

Developing Concepts of Conservation: the Fate of Bombed Churches after the Second World War

by

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The reconstruction of war-damaged areas and buildings has attracted much interest in recent years, including studies of how ideas about whether and how to conserve developed. This study explores these ideas using one building type – the church – usually prominent in the townscape and in people's experiences of areas.

My clear feeling is that it would be a sordid, nay, sinful piece of barbarism to do other than religiously preserve these churches as heirlooms. Many of them are specimens of noble architecture, the like of which we have no prospect of ever being able to produce again.¹

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War has been called a 'total war', one where the civilian population was affected directly and substantially by the conduct of the war; and, indeed, urban places and their inhabitants were hard-hit by the direct and indirect effects of war. Yet these effects were very unevenly distributed across the theatres of war. The severity of damage varied. Damage in the United Kingdom was relatively light, as it was caused by smaller air raids by smaller aircraft than was the case in Germany and Japan, or in comparison with the damage inflicted by surface warfare in France, Italy, Germany and the USSR. Even so, the damage inflicted upon Coventry in one air raid in November 1940 was widespread, affecting virtually every structure within the city centre. The fate of the surviving remnants, once the rubble clearance, reconstruction planning and implementation of these sometimes radical visions were carried through, was equally variable. This paper reviews the fate of some of these ruins – churches (specifically

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those of the Church of England), often iconic and familiar in the local townscape. How churches were treated usefully explores how ideas about conservation were developing in the early post-war period.²

The paper also examines some of the issues surrounding society's perception and treatment of ruins. Hugh Casson suggested that ruins are powerful symbols.³ This is particularly so when the ruins are produced through the action of war, as they may evoke memories of the place or building in its original state, of activities that took place there, and of people killed in the same conflict. Yet this is only a specialist theme in what appears to be a wider historical and societal fascination for ruins. Rose Macauley began her well-known book, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, by saying 'to be fascinated by ruins has always, it would seem, been a human tendency...'⁴ and this also permeates Christopher Woodward's more recent, more personal, volume.⁵ This study inevitably touches on such fascinations in its overview of how particular ruins, created by enemy action during the Second World War, were subsequently managed, cleared or rebuilt. This is sometimes related to, but conceptually distinct from, issues of the memorialisation of the war and its losses.

The actual words of original authors can be both evocative of the period and its values and attitudes, and revealing of the authors' views. This paper therefore makes extensive use of direct quotation to construct a narrative of these developing concepts.

In studying the damage and reactions to it, an important point is that, sixty years later, it is extremely difficult to judge the real severity of bomb damage. Even at the time, 'it must ... be remembered that many reports of damage to churches prove, on sifting, to amount only to stripped tiles or slates, or the loss of valueless stained glass'.⁶ Accurate photographs are scarce: photography required official permits and scarce materials; and there was (certainly in the Midlands) a considerable degree of self-censorship over and above the formal censor's activities.⁷ Literature of the time, and even more recent local and architectural histories, frequently use terms such as 'totally destroyed', when incendiaries have burned the roof and interior fittings, but walls and tower remain apparently little-damaged (Fig.

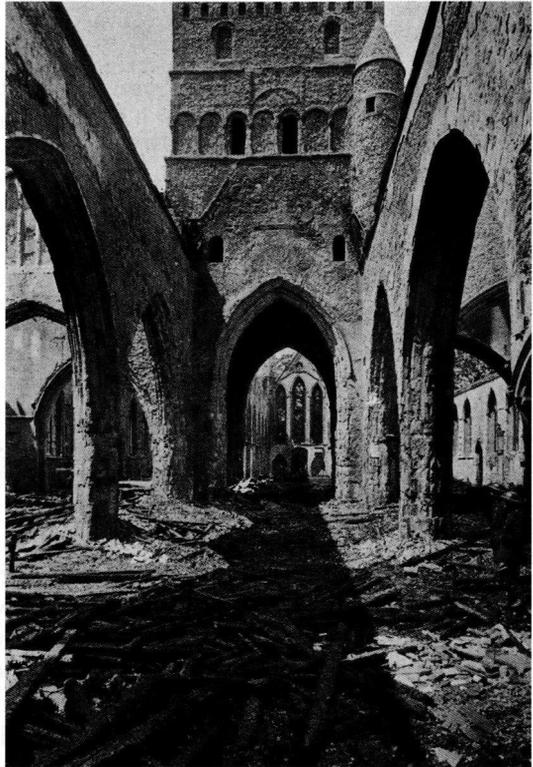


Fig. 1.

St Nicholas, Great Yarmouth, on 25 June 1942;
subsequently restored.

Photographer unknown: reproduced from G. G. Box, Great Yarmouth: Front Line Town 1939-45 (no publisher, undated, c. 1946)

1). The caption to one of a series of contemporary sketches of damaged London churches notes, of St Alban, Wood Street, London, that 'the whole of [it], except for the tower, was destroyed by a bomb', while the accompanying sketch clearly shows very considerable survival of walls to parapet level.⁸ The historian Hermione Hobhouse wrote in 1971 of St Mary Aldermanbury that 'it was burnt out in 1940, leaving only the east end ... standing', yet photographs and drawings clearly show the entire shell and tower remaining (see below).⁹ There appears to be clear propaganda rationale in some uses of texts and images: for example, Birmingham's St Thomas (1826-9) was hardly 'one of the oldest buildings in the city', as it is captioned in Country Life's picture-book *Britain Under Fire*.¹⁰

Despite these uses of 'totally destroyed' and similar phrases, it is clear from contemporary illustrations that, in many cases, there were substantial remains of buildings that were, perhaps, more stoutly constructed than their surroundings – because of the special nature afforded to church-building and use. Fire spared stout stone walls that could be re-faced. Roofs could be replaced, and interiors reinstated. However the urgency of clearance meant that what, in more peaceful circumstances, might have been salvaged or restored may have been cleared away by unskilled military labour.

The number of churches affected by wartime damage is high. Even by mid-1944, 'Nearly 14,000 churches, monasteries, convents and other ecclesiastical buildings have suffered various degrees of damage in enemy raids on Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.¹¹ Yet it should be remembered that many such damage reports relate to relatively minor damage to tiles and glass.

The scale of damage to churches prompted debates about how they were to be repaired; or even whether the ruins should be demolished and wholly new churches built, using contemporary styles and materials or as replicas. Although, in many cases, the bombing produced feelings of sadness that the familiar was damaged or destroyed, and thus calls for reinstatement, it is also important to consider that this was not always the case. In Bath, Pevsner wrote of G. G. Street's damaged St Andrew's, Church Street, behind the Royal Crescent, that although the big tower remained, 'the rest [was] happily bombed. The tower is now also coming down – a blessing; for it was unacceptable even from the picturesque mixer's point of view'.¹² The badly-damaged St Nicholas, Great Yarmouth (see Fig. 1), 'had been so altered and rebuilt that it could not be reckoned as in the front rank of ancient parish churches ... Here the reinstatement will give the distinguished architect who has been called in the opportunity of making the building finer than it was before'.¹³

In some cases the ruins proved to have practical uses: the burned-out shell of St Michael's Baptist Church, Coventry (next to the Cathedral), was converted into a static water tank for fire-fighting purposes.¹⁴ In a few cases the concept of total redevelopment for non-ecclesiastical uses seems to have been raised at a very early stage: for example, at St Mary Bredin, Canterbury, damaged in the 1942 'Baedeker' raids, burials were 'actually cleared when the shell of the building was pulled down in 1942, after the blitz; so the site has been cleared from that point of view ... the church authorities have actually purchased another site up in South Canterbury for the erection of a church to take the place of St Mary'.¹⁵

DEVELOPING IDEAS FOR RETENTION, RESTORATION AND REBUILDING

The scale and severity of destruction, most particularly to the Wren churches in the City of London, prompted a number of pronouncements of principles to guide restoration, reconstruction or replacement, particularly during the early 1940s. Many were prompted by the actions of the Bishop of London's various commissions and committees set up to review the fate of the bombed churches and the structure of the diocese: indeed many were written by individual members of these organisations, whether seeking to promote their own views or those emerging from the organisations' debates and consultations.¹⁶ Many of these inevitably appear to be heavily influenced by William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), but some are modified by the needs of the Church as a working organisation, or concepts of architectural modernity.

One of the earliest was by the influential architect H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, published in *Country Life* only weeks after the first major raids.¹⁷ He did not rule out facsimile replication in principle, although 'we must reproduce only those [buildings] whose designs appear to be intrinsically excellent, owing their merit, not to the beautifying disguise of antiquity, but to the architectural values that are permanent'.¹⁸ He did not strictly adhere to the principles of William Morris and SPAB, noting that there had been some 'legitimate re-creation' of important buildings in previous centuries; therefore 'outside its proper domain' Morris's theory 'need not be followed'.¹⁹ Moreover (although not public knowledge), even the SPAB Committee for London Churches was itself divided, with some including James Lees-Milne arguing that full restoration was acceptable in some cases, but the Chairman, Lord Esher, arguing against on principle.²⁰

In an Anniversary Address to the Society of Antiquaries, its President, A. W. Clapham, suggested three principles clearly deriving from SPAB guidance.²¹

- 'Where only the bare shell remains, reinstatement would be largely without historical value or artistic justification' (for example churches of poor architectural quality or 'mutilated in modern times', i.e. by the Victorians);
- 'Where demolition has been extensive, rebuilding would hardly be justified'; and
- 'Fittings and plasterwork, where destroyed, would be costly to replace and, if so, would be only near reproductions'.

'Rebuilding' in this context clearly meant 'restoration' to a more-or-less pre-war state. On a more pragmatic note,

- 'The policy of general rebuilding of all the destroyed churches would almost certainly be opposed by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves, who would no doubt prefer to have equivalent accommodation elsewhere, and this attitude would be likely to receive considerable support, even in informed circles, in view of the questionable value of a mere reproduction'.

Yet not everyone did question the value of 'mere reproduction'. Nevertheless, Clapham argued that 'we should ... press for preservation of specific churches or features'

- 'where of acknowledged merit and not too severely damaged, by replacing the main lines but not the destroyed ornamental features'; and
- 'where towers remained, the spires could be replaced', but this would need the retention of the sites of the churches and/or their churchyards for the towers to be visible.

The first point again relates to SPAB ideals of not replicating original detail or workmanship, and also perhaps to the architectural modernist preferences for no extraneous decoration. The second appears to focus on broader concepts of the urban design impact of the spires on the skyline as a whole.

Clapham wrote to the Ministry of Works and Buildings outlining his approach. F. J. E. Raby, of the Ancient Monuments Branch, responded on 28 February 1941 that 'our views and yours correspond so closely that I feel justified in sending them up to those concerned at Headquarters' (i.e. the London office).²² The effect of Raby's re-statement and endorsement of Clapham's views is not recorded.

In 1941 the architectural historian John Summerson, in a wider discussion of 'the place of preservation in a reconstruction programme', suggested that the following factors were of particular significance:

- 'The capability of the church to be rebuilt as its architect intended it', 'taking into account the condition of the ruins and the virtual impossibility of reproducing vanished craftsmanship and memorials';
- 'The merits of the church as a work of art' ... 'The quality of Wren's churches varies enormously ... The whole world admires St Stephen's Walbrook. But I doubt whether anybody has ever seen much to admire in St Mary Aldermanbury or St Andrew by the Wardrobe';
- 'The position of each building in relation to planning schemes' ... 'Here I should like to enter a plea for the consideration of preservation as part of the planners' programme...'; and
- 'The general consideration [of] how these churches can be used'. 'If rebuilt, how can they be used?'.²³

As did Clapham, Summerson focused on the issue of replication, and its costs and difficulties; although the SPAB ethical issue that replication could deceive the onlooker is not mentioned. Artistic valuation is given more prominence. Yet the views of those who might not have the benefit of Summerson's experience and training are not considered: it is plain that both St Mary Aldermanbury and St Andrew by the Wardrobe had their supporters, to such an extent that the latter was eventually restored.²⁴ The issue of preservation as a consideration in planning schemes is interesting, coming three years before the concept of Listing was introduced in the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act, but just when a few prominent planners such as Patrick Abercrombie and Thomas Sharp were considering area protection in their schemes.²⁵

Goodhart-Rendel, in a version of one of his many radio broadcasts (and, therefore, with the intention of reaching a particularly wide and non-specialist audience), suggested the following principles:

- If wholly demolished, rebuild on contemporary lines.
- However, 'there are probably some architectural designs so perfect in themselves as to be worth carrying out in new materials at any period [i.e. replication] [but] These designs, however, must be very few – I doubt if more have ever been made in England than ten or a dozen [and difficult to agree which these were]'.²⁶
- 'Where precious fragments have escaped the fury of both the enemy and of subsequent demolition gangs',
 - (a) 'reveal the original design, provided of course that it is suitable, supplying all the parts that are missing',

- (b) 'embody the ancient work in a new design, adding nothing that could falsely appear to have been originally part of it, but letting the building look what it is, a mixture of old and new'.²⁶

Here there is greater prominence given to the architectural style of the present day, 'rebuild on contemporary lines'. Mixing old and new is interesting in light of the long-standing SPAB-inspired use of tiles for patch repairs, and the odd appearance that this had given to so many historic buildings. Replication is acknowledged as a possibility, but of vanishingly small importance; a point made by others, including architects, in this widening debate.²⁷ It is significant that this was a matter for general public debate at the time. For example, F. J. Wills asked, in a Letter to the Editor of a provincial newspaper in mid-1941,

should churches, to take one example, be rebuilt in the old style of architecture in which all the old ones are, and most of the new ones pretend to be? Surely it is a poor advertisement for religion to suggest that it can only be housed in dead styles. Before this policy of sterile imitation of an old style, usually Gothic, set in, churches were particularly sensitive to architectural development.²⁸

However an editorial in *The Builder*, following the issue that had also reprinted excerpts from Goodhart-Rendel's radio broadcast, chose to highlight the issue of originality. The Editor raised the questions of how 'original' to the original designer's concept and original workmanship was the object that had been damaged or destroyed? When would restoration, replication or rebuilding be justified, and when, 'considered purely as design, and when it can be retained without detriment to the practical requirements' should even 'the remains' be retained?²⁹

At much the same time, and for a public readership, the architect Ralph Tubbs wrote a mass-market Penguin book about cities and their reconstruction, in which he illustrated a burnt-out church and suggested four possible courses of action in such circumstances:

restoration in its original form (only logical if enough fragments remain); repair by replacing damaged portions with candidly contemporary work (as always done before the 19th century); demolition (with a sigh of regret); retention of picturesque remains (as in the streets of Rome).³⁰

Each case should be treated on its merits, considering the extent of damage and the nature of restoration necessary. However, of course, he over-simplified; and polemically added, next to the illustration, the caption 'Always avoid sham antiquity, for "like a human being, a building that is born old is nothing but a horrid deformity"' (though the source of this apparent quotation is not given). Likewise, again in 1942, the prominent architectural writer J. M. Richards was arguing for an understanding of the beauty of ruins, and thus the retention of some for their intrinsic aesthetic merit:

The architecture of destruction not only possesses an aesthetic peculiar to itself, it contrives its effects out of its own range of raw materials ... the scarified surface of blasted walls, the chalky substance of calcined masonry ... on sunny mornings in the City. Moreover, the aesthetic of destruction bears no relationship to any architectural merit the building may have possessed in life.³¹

Angus Calder's epic overview of *The People's War* quotes this passage, with the comment that 'such special pleading was not heeded':³² such professionally-informed

aesthetic sensibilities were not likely to appeal to the wider public who were living through the continuing devastation.

By August 1942 the Ministry of Works and Planning had become so concerned about the issue of bombed churches, most particularly in London, that two officers, F. J. E. Raby and J. Charlton – apparently on their own initiative – produced a *Memorandum on the preservation and maintenance of ancient churches*, which was widely circulated within the Ministry. They distilled the views already discussed, concluding (albeit tentatively)

- that as many of the [City] churches as possible should be rebuilt, without necessarily copying destroyed internal fittings or enrichments;
- that all the towers and steeples, with one or two possible exceptions, should be retained and restored [their emphasis; the exceptions were not identified];
- that no attempt should be made to create open spaces around churches which were designed for sites surrounded by buildings;
- that where towers and steeples are preserved, the rest of the site should be kept as open space and the remains of the church laid out as an Ancient Monument; and
- that the height of buildings in the City must be limited so that the towers and steeples shall not be over-shadowed in the future.³³

Their justification for intervention in this way was that ‘these churches are not merely of local importance, and as public money will, in the main, be involved, ... it seems proper that the Government should have a say in what is decided’.³⁴ The emphasis on the retention of skyline features reflects earlier Ministry memoranda and a concern for the wider urban landscape; and their focus on the laying-out of bombed churches and their scheduling as ancient monuments is interesting in its parallel with later suggestions for garden memorials (see below). This draft policy was not, however, implemented; and there are no records of its reception in the higher echelons of the Ministry.

Goodhart-Rendel was also involved with the Association of the Friends of the City Churches,³⁵ which put forward a Statement of Policy in late 1943:

The Association is of the opinion that wherever possible these churches should be rebuilt on their original sites and re-used. If in any instance full reconstruction is found to be impracticable the Association urges that the tower, together with any spire or steeple that may have been destroyed, should be restored and preserved, and the site of the church, together with the churchyard, kept as an open space in perpetuity. When a decision has to be taken for or against rebuilding, the Association will endeavour to secure that in each case full and proper regard is paid to spiritual, architectural, historical, civic, and even imperial considerations, which it believes ought, in this matter, to carry at least equal weight with those of a purely monetary or administrative character.³⁶

Although ‘imperial considerations’ are unspecified, the Friends did suggest that replication of interior fittings in particular would be inappropriate, but that ‘the right solution of this part of the problem would be for the restored churches to be furnished with the best work that contemporary craftsmen can produce’.³⁷ At its first annual meeting, A. E. Richardson held that even the two churches that were beyond repair should be rebuilt.³⁸ Goodhart-Rendel publicised the Friends and their principles. In a 1944 publication, though, he uses several examples to argue that a case could be made for reproduction in exceptional cases; but that the post-Wren alterations were equally a part of the churches’ history and, if surviving, they too should be retained.³⁹

Pevsner, the supporter of modernism in architecture, noted in a radio broadcast that ruined churches should

- of course, be restored where damage has been light, or where the continued existence of a church is a matter of national interest because of its great traditions and the part it has played in the history of the country
- It can also be argued that a number of ruined churches should be restored on the strength of their architectural beauty as such
- Those not rebuilt or replaced by ecclesiastical buildings such as parish halls 'would be the ideal memorials of this war'.⁴⁰

Perhaps surprisingly, Pevsner emphasises restoration and memorials. But how many churches, even in the City, would qualify under his definition of 'national interest'? New construction on contemporary lines is not mentioned.

Some of the views expressed about the ethics and merits of restoration related particularly to the Wren (and later) churches, where plans were more likely to exist in sufficient detail to allow the original designer's conception to be accurately re-created, if desired. In particular, as a Ministry official suggested, the towers were visually significant, and 'remain intact or nearly so. Since they are of great value by all canons, architectural and artistic excellence as well as evidence of medieval and later life, they must be retained'.⁴¹ These values, too, were often implied, if not explicitly mentioned, in discussions of 'national interest' and cultural significance. Such views obviously were not applicable to medieval churches, built by 'masons' rather than designed by 'architects', and often in several major building campaigns from different architectural periods. Hence 'There is sure to be a great drive from some quarters, after the war, for re-building Wren churches, and we must keep in front of our minds the element of futility which this would involve',⁴² and 'The gutted shell of a Wren church is of hardly any value at all. Wood-carving and plaster-work are obviously irreplaceable. To rebuild one of the simpler Wren naves without the ability to re-furnish it would not be sensible'.⁴³ A 'fictitious reproduction' of Wren would 'not be justified'.⁴⁴ Moreover, since liturgical requirements had changed significantly since the late 1600s, 'how that great man [Wren] would laugh if he returned to this world and caught us piously rebuilding his hastily designed churches in the forms that for a hundred years had been found by us to be increasingly inconvenient!'.⁴⁵ So Wren's hand in the design was no guarantee of survival, according to the architectural élite and pressure groups such as the Friends of the City Churches. There is greatest professional agreement for the idea that facsimile reinstatement, most particularly of interior details such as carved woodwork and plasterwork, would be wrong.

The wider concern for urban design, especially the impact of Wren's towers and steeples upon the skyline, was mirrored by numerous others. Sir Giles Gilbert Scott noted that 'It is essential that where damage is not overwhelming these [City] churches should be preserved and restored, and no high blocks of buildings be allowed in their immediate vicinity ... indeed they become ridiculous, if they are buried, overtopped, and overwhelmed by great blocks of city offices'.⁴⁶ In the City of London, some church towers were retained after 1945; most notably perhaps that of St Alban, Wood Street. Here, the tower remains isolated on a tiny road island after lengthy debate as to whether it should be demolished, moved, or removed from the City to facilitate road widening

(Fig. 2). Its survival is surprising given that by 1952 the Ministry 'recognised that the retention of the Tower would be impracticable and have become reconciled to its loss'.⁴⁷ The surviving tower remained unrestored for many years, and in the mid-1980s was converted for commercial use with a small flat on the upper floors.⁴⁸ It is now neither memorial nor, given the scale of surrounding redevelopment, skyline feature: it seems instead an incongruous relict feature. Yet the prolonged debate over St Swithun London Stone is interesting: the City Surveyor wanted at least partial demolition for public safety reasons, and when this was finally accepted, 'The Ministry of Works whilst agreeing the demolition could not in all honesty regard the tower in the event of its completion as an Ancient Monument'.⁴⁹ By these comments in the early 1950s the Ministry was, perhaps, more realistic about what could or should be protected, in comparison with O'Neill's comment in 1941 (note 41).



Fig. 2. Surviving tower of St Alban, Wood Street, London, surrounded by taller office blocks and now converted for other uses.

Photograph Author

MEMORIALS AND MOVES

As one letter-writer to *Country Life* put it even in 1944, 'a state of ruin is in itself no bar to a beautiful existence'.⁵⁰ Rose Macauley's book *The Pleasure of Ruins*, written in the immediate post-war years, builds on this concept and includes a brief postscript 'Note on new ruins'. She deals explicitly with the ruins of war, including churches, and how they could, if allowed to weather, take on the same patina of age and familiarity about which she enthuses.

Shells of churches [will] gape emptily; over broken altars the small yellow dandelions make their pattern. All this will presently be; but at first there is only the ruin; a mass of torn, charred prayer books strew the stone floor; the statues, tumbled from their niches, have broken in pieces; rafters and rubble pile knee-deep. But often the ruin has put on, in its catastrophic tipsy chaos, a bizarre new charm.⁵¹

The way in which these ruins could be perceived was highlighted even during the London blitz by the art historian Kenneth Clark, who suggested that bomb damage could in itself be considered as Picturesque.⁵² The idea that such damage could be seen in the same way as the great English contribution to landscape philosophy was challenging, but became popular amongst some architectural writers at least.

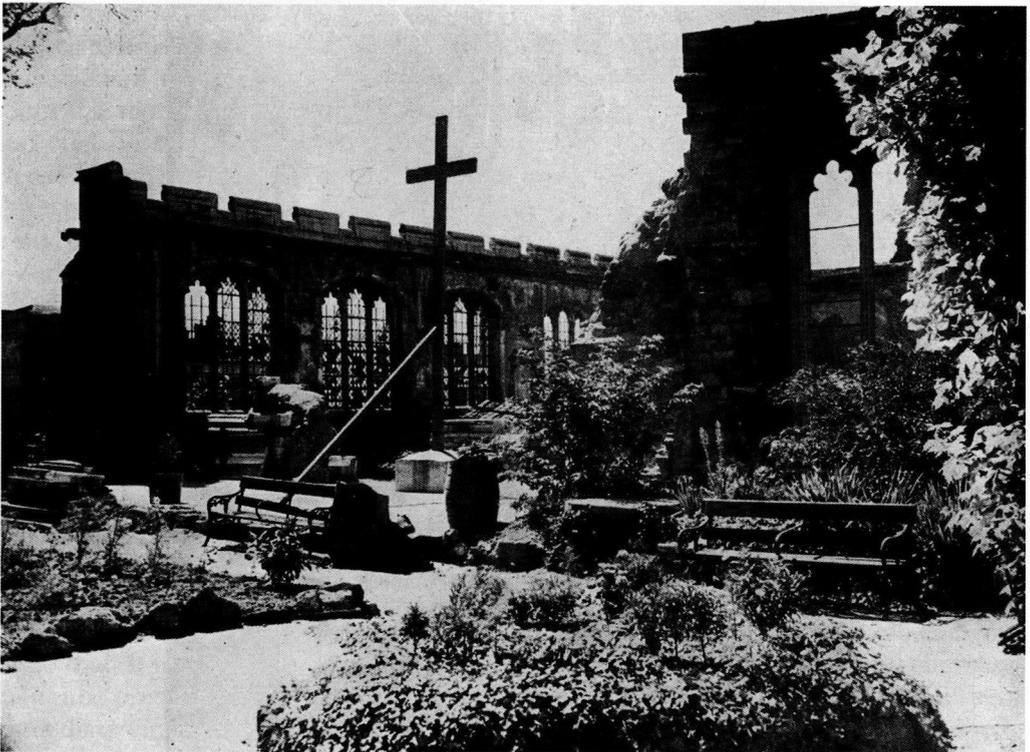


Fig. 3.

All Hallows, Barking, laid out as a temporary garden. Subsequently rebuilt.

Photographer unknown (a widely reproduced image)

The idea that some, at least, of the bombed churches in London and elsewhere might be retained as ruins, and used as public open spaces, gardens and war memorials (Fig. 3), was raised even during the main blitz. Sir Edwin Lutyens wrote to the architect S. A. Alexander on 16 January 1941 that, despite the need for space for housing, 'where there is no congregation I would leave the spaces occupied by destroyed Churches as open', or that, at St Bartholomew the Great, 'you might build a smaller church within its ruins'.⁵³ Shortly afterwards John Summerson suggested that '... certain churches could effectively remain as ruins ... [not the too-burned Wren ones, but – for example – Hawksmoor's St George's in the East; Archer's St John Smith Square] If it is not wanted as a place of worship why not let it remain as a shell, a witness – and a beautiful one – of the acts of these times as well as of its own'.⁵⁴ The early and influential reconstruction plan for Plymouth suggested that the ruined Charles Church should be retained as a ruin, 'a fitting memorial to symbolize the city's grief and honour in the triumphant survival of the trials of this tragic war'.⁵⁵

The concept appears to have been popularised again through a well-illustrated and fluent feature in the *Architectural Review* in January 1944 with text by Geoffrey Jellicoe and drawings by Neville Conder.⁵⁶ A much wider, non-professional, readership saw a letter in *The Times* a few months later, signed by a range of high-powered figures of the artistic and intellectual establishment.⁵⁷ They suggested that selected ruins should receive only the barest minimum of structural stabilisation, but that they should be 'surrounded by lawns, flower-beds and flowering trees ... we should be able to provide in some measure for the needs of our successors for spiritual refreshment and physical and mental relaxation'. The rationale for selecting some of the worst-damaged churches was that

The time will come – much sooner than most of us to-day can visualize – when no trace of death from the air will be left in the streets of rebuilt London. At such a time the story of the blitz may begin to seem unreal not only to visiting tourists but to a new generation of Londoners. It is the purpose of war memorials to remind posterity of the reality of the sacrifices upon which its apparent security has been built. These church ruins, we suggest, would do this with realism and gravity.⁵⁸

In an editorial reaction to the *Times* letter, one architectural journal was more interested in the absence of explicit acknowledgement 'that there might be new churches on the sites; only restoration is mentioned. And it is difficult to see why a contemporary piece of work should not also provide a most suitable and significant war memorial'.⁵⁹ However, at the time, this was a minority view.

There was, though, a counter-argument to the dominant view on reconstruction, within the Church and elsewhere. For example, the Bishop of Bristol made a public statement to the effect that 'we should not desire that the ruins of any of our churches should be preserved in such a way as to interfere with the layout which expert advice shows to be the best'. This caused some local anxiety, and some comment in the Ministry, where Raby and Charlton's memorandum of August 1942 suggested that the towers of such churches, at least, should be retained; and that 'the War Damage Commission would make no payments without consulting us', implying the possibility that the Ministry would exert control over schemes it deemed inappropriate by vetoing payment.⁶⁰ But this argument appears to have had little impact. Sir Herbert Baker felt that a ruin as

memorial conveyed the wrong message, steering the onlooker 'to the inferno where hate and revenge dwell'.⁶¹ There was little enthusiasm for retaining ruins amongst the majority of influential churchmen.⁶²

A suggestion that bombed churches could be preserved in garden settings as war memorials was also made by a committee of the Royal Society of Arts and published by the War Memorials Advisory Council as part of a survey 'designed primarily to guide public opinion so that the memorials of the present war should reach a higher standard of artistic merit and social value than those of the last war'.⁶³ Despite its authoritative source this appears to have had little direct impact. A page headed 'The charm of ruins: a suggestion for perpetuation' in the anonymous and undated propagandist booklet *Resurgam* made the suggestion that those of Wren's damaged churches not rebuilt, because of the falling population – and other historic buildings elsewhere – 'might be left as ruins ... these perpetual ruins would serve as monuments to "Britain's finest hour"'.⁶⁴ That the ruins could have 'charm' builds upon Clark's comment about the Picturesque, and is a precursor of Macauley's exploration of the 'pleasure' of ruins.

Probably the best-known advocacy of this idea was through the publication of a slim book, *Bombed churches as war memorials*, published by the Architectural Press in 1945 (Fig. 4) but circulated and reviewed widely, in the popular as well as professional press. This built upon the article by Jellicoe and Conder for the *Architectural Review*, using many of the same illustrations.⁶⁵ It was introduced by Hugh Casson, and contained detailed proposals for Christ Church, Newgate; and the adjoining ruins of St Alban, Wood Street, and St Mary, Aldermanbury, in the City of London; and St Anne, Soho, and St John, Red Lion Square, elsewhere in London (although there is exaggerated mention of 'many thousand churches which ... to-day stand ruined and open to the sky', and occasional names of other cities,⁶⁶ this is a London-focused piece of propaganda). This book was well illustrated with sketches and even detailed planting diagrams. Casson argued strongly against the purely functional and financial arguments that these churches had largely lost their congregations, and their valuable sites would raise money needed by the Church elsewhere.

A church like St Mary's ... stands, even when in ruins, upon sacred ground. It is, even when scarred and broken, a piece of architecture, sometimes perhaps a masterpiece. Every stone – whether fallen or in place – is a fragment of the past, part of the pattern of history. To destroy all this just because it was in the way, or because on Sunday the pews were mostly empty, is surely indefensible, however many new churches are built elsewhere to take its place.⁶⁷

He discussed the problem of restoration or reproduction, suggesting that, although technically feasible, 'would not such rebuilt churches be just lifeless reproductions, as smug and accurate and boring as plaster casts in a museum?'. Retention as ruins therefore 'does not seem quite so fanciful after all'. However, he argued that even such ruins would have multiple functions, and listed three:

- as 'sanctuaries': continuing use as places of worship, including open-air services and private prayer;
- as open spaces, 'affording places of relaxation and retreat from the bustle of traffic, where the City worker can eat his lunch under a tree or rest for half an hour against a fragment of sun-warmed masonry'; and

- as war memorials. Casson argued that 'a memorial should not be remote, but it should be withdrawn a little from the noise and distractions of human contacts. It should be a place of stillness, a place apart.'⁶⁸

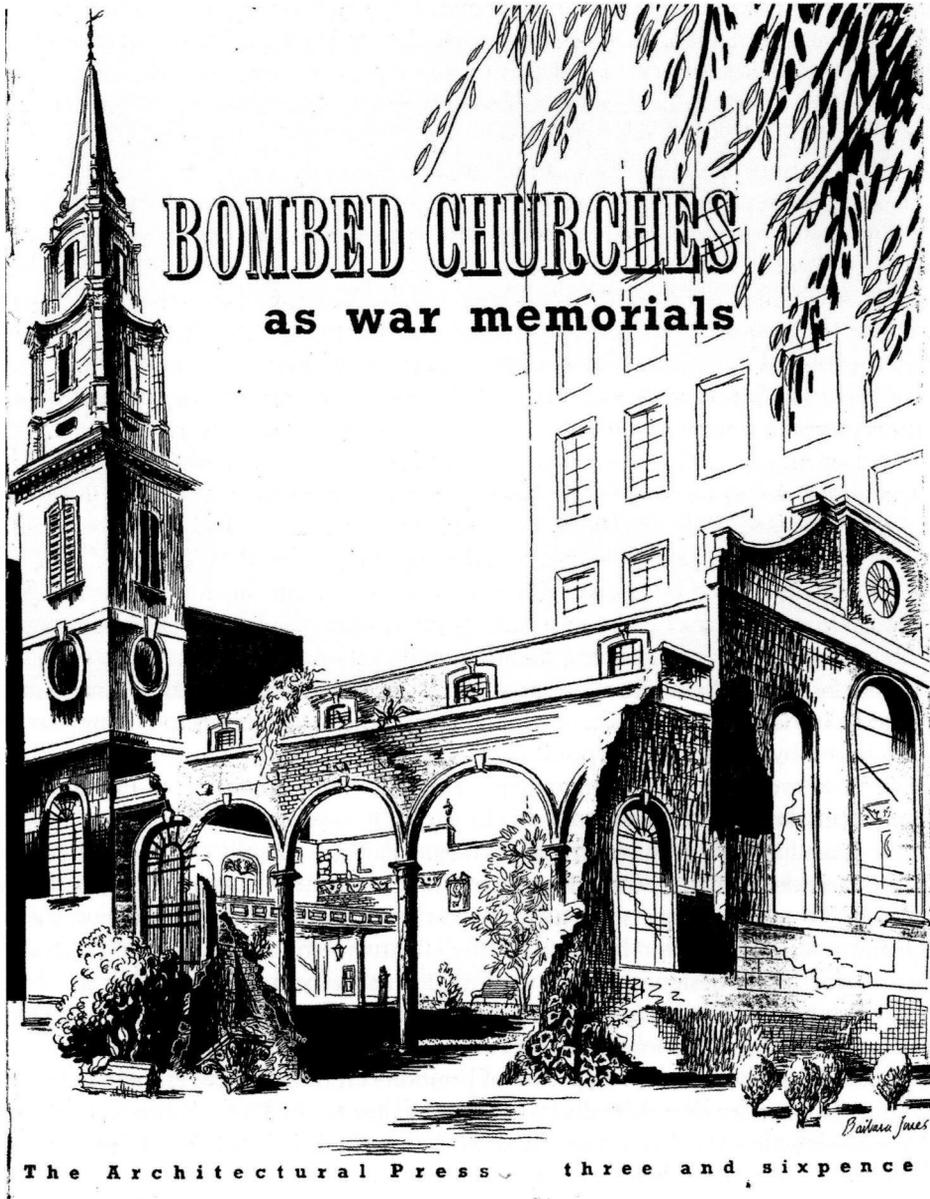


Fig. 4.

Cover of *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*, showing the suggested garden scheme for Christ Church, Newgate Street, London; emphasising how much of the structure had survived.

Casson also suggested, in some detail, the treatment that such multiple-use ruins would merit, and strongly implied that their landscaping as gardens (rather than as manicured public parks) would be most appropriate:

if ruins are to be preserved for use and not merely for looks, they must not be left, as the romantic purists would leave them, to crumble into dust. A ruin is more than a collection of debris. It is a place of its own individuality, charged with its own emotion and atmosphere, of drama, of grandeur, of nobility, or of charm. These qualities must be preserved as carefully as the broken stones which are their physical embodiment. This does not mean an arid 'restoration', an application of cosmetics to a weather-beaten skin, a laying-out, as though around a corpse, of shrubs and regimented lawns. It does not mean gravel paths and iron railings and little notices telling you, in impeccable lettering, to 'keep off'. Preservation is not wholly the archaeologist's job; it involves an understanding of the ruin as a ruin, and its re-creation as a work of art in its own right, keeping the essential forms but enhancing them with an imaginative and appropriate background.⁶⁹

This is the passage that Woodward highlights to emphasise the picturesque nature of this concept.⁷⁰ The idea was further popularised for a much wider public by Pevsner's 1946 radio broadcast, also excerpted in *The Listener*.⁷¹ Yet at least one commentator felt that this approach posed problems:

There is likely to be a tendency on the part of town planners to arrange vistas and public gardens and other amenities around the sites of important ancient churches whether these have escaped destruction or not. It is possible that this sort of thing may be carried too far, especially in the case of medieval town churches [... and] Wren's London churches.⁷²

However, this could be countered by an illustration and caption in *Bombed churches* suggesting that ruins given new meaning as memorials would contrast, not compete, 'with the giant façades surrounding them'.⁷³

Various churches have been treated in this manner.⁷⁴ For example, in Plymouth the ruined Charles Church (1657), in which open-air services were held during wartime, was purchased by Plymouth Corporation in 1957 and, according to the nearby plaque, has been preserved as a 'fitting memorial to the civilian population of Plymouth who lost their lives during enemy attacks on the city'. It now stands 'ruined, yet majestic, on a new island site at the eastern end of Royal Parade, the old churchyard covering more than an acre being lost with the construction of the new Exeter Street', and hardly accessible.⁷⁵ Now more a grassed traffic island than a gardened ruin, it is nevertheless a very prominent, visible – and hence arguably effective – monument (Fig. 5), although a recent and startlingly-designed shopping centre forms an incongruous backdrop. Ruined churches also exist in garden/park settings in Birmingham and (least successfully) Dover (see below), Bristol, Liverpool and other cities.

In considering how many of the City of London's churches were retained in this way, it is helpful to consider that this was hardly a new idea in the City. Numerous churches were not rebuilt after the Great Fire, or were demolished because of redundancy, up to 1939; in many, churchyards or fragments of them are still evident in the contemporary urban structure. In some, the church towers were retained, mostly as some form of monument; few have any constructive use. There is a garden within the remaining ruins of Christ Church Newgate Street, although this is a late addition by the Corporation of



Fig. 5. Charles Church, Plymouth, isolated amidst busy traffic.
Photograph Author

London: by 1958 'there was not even grass in the charred interior. Unsightly wreckage with the mould and rubbish of seventeen years' neglect could be seen through cracks in the boards';⁷⁶ the tower and shell were 'restored' in 1958-60 by Lord Mottistone, whose practice built attached brick offices two decades later, so there is some use attached to this ruin and monument. However, in *c.* 1974 the Corporation demolished two surviving walls for a road-widening scheme – largely un-implemented – and then created a garden in 1989.⁷⁷ Most recently there has been a proposal to re-create the demolished walls, retaining the body of the church as an unroofed garden; and the tower has been converted into residential accommodation.⁷⁸ There are also gardens on the site of St Mary Aldermanbury (see below) and St Dunstan-in-the-East. Woodward's view of those London churches that have been preserved as gardens is rather caustic: he suggests that the gardens are over-manicured, and 'perhaps the ruins should be left a little wilder'.⁷⁹ Perhaps the comments of the vicar of St Swithun's, about the temporary wartime garden in its ruined shell, are more apt: 'This is still holy ground. I do not think that God will mind if you smoke, but if you leave litter, there is no one to clean it up'.⁸⁰

A further suggestion, apparently put most forcefully (if perhaps not first) again by Clough Williams-Ellis in a letter to *The Times* in 1941,⁸¹ seems to have been applied almost exclusively to churches in the City of London. Williams-Ellis suggested that City churches that were damaged and/or un-needed should be re-located to the new and expanding suburbs.

The [bombed Wren] churches might be rebuilt in provincial towns and cities if they were of sufficient quality to merit replication... There could be few towns where the authentic Phoenix-Wren church could not be the most gracious, notable, and revered building in the place, so giving a more general pleasure and exercising a wider civilizing influence than ever it did as an obscured member of a congested galaxy.

Interestingly given later debates on ‘authenticity’, Williams-Ellis states that ‘it seems to me that a stone now hewn faithfully to the master’s design is not “unauthentic” merely because it takes shape posthumously’. Again there was some precedent to support this. All Hallows, Lombard Street, was demolished in 1939 and its tower rebuilt as a campanile to a new suburban church at Twickenham, by Anderson and Atkinson, in 1940.⁸² In the light of points made below about such moves, it is interesting that this church was described in its original location as ‘so hemmed in by banks etc. that it was known as “the Church Invisible”. It had a narrow yard at each side and access to it was only to be had by passages under the surrounding houses’.⁸³ Even this demolition and move had not been without protest.⁸⁴

Williams-Ellis’s suggestion provoked much immediate debate: there were ‘few Wren churches that would suit open sites, being designed for cramped inner-city locations. Perhaps only St Bride’s would be worth considering. Christ Church, with its galleries, would be a white elephant in any parish’.⁸⁵ Marking an interesting *volte-face*, an editorial (thus presumably by Christopher Hussey) in *Country Life* noted that the magazine had vigorously discouraged such suggested moves before the war, ‘but now that some, at least, must be re-built, there is much in favour’ of the suggestion.⁸⁶ Viscount Esher, Chairman of SPAB, responded in *The Times* that ‘the Society feels it would be wrong to re-erect them on sites other than those for which they were designed, even if many of the original stones were retained, but that the retention and re-erection of damaged portions in selected cases should be advocated’.⁸⁷ In a paper given at the Royal Society of Arts, Ansell argued that most of the towers were not badly damaged and could be repaired, and they contributed much to the character of the City skyline. ‘They are an essential part of the London scene ... Taken away and set singly in distant suburbs, they would be lonely and forlorn. The London of the future must retain Wren’s steeples’.⁸⁸ Likewise, speaking at the Royal Academy, the eminent architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott said that ‘I hope the proposal to remove some of these churches to the suburbs will not be adopted ... they would lose too much if torn from their context and historical associations’.⁸⁹ In the face of such sustained and eminent criticism, this idea rapidly declined.

It was resuscitated immediately after the war, when road-widening proposals encountered at least two bombed churches. The fate of St Alban Wood Street has been mentioned, and moving that church or its tower was considered only briefly. St James Garlickhythe, however, received more sustained consideration. The reconstruction plan by Holden and Holford recommended moving this church sixty feet to the north to allow

for a major widening of Upper Thames Street.⁹⁰ In March 1947 the Bishop's Committee met Holford to discuss this further. It could be done on rollers, at cost of approximately £10,000, compared with £30,000 'to demolish and rebuild the church on the new site'. The Committee was specifically asked if it had any objection to the removal of the church to this new site – it did not.⁹¹ However the cost, and changing road alignments, eventually left the church on its original site. Yet the idea was pursued by Holford and the Ministry, as surviving letters and memoranda show: demonstration projects to show the feasibility of moving complete buildings were sought, and St Stephen Wallbrook was discussed in this context. Although steel-framed buildings would be easier to move, Holford was told that he 'need not rule out historic buildings, the removal of which would be involved if they were to be preserved', in a senior civil servant's ominous words.⁹²

The one church that was eventually moved was St Mary Aldermanbury. Although burned out, its walls and tower survived intact (Fig. 6). However, after a period of debate and consultation the Diocesan view was that it 'should go',⁹³ but did not, and some remaining parishioners mourned its continued neglect and decay.⁹⁴ The Diocese received an unsolicited proposal from 'an Australian' who wished to incorporate its remains in a new church in Sydney 'as a memorial to London's part in the war'. The Bishop's Committee 'saw no objection and instructed the Secretary to encourage the project'.⁹⁵ However, the Royal Fine Art Commission felt in *c.* 1948 that 'in no circumstances should its removal to Australia be sanctioned'.⁹⁶ By the early 1960s views had changed. The church was still decaying and there was no prospect of ecclesiastical use, but the President of Westminster College, Fulton, USA, where Churchill had made his 'Iron Curtain' speech, was seeking a way of commemorating this event and thought of re-erecting the ruins of a London church as a memorial to Churchill, his speech and the war. No serious objections were raised – Churchill himself approved, and the main structure of the church was removed and rebuilt in Fulton.⁹⁷

However, a reversal of this concept was applied to the church of St Michael at Witley Court, Worcestershire. This was essentially the chapel of Witley Court, which had burned down in 1937. It already had a complex history. It was possibly by Gibbs, and was consecrated 1737. The interior is 'the most Italian ecclesiastic space in the whole of England', parts of which were purchased in 1747 from the chapel of the Duke of Chandos at Edgware, built *c.* 1720. The brick church was faced in ashlar in 1861 when Witley Court was considerably extended and re-styled.⁹⁸ The proposal was that this complex church 'may be moved, stone by stone, to a bombed site in London. The Parochial Council have agreed that the church should be offered to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to prevent it falling into decay'.⁹⁹ This was not found acceptable, and both church and house are now in the care of English Heritage.¹⁰⁰

The concept of removing ruins has not, however, vanished completely. In Coventry, St Michael's Baptist Church stood immediately opposite the Cathedral tower. The church was also burned out, although the stone walls survived. A plaque on the site now states that 'On this site stood St Michael's Baptist Church from 1856 until November 1940 rebuilt at Quinton Park, Cheylsmore, Coventry. New building completed on original foundations 1991'.

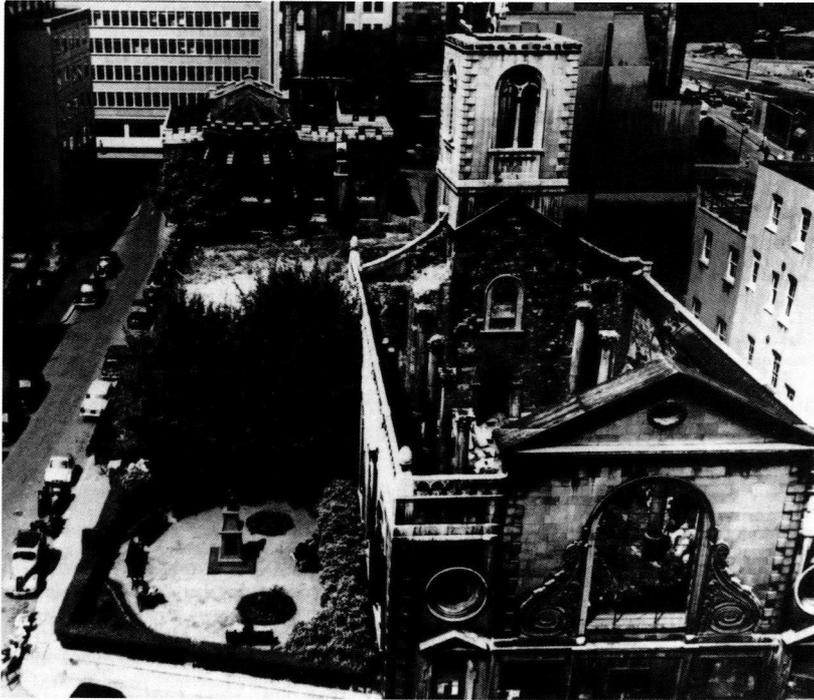


Fig. 6. St Mary Aldermanbury (with St Alban, Wood Street, in the distance), c. 1960.
City of London, London Metropolitan Archives



Fig. 7. St James, Dover, 9 May 1950, after collapse of war-damaged tower.
Ministry of Works (English Heritage, NMR)

EXAMPLES

The ideas and issues introduced here can usefully be explored in greater detail through two contrasted cases.

St James, Dover: neglect and inaction

Dover was badly damaged by cross-channel shelling. The seafront area was particularly affected. The small church of St James, below the castle, was damaged and was eventually preserved as a ruin; but this took several decades to achieve. A church of this name (in full, St James the Apostle) was referred to in Domesday. The present building is of early twelfth-century origin. At times it was used for meetings concerning the port management. Abandoned during the nineteenth century, the small church was replaced with a new church of the same name in nearby Maison Dieu Fields in 1860. The original was later restored and re-used, being damaged by a bomb on 19 March 1916. During the period 1940-4 it was badly damaged by shells. However, it was noted that 'the damaged transept ... is almost entirely modern work, and the church as a whole cannot be accounted of great architectural importance'.¹⁰¹

Despite this view, Welby cites (although without further attribution) 'the statement made in 1948 by a Council official who said "every effort has been made to preserve buildings of historic merit and to display the few that remain to greater advantage ... the church of St James should remain for all time as a tidy ruin, to commemorate the suffering of the people of Dover throughout the war"'.¹⁰² Council Minutes of 9 February 1948 mention that an offer had been made by the Church authorities: if the Council were to acquire the site by compulsory purchase (using the new powers for reconstruction contained in the 1944 and 1947 Town and Country Planning Acts), the Church would not seek compensation provided that the site would be used for a memorial.¹⁰³ In May 1950 part of the damaged tower collapsed (Fig. 7).¹⁰⁴ The Council Minutes make no further mention of this offer until 16 January 1951, when the Diocese asked whether any progress had been made. The church remained despite an intervention from the Borough Engineer and Surveyor suggesting that it be demolished and materials salvaged for use in restoring other local churches.¹⁰⁵ On 8 April 1952 it was noted that the Council had asked for certain repairs to be made by the Diocese prior to acquisition, as the War Damage Commission would not fund these. The Diocese was unable to do so. Nevertheless, the Council agreed to go ahead with the compulsory purchase, paying a preliminary £150 for immediate works and aware that £600 would be needed over the next four years. The local newspaper reported in 1955 that

Britain's front line church, the Old St James' at Dover – is to remain as a memorial to the sufferings of the townspeople during the last war. Constant shelling from the French coast and several bombing attacks left the church little more than a heap of rubble. But what remains of the once splendid architecture is to be 'patched up' under the supervision of the Ancient Monuments branch of the Ministry of Works. Workmen have already started to make the historic walls waterproof. In time the surroundings, at present a mass of overgrown weeds and smashed gravestones, are to be transformed into spacious gardens and lawns. People from all over the world will have an opportunity of recalling the bravery of the determined men and women of Dover who stayed put while the full fury of the Hitler war machine earned the town and East Kent the now-famous title of 'Hell Fire Corner'.¹⁰⁶

That the newspaper's report of the state of the church was much exaggerated is shown by a photograph published in October 1960: much of the nave was still roofed and, although one wall and corner of the tower had fallen, the roof and timber bell frame was still in place.¹⁰⁷ Yet, again, there is no further mention of the plan in Council Minutes until 1 June 1970, when the issue of the Compulsory Purchase Order was again mentioned. Suddenly, in June and July 1973, the churchyard burials were exhumed and the site turned into a memorial.¹⁰⁸ Presumably at this point the bulk of the tower, much of the walls and any remaining roof were removed. Much of the churchyard actually became a car park and municipal swimming pool. A plaque currently on site gives more prominence to the church's lengthy history than to any function as a war memorial.

In this example, a prominent figure promoting restoration is conspicuously absent, despite the historical value of the church and the survival of large parts of the structure. Local debates were muted, despite the Council moves in 1948; thereafter there was a lengthy period of inaction. The ruin is now a neglected adjunct to a sports centre car park.

St Thomas, Birmingham: good intentions, poor design and delay

Birmingham, being a major industrial city, was heavily bombed: the tonnage dropped being equal to Liverpool and Merseyside, second only to London itself. One architecturally-significant casualty was St Thomas, Bath Row/Holloway Head, by Thomas Rickman (Rickman & Hutchinson), 1826-9. The tower and west front alone remained standing after a direct hit on 11 December 1940 – 'clearly ... always the best part'.¹⁰⁹ The tower became an icon of war damage nationally, with photographs appearing in several publications including *The Bombed Buildings of Britain* and *Britain Under Fire*.¹¹⁰

Diocesan records¹¹¹ suggest that the decision had already been taken, immediately before the war, that the parishes of St Thomas and Immanuel were to be amalgamated. Immanuel would be closed and demolished, and St Thomas was to remain as the parish church of the new parish. This was part of one of the city's five redevelopment areas, already being planned in the late 1930s. Immanuel had not been demolished by the start of the war. The clear indication is that the damage to St Thomas was such that these plans were reversed, Immanuel would be re-used and St Thomas, and its site, sold to the Corporation as part of the redevelopment area. An Order under the Diocesan Reorganisation Committees Measure 1941 dated 28/6/45 states that 'the Diocesan Reorganisation Committee ... has recommended that the Church be not restored pending further consideration'.¹¹²

Having decided to sell the site to the City, the Diocese was anxious to proceed quickly. It was advised by the War Damage Commission that 'we ask the City to take over the site as it is [and] that we leave the City to negotiate with the War Damage Authorities for the cost of clearing the site'.¹¹³ However, the site was not 'vested' in the Corporation until February 1949.¹¹⁴

The Public Works Committee in 1950 mentioned the laying-out of St Thomas as a 'garden of rest' as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations.¹¹⁵ Permission for the expenditure was sought from the Minister of Housing and Local Government, but was not forthcoming.

Two years later, discussing ways to celebrate the Coronation, the General Purposes



Fig. 8. St Thomas, Birmingham: remaining structure
now in Peace Garden.

Photograph Author

Committee identified the St Thomas's project, estimated cost £15,500, as one of several to be put forward for Ministerial approval.¹¹⁶ The Minister was prepared to sanction only one project, and the Public Works Committee noted that 'after careful consideration it has been decided to proceed with the scheme for the layout of the site of St Thomas's Church, Bath Row. ... estimated cost £19,695' plus professional fees.¹¹⁷

A problem that emerged during development of the design in 1953 was the proposed use of part of the still-consecrated site as a chapel. This required express permission from the (new) Bishop, and senior diocesan staff felt that this would be unlikely. Council staff pressed for progress, and the Town Clerk wrote to and sought meetings with the Bishop. However, the Archdeacon wrote to the new Bishop: 'The Corporation are anxious to spend the money for which they have received Government approval during the present year. They are in a hurry to press on with their scheme ... we succeeded in heading him [the Town Clerk] off from coming to see you...'.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Bishop's letter of consent to use the site as a Garden of Rest – without a chapel – was dated just a few days later, on 19 October 1953.¹¹⁹

In mid-1955 – some time after the Coronation – the Cross Garden Co. Ltd was invited to tender for laying out of flower beds, turfed areas and tree planting.¹²⁰ Pevsner and Wedgwood were scathing about the landscape design: 'it would be hard to think of anything more pathetic, and this is an area which desperately needs imaginative treatment'.¹²¹ There were occasional local complaints that, as a memorial to the civilian dead of the bombing, it was too far from the city core. The gardens were redesigned in the mid-1980s, when the Loggia formerly by the Broad Street Hall of Memory (S. N. Cooke & Norman Twist, 1925) was moved here to allow for the building of Centenary Square; St Thomas's grounds were re-designated and re-designed as a 'peace garden' (Fig. 8). After a lengthy campaign particularly by one local individual, Marjorie Ashby, a small plaque was placed on the church tower.¹²² Continued campaigning by Marjorie Ashby and the Birmingham Air Raids Remembrance Association resulted in a far more substantial memorial. This is in the form of the sculpture 'the Tree of Life' by Lorenzo Quinn, on a base containing the names of all known victims of the air raids, and was unveiled on 8 October 2005. It is located close to St Martin's Church and the Bullring shopping centre.

CONCLUSIONS

Some enduring points about conservation ideas arise in this period, and the example of damaged churches serves as a useful thematic focus. Churches are emotive, usually prominent, structures; they are catalysts for identity and morale. The problem raised by so many damaged and derelict structures had to be resolved, at a time when the planning system was changing rapidly. This was a period of unparalleled planning activity, resulting in over 250 redevelopment plans for a range of towns and cities; some bomb-damaged, others clearly jumping on the bandwagon of replanning for reasons perhaps more to do with place-promotion and post-war inter-urban competition.¹²³ Part of that activity involved the development, or perhaps refinement, of ideas about building conservation, from the introduction of Listed Buildings in the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act to the local level in the flood of reconstruction plans.¹²⁴

The evidence here, presented as far as possible in the words of those involved, shows the wide range of parties and individuals, from the Church of England as an organisation down to its members – Bishops to parishioners; the developing planning system and the civil servants administering it, some of whose acerbic memos are retained in the National Archives; and the range of prominent professionals who might both promulgate views

about this issue and, perhaps, undertake work on the structures themselves. What is missing is a sense of wider public views; although the very survival of so many church ruins as established features of the twenty-first-century urban landscape suggests an implicit public consent despite the clear changes in values and attitudes, especially towards religion *per se*.

The most powerful views articulated here are clearly derived from SPAB influence. However, it should be noted that the influence of this organisation of English conservation ideas has been criticised, and by the 1930s it 'remained set in the distant past'.¹²⁵ Yet some were suggesting new directions. For example, the focus of several commentators, and some Ministry staff, on the impact of church towers and steeples on the wider urban landscape suggests the broader concept of 'townscape' being developed at this time particularly in the pages of the *Architectural Review* by critics such as Thomas Sharp.¹²⁶ Yet there was a long tradition, especially – but not solely – in London, of retaining church towers when the remainder of a redundant church had been demolished: a poorly-articulated understanding of the visual significance of urban landmarks, and of relict features in the urban landscape. A more surprising issue was the suggestion of physically moving churches, either intact as with St James Garlickhythe, or in pieces, as eventually occurred with St Mary Aldermanbury. But here there was a gap: the earliest suggestions were found unpalatable; it took half a decade or more, and an eminent architect-planner, Lord Holford, to make the suggestion remotely plausible; while the Ministry clearly did not want St Mary's to go to Australia. Perhaps a further decade and more of neglect and decay helped to make the suggestion from Fulton more acceptable: certainly by the early 1960s the social and economic context was very different from the early 1940s, and a further national survey of redundant churches had just been published, emphasising the scale of this particular problem.¹²⁷

The most surprising feature of this entire debate is the suggestion that bombed churches could be laid out as memorial gardens. Not only did this arise several times, with some prominent society and professional backers, but it was viewed with considerable suspicion by the Church authorities who were trying to balance bomb damage, redundancy and redevelopment priorities and costs. A cleared site for which there was no ecclesiastical requirement could be sold for redevelopment, and the income used for Church purposes elsewhere. A garden clearly stopped the sale, reduced income, and may involve ongoing maintenance costs. Nevertheless, some gardens were created, either temporarily until rebuilding, or more permanently. Yet these were usually cases where the site had been transferred to other ownership, usually the local authority, and usually for payment that may have come from the War Damage Commission. So responsibility for the design and maintenance of gardens, and indeed of memorials, was not usually a matter for the Church itself; and the permanent gardens were usually created at a time when, as Rose Macauley suggested, ruins were a feature of everyday life. The ephemeral nature of gardens and memorials is well shown in the contrasting example of St James, Dover, and St Thomas, Birmingham: one of sad neglect and continuing decay, the other of slow progress, poor design, expensive redesign, and debate about an appropriate memorial to the victims of the air raids that continued until the present decade. Even the personal interest by the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Dover case

did not produce the desired result.¹²⁸ Neither did the Coronation celebrations produce a high-quality result in Birmingham.

Therefore, overall, this example of the development of conservation ideas in a time of crisis, whether directly from bomb damage or indirectly from Church reorganisation, produces a confusing message. There were ideas aplenty, but they were contradictory, overlapping, and some were poorly articulated. The scale and speed of the crisis were particularly problematic. There was evident mistrust of the Church as an organisation in terms of its recent history of sale and demolition of redundant buildings; yet care of historic buildings *per se* was not its core function. A major issue here was the wider emergence of a sense of English national identity and heritage, inevitably spurred by the nationalism of war, but also evident in wider contemporary contexts and in the rhetoric of reconstruction.¹²⁹ These confusions of conservation were scarcely resolved in succeeding decades, and tend to recur particularly in periods of high development pressure. The main failing remains the lack of consensus on a clear philosophy of conservation for the built environment in this country. Lessons of the immediate post-war period have not been heeded.

NOTES

NA = National Archives

1. Thomas Carlyle, written to the City Churches and Churchyard Protection Society, quoted by G. Cobb (revised by N. Redman), *London City Churches* (London, 1989), 128.
2. Delafons does discuss churches in his overview of the development of conservation ideas, but provides little specific detail: J. Delafons, *Politics and Preservation* (London, 1997), Part 3 especially 121.
3. H. Casson, 'Ruins for remembrance', in Architectural Press, *Bombed Churches as War Memorials* (Cheam, 1945), throughout, but see especially 15.
4. R. Macauley, *The Pleasure of Ruins* (London, 1953), 1.
5. C. Woodward, *In Ruins* (London, 2001).
6. Central Committee for the Care of Churches, *Salvaging the Art Treasures of the Church 1941-45*, Ninth Report (Westminster, 1945), 11-12.
7. Information from Birmingham City archivist.
8. H. Fletcher, *Bombed London: a Collection of Thirty-Eight Drawings* (London, 1947), plate 5.
9. H. Hobhouse, *Lost London: a Century of Demolition and Decay* (London, 1971), 66.
10. Country Life Ltd, *Britain Under Fire* (London, undated, c. 1941), 71.
11. War Damage Commission, 'War damaged and destroyed churches: scheme for rebuilding and repair', *The Builder*, 19 May, 1944, 400.
12. N. Pevsner, *North Somerset and Bristol* (Harmondsworth, 1958), 105. The city's reconstruction plan proposed using the site as part of a civic centre: P. Abercrombie, J. Owens and H. Mealand, *A Plan for Bath* (Bath and London, 1945), 70. After demolition the triangular site was grassed over, and part was excavated by Channel 4's 'Time Team' in the early 2000s.
13. Central Committee for the Care of Churches 1945, 7.
14. A photograph appears in Coventry Evening Telegraph, *Coventry's Blitz* (Coventry, 1990).
15. Transcript of evidence, Development Plan inquiry, NA HLG 79/85.
16. P. J. Larkham and J. L. Nasr, forthcoming, 'Decision making under duress: the treatment of London churches after the Second World War'.
17. H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, 'The London that is to be: principles of patchwork', *Country Life*, 4 January, 1941, 4-6. Although a prolific writer, and President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (1937-9), Goodhart-Rendel's ideas for London were not taken up. Derrick says that 'While he was therefore a man of great influence and intellectual distinction, with clear ideas of what ought to be

done with the City churches, he was denied the opportunity of putting these ideas into practice. His influence did not penetrate the inner circle of wealth and patronage in the City, perhaps on account of his Catholicism' (A. Derrick, 'The post-war reconstruction of Wren's City churches', *AA Files*, 26, 1992, 28).

18. Goodhart-Rendel, *Country Life* 1941, *op. cit.*, 5.
19. Goodhart-Rendel, *Country Life*, 1941, *op. cit.*, 5.
20. Derrick 1992, 30; see also J. Lees-Milne, *Ancestral Voices* (London, 1987), 73-4.
21. A. W. Clapham, 'Anniversary address', *Antiquaries Journal*, XXI no. 3, 1941, 185-96. Clapham was also then a member of the Bishop's Commission on City Churches.
22. NA HLG 103/79.
23. J. Summerson, 'The place of preservation in a reconstruction programme', paper read at the Architectural Association, reported in *Architect and Building News*, 31 October, 1941, 71. He was then Deputy Director of the National Buildings Record.
24. Support for St Mary Aldermanbury is plain in Mrs Robert Henrey, *The Virgin of Aldermanbury: Rebirth of the City of London* (London, 1958), and a petition of 1000 signatures seeking the retention of St Andrew by the Wardrobe was submitted: Minutes of the Bishop's Commission on City Churches, 3 December 1941, London Guildhall Library.
25. P. J. Larkham, 'The place of urban conservation in the UK reconstruction plans of 1942-1952', *Planning Perspectives*, 18 (2003), 295-324.
26. H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, 'Rebuild or restore', radio talk, reprinted in *The Listener*, XXV no. 629, 30 January, 1941, 143-146.
27. For example Charles Holden who, towards the end of his architectural career, worked on reconstruction plans including that for the City of London (see Note 90). In a letter to *The Times* (11 January 1941) and to the Church's newspaper *The Guardian* (draft, RIBA Library, AHP\28\4) Holden said that there was little 'in favour of a pseudo-Wren church with every detail reproduced with slavish exactitude' and that large-scale restoration would diminish the interest of the building. See E. Karol, *Charles Holden Architect* (Donington, 2007), 451.
28. F. J. Wills, Letter to the Editor, *Western Morning News*, 3 August 1941.
29. Editorial, *The Builder*, 7 February 1941, 145.
30. Ralph Tubbs, *Living in Cities* (London, 1942), 32.
31. J. M. Richards, Foreword to J. M. Richards (ed.), *The Bombed Buildings of Britain* (Cheam, 1942), 8; and in the enlarged second edition (London, 1947).
32. A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London, 1969), 222.
33. F. J. E. Raby and J. Charlton, memorandum 'On the preservation and maintenance of ancient churches', Ministry of Works and Planning, Ancient Monuments Branch, August 1942, NA HLG 103/79.
34. Raby and Charlton 1942.
35. The Friends of the City Churches was founded to counter the threats posed by the bombing and reconstruction. In 1943 its President was Lord Faringdon, and the Chairman of its Executive Committee was the eminent architect Professor A. E. Richardson ARA.
36. Friends of the City Churches, 'Statement of policy', reproduced in *The Builder*, 17 September, 1943, 228.
37. Friends of the City Churches, *The Builder*, 1943, *op. cit.*, 229.
38. Friends of the City Churches, 'Association's first Annual Meeting', report in *The Builder*, 22 October, 1943, 329. Richardson repeated these views to the Bishop's Commission.
39. For example in H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, 'The future of the injured City churches', *Architect and Building News*, 18 February, 1944, 124-7.
40. N. Pevsner, 'Bombed churches as war memorials?', excerpts of radio talk, *The Listener*, 16 May, 1946, 639.
41. B. H. Stj. O'Neill, 'Damage to historic buildings by enemy action: City of London: the City churches', 4 February 1941, NA HLG 103/79
42. Summerson 1941, 71.
43. Editorial comment, *Architect and Building News*, 10 January, 1941, 15.

44. Member of the Friends of the City Churches, giving evidence to the Bishop of London's Commission on City Churches, Minutes, 1 April 1943, London Guildhall Library.
45. Goodhart-Rendell, *The Listener*, 1941, *op. cit.*, 143-4.
46. G. G. Scott, 'The City and the river', lecture given at the Royal Academy, excerpted in *Architect and Building News*, 24 October, 1941, 62.
47. N. Digney, memorandum to A. Barker, 2 February 1952, NA WORK 14/2262.
48. P. Cunnington, *Change of Use: the Conversion of Old Buildings* (Sherborne, 1988), 214-17.
49. NA WORK 14/2591.
50. J. R. T. Ettliger, Letter to the Editor, *Country Life* 25 February, 1944, 340.
51. Macauley 1953, 453-4.
52. Quoted in Woodward 2001, 212. See also Tubbs 1942 quoted earlier (note 30).
53. S. A. Alexander, Letter to the Editor, reprinting a letter of Sir Edwin Lutyens, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, October, 1944, 319.
54. J. Summerson, 'The place of preservation in a reconstruction programme', paper read at the Architectural Association, summarised in *Architect and Building News*, 31 October, 1941, 71.
55. J. Paton Watson and P. Abercrombie, *A Plan for Plymouth*, (Plymouth, 1943), 16.
56. G. Jellicoe and N. Conder, 'The landscape architect speaks', *Architectural Review*, January, 1944, 15-17.
57. Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 15 August, 1944. The signatories were Marjory (Lady) Allen of Hurtwood, David Cecil, Kenneth Clark, F. A. Cockin, T. S. Eliot, H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, Julian Huxley, [Lord] Keynes and E. J. Salisbury. Lady Marjorie Allen (1897-1976) was then Vice President of the Institute of Landscape Architects and worked with Susan and Geoffrey Jellicoe. Another of her campaigns using a letter to *The Times* resulted in the Children Act 1948.
58. Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 12 August 1944.
59. Editorial comment, *Architect and Building News*, 25 August, 1944, 114
60. NA HLG 103/79. Raby and Charlton 1942 (in this file) quote the Bishop of Bristol, without giving an accurate source.
61. Sir H. Baker, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 22 August, 1944.
62. P. Webster, 'Beauty, utility and Christian civilisation: war memorials and the Church of England, 1940-47', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44 (2008), 207 (although see Larkham and Nasr, forthcoming, on the processes within the City of London).
63. War Damage Commission 1944, 400.
64. Anon. *Resurgam* (no publisher given, undated), 66. [The accessions note for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning Library suggests that this was published in 1945 by the Ministry of Information.] The word 'Resurgam' has long been associated with St Paul's, from the story of Wren taking a piece of rubble and finding the word carved upon it. It appears to have been a fragment of the tomb of Bishop King (d. 1621): the only tomb in the old cathedral with this inscription (P. Tudor-Craig, *Old St Paul's: the Society of Antiquaries' Diptych, 1616* (London, 2004), 33). It was prominently displayed on the cover of the anonymous booklet, and became – with the phoenix – one of the icons of the reconstruction era.
65. Architectural Press 1945.
66. Casson 1945, 5.
67. Casson 1945, 11-3.
68. Casson 1945, 17, 21.
69. Casson 1945, 15.
70. Woodward 2001, 214.
71. Pevsner 1946, 639.
72. C. Nicholson, 'Building the church: styles and requirements', in E. Short (ed.) *Post-War Church Building* (London, 1947), 76.
73. Architectural Press 1945, 15.
74. This approach to damaged and redundant churches does re-surface from time to time. A more recent example was the proposal to create a garden in the ruins of St Luke's, Old Street, just north of the City of London. This is by Hawksmoor (1727) and had suffered from settlement culminating in partial collapse, removal of the roof and interior. The architectural magazine *Perspectives* commissioned the

- garden designer Arne Maynard to design a garden within the consolidated walls (J. Watt, 'London's Garden of Eden', *Perspectives on Architecture* 2 (18), 1995, 42-3).
75. W. G. Ramsey (ed.), *The Blitz: Then and Now*, 2 (London, 1988), 496. K. Nevis, of the Ancient Monuments Branch, had visited in 1955 and approved this in principle, suggesting a cost of about £10,000: Report of Visit, November 1955, NA WORK 3163.
 76. Henrey 1958, 12.
 77. S. Bradley and N. Pevsner, *London: the City Churches* (London, 1998), 54.
 78. *Ancient Monuments Society Newsletter*, Winter 2006, 34-5.
 79. Woodward 2001, 215.
 80. Quoted by Ziegler 1995, 242-3.
 81. C. Williams-Ellis, Letter to the Editor, *The Times* 3 January, 1941, 5.
 82. G. Cobb, revised by N. Redman, *London City Churches* (London, 1989), 177.
 83. Cobb, revised by Redman 1989, 26.
 84. W. G. Bell and E. J. Davies, *Shall All Hallows, Lombard Street be Destroyed?* (London, 1936).
 85. Editorial comment, *Architect and Building News*, 10 January, 1941, 15.
 86. *Country Life*, 'As a phoenix', Editorial, *Country Life* 11 January, 1941, 24.
 87. Lord Esher, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 12 January, 1941.
 88. W. H. Ansell, 'The London of the future', paper read at the Royal Society of Arts, 12 March, 1941 and excerpted in *Architect and Building News* 14 March, 1941, 181, 183. Ansell was Goodhart-Rendell's successor as RIBA President, Chair of the RIBA Reconstruction Committee, and was also a member of the Bishop's Commission on City Churches.
 89. G. G. Scott, 'The City and the river', lecture given at the Royal Academy, 23 October, 1941 and excerpted in *Architect and Building News* 24 October, 1941, 46, 62.
 90. C. H. Holden and W. G. Holford, *Reconstruction in the City of London: Final Report to the Improvements and Town Planning Committee* (London, unpublished, 1947); an extended version was finally published as C. H. Holden and W. G. Holford, *The City of London: a Record of Destruction and Survival* (London, 1951), see p. 300.
 91. Minutes, Bishop of London's Committee for London Churches, 18 March 1947, London Guildhall Library.
 92. NA HLG 71/43, although this correspondence ceases in about August 1950. The quote is from a memo from Beaufoy dated 25 January 1950.
 93. Minutes, Bishop of London's Commission on City Churches, 21 July 1943, London Guildhall Library.
 94. Probably most prominent of these was the novelist Mrs Robert Henrey, who published *The Virgin of Aldermanbury* (Henrey 1958).
 95. Minutes, Bishop of London's Committee for London Churches, 19 October 1948.
 96. 'Notes of Royal Fine Art Commission', NA WORK 14/2262.
 97. M. Sisson and F. C. Sternberg, 'Tale of a church in two cities', *AIA Journal* July 1971, 27-30.
 98. A. Brooks and N. Pevsner, *Worcestershire* (New Haven, 2007), 323-4.
 99. News item on Witley Court and church, *Architect and Building News*, 20 June, 1947, 229.
 100. It is an ironic point that the fire-damaged Witley Court was sold to demolition contractors, who wrote to Coventry shortly after the 1940 air raid, offering to sell the ornate fountains, balustrading and other carved stone for use in the reconstruction of the city (letter from W. Collington & Son to E. Ford, City Surveyor & Engineer, 30/12/40: Coventry Record Office CCD/CE/7/1). This offer, too, was rejected.
 101. J. Summerson, 1942: John Summerson contributed all of the photograph captions, including this comment, in J. M. Richards (ed.) 1942, 132.
 102. D. Welby, *Dover's Tidy Ruin* (Dover, 1976), 11.
 103. In the East Kent Archives Centre, Dover.
 104. 'Dover tower crashes', *Kent Messenger* 3 May, 1950.
 105. Letter from D. R. Bevan, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, to R. W. Wardill at the Ancient Monuments Branch, Ministry of Works, 20 February, 1952: NA WORK 14/1602.
 106. 'Kent's front line church to be garden of memories', *Kent Messenger*, 8 July, 1955.
 107. J. Harman, 'Dangers abound', *Dover Mail*, 13 February, 2003.

108. Welby 1976.
109. N. Pevsner and A. Wedgwood, *Warwickshire* (Harmondsworth, 1966), 138.
110. Richards (ed.) 1942, 119; Country Life Ltd, *Britain Under Fire* (London, undated, 1941), 71.
111. In the City Archives, Birmingham Central Reference Library (hereafter Archives).
112. Archives, BDR/D1/41/14.
113. Diocesan Reorganisation and Pastoral Committee 28 March 1946: Archives, BDR/B10.
114. Archives, BDR/D1/41.
115. Public Works Committee Minutes, 4 July 1950, Birmingham Central Reference Library Local Studies (hereafter PWC Minutes).
116. General Purposes Committee Minutes, 2 December 1952, Birmingham Central Reference Library Local Studies.
117. PWC Minutes, 21 April 1953.
118. Archives, BDR/D1/41/20, letter dated 15 December 1953.
119. Archives, BDR/D1/41/20.
120. PWC Minutes, 14 June 1955.
121. Pevsner and Wedgwood 1966, 139.
122. See her file, Archives, MS 1881/1.
123. The list of plans is in P. J. Larkham and K. D. Lilley, *Planning the 'City of Tomorrow': British Reconstruction Planning, 1939-1952: an Annotated Bibliography* (Pickering, 2001). A commentary on 'promotional' planning is P. J. Larkham and K. D. Lilley, 'Plans, planners and city images: place promotion and civic boosterism in British reconstruction planning', *Urban History* 30 (2003), 183-205.
124. The development of conservation ideas at this time is covered by P. J. Larkham, 'The place of urban conservation in the UK reconstruction plans of 1942-1952', *Planning Perspectives* 18 (2003), 295-324, and J. Pendlebury, 'Planning the historic city: reconstruction plans in the United Kingdom in the 1940s', *Town Planning Review* vol. 74 (2003), 371-93.
125. Delafons 1997, 51.
126. J. Pendlebury, 'The urbanism of Thomas Sharp', *Planning Perspectives* 24 (2009), 3-27; E. Erten, 'Thomas Sharp's collaboration with H. de C. Hastings: the formulation of townscape a surban design pedagogy', *Planning Perspectives* 24 (2009), 29-49.
127. *Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Redundant Churches 1958-1960* (London, 1960).
128. NA WORK 14/1602.
129. See D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998), Part III.