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ST PAUL'S CHURCH, HOLBEACH ROAD, FULNEY, SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT

John Minnis

ARCHITECTURAL INVESTIGATION

ENGLISH HERITAGE

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CHURCH OF ST PAUL
HOLBEACH ROAD, FULNEY
SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE

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SUMMARY
St Paul's church, together with its school and vicarage, was built in 1877-80 to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott. The role of its benefactor, Charlotte Charinton, and that of the Vicar of Spalding, Canon Edward Moore, who instigated a major church building and restoration programme within the town, is examined and the significance of the buildings considered in relation to that of other work by Scott.

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CHURCH OF ST PAUL, HOLBEACH ROAD, FULNEY, SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE

St Paul's, together with its school and vicarage (the church, with attached former schoolroom is listed at grade B) was built in 1877-80 to the design of Sir George Gilbert Scott. This report was commissioned by James Edgar, Team Leader, East Midlands Region, in response to a request from the Diocese of Lincoln to advise on the future of the church. It considers the church within the context of the history of Spalding and assesses the significance of the buildings in relation to Scott's work.

History

Fulney in the mid nineteenth century was a hamlet to the north east of Spalding strung out along the Holbeach Road with a Hall, a corn mill and a few houses. It was linked to Spalding only by houses that stretched along the south bank of the River Welland although subsequent twentieth century housing development has largely incorporated it within the built-up area of the town.

Although in medieval times, there had been a chapel on the south side of Holbeach Road (the site is marked on 25" Ordnance Survey maps), by the mid nineteenth century, the sole religious provision for Fulney was a Congregational chapel. Charlotte Charinton (1801-88) decided that the inhabitants of Fulney needed Anglican worship to be made available to them and paid for the site and building. She also endowed the living for £300 per annum and her total expenditure on the church came to more than £30,000. Miss Charinton lived in the Terrace at Spalding and came from a wealthy Gedney Hill farming family. She was of a retiring character and devoted herself to her private charities and to the building and restoring of churches in the locality. These included St Mary and St Nicholas, the Spalding parish church, St Peter's, Priory Road and St Paul's itself.

But the significant figure in the history of St Paul's and, indeed in the public life of Spalding for much of the nineteenth century, was Canon Edward Moore (1811-89), one of the remarkably energetic clergy that were such a feature of nineteenth century provincial towns. Moore had a hand in almost every institution and body in the town: he was headmaster of Spalding Grammar School (1835-65) and subsequently Chairman of the Governors; he was a member and Chairman of the School Board; he was a member of the Board of Guardians; he was a Spalding Improvement Commissioner and helped to buy the gas-works; he was Chairman of the Spalding Waterworks Committee; he was a Commissioner of Sewers, he was active in the local Conservative Association, he became a JP in 1857, and served as Chairman of the South Holland bench for fifteen years.

He was evidently a practical man of formidable energy who knew what he wanted and got it done. That this drive was combined with an interest in antiquarian matters is highly relevant when we consider his architectural legacy. A member of the Lincoln

and Nottingham Archaeological and Architectural Society and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, he wrote papers on the parish church where he had succeeded his father as vicar in 1866. He joined the Spalding Gentlemen's Club, one of the oldest antiquarian societies in the country, in 1834 and became its President in 1872. He was responsible for having the west front and south arcade of Crowland Abbey shored up and repaired in 1860, his chosen architect again being Scott. [1]

Fig. 1. The church from the east. *© John Minnis 2007*

He had Scott restore the parish church in 1865-7, acting as clerk of works himself for part of the time. He again commissioned Scott to design St Peter's (demolished 1968), built in 1875-6. A third church, St John Baptist, Hawthorn Bank, on the west side of the town, by the London architect, R. J. Withers, who carried out other work in Lincolnshire, was constructed in 1874-5. He thus instigated a major church building and restoration programme in Spalding (more than £80,000 was spent) and it is recorded that while in some cases the work was entrusted to a committee, in each case he had effective control and carried out all the negotiations with the architect. That he had a considerable input in the design of the churches is evident when one examines them. All the new churches are Early English in style while Scott added a triple lancet east window to the chancel of the externally largely Perpendicular parish church. St Peter's was smaller than St Paul's with a bellcote rather than a spire but shared some of its chunky buttressing and corbelling. St John Baptist's although by a different architect and in stone, has the same bold outline, the same groups of lancets. Both, in common with St Paul's, have a lengthy chancel.

Work at St Paul's began with the laying of the foundation stone by Miss Charinton on 18 October 1877 and the Church was dedicated by the Bishop of Lincoln on 27 October 1880. The first Vicar was Revd. Richard Guy Ash (1848-1935), the nephew of Miss Charinton and a man who, besides his active participation in sport, was of considerable learning, becoming Professor of English History at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1879. The subsequent lack of change to St Paul's may have much to do with his long incumbency which lasted until his death in 1935.

Description and Analysis

St Paul's Church

Fig. 2. The tower and broach spire.
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Fig. 3. Passage between the tower and the nave.
© John Minnis 2007

Exterior

St Paul's is built of red brick which varies in shade with Ancaster stone dressings. It comprises a nave, chancel, aisles, south porch and a 135 ft high campanile with a broach spire, linked to the body of the church by a short covered passage. The windows of this passage replicate the arcading of the nave in miniature. The almost detached tower is unusual although there are medieval precedents in the fens such as at Long Sutton. It may have been designed in this way because of the risk of the ground sinking with the tower taking the church with it. Certainly, the tower of the parish church in the nearby village of Cowbit leans at an alarming angle. What is unusual is that the tower is in the conventional position before the west front of the church rather than to the north or south of the nave, as is more common. The roof of the church is entirely covered in lead. The aisle windows comprise single lancets; those in the clerestory are paired and set

Fig. 4. Clerestory arcading and cast iron guttering. *© John Minnis 2007*

Fig. 5. Doorway to the porch.
© John Minnis 2007

within blind arcading. The triple lancet west window is surmounted by two quatrefoil windows above the passageway. The south east chapel has a triple lancet and a single lancet at the east end. The chancel east window has tall triple lancets divided by large buttresses extending just above the capitals, surmounted by a quatrefoil window. The south and north walls of the chancel have tall paired lancets and two small round windows each. A vestry, and to its north, a choir vestry is located on the north side of chancel and has a basement below. The porch has a double chamfered doorway with attached piers and nailhead, dogtooth and foliage mouldings. The tower has three principal stages with two openings to each stage together with a half stage of blind arcading between the second and third stage. There are corner spirelets to the broach spire and three lucarnes. A stair tower is attached at the north east corner.

Interior

The interior is plastered with banded white and red Ancaster stone dressings. Instead of strong red brick, there is a subtle colour scheme, the alternating bands of Ancaster stone complementing each other in a way that achieves a polychromatic effect without the harshness of much constructional polychromy. It bears more resemblance to the Venetian examples that Ruskin espoused than the work usually described as Ruskinian Gothic by Scott's pupil, Street, or by Butterfield. Thus it is softer than the High Victorian Gothic of the 1860s and 70s and shows a move, however slight, towards the more refined Gothic associated with Bodley at the end of the century.

Fig. 6. Interior, looking east. *© John Minnis 2007*

Fig. 7. Nave arcading.
© John Minnis 2007

The six bay nave is divided with three principal semicircular arches which are then subdivided into six smaller pointed arches. This unusual arcading is derived from that at Boxgrove Priory, West Sussex, a form also seen at St Thomas à Beckett's church at Portsmouth. Scott had carried out the restoration of Boxgrove in 1864-5.[2] The piers of the principal arches are in the form of Greek crosses with detached shafts within the curved angle of the cross while the latter are round piers. The spandrel between each pair of arches is pierced with a quatrefoil opening. The broad and richly decorated triple chamfered chancel arch has roll mouldings and carved label stops, that on the north side depicting Bishop Christopher Wordsworth who dedicated the church. There are bell capitals to the nave piers

Fig. 8. Base of nave piers.
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Fig. 9. Shafts of chancel arch.
© John Minnis 2007

and there is extensive stiff leaf carving by Farmer & Brindley to those of the chancel arch and the shafts of the roof struts. Deep splayed jambs to the nave windows have shafts attached by a fine fillet of stone. The paired clerestory windows are set back in deep splayed jambs with a detached arcade forming the internal or "scoinson" arch. The east and west windows too have attached shafts. Although the nave is tall, it is saved from being barn-like by the design of the roof where the combination of king posts, tie-beams and twin curved struts visibly hold the composition together. These struts are supported by carved stone corbels extended below as shafts.

Fig. 10. Clerestory windows showing scoinson arch. *© John Minnis 2007*

A piscina and sedilia are set in the south wall of the chancel. The altar table is of oak topped with a slab of Mansfield Woodhouse stone and raised seven steps above the nave, the steps within the sanctuary being of polished grey fossil marble. The remainder of the sanctuary floor is of patterned encaustic tiles. The organ by Forster & Andrews

of Hull is located on the north side of the chancel. The ironwork of the chancel screen and the pulpit handrail is by Skidmore. The octagonal pulpit of oak on a stone base is by Farmer & Brindley. It is divided into two panels on each face with flower motifs in the lower panels and circular laurel devices in the upper. The font is square with panels containing foliage motifs, of Mansfield Woodhouse stone on Purbeck marble shafts and is similar in form to that in Lincoln Cathedral. The vestry and choir vestry retain their original cupboards and lockers. The pews and choir stalls are in oak, open backed with shaped ends.[3] As befits the decorative scheme of the church, the pews are more elaborate than those in many of Scott's churches with quite elaborately shaped ends of what Geoff Brandwood has termed the "elbow" type rather than the plain rectangular ends often favoured by Scott. The "elbow" type is found in 18% of Anglican churches in the neighbouring counties of Leicestershire and Rutland, where it forms the second most common type although St Paul's is set apart from many of the examples by virtue of the cut-out at the base which forms what are in effect "legs" and by the open backs.[4]

Tinted "cathedral" glass is fitted throughout other than in the east windows which were reglazed in 1968 with clear glass and in the east Lady Chapel furnished in 1948 where there is a stained glass east window of the Virgin Mary and stained glass in the three side windows.[5] Other than this and the removal of some pews at the north east end, there have been no significant changes to the church since construction.

The School

Fig. 11. View of St Paul's from the east showing the relationship of the school to the church. *© John Minnis 2007*

The School is a single-storey structure attached to the choir vestry at the north east end of the church. It is of similar red brick to the church but with a tiled roof. Access from the church is gained externally through a three bay loggia supported on simple square section timber piers with angled struts. The first bay is enclosed with an open iron screen of plain design. Behind the loggia, there are two rooms, now used as toilets, a kitchen and the single schoolroom. This is expressed externally as a gabled wing at right angles to the link block with a bellcote on the west gable. The gabled wing has three flat-headed windows to the east and west elevations, each of diamond shaped small panes, the central window of greater height. Box section cast iron gutters have a swirling vine pattern. Extension of the school took the form of a prefabricated building rather than modification of the original structure which is consequently largely as built, other than the truncation of the chimney at the junction of the two wings.

Fig. 12. The vicarage, west elevation.
© John Minnis 2007

The Vicarage

The red brick vicarage is of two storeys with an attic, Tudor Gothic in style. It has a steeply-pitched tiled roof and dormers. The principal (west) elevation has two gables to the right, one crow-stepped, the other coped. A gabled porch has a four centred arch and a small circular window over the doorway. Much of the detailing of the brickwork is simple (a band of cogging provides almost the only decorative element) as are the windows and in such respects, the vicarage is comparable to those designed some twenty years earlier by architects such as Street or William White. 6 Internally, the hall has a dogleg staircase with newel posts incorporating Gothic panelling. The secondary staircase has been removed. The principal rooms are to the south, service quarters to the north. Some of the iron casement window frames have been replaced but most survive and have their original window furniture. Most rooms retain original rising or folding internal shutters and the majority of the original simple timber fireplace surrounds survive. To the north of the house is a walled service court with a washhouse. The gateposts, gate and part of the garden fence, now in poor condition, are probably the originals although the adjacent brick boundary wall around the church has been rebuilt. The vicarage is little altered since construction, the only major change being the removal of the secondary staircase at the north end of the building.

Fig. 13 The vicarage, entrance hall and stairs.
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Significance

Although there is no hard evidence to prove the point, examination of the other churches built for Canon Moore suggests that he was responsible for choosing the use of the Early English style for St Paul's. However, Scott himself frequently used the style throughout his career and there is a significant group of Early English churches designed at the end of his life. One, All Souls, Leeds, (1876-80) was, like St Paul's, constructed under the supervision of John Oldrid Scott following his father's death in March 1878. It was built in stone, unlike St Saviour, Leicester (1875-7) which is in a hard red brick, similar to St Paul's.

St Paul's is a "tough" building externally with powerful massing, making few concessions to repose. This influenced Pevsner's judgment in 1964 "..externally all that prevents one from appreciating so much Victorian church design…It is assertive and it is terribly mechanical in its execution…joyless stone carving"[7] By the time of Nicholas Antram's revision, this view has been softened to "…assertive and mechanical in its composition and richness of detail".[8] The brickwork is softened to some extent by the use of two shades of red while the Ancaster stone dressings do not stand out as much as they appear to do in photographs making a more harmonious ensemble than is apparent. The tough aspects of the building are heightened by the chunky buttresses at the east end which are used in a manner perhaps associated more with Teulon or one of his fellow "rogue" architects.

Separating the tower has two beneficial effects on the nave. Firstly it enabled Scott to incorporate a passageway that has the character of a short cloister between the tower and nave, a device that was also employed at All Souls between the church and the vicarage. This gives St Paul's a collegiate effect that complements the grouping of the vicarage and the school to create a complex of buildings devoted to the glory of God. Secondly, it enabled large windows to be provided in the west wall of the nave which results, taken with the extensive glazing and lack of stained glass, in a wonderfully light church. In some respects, the tall nave with its triple lancets at each end has something in common with James Brooks' red brick urban churches such as the Transfiguration, Lewisham, (1880-6) but the comparison does not survive close inspection; Brooks would never countenance the level of decoration provided by Scott both internally and externally. The execution of both brickwork and stonework is to an extremely high standard while the details are full of interesting touches – the decoration of the cast iron box section guttering (differing from that of the school), the ingenious replication of

the nave arcading in the covered passage's fenestration, the variety of corbelling and the excellent carving. The design brings out to the full Scott's liking for rich mouldings and, taken with the heavy buttressing, these offer much opportunity for the effects of light and shade to play a part.

Internally, the introduction of paired pointed arches set within a rounded arch within the arcading of the nave alludes to Norman work and echoes Scott's use of a Norman intersected arcade on the west front of St Saviour, Leicester (1875-7), one of the three Early English churches that Scott designed at the end of his life. The quality of the interior stonework is exceptional, comparable to that achieved by Farmer & Brindley, Scott's favourite sculptural stone carvers, at All Saints, Sherbourne, Warwickshire (1862-4), another expensive Scott church. Common to both churches are the detached openings to the inside of the clerestory. Comparison may also be usefully made with All Souls, Leeds. While All Souls has the advantage of being constructed of stone throughout and of having richer furnishings, including a carved reredos and elaborate ironwork, the quality of the carving at St Paul's is comparable, as indeed is the grand scale of the church. The complex principal nave piers are a tour de force with the satisfying concave shapes of the Greek cross cores interacting with the detached shafts and the transition of these forms at both base and capitals is skilfully handled. So too is the work on the aisle windows where the shafts are joined to the jambs by the thinnest of fillets. The stiff leaf carving of the shafts and corbels of the chancel arch and roof trusses is deeply cut and the standard of the interior carving is anything but mechanical.

The pulpit, font, ironwork and other furnishings are of high quality comparable with other work by their makers. The church is in remarkably original condition with virtually nothing taken away and very few additions during its one hundred and thirty years of existence. It retains the original encaustic tiling in the sanctuary and the vast majority of its pews.

St Paul's should also be seen within the context of a complete group of buildings by Scott, each carefully designed to relate to each other. Thus the back garden of the vicarage also serves visually as the churchyard to the north side of the church and faces the rear of the school so that the three buildings form three sides of a rectangle around the open space. The vicarage is so close to the church that views of the tower impinge on its service yard and on the aspect from many of the windows. The school is an integral part of this composition as the vestry roof slopes down to meet it, symbolising the link between church and school. Scott designed many vicarages and schools, often but by no means always in conjunction with new or restored churches. At least 39 vicarages and 30 schools are identified by Cole in 'The Work of Sir Gilbert Scott'. There has been no detailed study of Scott's work in this field but what becomes evident from examining the gazetteer given by Cole is that the majority of them were done during the earlier stages of his career. There was no consistent style adopted by Scott for vicarages – many displayed a mix of Gothic and Tudor details and St Paul's, like a number of others, has a pair of gables (unequal in size and differing in style) brought forward adding further variety to what was already a picturesquely asymmetrical and eclectic design, albeit one that expressed a clear and logical plan.

At St Paul's, we have a church whose design was influenced by a discerning and vigorous patron who had a clear idea what he wanted. Scott was a remarkably prolific architect and ran a large office. While in some cases it could be argued that his personal engagement may have been limited, it is unlikely that Canon Moore would have accepted anything less than a substantial personal input from Scott. It is interesting to conjecture as to extent of Moore's own involvement. He would undoubtedly have been a demanding client. Scott was no stranger to such clients. During the building of All Souls, Leeds, he complained of Sir Edward Beckett (who contributed much of the cost) that "he writes more like a schoolmaster than anything else but I have been used to this for 23 years though every time I have to go through it I fall [sic] to detest my profession and wish architecture were abolished from the face of the earth (my work today has made me hate everything and everybody!!)".[9] That he had already carried so much work for Moore at Crowland, Spalding parish church and St Peter's would suggest that the two enjoyed a good architect-client relationship although, in the absence of surviving correspondence, we can do no more than speculate.

What is clear is that in St Paul's and its school and vicarage, we have a group of buildings, generously funded, that represent Scott displaying the full mastery of his art and incorporating the highest standards of craftsmanship in their execution.

Comments by Andrew Saint

St Paul's is certainly impressive. There is a clear generic similarity with St Saviour's, Leicester but there are also some differences. What they share is grandeur of scale, an idiom of bright red brick with copious stone dressings and a remarkable tendency to draw in elements of an earlier and tougher French style to vary the more conventional Early English – Decorated that is the main language of the churches and especially of their towers and spires. This is rather more marked in the interior of St Saviour's, which has stumpier polished granite columns with carved capitals, round cross arches in the aisles, a high crossing and mini-transepts. The Fulney plan and indeed general treatment is indeed more conventional but also a little richer, no doubt reflecting the budget. But the implied round arches of the arcade, the alternation of plain and clustered piers and the heads to the external buttresses, are all striking examples of the early French tendency, not that usual in the Gothic of the 1870s. One peculiarity of Fulney is the open-truss roof in the chancel, combined with a boarded ceiling.

The obvious thing to emphasise is the impressiveness of the Fulney ensemble: church with tower, hall, little cloister and vicarage, all still there and all in seemingly good, little altered condition. The vicarage is interesting: a good building but slightly less "advanced" than the comparable one at St Saviour's. The crow-stepped gable and porch look rather old-fashioned.

NOTES

1. This account of the roles of Charlotte Charinton and Canon Moore is based substantially on Norman Leveritt & Michael J. Elsden, Aspects of Spalding 1790-1930 (Spalding 1986) pp. 115-9 and p. 127.

2. David Cole, The Work of Sir Gilbert Scott (London, 1980) p. 134.

3. The description is based on fieldwork carried out 5 March 2007 and on the account in The Builder 13 November 1880 p. 596.

4. Geoff Brandwood, Anglican Congregational Seating: a Study from Leicestershire and Rutland, (unpublished draft for English Heritage) – the only comprehensive study of its kind carried out to date.

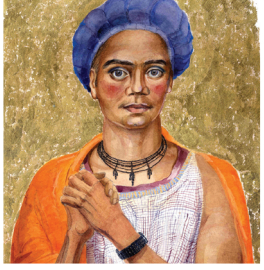
5. St Paul's Church leaflet (N. D.).

6. Stefan Muthesius, The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-70 (London 1972), pp. 76-8.

7. Nicholas Pevsner & John Harris, The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire (Harmondsworth, 1964) p. 649.

8. Nicholas Pevsner & John Harris, Buildings of England: Lincolnshire, Second Edition revised by Nicholas Antram (London, 1995) p. 673.

9. G. G. Scott, letter to Rev. Frederick Wood 27 October 1876, Leeds Archives, RDP 55/12 All Souls papers 1877-99.



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