

# In the Footsteps of William of Wykeham: Anglican Priest-Architects of the Nineteenth Century

by

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*The drift of much post-war scholarship has been away from the Romantic belief that the medieval faithful, whether laity, monks, or clergy, spurred on by the example of the early Christians of Rome in their hewn out caves, built churches and monasteries with their own devoted labour. Long-standing AMS trustee John H. Harvey spent much of his professional life establishing the concept of the medieval architect, demonstrating that the greatest churches and cathedrals were as much the result of individual human genius as the coming together in the corporate, even divine, inspiration of God's People and Clergy. And yet, as James Bettley shows in this seminal paper, the concept of the Anglican priest-architect in the heyday of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival has, if anything, been underplayed. Ernest Geldart was just one among many clergymen who not only built or embellished their own churches but on occasion offered their services to other congregations. Although this paper is confined to the work of Anglican clergy, the story is just as convincing beyond the Established Church. Men like Father Benedict Williamson were the Roman Catholic equivalent of Geldart, and what at face value seems like a Puginian myth, that the Franciscan Brothers shared the scaffolding with professional builders to construct the magnificent monastery at Gorton in Manchester, designed by E.W. Pugin in 1866-72, turns out to have been true. And in Wales few have hitherto taken seriously the Revd William Jones, who designed over 200 chapels, and the Revd Thomas Thomas, responsible for scores more. The Revd Thomas Morris seems by comparison to have been positively meagre in his output, given his friendly nickname of 'Ten Chapel Tom'.*

In 1849 the *Ecclesiologist* published lengthy accounts of St Bartholomew's Church, Lower Cam (Gloucs), which had in fact been consecrated five years earlier, and the newly restored St George, Upper Cam. Both accounts were generally favourable, and noted in particular that

they derive an interest of the highest kind from the circumstances of their erection and restoration; both being designed, and, we may almost add, executed, by the vicar of the parish, than whom no one in these days has more completely realised the old character of the priest-architect. No one can fail to rejoice in such instances when they occur, and they are not likely to occur in sufficient abundance seriously to interfere with the calling of the professional architect.<sup>1</sup>

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James Bettley's revised edition of the Pevsner Architectural Guide to Essex was published in 2007, and he is currently working on a new edition of Suffolk. For many years he worked in the Library and Drawings Collection of the RIBA, as well as at the Design Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum. His interest in priest-architects began while researching his PhD at the Courtauld Institute, 'The Reverend Ernest Geldart (1848-1929) and late nineteenth-century church decoration' (1999).

The idea of the priest-architect was clearly one that appealed to the editors, although, as we shall see, it was not one to which they always felt able to give their whole-hearted support. There was something reassuringly medieval about the priest-architect; in the words of Neale and Webb,

In ancient times, the finest buildings were designed by the holiest Bishops. Wykeham and Poore will occur to every Churchman. And we have every reason to believe, from God's word, from Catholick consent, and even from philosophical principles, that such must always be the case.<sup>2</sup>

Both William of Wykeham and Richard Poore, bishops of Winchester and Salisbury respectively, were commonly thought of as architects, and Poore in particular is still held to have played a significant part in the design of Salisbury Cathedral,<sup>3</sup> but they would now be considered more as active clients, perhaps combined with the role of project manager, while the role of architect would have been taken by the master mason. The tradition was, however, an attractive one, because it took to its logical conclusion the idea that church architects had to be devout churchmen, and that architects of churches should, ideally, design only churches. The idea of someone designing a church one moment and a public house the next was anathema.<sup>4</sup>

Although many medieval parish churches must have been built by their priests, either with their own hands or directing the local workforce, the priest-architect is really a nineteenth-century phenomenon, and neither before nor since can he be found in significant numbers. Amateur architects abounded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but very few of these seem to have been clergymen.<sup>5</sup> The overwhelming majority were landowners who designed improvements to their own estates and those of their friends, and if on occasion they may have turned their attention to the churches which lay on those estates, even then their activity was usually confined to funerary monuments.<sup>6</sup> One of the few clerical architects was Thomas Machell (1647-1698). After graduating from Oxford he returned to his native Westmorland, where 'he saw himself as a lone representative of the new historical and aesthetic attitudes that he had learned in Oxford', and designed some of the earliest classical houses in the county.<sup>7</sup>

Machell cannot have been alone in his cultural isolation. A typical parish at the time would very probably have contained only two educated men: the squire and the parson. In the case of the parson, he would almost certainly have been educated at Oxford or Cambridge, and would there have become acquainted with buildings of an architectural quality that he might not otherwise have encountered. When he returned to his country living he might well have preferred to act as his own architect, rather than rely upon provincial builders. It would also seem that the parson of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century was more likely to confine his architectural activity to rebuilding his own house. A notable example was Sydney Smith (1771-1845), who designed and largely built his own rectory at Heslington, near York: he considered the plans prepared by Peter Atkinson junior in 1813 to be too expensive, and so did the job himself.<sup>8</sup> His contemporary John Pridden (1758-1825) rebuilt the vicarage at Caddington (Beds) in 1812, acting as his own architect and surveyor; he was said to have had 'a considerable knowledge and natural taste for architecture and civil engineering', and designed the Sea-Bathing Infirmary at Margate (Kent), 1796.<sup>9</sup> Other clergy who designed their own parsonages include

George Bell at Bloxham (1815), Lord Augustus Fitz-Clarence at Mapledurham (1830), and Edward Payne at Swalcliffe (1838), all in Oxfordshire.<sup>10</sup>

Developments within the Church of England in the first half of the nineteenth century changed attitudes to buildings as well as to worship. One of the consequences of the Oxford Movement, generally taken to date from John Keble's Assize Sermon of 1833, was that many clergy began to assert their priestly authority and their independence not only from their worldly masters (such as lay patrons) but even from their bishops. The ecclesiological societies, such as those of Oxford, Exeter, and, most influentially, Cambridge, were dominated by clergymen, and their knowledge of the finer points of Gothic architecture led to an awareness of the shortcomings of the churches in their care. Indeed, in the early days of the Gothic Revival many clergy would have had a better understanding of Gothic architecture than many architects, at least in point of view of style if not of structure. On a more down-to-earth note, the Pluralities Act of 1838 meant that clergy were more likely to be resident in a single parish and to attend to the church, parsonage and school in which they were expected to spend so much of their time. It is hardly surprising, given a little knowledge and the availability of published source books and guidance, that many clergymen became their own architect.

Quite how many it is not possible to say. Canon Basil Clarke (1903-1978) compiled 'a brief account of those clergymen of the Church of England who, in the 19th century, acted as architects and craftsmen in the building, rebuilding, restoration or adorning of churches in England, Wales, & Scotland, and overseas',<sup>11</sup> and identified 151 such clergymen; he listed a further 22 who were based overseas, and eight professional architects who became clergymen.<sup>12</sup> Out of a total of 15-20,000 clergymen in the Church of England in the second half of the nineteenth century,<sup>13</sup> that is a very small but nonetheless significant proportion, and anyone researching parish churches is likely to have come across further examples not known to Clarke. Leaving aside those who designed and made furnishings and fittings and otherwise decorated their churches with their own hands (in Clarke's words, 'woodcarving and joinery were easier for an amateur, and painting was almost too easy'), the priest-architects range from those who restored or rebuilt their own church, perhaps just once in their clerical career, to those who were regarded as authorities and were consulted by fellow clergy in their neighbourhood, and one or two who were semi-professional architects.

Also characteristic of the nineteenth century were those clergy working as missionaries overseas, who very often had no option but to be their own architect (and builder), unless they were to purchase one of the prefabricated churches advertised by church furnishing companies that were so despised by the editors of the *Ecclesiologist*.<sup>14</sup> In 1853, William Grey (1820-1872) wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Oxford Architectural Society, of which he was a member. He had previously been Corresponding Secretary (for Wiltshire), and was now its 'first-appointed Colonial Secretary', having taken up a living in the diocese of Newfoundland.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, he 'had the office of Diocesan architect forced upon me, and in that capacity have given designs for eight entire new churches, and for additions to two existing churches'. He thought this entirely appropriate:

Let me add my voice to those of many others who have spoken before me, and strongly advise the junior members of our University to qualify themselves for Holy Orders by a

practical knowledge of architecture. It is no disgrace to follow such men as William of Wykeham.

Before going to Canada, Grey had served as curate of Allington (Wilts), where he designed St John the Baptist, 1848-51 (Fig. 1).<sup>16</sup> On his return to England he designed the church, clergy house and schools at Rownhams (Hants), 1855,<sup>17</sup> and was jointly responsible, with R.J. Jones, for St Michael, Swanmore (Isle of Wight), and its clergy house, 1860-2.<sup>18</sup>

Another young clergyman in Canada was Edward Shuttleworth Medley (1838-1910). The background to his situation was a little more complicated, and is worth unravelling because of the way it illuminates the close ties that then existed between the Church and the study and practice of architecture. Medley's father John (1804-1892) was rector of St Thomas, Exeter, and was one of the leading lights of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (EDAS). He is said<sup>19</sup> to have designed furniture in Scott and Moffatt's Church of St Paul, Chudleigh Knighton (Devon), and he was the author of *Elementary Remarks on Church Architecture* (1841). He designed Oldridge chapel, near Crediton,<sup>20</sup> but his principal architectural work was St Andrew's Church at Exwick, a suburb of Exeter, of which he was 'founder and general designer', the nominal architect being a protégé of the EDAS, John Hayward (1808-1891). The *Ecclesiologist* considered the church to be 'the best specimen of a modern church we have yet seen'.<sup>21</sup>

Edward Medley followed his father into the Church (although with less distinction), but started adult life as an architect. John Medley became first bishop of Fredericton,



Fig. 1

St John the Baptist, Allington, Wiltshire, by the Revd William Grey, 1848-51. It has recently been taken into the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches.

*Photograph by Matthew Saunders*

Canada, in 1845, where one of his first tasks was to oversee the building of a cathedral, completed in 1853 to designs by William Butterfield. He sent his son to study for three years under Butterfield in London, after which Edward returned to New Brunswick and designed a series of neo-Gothic wooden churches there. One of the most ambitious of these was Christ Church, St Stephen (1863-4); it was consecrated in 1864 by his father, and Edward was ordained priest at the same service. He became rector the following year but left his parish in 1872, apparently as the result of some Ritualist controversy. From then until his death he held various ecclesiastical appointments in England and Scotland but does not seem to have continued work as an architect.<sup>22</sup> Another of Medley's timber churches, St Mary the Virgin, New Maryland, of 1863-4, was visited and sketched by the priest-architect par excellence, Ernest Geldart, in 1882 (Fig. 2).<sup>23</sup>

John Medley's influence spread in other directions too. Robert Medley Fulford (1845/6-1910) would appear to have been named after him; his father was the Revd J.L. Fulford, one of the original members of the EDAS. The younger Fulford was articled to John Hayward, practised as an architect (being elected Associate of the RIBA in 1876) but was ordained priest in 1893.<sup>24</sup> Like his father before him, he became Secretary of the EDAS, thus combining to the full his architectural and clerical interests.<sup>25</sup>

It was natural that Edward Medley, trained as an architect, should have designed churches in remote Newfoundland. Others too were able to put architectural training to good use. Herbert Woodward (1854-1932) had been articled to S.S. Teulon, and worked in the Architectural Department of the War Office before going out to Zanzibar as a lay worker.<sup>26</sup> Here his first task 'was to design benches for the new church, and to superintend their construction by a native carpenter';<sup>27</sup> the church in question being the cathedral that was being built by the so-called "'architect" bishop' Edward Steere.<sup>28</sup> The cathedral was designed by C.F. Hayward but Steere 'acted as master-builder and clerk of the works'; it was begun in 1873 and the first service was held in 1877.<sup>29</sup> Woodward took Holy Orders and pursued a clerical career in Africa, becoming a canon of Zanzibar Cathedral in 1930.

For some colonial clergy, however, architecture became their principal



Fig. 2

St Mary the Virgin, New Maryland, Canada, by the Revd Edward Medley, 1863-4. Sketched by the Revd Ernest Geldart in 1882 and used by him to illustrate an article in *Dawn of Day* (May 1890), 77-8.

occupation. John Frederick Bourne (1816-1879) reported to the Ecclesiological Society in 1847 from Demerara on the churches of Guiana.<sup>30</sup> He himself was engaged on rebuilding St Paul's, Demerara, and the following year wrote about adding a chancel to St Augustine's, Friendship.<sup>31</sup> He became something of an expert on designing for the tropics, and in a paper published in 1851 described the use of cavity walls at St Augustine's as a way of keeping the building cool. He advocated filling the cavity with ashes from the sugar works, or a similar light material, because a void would harbour vermin.<sup>32</sup> Bourne retired from the ministry in 1853 and became a civil and military engineer working in British Guiana, Cape Town, and Barbados.<sup>33</sup> An equally varied colonial career was that of Alberto Dias Soares (1830-1909), the London-born son of a Portuguese merchant. He trained as a civil engineer before sailing to New South Wales in 1852, but here he was unable to find an engineering job, studied theology, and supported himself working as a merchant. Once ordained he threw himself into architectural work, designing numerous churches, parsonages, schools, and halls, and was honorary diocesan architect.<sup>34</sup>

Of those who stayed in England, clergy who became architects, usually temporarily, did so for a variety of reasons. Only a very small number had actually trained as architects. Among the most conspicuous of these was William Henry Lowder (1831-1901), brother of one of the leading Ritualist clergymen C.F. Lowder. Like Medley, he was a pupil of Butterfield, and designed the font in Butterfield's Church of St Matthias, Stoke Newington.<sup>35</sup> His first clerical appointment was as curate of Bisley (Gloucs), where he carried out a 'drastic' restoration of the church in 1860-2, including the almost total rebuilding of the nave, aisles, and south porch. He also rebuilt the Bisley Wells in 1863, 'rural and pretty, though the water is no longer fit to drink'.<sup>36</sup> Even after moving to Staffordshire he continued to be active in the neighbourhood, restoring St Andrew, Miserden, in 1866, and St Nicholas of Myra, Ozleworth, in 1873-4 (Fig. 3). He also built St Augustine, Eastcombe, a school-cum-chapel, like his restorations considered 'hardly subtle'.<sup>37</sup> More successful was St Mary Magdalene, Broadbottom (Cheshire), 1888-90, while vicar of St George, Hyde: 'well placed on falling ground'.<sup>38</sup> In 1891 he was appointed vicar of Southminster (Essex), and here attracted unfavourable attention for his restoration of St Leonard's, which included a pulpit that he carved himself.<sup>39</sup> His parishioners were not enthusiastic, nor was the architectural press, in spite of the plans being approved by Ewan Christian, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and G.E. Pritchett, to whom Lowder had turned for support. The *Architect* feared that on the strength of the Southminster case, 'amateurs, or even ladies, would be eligible to be accepted as architects for church buildings'.<sup>40</sup> The writer was clearly unaware of Lowder's training and experience as an architect, but was justified in his reservations about Lowder's ability: the result is incoherent, and the exterior still looks unfinished.

The *Ecclesiologist*, as we have seen, was not averse to the idea of amateur architects, and the vicar of Cam (Gloucs), George Madan, who restored St George and built St Bartholomew, was highly praised. St Bartholomew's they considered 'one of the most successful churches of modern times. Built almost entirely, we believe, from the designs of the Vicar, and erected with funds collected by his own generous and nearly unassisted efforts, it may be taken as an example of what may be effected under unfavourable circumstances by self-denying devotion'.<sup>41</sup> Modern critics have agreed: 'No better and



Fig. 3

St Nicholas of Myra, Ozleworth, Gloucestershire, restored by the Revd W.H. Lowder, 1873-4. Now vested in the Churches Conservation Trust.

*Photograph by Christopher Dalton*

no worse than the work of a professional architect; in fact rather good for the date, and not unlike Benjamin Ferrey'.<sup>42</sup> Madan himself was very modest about his achievement. His main reason for not employing an architect – as was so often the case – was to save money, and he made no claims for the originality of his designs: they were, as he explained to the Incorporated Church Building Society, 'for the most part mere copies of other churches'. He had listened to the comments of the Cambridge Camden Society and adopted the changes they suggested, but unlike some priest-architects did not possess sufficient artistic skill to produce the plans himself: for this he turned to 'the Master of the Dursley Commercial School, who employed the boys of the School to draw and colour them... This will account for many slight inaccuracies in the drawings'. Nonetheless the ICBS felt able to make a grant of £300.<sup>43</sup>

Another Gloucestershire priest-architect was Benjamin Perkins, vicar of Wotton-under-Edge for fifty-two years from 1829. He was responsible for major alterations to St Mary's Church in 1838-40, destroying many eighteenth-century fittings in the process, although by 1872 he called upon a professional, C.P. Pritchett, to restore the south aisle. Perkins also designed the Ann Bearpacker Almshouses in the town, 1837-8, and at nearby Hillesley designed St Giles' Church, 1845-51: 'a good building, modest and learned'.<sup>44</sup>

As well as Madan, the *Ecclesiologist* was also happy to endorse the work of James Francis Turner (1829-1893), who rebuilt St Maurice, Ellingham (Northumberland), keeping only the chancel walls, in 1862: 'It is not often that we can commend the work of amateurs, but in this case we are glad that we can speak favourably'.<sup>45</sup> Turner had already built the chapel of Bishop Hatfield's Hall (later Hatfield College), Durham, 1853, and St John's, Greenside, 1853-7; he later restored St Peter, Titchfield (Hants), in 1866-7, with a new south aisle, but went to Australia in 1869 as Bishop of Grafton and Armidale.<sup>46</sup>

The *Ecclesiologist* also approved wholeheartedly of the restoration of St Margaret, Wicken Bonhunt (Essex), but with a note of caution:

This interesting restoration was conducted without professional aid by the rector, the Rev. J.H. Sperling. To less competent ecclesiologists, however, we should not recommend the adoption of this course.<sup>47</sup>

John Hanson Sperling (1825-1894) was, however, something of a special case. He was the author of *Church Walks in Middlesex*, published in 1849; the second edition, 1853, included additional material on newly erected church, which shows him to have been completely au fait with the latest ecclesiological thinking. He came of a clerical family and his uncle, Harvey James Sperling, was rector (and lord of the manor) of Papworth St Agnes (Cambs), where J.H. Sperling is said to have been responsible for the rebuilding of the church in 1848-54 (Fig. 4); if so, he would still have been an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, when work started.<sup>48</sup>

Sperling was appointed rector of Wicken Bonhunt in 1856; his father was the patron. He immediately built the rectory, at a cost of some £5,000, a building described by Pevsner as 'gruesome'.<sup>49</sup> He then turned his attention to the church, restoring the chancel

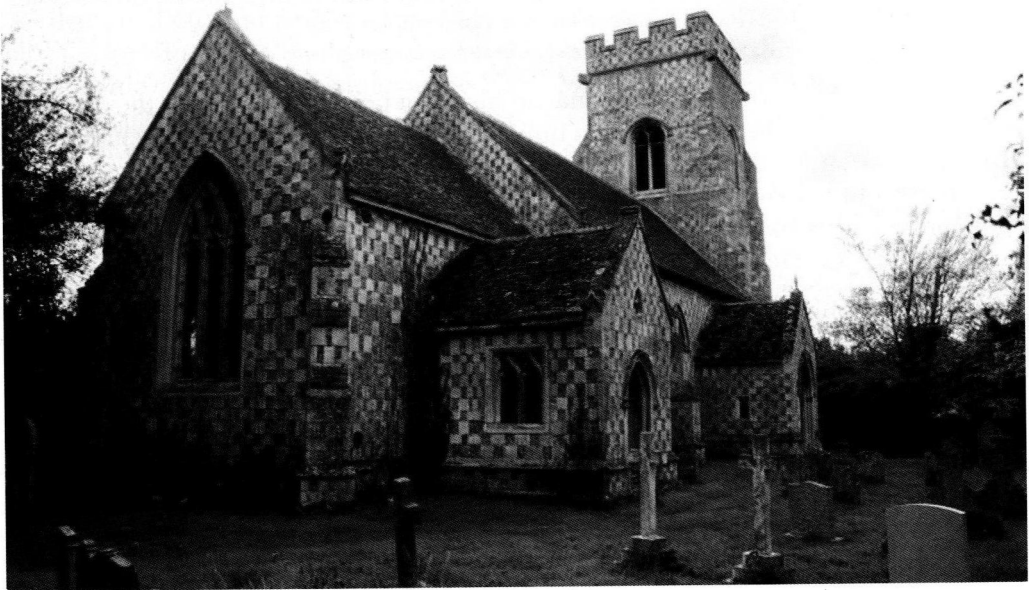


Fig. 4

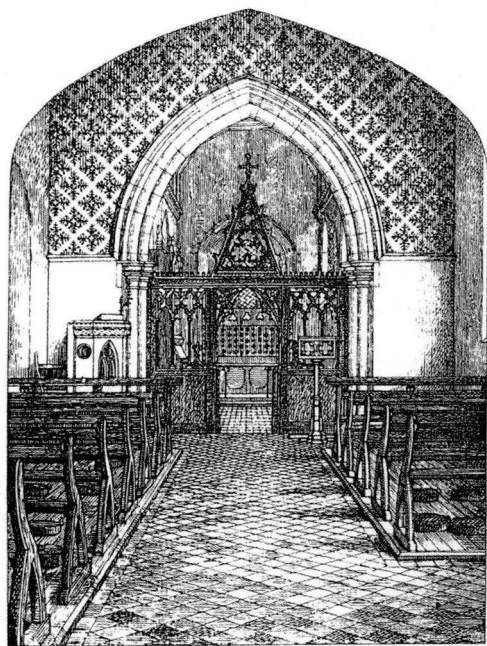
St John the Baptist, Papworth St Agnes, Cambridgeshire, rebuilt 1848-54, probably by the Revd J.H. Sperling for his uncle the Revd H.J. Sperling. Now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches.

*Photograph by Matthew Saunders*



in 1857 and rebuilding the nave and tower in 1858-9 (Fig. 5). For this he acted as his own architect, but commissioned others as well: G.E. Pritchett designed the choir stalls, and G.E. Street supplied the design for the pulpit. There was also stained glass by Lavers & Barraud.<sup>50</sup> Sperling confirmed his ecclesiological authority with a paper 'On the churches of north west Essex', concluding with 'a short notice of the more cheering signs of church revival and restoration, for which our district now stands honourably distinguished'.<sup>51</sup> From Wicken Bonhunt he went to Westbourne (Sussex), which church he also restored in 1863-4. He is credited with designing the east window in collaboration with Nathaniel Westlake, but the architectural work was left to Ewan Christian (chancel) and Benjamin Ferrey (nave).<sup>52</sup> Sperling became a Roman Catholic and left Westbourne in 1871.<sup>53</sup>

Henry Thomas Ellacombe (1790-1885) was another favourite of the Ecclesiological Society: he was the 'esteemed vicar' of Clyst St George (Devon) from 1850, his name 'known to and venerated by all ecclesiologists'. This tribute was prompted by the lychgate he designed for the church in 1867: 'perhaps the barge-boards are less ecclesiastical in feeling than might have been wished: but the whole is very successful.' He had already rebuilt the church, in 1851-60, but it was gutted in the Second World War and rebuilt by T.J. Rushton.<sup>54</sup> Ellacombe, who was something of an authority on church bells, had actually trained as an engineer after leaving Oxford, working at Chatham Dockyard



Wicken Bonhunt Church, co. Essex.—Interior.



Wicken Bonhunt Church, co. Essex.—Exterior.

Fig. 5

St Margaret, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex, restored by the Revd J.H. Sperling, 1857-9. Interior and exterior views, probably by Sperling, published in the *East Anglian*, 1 (July 1862), 222-3.

under Marc Isambard Brunel, but he left there in 1816 and was ordained priest in 1817. That year he became curate of Bitton (Gloucs), then vicar in 1835; he restored the church, St Mary's, over the years, and may also have designed the National School of 1830.<sup>55</sup> He was succeeded as vicar by his son Henry Nicholson Ellacombe (1822-1916), who inherited his father's architectural inclinations: he replaced the hammerbeam nave roof in 1862-5 and also designed the carved seats. He wrote in 1907 of this work:

In the last century, or at the end of the eighteenth, the churchwardens destroyed the rood screen, the old seats, and the old roof, and put up an elaborate Tuscan reredos, very ugly, as we should say, but costly and well worked. My father, in 1820, destroyed all their work as far as he could, and did some excellent work in the fashion of the day. Most of his work I destroyed, and received his thanks and approval for so doing. I have little doubt that my successors will undo much of my work; and the time may come when they will restore the Tuscan reredos. To such an event I look forward with a very light heart; if the work is done solely in *majorem Dei gloriam*, I wish them all success.<sup>56</sup>

The reredos was in fact by John Wood the Younger, 1760-1, and Ellacombe reused and remodelled it not long after writing those words. He also, in 1880, designed the carved stone pulpit and low screen in the Church of St Anne, Oldland.<sup>57</sup>

William Haslam (1818-1905) was also favoured by the *Ecclesiologist*. He was described as being 'well known, practically as well as theoretically, as an experienced church-builder', when the journal considered his designs for St George the Martyr, Truro (Cornwall).<sup>58</sup> Haslam's reputation as an experienced church-builder may rest largely on his own account contained in *From Death into Life, or, twenty years of my ministry*. Here he describes his appointment to his first parish, Perranzabuloe, where he served as curate in 1842-6. Once he had restored the church, doing much of the work with his own hands, it

began to be the talk of the neighbourhood. Numbers of people came to see it, and among them several clergymen, who asked me to come and restore their churches.

There were many places where the people could not afford to rebuild the structure. In such, I was invited to exercise my skill in repairing, as I had done with my own; in others, I was asked to give designs for restoring portions of the edifice; and in some, for rebuilding altogether. In this district, schools were not built nor parsonage-houses enlarged without sending for me.

For several years I was looked upon as an authority in architectural matters. I rode about all over the county from north to west, restoring churches and designing schools, and was accounted the busiest man alive.<sup>59</sup>

Another task he was given was drawing up new ecclesiastical districts under Peel's New Parishes Act of 1843, and in 1846 he was rewarded with the incumbency of one of these, Baldhu. He immediately set about building a new church, consecrated in 1848: 'I drew the designs for it, passed them, and obtained money enough to begin to build'.<sup>60</sup> However, it seems his memory was at fault, because the *Ecclesiologist* credited the design to William White, and it is generally taken to be that architect's first commission; Haslam is credited with some of the painted decoration.<sup>61</sup>

By coincidence, the vicarage and schools of St George's, Truro, were the work of another prolific amateur, Francis Charles Hingeston-Randolph (1833-1910), simply F.C. Hingston until his marriage in 1860, when he also adopted an older spelling of his original surname.<sup>62</sup> He began his clerical career as curate of Holywell, Oxford, before

moving to Hampton Gay in 1858; he was there only two years, but managed to restore the church.<sup>63</sup> At the same time he was involved in a proposed restoration of St Peter's, Newlyn (Cornwall), but although a grant was offered by the ICBS, when the tenders came in from the builders the scheme was too expensive and a new design was prepared by Salter & Perrow, a London firm.<sup>64</sup> Hingeston-Randolph then became rector of Ringmore (Devon), where he restored All Hallows, introducing stained glass by Horwood Bros of Mells, altar hangings and vestments by Jones & Willis, and metalwork by Hardman; 'the present rector has been his own architect, and the works have been carried out under his superintendence by the masons of Ringmore and a neighbouring village'.<sup>65</sup> According to Basil Clarke he also, in addition to the work at Truro, restored St Columb Minor, 1886, and Zennor, Manaccan, and St Colan, and was instrumental in ensuring that the aisle of St Mary's, Truro, was incorporated into the new cathedral rather than being demolished.<sup>66</sup> In 1885 he was responsible for renovating the roof of St Ia's Church, St Ives.<sup>67</sup> He was therefore hardly exaggerating when he wrote to the ICBS,

Although I cannot practice professionally I am practically a Professional Architect, and have been always recognized as such by the Bounty Board and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners under whom I have built several large Parsonage Houses.

He was writing, in December 1882, in connection with an application for a grant to assist with the restoration of St Mary's, Belstone (Devon), and although initial plans had been drawn up by P.B. Hayward of Exeter in 1875, Hingeston-Randolph claimed the credit for what was actually done:

At the request of the Archdeacon of Totnes, and with the Bishop's approval, I undertook the Restoration of this church, and carried it out last year... The whole of the work was carried out in the most substantial and workmanlike manner... I rebuilt the Porch, solidly and suitably, but did not waste money on useless side windows – of which there were none in the old Porch.

The ICBS overcame its objection to the work not being overseen by a professional architect, and J.P. Seddon passed the work on behalf of the Society in 1882.<sup>68</sup>

Of course the efforts of priest-architects did not always meet with approval. When Clement Winstanley Carlyon drew up plans in 1876 for restoring the church at Philleigh (Cornwall), the committee of the EDAS urged him to call in a competent architect.<sup>69</sup> Carlyon was rector of St Just-in-Roseland. He restored the church there, including painted texts on the walls, and was then asked by his cousin, Samuel Spry, to restore St Anthony-in-Roseland, next to Place House which Spry had just rebuilt (Fig. 6).<sup>70</sup> The *Ecclesiologist* found the work 'satisfactory on the whole but with many blemishes... The pulpit (the work of a clergyman) is too high, and the base is hideous... The seats are very rude and simple... There is no screen, but some wretched toy-like altar rails.'<sup>71</sup> The seats, as at St Just, were carved by Carlyon himself. To the modern eye, the overall effect is more charming than it might have seemed in 1851, but the editors of the *Ecclesiologist* were notoriously blunt in expressing their views. At Birlingham (Worcs), 'a very incorrect and tasteless, but expensive, new chancel has been erected, no architect being employed – the rector and the mason being the sole architects'.<sup>72</sup> The rector in question must have been Robert Eyres Landor (1781-1869), brother of Walter Savage Landor and himself a poet and dramatist.<sup>73</sup> The church, except for the fifteenth-century tower, was rebuilt in



Fig. 6

St Anthony-in-Roseland, Cornwall, restored by the Revd C.W. Carlyon, 1849-50. Now vested in the Churches Conservation Trust.

*Photograph by Christopher Dalton*

1871 by Ferrey. Also mercifully unnamed, but in fact William Wyan Welby (1814-1881), was the vicar of Bolton upon Dearne (Yorks), 'a not particularly interesting fourteenth century church':

The parson being his own architect, among other things he broke up what carved work remained in his church, and turned his font into a fern-pot. He also added a new hall pew, which is really something like a comfortable parlour. It is lucky that he only plastered the stonework.<sup>74</sup>

The *Ecclesiologist* was particularly scathing about a church designed by John Louis Petit (1801-1868), with whom the editors disagreed on many occasions. Petit was himself an architectural writer, and might therefore be considered fair game; although ordained, he held only one clerical appointment, as curate of Bradfield (Essex) in 1840-8. The church

in question was at Caerdeon (Gwynedd), which he built at the request of his brother-in-law, the Revd W.E. Jelf, in 1861-2; it was his only executed architectural design (Fig. 7).

On a rough mountain side... stands what looks at first sight like something between a large lodge gate and a lady's rustic dairy... The architect is the Rev. J.L. Petit, and the object of the building... is to exhibit to the world the notions of picturesque appropriateness entertained by that clever amateur. Mr Petit, as everybody knows, is always drawing and denouncing Gothic, while seeking his practical model in the rustic Italian of hillside chapels on the flanks of the Southern Alps... In a word, the effect of the building is something like that of the Swiss chalet on the Barnet road.<sup>75</sup>

The relative freedom often enjoyed by the priest-architect meant that he could design something offensive to the eyes of purists but pleasing to those who relish eccentricity. Whitwell Elwin (1816-1900) is one of the best-known priest-architects thanks to his church at Booton (Norfolk), where he was rector from 1849 until his death. The church was famously praised by Lutyens as 'very naughty but designed in the right spirit'.<sup>76</sup> It is in the fact the recasing of the medieval church, carried out between 1875 and 1891, in an exuberant version of Early English (Fig. 8). He also built the village school, 1896.<sup>77</sup> Robert Stephen Hawker (1803-1875) became vicar of Morwenstow (Cornwall) in 1834 and designed his own parsonage, although the basic design appears to be based on one published by T.F. Hunt.<sup>78</sup> It is famous for the tops of its chimneys, built to resemble the towers of the churches with which Hawker had associations, while the kitchen chimney



Fig. 7

St Philip, Caerdeon, Gwynedd, by the Revd J.L. Petit, 1861-2.  
*Photograph by National Monuments Record, Wales*

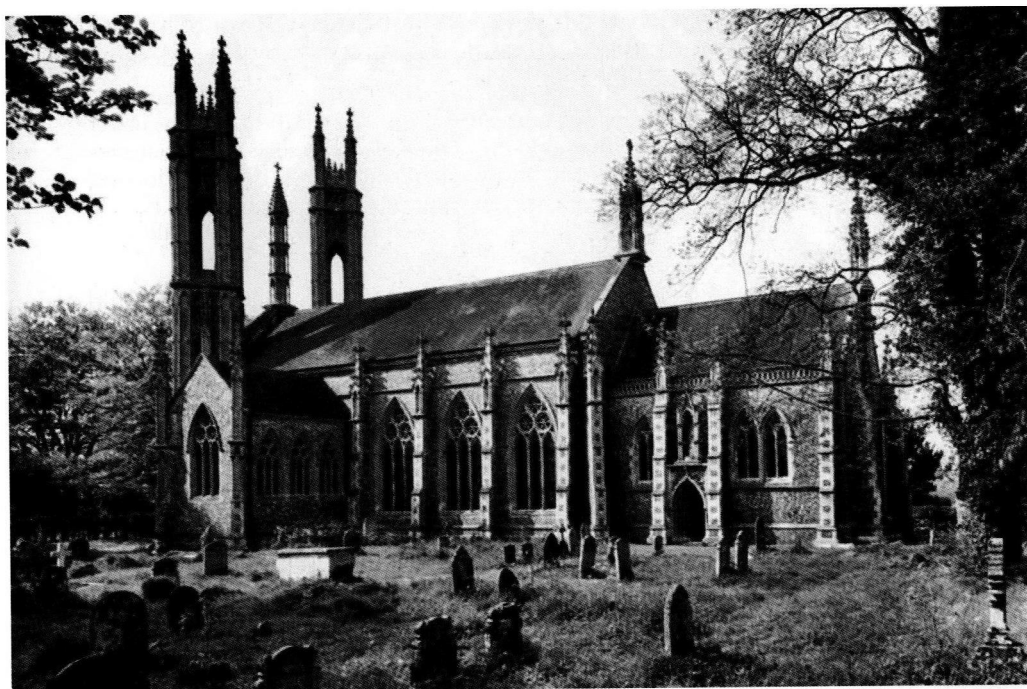


Fig. 8

St Michael and All Angels, Booton, Norfolk, remodelled by the Revd W. Elwin, 1875-91. Now vested in the Churches Conservation Trust.

*Photograph by Christopher Dalton*



Fig. 9

'South East View of Casterton Chapel', from *Helps to the Building of Churches* by the Revd W.C. Wilson (1835; second edition, 1842).

*The Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library*

is supposedly an exact replica of his mother's tomb.<sup>79</sup> This information is derived from a memoir of Hawker by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924), who was himself a prolific architect as well as a prolific author. In 1872, while rector of East Mersea in Essex (the setting for a number of sensational novels by him, notably *Mehalah* (1880)), he inherited his father's estates at Lew Trenchard (Devon). In 1881, on the death of his uncle, he presented himself to the rectory and made a number of significant changes to the church. He also transformed Lew Manor, for his own occupation, and made alterations to the Dower House; his hand can be detected in at least three other buildings in the village.<sup>80</sup>

Few clergy can have had the means or, perhaps, the energy to work on the scale of Baring-Gould, but one who certainly had was William Carus Wilson (1791-1859). His father had inherited the estate of Casterton Hall (Westmorland) from an aunt, and Wilson was presented to the rectory of nearby Tunstall in 1816. He resigned in 1828, having become rector of Whittington (Lancs) in 1825, and from 1834 to 1856 he was additionally perpetual curate of Casterton. He in turn inherited the estate in 1851. In 1820 he founded the School for Training Servants and Teachers at Whittington, and in 1824 the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge. The latter, which Charlotte Bronte attended, was the original of the Lowood Institution in *Jane Eyre*, but in 1833 it moved to new premises, apparently designed by Wilson himself, at Casterton.<sup>81</sup> At the same time he built a little church there (Holy Trinity), both as a chapel for the school and for the benefit of local residents, who were a long way from the parish church (Fig. 9). It is a simple little building in the lancet style with west tower, south porch, and a very shallow chancel; the latter was rebuilt, on a bigger scale, in about 1860.<sup>82</sup>

Wilson then proceeded to build a near replica of Holy Trinity Casterton at Holme, in the parish of Burton, about five miles to the west. For this he applied to the Incorporated Church Building Society for a grant, and found himself having to defend his design to the Society's surveyor, J.H. Good, who was unhappy about the roof structure. Wilson replied it was a copy of the roof at Casterton, which had been 'submitted to and approved by [George] Webster of Kendal, the first architect in the north of England, before it was put up'; but he agreed to modify the design, following instead the roof just installed by Thomas Rickman at Settle. In support of his application, Wilson wrote that Casterton 'has proved a very satisfactory building, and the admiration of every one who sees it, [and]... is referred to as a model by the Bishop of Chester'; and he commended to the Society's committee his book, *Helps [sic] to the Building of Churches, Parsonage Houses, and Schools*, published in 1835. The grant was eventually approved.<sup>83</sup>

Given the propensity of the nineteenth-century Anglican clergy to write books on all subjects, not least ecclesiology, it is surprising that only Wilson appears to have written a manual on designing churches and other parish buildings.<sup>84</sup> It is indeed a helpful little work, and a second edition (which takes account of the difficulty over the roof at Holme) appeared in 1842. It covers the necessary legal arrangements, and addresses the problem of funding, taking a very pragmatic line: 'How different would have been the condition of many of our modern Churches, if half the money devoted to their erection had been reserved for their endowment!'<sup>85</sup> His approach was altogether severely practical: 'The old English style of Architecture, with lancet windows and buttresses is decidedly the most satisfactory for an ecclesiastical edifice; but whatever style is adopted, it is strongly

recommended to avoid the use of valley gutters.<sup>86</sup> He includes a model specification for building a church, as well as 'Suggestions' published by the ICBS. Of greatest interest, however, are the plates, which include plans, elevations and views of a number of buildings which, it must be assumed, were designed by Wilson, perhaps with the assistance of George Webster. As well those already mentioned, there are parsonages at Casterton, Holme, and Grimsargh (near Preston); the village school at Casterton, a picturesque two-storey building that contained also 'rooms for the aged poor' (Fig. 10); and other suggested designs for schools.<sup>87</sup> The text mentions parsonages built on exactly the same plan as Holme at Silverdale, Preston Patrick, Austwick, and Hurst Green, as well the church at Hurst Green (St John the Evangelist, 1837) built on the same plan as Casterton. It would be hard to say whether Wilson's book had much influence beyond the neighbourhood in which he held sway as a landowner, but Emmanuel Church, Bistre, near Mold (Clwyd), by John Lloyd, 1841-2, is said to be copied from Casterton.<sup>88</sup> However, although the basic design is followed, there is no south porch and the entrance is through the base of the west tower.<sup>89</sup>

In terms of influence through published work, one might look to Frederick George Lee (1832-1902), and although his claim to the status of architect is slender, his wider associations with the profession make him worthy of mention here. Lee was a controversial High Churchman, and like many who found the Church of England uncomfortable in the middle years of the nineteenth century headed north to Scotland, where he became the incumbent of St John's, Aberdeen, in 1860. Here he built a new church, St Mary's, described on more than one occasion and in generally approving terms by the *Ecclesiologist*,



Fig. 10

'Village School, Casterton', from *Helps to the Building of Churches* by the Revd W.C. Wilson (1835; second edition, 1842). In the background is the parsonage.

*The Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library*



although they made allowance for his amateur status: ‘the general design has some good points which make us look with leniency on the first thoughts of an amateur architect... It is, we believe, in order to save money that recourse has not been had to a professional architect.’<sup>90</sup> But the *Aberdeen Journal* took care to give credit where it was due: ‘Though the original idea of the building, as regards plan and style, was furnished by the Rev. F.G. Lee, yet the carrying out of these are entirely the work of Mr Ellis and certainly do him great credit’ – that is, Alexander Ellis of Aberdeen (Fig. 11).<sup>91</sup> The church was completed in 1864,<sup>92</sup> but the bishop of Aberdeen was unwilling to consecrate it unless Lee agreed to give up using unauthorised vestments, incense, and superfluous candles. He refused, and resigned, whereupon a dispute arose over payment for the building that ended in Lee’s bankruptcy. Lee then took the living of All Saints’, Lambeth, where he remained for thirty-two years; he does not appear to have designed any alterations to the church, which was demolished in 1901 to make way for an expansion of Waterloo Station. Lee became a Roman Catholic six weeks before his death in 1902.<sup>93</sup> St Mary’s Aberdeen was badly damaged by a German bomb in 1943, and although the church was restored it lacks the tall flèche over the crossing, and the apsidal chancel was rebuilt in simpler form.<sup>94</sup>

Although Lee engaged a professional architect to assist with St Mary’s, he was undoubtedly knowledgeable about church architecture and had some talent as a draughtsman: his *Glossary of Liturgical and Ecclesiastical Terms* (1877) includes a number of illustrations drawn by himself, that sit well alongside those by Pugin and others (Fig. 12). A more

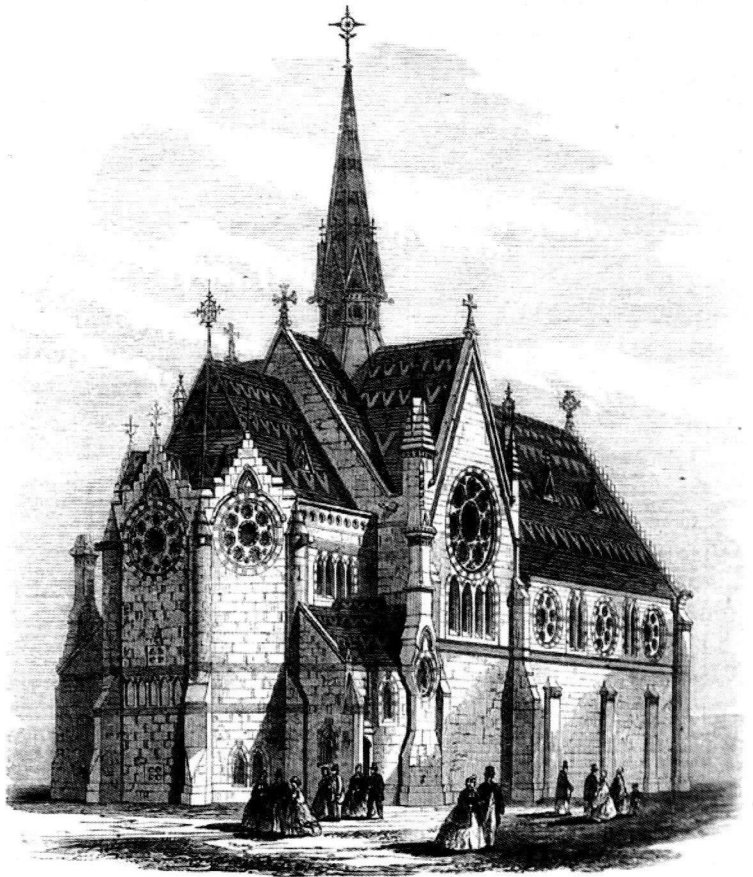


Fig. 11

St Mary, Aberdeen, by Alexander Ellis and the Revd F.G. Lee, 1862-4.  
*Illustrated London News*, 44 (1864), 521.

controversial work was his revised edition of John Purchas's *Directorium Anglicanum*, 'a manual of directions for the right celebration of the Holy Communion... in accordance with the ancient use of the Church of England', a vade-mecum for High Church celebrants. It was first published by Purchas in 1858 with illustrations by J.W. Hallam of Oxford, a draughtsman who worked for a number of ecclesiastical architects; but for the second edition, in 1865, Lee replaced Hallam with Edmund Sedding, whose drawings were praised by Lee for being 'so full of Catholic feeling and a correct taste for the best form of Christian art.'<sup>95</sup>



Fig. 12

'Second-Pointed Window, Thame Church, Oxfordshire', drawn by the Revd F.G. Lee for his *Glossary of Liturgical and Ecclesiastical Terms* (1877), 449.

Other clergymen besides Lee collaborated to a greater or lesser degree with professionals. John Medley used John Hayward to help put his architectural ideas into practice; William Haslam worked with William White to an extent that remains unclear. Sometimes the problem was simply providing the drawings required by the ICBS if a grant were needed. George Madan, as we have seen, turned to the Dursley Commercial School. John William Whittaker, when he needed to supply the ICBS with a plan of Immanuel Church, Feniscowles (Lancs), in 1837, had to make do with a 'young man [who] ... was only just recovering from a very dangerous fever. His hand trembled so much from weakness, that he was not able to execute the commission with either the neatness or precision that he has usually observed on such occasions. The

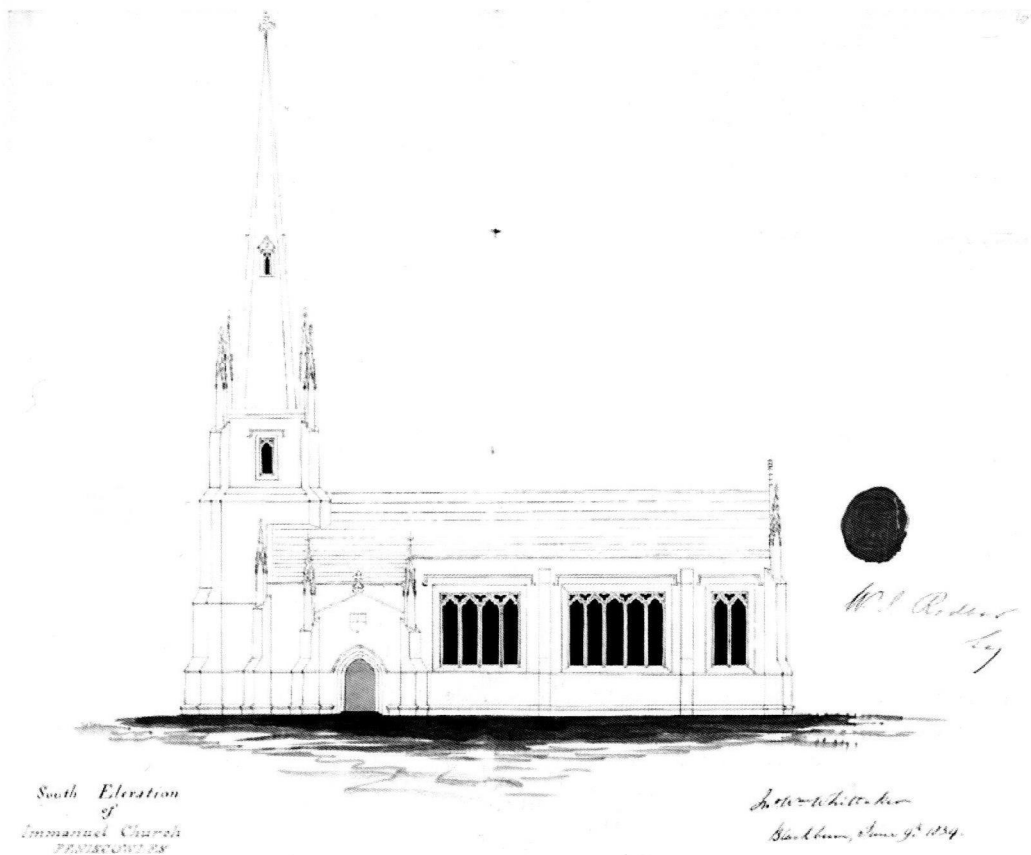
letter and figuring I have done myself.' The accounts for the church show that this was Thomas Walsh junior, son of the contractor who built the church. But Whittaker may well have produced the drawings that accompanied the original application in 1834, and he signed the report to the ICBS 'Archit, Clerk of Works, & Building Committee'.<sup>96</sup> Pevsner was intrigued by the result: 'Can the large straight-headed Perp windows be so early, even if one makes allowance for the possible boldness of an amateur?'<sup>97</sup> The drawings show that they could indeed (Fig. 13).

Some priest-architects also relied very much on the abilities of their builders. Joseph Woolley, rector of East Bergholt (Suffolk), told the ICBS in July 1857:

I am the architect – I found that if I employed a real architect the plan would not have been ready by the beginning of July – I therefore took the matter in hand myself with the assistance of Mr [Henry] Ringham of Ipswich whose specification & estimate I now enclose – I was told that the Church Building Society had made grants to Belstead & Letheringsett, churches in this neighbourhood, in which only Mr Ringham had been employed.

The difficulty here was that, as George Gilbert Scott had pointed out when vetting the application on behalf of the Society, 'These designs being by a builder are contrary to the rules'; but the grant was awarded nonetheless.<sup>98</sup>

The name of Ernest Geldart (1848-1929) has so far been mentioned only in passing, but he was the supreme example of the priest-architect in the nineteenth century, not at all characteristic of the type, but nonetheless sharing many of the pleasures and difficulties that his more typical colleagues experienced in their encounters with architecture. Like a handful of other clergymen, he trained as an architect, entering the office of Alfred Waterhouse in 1864; Waterhouse had opened a London office the previous year, and it was to here that Geldart was sent, and from here that he was attracted to the ritualism of St Mary Magdalene, Paddington. He left Waterhouse in 1871, enrolled at King's College, London, to read theology, and was ordained priest in 1875. Curacies followed, at Plaistow (Essex) and Hatchford (Surrey), before he was appointed to the rectory of Little Braxted (Essex) in 1881, where he stayed until his retirement, on grounds of ill health, in 1900. His remaining years were spent at Holmbury St Mary (Surrey).<sup>99</sup>



South Elevation  
of  
Immanuel Church  
FENISCOWLES

J. W. Whittaker  
Blackburn, June 9th 1834.

Fig. 13

'South Elevation of Immanuel Church Feniscowles', Lancashire, by the Revd J.W. Whittaker, 1834.

Drawing submitted with application to the Incorporated Church Building Society.

*The Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library*

Various aspects of Geldart's career set him apart from other priest-architects. The first is that throughout his working life – from leaving Waterhouse's office, until at least 1914 – he practised to a greater or lesser extent as an architect and designer, combining the two roles almost equally. In principle, there is no difference between the way Geldart organised his life, and the way many other clergymen did who wrote books or taught as well as running a parish; but no one else seems to have done it. As a result, his architectural output was very much greater than that of other priest-architects. Some 163 projects can be attributed to him, but many of these were for furnishings and fittings, stained glass, and decorative schemes; nonetheless he was responsible for forty-three structural works. Twenty-nine of these relate to churches, mostly restorations and minor additions such as vestries and organ chambers; but they include the almost complete rebuilding of St Nicholas, Rawreth (Essex), the rebuilding of the nave of St Mary, Langham (Suffolk), new towers at St Margaret, Stanford-le-Hope and All Saints, Great Braxted (Essex) (Fig. 14), and a new chancel and morning chapel at St Saviour, Walton Street (London). In addition to that, he designed three lychgates and four church halls; the vicarage at Sparkwell (Devon) (Fig. 15); and three houses, besides alterations and additions to four more. But he was typical in that he wasted no time in making alterations to the buildings in his own parish: he added an aisle to St Nicholas' Church (Fig. 16) and lavishly decorated the interior between 1881 and 1886 (Fig. 17);<sup>100</sup> he built a reading room as an extension to the school in 1890; and he added a chapel to the rectory (now Braxted Place) in 1896.

The second difference between Geldart and other priest-architects is that after about 1888 he started charging for his services. His living was worth very little, only £169 a year, and in 1887 he suffered an accident that kept him off work for nearly two years, during which time he had to employ a locum, as a result of which he was very short of money. Other clergy profited from books they wrote and pupils they taught, so it is not unreasonable that Geldart should have charged for architectural work, but to some it seemed odd. In 1891 he was asked by the rector of Salcott (Essex), Edward Musselwhite, to restore his church,



Fig. 14  
All Saints, Great Braxted, Essex: west tower partially  
rebuilt by the Revd Ernest Geldart, 1883-4.

*Photograph by James Bettley*



Fig. 15

Sparkwell vicarage, Devon, by the Revd Ernest Geldart and J.R. Vining, 1885-6.

*Photograph by James Bettley*



Fig. 16

St Nicholas, Little Braxted, Essex, showing the north aisle and vestry added by the Revd Ernest Geldart, 1884. Contemporary photograph.

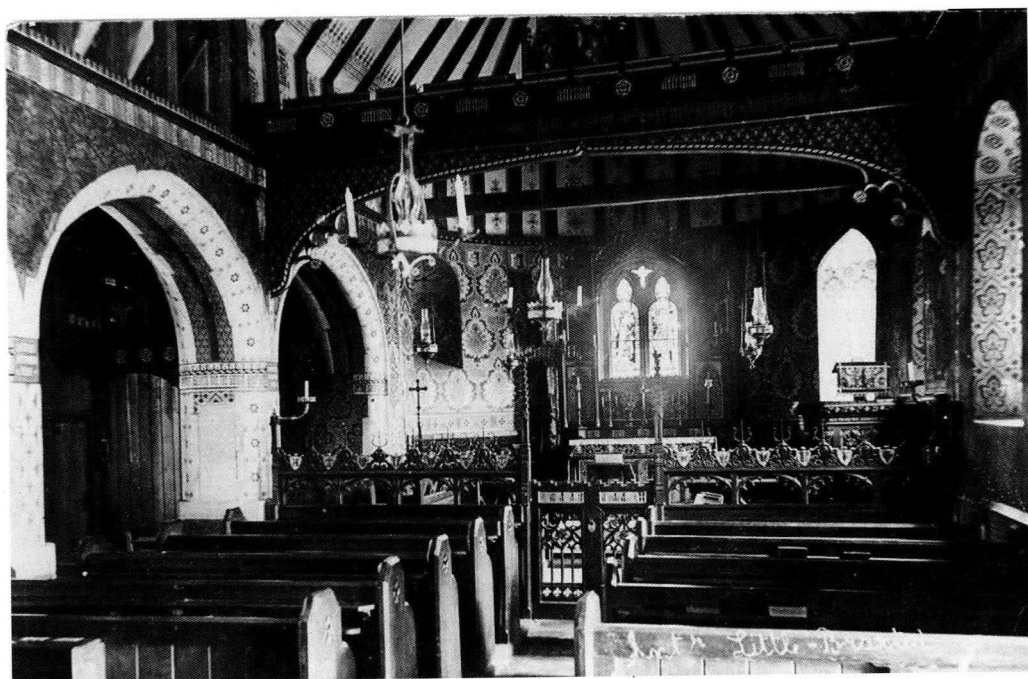


Fig. 17

St Nicholas, Little Braxted, Essex, showing the interior as decorated by the Revd Ernest Geldart, 1881-6. Contemporary photograph

which had been damaged in the Essex earthquake of 1884. 'Got a letter from Musselwhite saying that he had been told I received full architects fees was it true! I answered sadly but firmly – quite so & returned his old plans for Chancellor to make new ones on.' The nave was then restored by Frederic Chancellor; he had previously restored the tower, but Musselwhite had presumably been hoping to get the job done more cheaply.<sup>101</sup> When Geldart restored the churches at Breage and St Germoe (Cornwall) in 1889-91, quite big jobs estimated at £2,895 and £2,622 respectively, he reduced his fee from 2½ to 1¼ per cent because the rector, Jocelyn Barnes, was an old friend and fund-raising was proving difficult; but he still did not waive it altogether.<sup>102</sup>

Geldart did in fact have an additional source of income, another respect in which he differed from other priest-architects. Throughout his clerical career he was employed by church furnishers, designing fittings, vestments, stained glass, and all the other ecclesiastical items that these firms supplied. As early as 1878 he was working for Cox & Sons, later Cox, Sons, Buckley & Co., as a salaried employee: in 1892 he asked for a pay rise from his 'present screw' of £225 to £300; it was refused, and his association with the firm seems to have ended the following year.<sup>103</sup> From about 1893 to 1901 he worked regularly with Percy Bacon & Brothers, and with Taylor & Clifton between about 1902 and 1914. He also worked with various other firms, such as Saunders & Co., Clayton & Bell, and Ward & Hughes, for specific stained-glass commissions. It is for this aspect of

his work that Geldart was probably more widely known during his lifetime, thanks in part to the publications that stemmed from it. For Cox, Sons, Buckley & Co. he wrote *The Art of Garnishing Churches at Christmas and other Times* (1882), essentially a glorified trade catalogue and a rewriting of a book of similar title by E.Y. Cox, first published in 1868. Geldart followed this with *A Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism*, published by A.R. Mowbray & Co. in 1899, 'the fruit of five-and-thirty years of my work in one field of God's fair earth.' As well as Geldart's own illustrations, it included a 'beautiful frontispiece' by Percy Bacon, whose firm 'have for several years executed all the painted work which I have designed as architect'.<sup>104</sup>

Apart from his work for the church furnishers – the full extent of which will never be known – his commissions came about through personal contact, the majority of them from clergy he had first known as a young man in London, many of the remainder clerical colleagues in Essex. Indeed of the total of 163 projects, fifty-seven were in that county. After leaving Little Braxted he made efforts to expand his architectural career. In *Who's Who* he described himself as 'retired from Church service and now practising as an architect', and he even went so far as to place an advertisement in the *St Alban's Diocesan Magazine*, stating that

having resigned the Rectory of Little Braxted he is free to practice his profession as Architect, and to give designs and advice in all matters connected with Church Art. Any clients wishing to see him for consultation or otherwise can do so in London or elsewhere by appointment.<sup>105</sup>

In spite of the advertisement (and there is no evidence that his workload increased after it, let alone because of it) his commissions still tended to be the result of personal contact. He was not widely known in the architectural world, and his work is almost entirely unrecorded in the architectural press. An early exception was a notice of work at Little Braxted in *Building News*, which drew an indignant response from Geldart pointing out the various errors it contained.<sup>106</sup> Later in his career, the chapel at Clumber Park (Notts), for which he provided many furnishings, and St Cuthbert's, Philbeach Gardens (London), for which he designed the impressive reredos, were featured, but his name is introduced as that of a man who would not be known to the readers: the stalls at Clumber 'are due to the facile pencil of the Rev. Ernest Geldart who was, we believe, a pupil of Mr A. Waterhouse, R.A.'<sup>107</sup> When the *Builder* reviewed his *Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism*, Geldart wrote to point out that he was not in fact an amateur but 'was duly indentured and worked with Mr Waterhouse for eight years'.<sup>108</sup>

In some respects, though, Geldart faced the same problems as other priest-architects. He was an excellent draughtsman and certainly needed no assistance with the preparation of drawings, but in spite of his professional training his experience was limited and he was aware that he needed help with the more technical aspects of architectural work. For a number of projects he worked with John Randall Vining, whom he described as a 'practical architect',<sup>109</sup> a telling epithet whose use would seem to indicate Geldart's awareness of his own shortcomings. Vining is a shadowy figure, unnoticed in the usual sources, but he served a useful function. He first assisted Geldart at Rawreth in 1886, a church that Geldart had rebuilt in 1881-2 but was already suffering from subsidence and was complicated from the technical point of view.<sup>110</sup> The contract drawings for

Sparkwell vicarage, 1885, are signed jointly by Geldart and Vining, and it may be that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who approved the plans, required the involvement of a professional.<sup>111</sup>

Geldart may also have hoped that Vining would enable him to get round the problem of the ICBS requiring plans to be prepared by a professional architect. Vining was involved in the restorations at Breage and Germoe mentioned above,<sup>112</sup> although no grant was made because work had already started before the application was submitted. He was unfortunately not involved with the initial work at Rawreth (Fig. 18), because here the rector, G.G. Kemp, a friend of Geldart's from London days, experienced a lot of trouble when applying for grants. He went first to the Essex Church and Chapel Building Society and then to the Incorporated Church Building Society.<sup>113</sup> Joseph Clarke, the diocesan surveyor, reported to the ECCBS:

The plans of Rawreth Church are all right, but we cannot consider there is an Architect – no more than we may preach in the Churches we build. Do the laws Eccl: allow an Ecclesiastic to practice in a Profession? I will return the plans approved.

Like the ICBS, the ECCBS normally required that a professional architect be employed, and although the latter was prepared to make a grant for Rawreth, the ICBS was not. The application, signed by Geldart, was queried by the ICBS, which drew this response from Kemp:

I infer that you do not consider Mr Geldart a competent architect. I beg to point out that Mr J. Clarke has already approved of those plans on behalf of the Essex Church Building Society, to which I appended a note that they were not prepared by a professional architect. I have to repeat what I stated then, that Mr Geldart received a thorough education in Mr Waterhouse's office. The only difference between Mr Geldart & a competent or professional architect lies in the fact that he as an old friend has kindly consented to give his services. I conclude that competent architect means one who is paid for his work. I take a different view, & define competent as, 'able to do the work required' whether paid or not. I have not had much experience in the matter; but, to judge from the present state of our School Room, (within 100 yds of the Church) which was finished just before I came here 8½ years ago, I am afraid even competent Architects at times fail to get their buildings to stand properly.

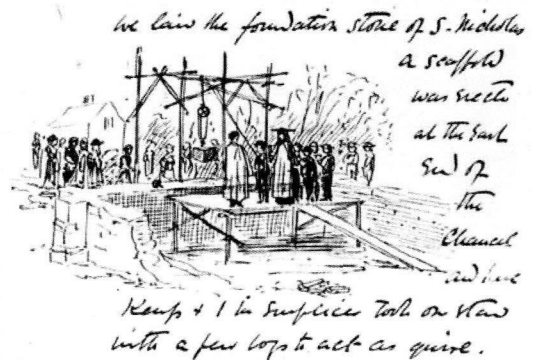


Fig. 18

St Nicholas, Rawreth, Essex, rebuilt (except for tower) by the Revd Ernest Geldart, 1881-2. Sketches from Geldart's diary, showing the old walls taken down (19 October 1881) and laying the foundation stone of the new church on St Nicholas' Day (6 December 1881).



The Secretary of the ICBS responded,

A 'competent architect' means, without question, 'a competent professional architect'. That there are professional architects who are incompetent, your schools are a witness; but it has always been the position of our Committee to refuse to examine plans prepared by any but one of their own profession. Builders' plans, for example, are never looked at.

Kemp replied,

I cannot for a moment allow that Mr Geldart is [in] any sense incompetent. Our foreman declares that his plans are so good that it is a pleasure to work from them, which is more than he can say for a good deal of professional work.

You would be astonished if I named the architect who built our school...

The grant was refused, on the grounds that the plans were not prepared by a professional architect (and Geldart at this stage of his career, 1880-83, was still not charging for his services), and that work had already begun when the application was submitted. The architect of the school to which Kemp refers was, incidentally, none other than Joseph Clarke.<sup>114</sup>

Something else that Geldart may have shared with his fellow priest-architects was his motivation, beyond purely financial considerations. There was artistic talent in his family, but no particular architectural influence. A kinsman, James William Geldart (1785-1876) restored his own church at Kirk Deighton (Yorks) in 1849, but he was from a different branch of a large family.<sup>115</sup> This is in contrast to the Scott family, which provides a famous example of 'building in the blood': Sir Gilbert Scott's 'first initiation into practical building' was watching the construction of the church at Gawcott (Bucks) of which his father Thomas (1780-1835) was both the curate and the architect. He had already built himself a parsonage.<sup>116</sup> A cousin of Scott's, Charles Perry Scott (1847-1927), was Bishop of North China and was both architect and clerk of works for Peking Cathedral, consecrated in 1907.<sup>117</sup> In similar vein, Edward Lewes Cutts (1824-1901) deserves a mention. He was an outstanding example of a clergyman with antiquarian tastes, being Secretary of the Essex Archaeological Society from 1852 to 1866, and was the author of (among many other works) *An Essay on Church Furniture and Decoration* (1854) and *An Essay on the Christmas Decoration of Churches* (1859). Although he is not known to have designed anything himself, his writings influenced those who did, and of his ten children, two became architects who are particularly remembered for their ecclesiastical work: John Edward Knight Cutts (1847-1938) and John Priston Cutts (1854-1935), the younger being articulated to the elder and remaining as his assistant.<sup>118</sup>

Basil Clarke felt that the clergy of the nineteenth century had every bit as much right to be called architects as the noblemen and gentlemen of the eighteenth. There are, however, differences between amateur architecture in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, and between the gentlemen of one century and the clergymen of the next; most significantly, by the middle of the nineteenth century there was a well-established architectural profession. But if there was, technically, no need for clergymen to carry out the work themselves, because proficient architects were within reach of every corner of the country, many obviously felt some spiritual need to design their own churches, rather than entrust the job to a man who might be equally happy designing a factory. Some clearly had a talent for it, a few had proper training, and the majority simply had

a creative urge that expressed itself in architecture when the need to build or restore a church arose. The particular ecclesiastical and social conditions that prevailed in the nineteenth century, which created a need for more churches to be built, or for existing churches to be restored and enlarged, meant that more clergy turned their hands to architecture than before or since.

Geldart saw another aspect, one which he was peculiarly well placed to explore. In 1881, he visited Dennington, in Suffolk, where 'The 2 side chapels are enclosed with carved & painted screens & the nave benches are the most perfect & the richest that I ever saw, scores of ends all carved & traceried to the nth & each one of them looked so sharp cut & fresh that I thought they must be new but I found them all old' (Fig. 19).<sup>119</sup> This work, he wrote later, was probably executed by members of a guild who travelled round from church to church.

These travelling artists have long since died out, and if such work as this had to be done to-day, first an architect would draw the design, and then employ builders and carvers to do it, who would work by rule and plan; but we could not improve on the labours of these men, who themselves designed and did the work well, because they loved it.<sup>120</sup>

This ideal, of the artist-craftsman who was able to execute his own designs without the need for a middleman, was something which Geldart himself managed to achieve in his own career, and may also have inspired many other clergymen to take up the drafting pen, the trowel, or the chisel.

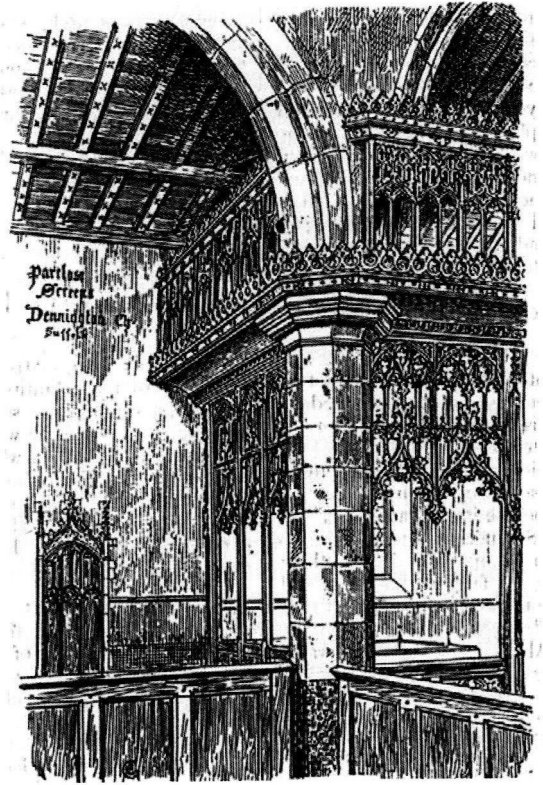


Fig. 19

'Parclose Screens Dennington Ch. Suffolk', sketched by the Revd Ernest Geldart in 1881 and used by him to illustrate an article in *Dawn of Day* (March 1890), 44.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 *Ecclesiologist*, 10 (1849), 241-2. George Madan's work at Upper and Lower Cam is discussed further below.
- 2 J.M. Neale & B. Webb, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (1843), xx.
- 3 Philippa Hoskin, 'Poor, Richard (d. 1237)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22525, accessed 18 Aug 2010]. Neither Wykeham nor Poore have entries in John Harvey's *English Medieval Architects* (2nd edn, 1984), in spite of its broad terms of reference that include 'others responsible for design', but Wykeham is, surprisingly, included in the *Macmillan Dictionary of Architects*, 4 (1982), 402-3, where he is described as 'among the first architects to use the Perpendicular style'.
- 4 *Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1842), 70, 87; 4 (1845), 277-9.
- 5 G. Worsley (ed.), *The Role of the Amateur Architect* (1994), 55-6, lists 78 amateur architects, of whom six were clergy.
- 6 M.J. McCarthy, 'Amateur architects in England, 1740 to 1770: their training, their drawing, their works, and their influence' (PhD, Courtauld Institute, 1972), 6, 274.
- 7 H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (2008), 668.
- 8 A. Savidge, *The Parsonage in England: its history and architecture* (1964), 85-7; B.A. Bax, *The English Parsonage* (1964), 124-5.
- 9 H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (2008), 831.
- 10 J. Sherwood & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), 481, 695, 797; see also Anthony Jennings, *The Old Rectory: the story of the English parsonage* (2009), 220.
- 11 Undated, unpublished and unpaginated notes preserved in the library of the Church Buildings Council, Church House, London; hereinafter referred to as Clarke, 'Brief Account'.
- 12 The eight architects who took Holy Orders were Henry Briant of Reading; M.B. Buckle; R.M. Fulford; G.F. George; M.H. Linklater; J.W. Rhodes; T.E. Roberts; and Frederick Thatcher.
- 13 C.K. Francis Brown, *A History of the English Clergy 1800-1900* (1953), cites 14,527 clergy in 1841, rising to 20,694 in 1871.
- 14 *Ecclesiologist*, 28 (1867), 165.
- 15 The letter was published in the *Ecclesiologist*, 14 (1853), 156-161, from which the following extracts are taken.
- 16 Clarke, 'Brief Account'. The Victoria County History, *A History of the County of Wiltshire*, 15 (1995), 6-12, says that 'the plans, inspired by the curate William Grey and drawn by F.R. Fisher, reproduced the design of the old church'. The listing description says 'architect unrecorded but possibly T.H. Wyatt'.
- 17 N. Pevsner & D. Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire* (1967), 832.
- 18 *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (1863), 64-5; *Building News*, 21 (1871), 441 (Jones named as architect for completion); D. Lloyd & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Isle of Wight* (2006), 224.
- 19 By Clarke.
- 20 N. Pevsner & B. Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (1989), 613.
- 21 *Ecclesiologist*, 2 (1842), 21-3; Pevsner & Cherry, *Devon* (1989), 387, 390. Medley's patronage of Hayward is described by Martin Cherry in 'Patronage, the Anglican Church and the local architect in Victorian England', in Chris Brooks & Andrew Saint (eds), *The Victorian Church: architecture and society* (1995), 173-191.
- 22 Douglas Scott Richardson, 'Hyperborean Gothic; or, wilderness ecclesiology and the wood churches of Edward Medley', *Architectura*, 2 (1972), 48-74. Paul Thompson, *William Butterfield* (1971), 25, notes that E.S. Medley received £199 as a beneficiary of Butterfield's will.

- 23 E. Geldart, 'New Maryland Church', *Dawn of Day* (May 1890), 77-8.
- 24 A. Brodie et al., *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914*, 1 (2001), 694.
- 25 Obituary in *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural and Archaeological Society*, 3rd series 3 (1910), 69-70.
- 26 *Who was Who 1929-1940* (1941), 1486.
- 27 *Church Work*, 3 (1874-5), 440.
- 28 C. A. Harris, 'Steere, Edward (1828-1882)', rev. Andrew Porter, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26353>, accessed 18 Aug 2010].
- 29 B.F.L. Clarke, *Anglican Cathedrals outside the British Isles* (1958), 42-3.
- 30 *Ecclesiologist*, 8 (1847), 142-7.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 9 (1848), 181-7.
- 32 J.F. Bourne, 'On tropical architecture', *Ecclesiologist*, 12 (1851), 169-72.
- 33 Papers in Lincolnshire Archives, 2-GL/3.
- 34 Ian Matheson, 'Soares, Alberto Dias (1830-1909)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6 (1976), 163.
- 35 T.F. Bumpus, *An Historical Church: a record of sixty-five years' life and work in the church and parish of S. Matthias, Stoke Newington* (1913), 49; P. Thompson, *William Butterfield* (1971), 346.
- 36 D. Verey & A. Brooks, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire 1* (1999), 175, 177.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 102-3, 346, 485, 539.
- 38 N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cheshire* (1971), 115.
- 39 *Essex Review*, 2 (1893), 78-80; see also 10 (1901), 113, for his obituary.
- 40 *Architect*, 47 (1892), 236.
- 41 *Ecclesiologist*, 4 (1845), 40. See also *Ecclesiologist*, 10 (1849), 241-2, cited earlier.
- 42 Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 1* (1999), 208-9.
- 43 ICBS file 03135 (1842-4).
- 44 Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 1* (1999), 414, 753-4, 758. They also suggest that Perkins might have restored The Chantry, North Nibley, 1853 (op. cit., 521).
- 45 *Ecclesiologist*, 23 (1862), 302-3.
- 46 Clarke, 'Brief Account'; Keith H. Aubrey, 'Turner, James Francis (1829-1893)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6 (1976), 313-4. Clarke also says that Turner restored St Peter, Bywell (Northumberland), 1848-9, but the listing description ascribes this to Benjamin Ferrey.
- 47 *Ecclesiologist*, 20 (1859), 212-4.
- 48 *Ancient Monuments Society Newsletter* (Autumn 2004), 10. Victoria County History, *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, 9 (1989), 368-70, 372-4, states that the church was rebuilt by Rev. H.J. Sperling, and the rectory in c.1848, but this probably means he was the client rather than the architect.
- 49 N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (1954), 389. See also *East Anglian*, 1 (1862), 224.
- 50 *Builder*, 17 (1859), 652; *East Anglian*, 1 (1862), 222-4; J. Bettley & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (2007), 830-1.
- 51 Given to the Essex Archaeological Society, Saffron Walden, October 1859, and the basis of articles in *Ecclesiologist*, 21 (1860), 16, and *Transactions of the EAS*, 2 (1863), 157-63.
- 52 Clarke, 'Brief Account'; [www.sussexparishchurches.org](http://www.sussexparishchurches.org), accessed 29 June 2010.
- 53 Clarke, 'Brief Account'; *Essex Review*, 3 (1894), 82 (obituary).
- 54 *Ecclesiologist*, 29 (1868), 373; Cherry & Pevsner, *Devon* (1989), 271.
- 55 D. Verey & A. Brooks, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire 2* (2002), 190, 193.
- 56 *National Review* (1907), 79, quoted in A.W. Hill (ed.), *Henry Nicholson Ellacombe: a memoir* (1919), 48-9.
- 57 Clarke, 'Brief Account'; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2* (2002), 192, 623.
- 58 *Ecclesiologist*, 16 (1855), 390-1.
- 59 W. Haslam, *From Death into Life* (1880), 22-3.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 40. He implies that he also designed the parsonage.
- 61 *Ecclesiologist*, 9 (1849), 262-4; *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, 36 (1992), 143; G. Hunter, *William White: pioneer Victorian architect* (2010), 19-20, 259.
- 62 Harry Tapley-Soper, 'Randolph, Francis Charles Hingeston- (1833-1910)', rev. Christine North, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33883>, accessed 19 Aug 2010].

- 63 Sherwood & Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (1974), 630.
- 64 ICBS file 05486 (1859-66).
- 65 *Church Builder*, 1 (1862), 69-72 (article by Hingeston-Randolph who, according to Clarke, 'Brief Account', paid for the work himself, some £1200); Cherry & Pevsner, *Devon* (1989), 701.
- 66 Clarke, 'Brief Account'.
- 67 Specification, Cornwall Record Office, P91/2/16.
- 68 ICBS file 07930 (1875-83). Cherry & Pevsner, *Devon* (1989), 162, say that the work was by Hayward & Son, planned 1875, executed 1881-2.
- 69 Clarke, 'Brief Account'.
- 70 G.E.M. Trinick, *St Anthony's Church* (1998).
- 71 *Ecclesiologist*, 12 (1851), 361-2.
- 72 *Ecclesiologist*, 18 (1857), 54.
- 73 Sheldon Goldfarb, 'Landor, Robert Eyres (1781-1869)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15979>, accessed 19 Aug 2010].
- 74 *Ecclesiologist*, 28 (1867), 343.
- 75 *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (1863), 374-5. See also P. Howell, 'Churches and chapels in Wales', in Chris Brooks & Andrew Saint (eds), *The Victorian Church: architecture and society* (1995), 127; Guy Braithwaite, 'Petit, John Louis (1801-1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22037>, accessed 19 Aug 2010]; Donald Moore, *The Building of Caerdeon CHapel in Merioneth: A unique pictorial record*, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 156 (2007), 161-83; and R. Haslam, J. Orbach & A. Voelcker, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd* (2009), 567-8.
- 76 Lady Emily Lutyens, *A Blessed Girl* (1953), 22.
- 77 N. Pevsner & B. Wilson, *The Buildings of England: Norfolk 1* (1997), 409-10. Clarke, 'Brief Account', attributes the rectory to him as well, but according to Pevsner & Wilson this is by Thomas Allom.
- 78 T.F. Hunt, *Designs for Parsonage Houses* (1827), Design No. 1; cf. Anthony Jennings, *The Old Rectory* (2009), 112-3.
- 79 A. Bax, *The English Parsonage* (1964), 180. William Haslam describes a visit to Hawker in 1847 (*From Death into Life* (1880), 36-9).
- 80 Cherry & Pevsner, *Devon* (1989), 534-6.
- 81 Juliet Barker, 'Wilson, William Carus (1791-1859)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50487>, accessed 19 Aug 2010].
- 82 M. Hyde & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cumbria* (2010), 274-5, say that 'the architect was almost certainly George Webster', but this is not supported by what Wilson wrote to the ICBS in connection with Holme (see below). J. M. Ewbank, *The Life and Works of William Carus Wilson (1791-1859)* (1959; 2nd edn, 1960), 9, says that the church was 'erected according to plans drawn up by Mr Carus Wilson himself'.
- 83 ICBS file 02404 (1838-9). Hyde & Pevsner, *Cumbria* (2010), 411, describe this as 'a "Carus Wilson" church' by George Webster, but from the information submitted to the ICBS it is clear that Wilson was responsible for the design and its execution.
- 84 A comparable work is *Chapel and School Architecture, as appropriate to the buildings of Nonconformists, particularly to those of the Wesleyan Methodists: with practical directions for the erection of chapels and school-houses* (1850) by Frederick James Jobson, a Methodist minister who had trained as an architect under E.J. Willson.
- 85 W.C. Wilson, *Helps to the Building of Churches* (1842), 12.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 87 The parsonage, village school and Clergy Daughters' School are all now part of Casterton School (Hyde & Pevsner, *Cumbria* (2010), 275).
- 88 H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (2008), 657.
- 89 ICBS file 02474 (1839-43).
- 90 *Ecclesiologist*, 23 (1862), 239; 24 (1863), 144-7; 25 (1864), 94-100.
- 91 Quoted in Connie Leith, *Alexander Ellis: a fine Victorian architect* (1999), 33.
- 92 *Illustrated London News*, 44 (1864), 521.

- 93 Margaret Pawley, 'Lee, Frederick George (1832–1902)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34467, accessed 19 Aug 2010].
- 94 Connie Leith, op. cit., 40-3.
- 95 *Directorium Anglicanum*, quoted from 3rd edn (1866), xliii. Lee's *Glossary* includes a single drawing by Sedding, 'Pastoral staff designed by the late Mr Edmund Sedding', on p. 273. See also J. Bettley, 'Some architectural aspects of the role of manuals in changes to Anglican liturgical practice in the nineteenth century', in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and the Book* (2004), 324-338.
- 96 ICBS file 01632 (1834-7).
- 97 N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Lancashire* (1969), 169. C. Hartwell & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Lancashire: North* (2009), 129, suggest that Whittaker might have been influenced by his cousin, the architect Edmund Sharpe.
- 98 ICBS file 05163 (1857-69).
- 99 Further details of Geldart's life and work, and of the buildings mentioned in the following paragraphs, can be found in J. Bettley, 'The Reverend Ernest Geldart (1848-1929) and late nineteenth-century church decoration' (PhD, Courtauld Institute, 1999), and "'The Master of Little Braxted in his prime": Ernest Geldart and Essex, 1873-1900', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 31 (2000), 169-194; and in John Booker, *Godly and Gifted: the Victorian Geldart family and its contribution to religion, learning, and the fine arts* (2008), 102-163.
- 100 J. Bettley, 'New light on St Nicholas', *Country Life*, 187 (15 Apr 1993), 78-9.
- 101 E. Geldart, unpublished diary entry (15 Oct 1891); Bettley & Pevsner, *Essex* (2007), 677.
- 102 ICBS files 09485 & 09486 (1890).
- 103 Geldart, diary (26 May 1892).
- 104 E. Geldart, *A Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism* (1899), vii-viii.
- 105 *St Alban's Diocesan Magazine*, 6 (1901)-7 (1902).
- 106 *Building News*, 47 (1884), 648 & 685.
- 107 *Ibid.*, 61 (1891), 572.
- 108 *Builder*, 78 (1900), 170-1.
- 109 Geldart, diary (17 Dec 1886).
- 110 Bettley & Pevsner, *Essex* (2007), 636. Subsidence is still a problem.
- 111 RIBA Drawings Collection, PB148/7(1-3).
- 112 Geldart, diary (30 Apr 1890).
- 113 The following account is based on letters and other documents in ICBS file 08661 (1880-3).
- 114 Essex Record Office, D/P 40/12/6, D/P 40/24/1, TS 527/1.
- 115 Clarke, 'Brief Account'.
- 116 G.G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), 5-6, 53-5; N. Pevsner & E. Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (1994), 334.
- 117 Clarke, 'Brief Account'. He is more circumspect in his *Anglican Cathedrals outside the British Isles* (1958), 131-2, saying only that 'the design was suggested by Bishop Scott'.
- 118 R.E. Graves, 'Cutts, Edward Lewes (1824–1901)', rev. J.F. Coakley, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32688, accessed 20 Aug 2010]; A. Brodie et al., *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914*, 1 (2001), 490.
- 119 Geldart, diary (19 Mar 1881).
- 120 E. Geldart, 'Dennington screens', *Dawn of Day* (March 1890), 44.