in the way that the monopitch roof overlaps the projecting stair hall bay is part of the character of the building and we welcomed the lack of 'tidying up'. At the time of writing no decision by the planning authority had been taken but the proposal has received a positive response.

GARDEN COTTAGE, PLAS CASTELL, BULL LANE, DENBIGH.

We thought this scheme 'bold but commendable'. It is hard to depict in a normal elevational drawing for we are talking about three distinct architectural elements. The garden cottage itself is an eighteenth-century three-storey townhouse built immediately adjacent to Denbigh's town wall. Beyond that, separated from it by the town wall, is the projected site for the new extension, itself to be built on land that is appreciably higher than that available to the Georgians. This literal separation has inspired the architect, Christopher Sanders, to prepare a scheme of careful repair (where the existing

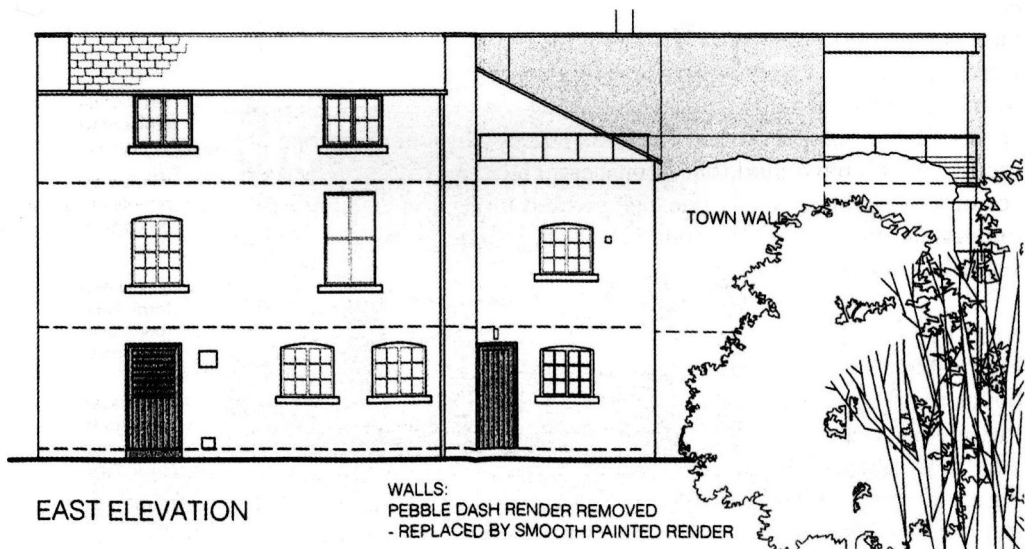


Fig. 6

Garden Cottage, Plas Castell, Bull Lane, Denbigh

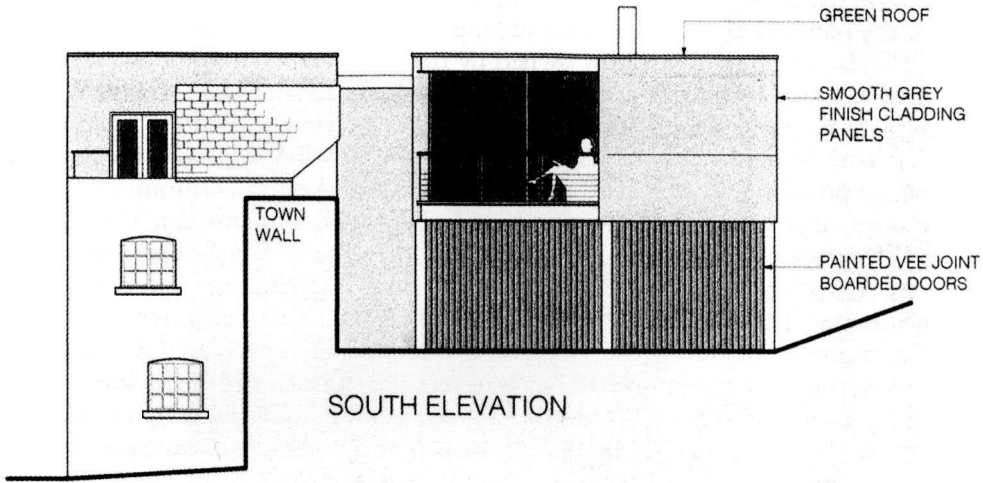


Fig. 7
Garden Cottage, Plas Castell, Bull Lane, Denbig

unattractive pebbledash is replaced by a lime-based smooth render on the listed building) with a new build that is complementary to the existing in roofline and rectilinearity but otherwise wholly of the twenty-first century. Figures 6 and 7 show the comparative daredevilry of the juxtaposition. Christopher Sanders used to work in London but has for many years been based in Denbig where he has established a reputation for both careful conservation and clean-line modern design, mostly in steel and glass. His Ty Brombil for a very steep site at Castle Hill, Denbig is a steel-framed structure and the materials were chosen because the winding approach precluded masonry construction. The frame also provided an efficient method of construction which avoided the conventional problems of transportation. He was responsible for a number of schemes of external repair which have made the Townscape Heritage Initiative at Denbig one of the most celebrated in the UK. He has also worked for Cadw at Rhuddlan Castle. Our present understanding is that the scheme is likely to get through the planning system but may yet fail to be built.

NETLEY OLD HALL FARM, DORRINGTON, SHROPSHIRE.

Figures 8-11 show the four sides of Netley Old Hall Farm. The bulk is eighteenth century but as the dramatically exposed timber-framed gable to the north-west shows, much of the late eighteenth century brickwork covers work that is at least two centuries earlier. The most unsatisfactory elevation is that shown fully in Figure 11 and obliquely on Figure 10. In the mid-nineteenth century a substantial extension was added running south-west. This lasted just over a century before it was itself almost wholly removed to be replaced by an unsuccessful attempt to hide the scar and the later outshot built in hard brick. The doorcase to the north-east dates from the same date (1964) as the



Fig. 8
Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorrrington, Shropshire, south-east elevation



Fig. 9
Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorrrington, Shropshire, south-east and south-west elevations



Fig. 10

Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorrington, Shropshire, south-west and north-west elevations



Fig. 11

Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorrington, Shropshire, north-west elevation

truncation. The drawings show the plans by Arrol and Snell both to put back some of the lost accommodation which is now once again needed, and to do it in a way which would help to rebalance the composition. The truncated nineteenth-century rear wing would be largely retained with the floor joists, beams and floorboards reused but set at a different level, the ridge height and profile of the roof would be modified, and a completely new full-height staircase provided to replace that of the nineteenth century. The new extension would echo the footprint of the proportions of the fifteenth-century primary range and more or less occupy the site of the previous mid-nineteenth century rear wing. It has been designed to achieve a new south-west elevation which, as Figure 13 shows, captures the character of a traditional five-bay late Georgian design with diminishing window heights and three attic dormers. By roofing the central part of the house at a height derived from the roof of the eighteenth-century cross-wing it will be possible to cover over the central part of the dwelling with a new lead-covered flat roof, thereby avoiding the unsightly dominance over the sixteenth-century roof presently exercised by the higher mid-nineteenth century ridgeline. The new elevations will be constructed using handmade matching red stock brick laid in Flemish Bond, whilst the new internal stairs will be in oak to a late eighteenth-century design incorporating cast aluminium



Fig. 12
Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorrington, Shropshire, proposed north-west elevation



Fig. 13

Netley Old Hall Farm, Dorington, Shropshire, proposed south-west elevation

Gothick balusters and a mahogany rail. The new conservatory is in timber with Gothic glazing and is to have a lead roof. Unusually, it is to be entered at both first and ground floor level. We supported the scheme in principle and commented on matters of detail. Planning permission and listed building consent have been granted.

ASHLANDS, TURNPIKE WATERFOOT,
RAWTENSTALL, LANCASHIRE.

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in his volume on North Lancashire singles out Rawtenstall as having a large number of mill owners' mansions. Ashlands is one of the most interesting.

It was built in 1863 at a cost of £8,000 to the designs of the local architect, Harry Thorndyke Percival (1833-85). The craftsmanship is of high quality and the style, a refined Italianate. It is socially interesting in the way that there is a discernible architectural differentiation between the family block constructed in ashlar freestone and the servants' quarters which are rockfaced. It is remarkably intact both in its fabric, apparently still with all its original windows, and in its spacious grounds. Inside too there are spectacular survivals, as in the ceiling to the main drawing room with painted cartouche panels of cupids



Fig. 14

Ashlands, Turnpike Waterfoot,
Rawtenstall, Lancashire



Fig. 15

Ashlands, Turnpike Waterfoot, Rawtenstall, Lancashire

with flowers and lambs, no doubt a reference to the wool trade that paid for the building. It is, like so many houses of its character and style, now in use as an old people's home. Also like many others with that use, it faces both stringent regulations and a change in economics that appear to be dictating substantial new extensions. The extension proposed for Ashlands is not encouraging. The new wing is almost as grim as the mills which paid for the villa, the complete absence of chimneys not helping. One particularly alarming aspect is that the glass link between the new and the old destroys one of the most important elements on the north elevation, the striking tripartite window shown in Figure 14 (apparently with later glass). Figure 15 shows, tucked into the entrant angle, the two tiers of stair hall windows, the one to be removed being the the lower one.

We are pressing for our criticisms of the new wing to be taken into account.

ECCLESIASTICAL CASES

We begin our examination of matters ecclesiastical with a chapel long out of use and one of the few from the nineteenth century to have spent the last few decades as a ruin.

FORMER WESLEYAN CHAPEL, BRADFORD-ON-AVON, WILTSHIRE.

Bradford-on-Avon almost rivals central Bath for the density of its listed buildings. One of them, dramatically visible in many long and medium views, is the former Wesleyan Chapel in Coppice Hill, set within the steep northern slope of the valley to the Avon close



Fig. 16

Former Wesleyan Chapel, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, existing front elevation

to the town centre. In most views only the first floor is visible as it perches like something from an Italian hilltop scene partly obscured by neighbouring buildings, climbing steps and mature trees. Although listed Grade II* it is in fact a ruin and has been so ever since a fire swept through it in 1975 (shortly after closure). It dates from 1818 and as Figure 17, illustrating the front elevation by NVB Architects shows, its current state seems to prove that ruination for so many Classical buildings is merely the most obvious way in which they embrace the Picturesque.

The trouble is that this is a situation which cannot persist indefinitely. In 1977 the Property Division of the Methodist Church sold off the site, both the chapel and its associated complex of Sunday School house, housekeeper's cottage, rector's house, burial ground and gardens. The chapel and gardens were purchased by the owners of an adjoining property, Nos 5 and 6 Mason's Lane, the remainder of the roof removed and the upper part of the west wall was taken down, albeit without listed building consent. The local authority stepped in to prevent further removals and subsequently in 1978 the owners created a private open air swimming pool within the walls. There is now a need for a substantial and further programme of repairs if the two-storey shell is not to become further dilapidated. The present owner, with architects NVB and engineers Mann Williams, plans to keep all that has currently survived (indeed not rebuilding the



Fig. 17

Former Wesleyan Chapel, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, proposed front elevation

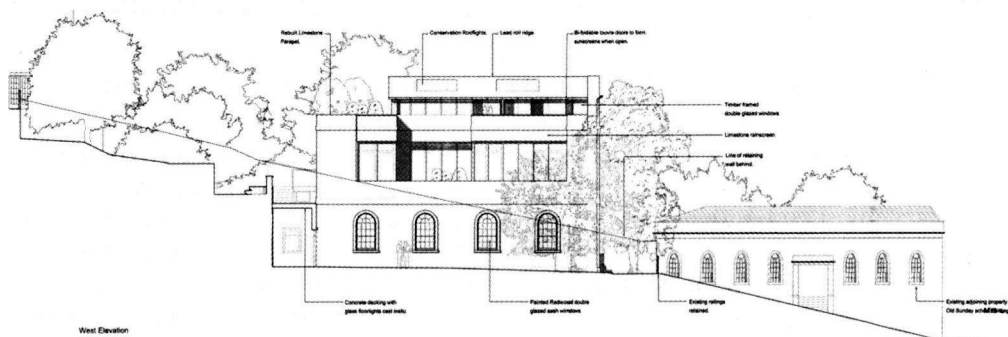


Fig. 18

Former Wesleyan Chapel, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, proposed side elevation

half demolished western wall to allow views outwards) and to slot a new house within. This will be in a light steel structure hidden behind the retained walling and a new limestone rain-screen running at cornice level. The new roof, running away from the retained gable but not to the full depth of the chapel, will be covered in natural slate. The lie of the land and the abundance of trees should conceal most of the 'gash' to the west for much of the year. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted on 29 September 2006. The architect responsible at NVB Architects is Andrew Bell.

MALMESBURY ABBEY,
WILTSHIRE.

Elsewhere in Wiltshire we have probably the most dramatic example referred to us in the last year of a scheme of extension to a place of worship in use. The site of the Abbey at Malmesbury has been in continuous Christian use since 635 AD although it gradually assumed its dramatic pre-Dissolution composition as the result of a building campaign marked by its dedication in 1177, the adding of the spire in the 1320s and embellishments in the fifteenth century, including a pulpitum built across the western arch of the crossing and parclose screens. However, as this reconstruction (Fig. 19) by Andrew MacDonald for North Wiltshire District Council implies, it suffered appallingly from the depredations of Henry VIII which saw the loss of the chancel, the crossing tower, most of the transepts, the western tower and the westernmost end of the nave.

It was the subject of successive and sympathetic conservation campaigns by father and son, Harold and Oswald Brakspear, in the twentieth century.

Now Ptolemy Dean, famous as a television presenter and gifted as a conservation architect, has been commissioned to provide a substantial new extension at one side of the ruined section of the nave. (The commission first went to Richard Griffiths Architects for whom Ptolemy then worked, Ptolemy Dean Associates Ltd being formed in 2005.) The drawings of the ground plan at present (Fig. 20) show that only the southern side of the western end of the nave survives and that is only to half height. That space is to be converted to provide the Abbey Bookshop, whilst Dean's entirely new work opposite, shown also at mezzanine floor level and in elevation (Figs. 22 and 23), builds on the aesthetic established by Richard Griffiths in his own extension to Southwark Cathedral, which, in turn, builds on the work and vocabulary of George Pace and Ronald Sims. The construction is in cavity walling with limestone outer skin, copper panels to the oak frames surrounding bronze casement windows, and a copper clad standing seamed pitched roof (something on which the SPAB in particular expressed misgivings, preferring

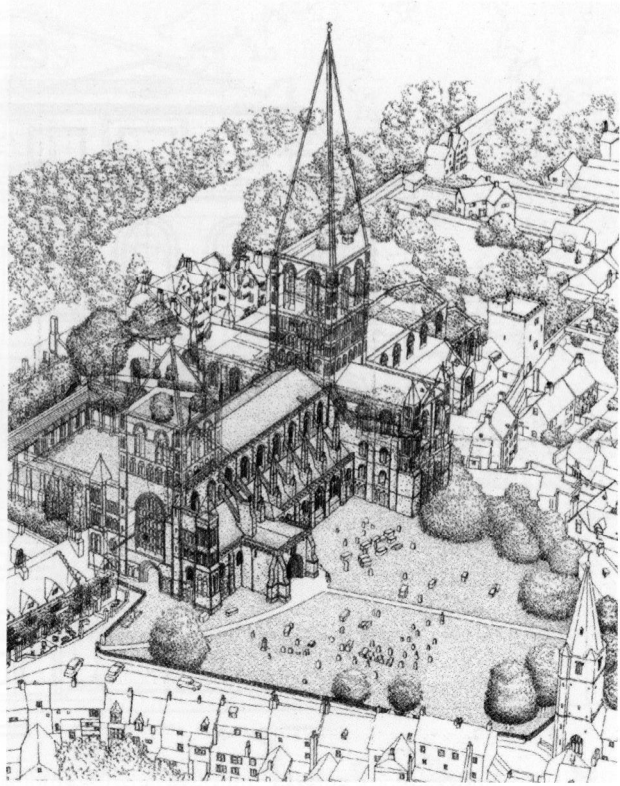


Fig. 19
Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire,
reconstruction of it at its fullest extent

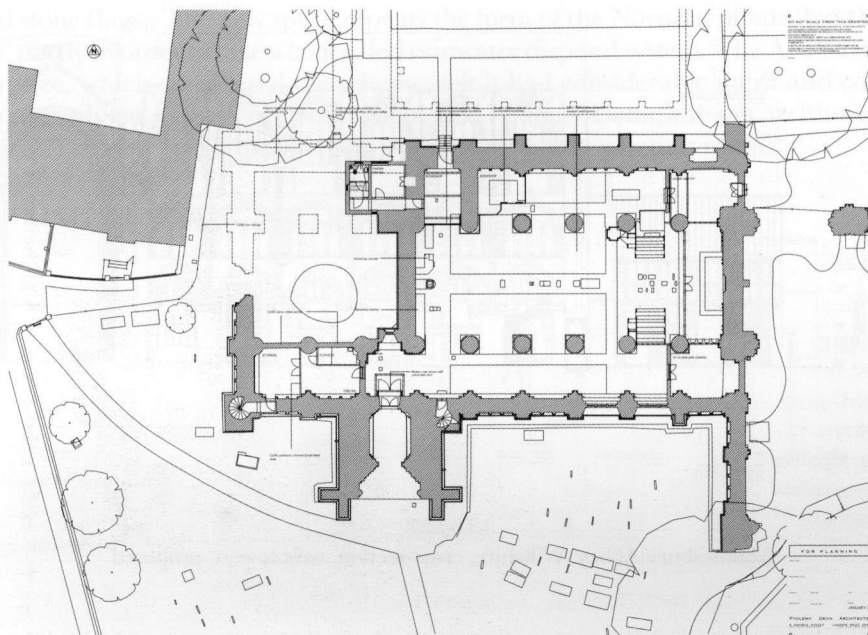


Fig. 20
Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire, existing ground floor plan

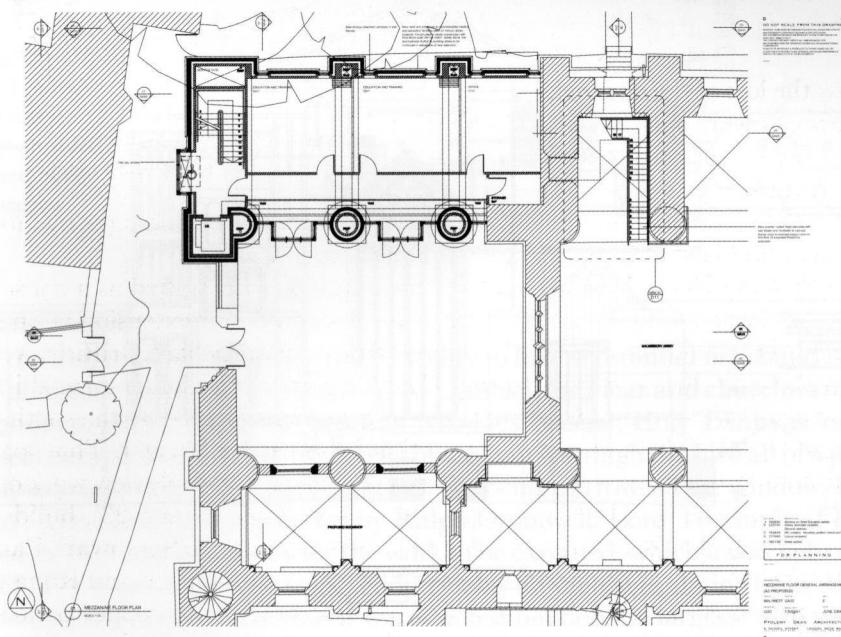


Fig. 21
Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire, proposed ground floor plan

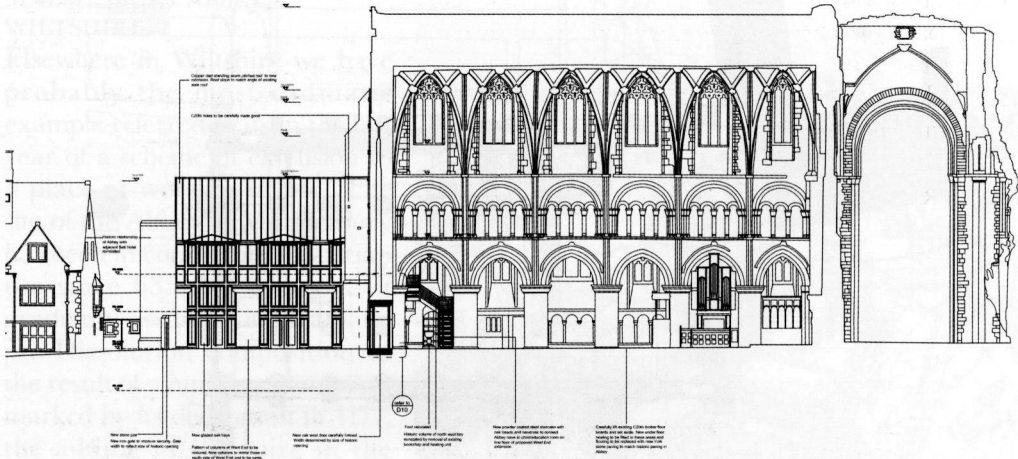


Fig. 22
Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire, cross-section, west to east, proposed

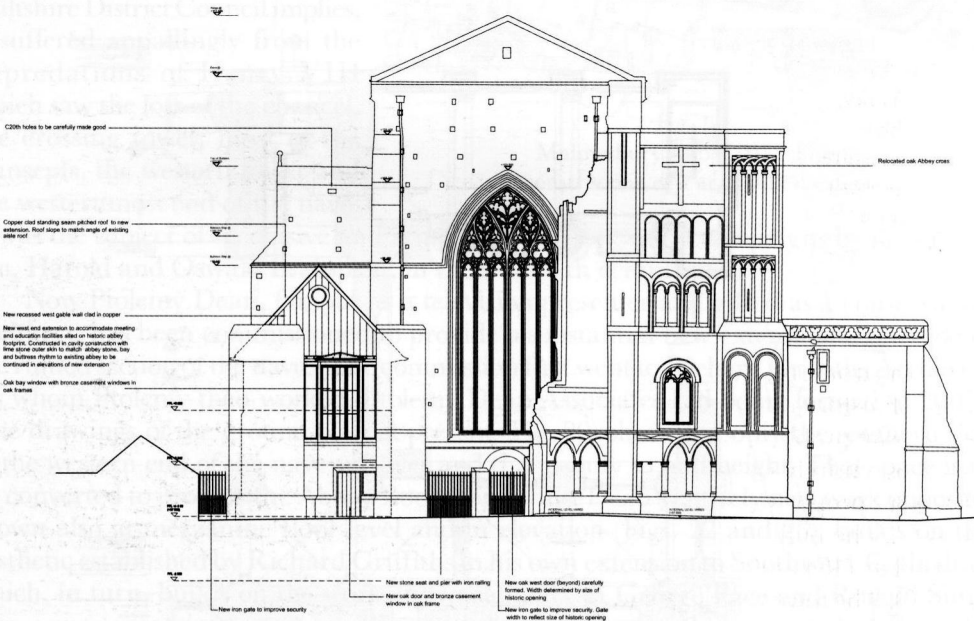


Fig. 23
Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire, proposed west elevation

instead stone flags). The new space repeats the form of the Norman pillars, but this time hollow, partly in order to take a concealed rainwater disposal system. The AMS Casework Committee, which considered the scheme, felt it had considerable merit and comment was made only on matters of detail. Alongside Ptolemy Dean, the job architect is Udo Heinrich. The new two-storey section will mainly house meeting rooms.

HOLY TRINITY, LAMBLEY, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

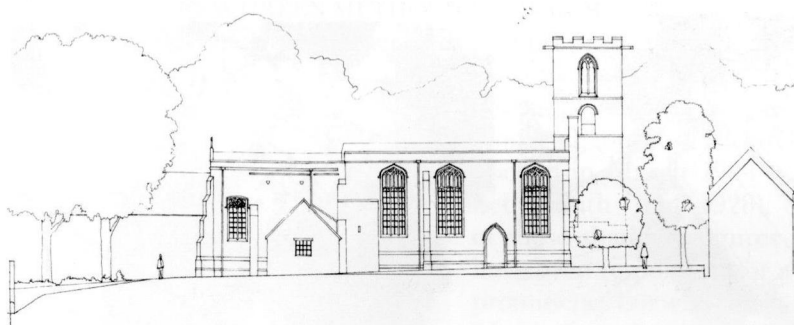


Fig. 24
Holy Trinity,
Lambley,
Nottinghamshire,
existing north
elevation

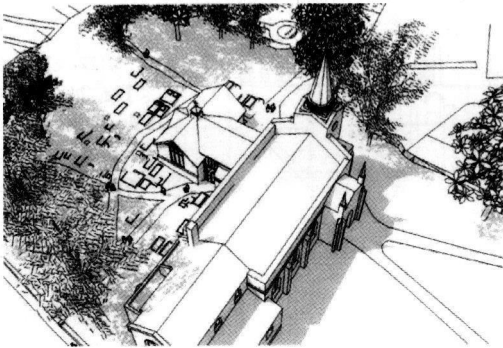


Fig. 25
Holy Trinity,
Lambley,
Nottinghamshire,
proposed north
elevation

One of the ironies of Malmesbury and its ability to take substantial new build is that the cruelty of history rendered it incomplete. At Lambley the vicar and churchwardens face the opposite problem. For in the words of Nikolaus Pevsner, Holy Trinity is 'one of the few almost entirely Perpendicular village churches in Nottinghamshire all of a piece and of felicitous proportions, tall and upright without being narrow, all the windows high and spacious'. The building was paid for by Ralph Cromwell, Lord Treasurer of England, who died in 1454 and left money for the work to be executed, which it was between 1466 and 1469. The tower is the only work of appreciably different age, dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Cromwell was a noted builder, his largesse also giving rise to Wingfield Manor in Derbyshire and Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire. The church wanted toilet and kitchen facilities and a safe space for children and the elderly. Their

ideas were given visual expression by the architect Peart Bradley of Nottingham who prepared the proposal shown in Figure 25. This was in effect a long corridor aisle added onto the nave and chancel. The vestry which was to come down was no particular loss, but the newcomer did impede the clean lines of what is one of the great late medieval churches. We opposed the scheme and planning permission has been refused. It is expected that an appeal will be lodged.

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, LEXDEN, COLCHESTER, ESSEX.



Aerial view from north-east



Aerial view from south-east

Fig. 26

St Leonard's Church, Lexden, Colchester, Essex

Are we more lenient if the building is much later and less important? Well, yes we are. When faced with the proposal shown here to provide a new multi-purpose room at St Leonards, built in 1821 with a chancel of 1893, and listed a 'mere' Grade II rather than Grade I, we did say yes. The hammerhead extension does not relate particularly well to the existing footprint but there are clear echoes of a traditional transept. The drawings are by Tim Venn Design of Colchester and a faculty for the work has been granted.

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, BUTTS LANE, EGGLESCLIFFE, TEESIDE (STOCKTON-ON-TEES).

The decision was even less taxing when faced with this self-consciously contextual extension planned for the medieval church of St John by the architect Christopher Downs of Durham. Not only are the language and materials exactly compatible but the new work succeeds a singularly ugly

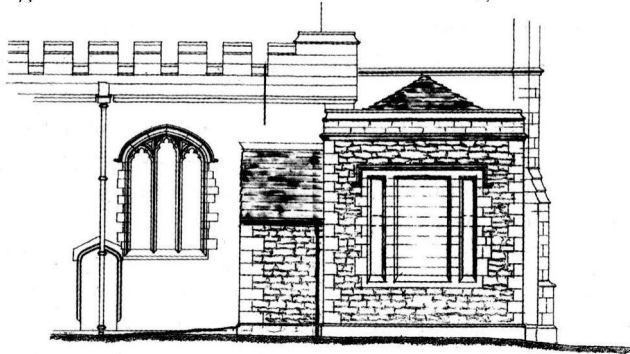


Fig. 27

St John's Church,
Butts Lane, Egglecliffe, Teeside,
Stockton-on-Tees

boilerhouse. The boiler will be rehoused within, as will a new accessible w.c., a flower arrangers' store and a lobby. The language is deliberately more domestic, as in the dripstone moulding to the head of the flat-topped windows, but the western door on the return of the monopitch shown to the left is to have a Gothic four-centred head. The materials are to be new natural sandstone and the slates, good quality green Lake District. Unsurprisingly, planning permission has been given.

ENGLEFIELD NEW GREEN METHODIST CHURCH, SURREY.

Our only Nonconformist chapel in this report is unexpected. As the photographs sent to us by David Rodger show, this is modest but



Fig. 28

Englefield New Green Methodist Church,
Englefield, Surrey

with sophisticated Arts and Crafts, almost Art Nouveau, touches. The architect of the building opened in March 1904 was William Howard Seth-Smith (1858-1928). Seth-Smith was one of those shadowy figures who never seems to have been responsible for a building of national prominence but who produced work at St Luke's, Maidstone of 1896 with displays of bravura in design and craftsmanship that still excite. And he was one of those who gathered artists about him. At Maidstone the carving on the capitals is by Gilbert Seale and the altar rails are by Bainbridge Reynolds. A substantial wall painting within the chancel on the south wall of 1918 establishes a further connection which we can take through to Englefield Green. This is a significant work by Ivon Hitchens which Pevsner rather ambiguously describes as 'harts by the water brook among stylized trees. The manner of Douanier Rousseau, a feeling of Mabel Lucie Attwell'. Ivon was actually the son of Alfred Hitchens who married Ethel Margaret Seth-Smith and who lived in Englefield Green from 1895. It is hard to believe that that connection did not open doors in terms of patronage. At

Englefield Green, Seth-Smith's architectural language was a dexterous use of roughcast for the walls, and Bath stone for the kneelers to the buttresses and splayed mullions and arch heads to the windows, with a double line of tiles above. Figure 29 illustrates the herringbone pattern beneath the tiled subsill, which is incised into the render.

The AMS was first alerted to the building as a possible candidate for closure, but in fact in the end it came in as one for reordering and maintaining in use. This is the result of the coming together of the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church within Englefield Green to form an ecumenical partnership called St Jude's United Church. As

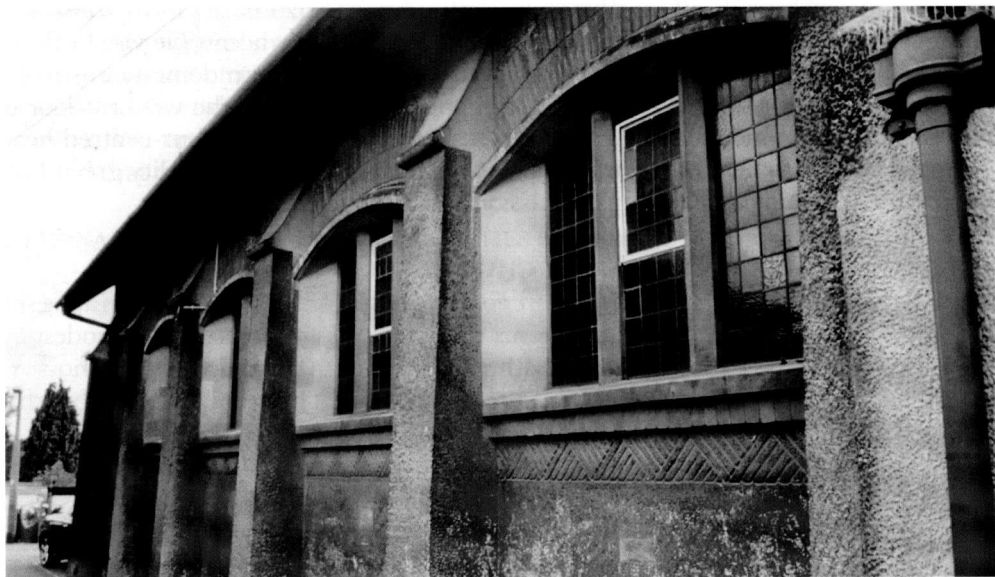


Fig. 29

Englefield New Green Methodist Church, Englefield, Surrey
Property Division, Methodist Church



Fig. 30

Englefield New Green Methodist Church, Englefield, Surrey, east end
Property Division, Methodist Church

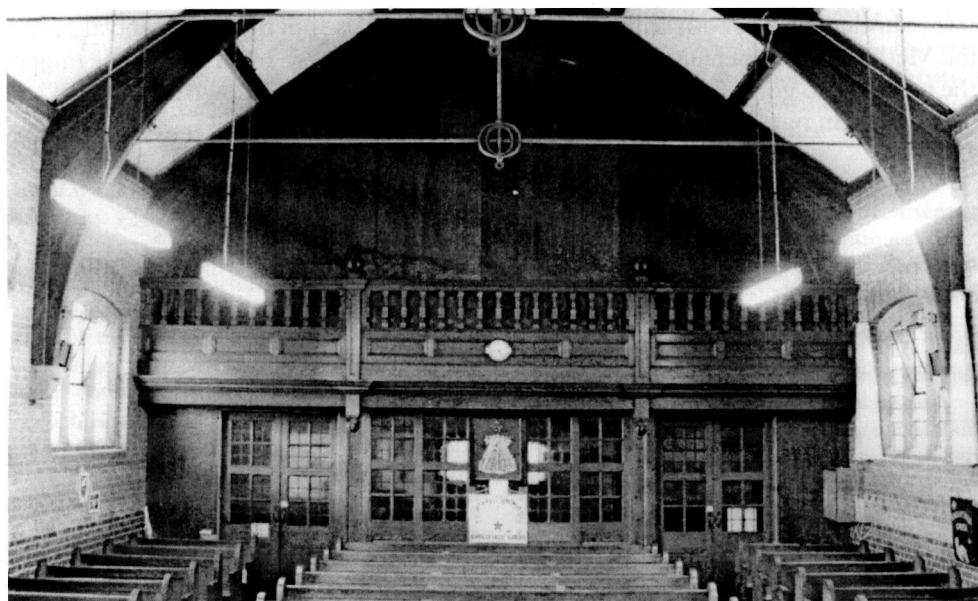


Fig. 31

Englefield New Green Methodist Church, Englefield, Surrey, west end
Property Division, Methodist Church

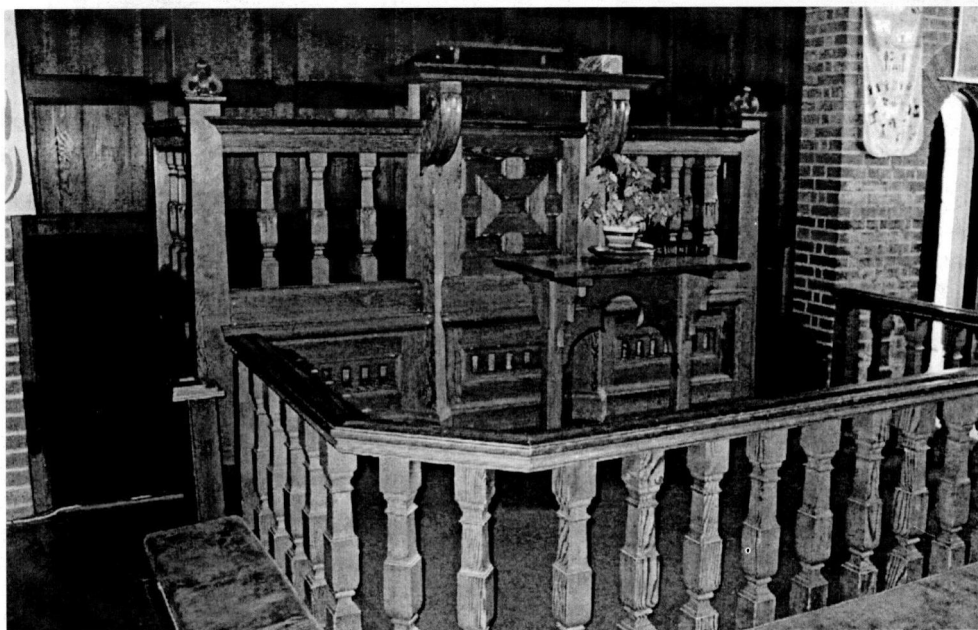


Fig. 32

Englefield New Green Methodist Church, Englefield, Surrey
Property Division, Methodist Church

far as we understand it, both buildings would remain in use but the more central position of the Methodists has persuaded the partnership to use, it more intensively. The majority of the pews are to go, as are the organ and the communion rail, shown in Figure 32. We remonstrated in particular over the latter.