THE WALL PAINTINGS IN ST JUDE'S CHURCH

Hampstead Garden Suburb

by

Chris Miele

Historical Analysis & Research Team
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Philip Davies of London Region asked for an assessment of the historic importance and artistic interest of the wall paintings in St. Jude's Church, the parish church of Hampstead Garden Suburb, Central Square, LB of Barnet. The work of Edwin Lutyens, all but the east and west ends of the church was executed between 1909 and 1913.

The wall paintings, which are probably executed in a variant of the 'spirit fresco' technique, are the principal work of Walter Percival Starmer, a painter and illustrator active from 1906 to c.1960. The vast cycle of fresco paintings was championed by the Rev. Basil Graham Bourchier (1881-1934), first incumbent of St. Jude's.

The first paintings to be executed were those in the Lady Chapel dedicated in 1921 as a war memorial. Its iconographic programme is unusual, 'Women in the Bible'; the most arresting and noteworthy passage is to be found in the western dome where depictions of Victorian and Edwardian women who have contributed to the progress of good works and charity (from Queen Victoria to Edith Cavell) mingle with saints.

By the end of 1922 Starmer had prepared designs for decorating the rest of the church; these were exhibited at the Royal Academy 'Art of Building Decoration' Exhibition held in the first two months of 1923. Work commenced in May 1923, the subject of the complete scheme being 'The Life of Christ'. The crossing and transepts were dedicated in 1926. St. John's Chapel was completed in 1928. The last phase of the work, the choir and apse, was executed between May 1929 and February 1930, by which point the Rev. Bourchier had left St. Jude's to become rector at St. Anne's Soho.

The paintings are noteworthy several regards. Apart from the considerable socio-historical interest of the Lady Chapel, the artistic quality is in places high: the aforementioned Lady Chapel, St. John's Chapel, the Apse, and many of the aisle paintings. The large paintings covering the vaults and domical crossing are effective from a distance and important for their contribution to the overall effect of this grade I listed building's interior. Complete painted church interiors are not common, and Starmer's is perhaps the most complete and extensive set of church paintings to survive from the interwar period. They are also in fairly good condition. As works of art, however, they are not equal in stature to Stanley Spencer's painting for the Sandham Memorial Chapel at Burghclere (1927), nor Frank Brangwyn's chapel paintings at Christ's Hospital, West Horsham, Sussex (1913-23). In style Starmer's work can be related in part to the tradition of mural decoration pioneered by Lord Leighton in the South Court of the South Kensington Museum (c1872 and recently restored) and developed in the several key, large-scale projects: the Royal Exchange Murals (1892 to 1927) by various artists, Richmond and Moira's murals inside the Old Bailey (1905-7), Goetze's Foreign Office murals (1912-19), and the St. Stephen's Hall Murals in the Palaces of Westminster by various artists. In some passages, however, Starmer used a loose illustrational style.

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I. Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) and the Design and Construction of St. Jude's Church

Lutyens was appointed consulting architect to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in May 1906.[1] He was instructed to help Raymond Unwin, the Trust's primary architect, in the preparation of a final plan. The definitive layout over the autumn and winter of 1906-7. In comparison with Unwin's first version it is rather formal, with all the sinuous, picturesque curves ironed straight. Though some writers have seen this change as a mark of Lutyens's influence, it is now generally agreed that Unwin himself was entirely responsible. The decisive influence may actually have been the London County Council's plans for the Millbank Estate (1903) and in particular the White Hart Lane Estate (1904 and ff.), though this is at present still an hypothesis. Lutyens, though, was given control over the public square at the heart of the Suburb, Central Square, and awarded the job of designing its three principal structures, the Institute, the Free Church, and St. Jude's, the Anglican church whose dedication was meant to recall the Rev. Samuel Barnett's former charge in Whitechapel. Preliminary sketches for it were ready early in 1908, though these were to go through at least two revisions at the hands of the building committee which was spearheaded by a determined and very cost conscious Henrietta Barnett.

The building committee minutes record that plans were put out to tender in July 1908.[2] In September Messrs. Parnell, builders of Rugby, were duly retained, having submitted the lowest bid, though the committee was 'shocked' by the projected cost, £30,769. It was six times the money held in their accounts and, more to the point, 50% hugher than Lutyens's own estimate. In late September the architect was told to economise and a pared down design was ready in early October accompanied by a second Parnell estimate, this time for an entirely reasonable £12,304. Mrs Barnett's sod cutting ceremony was scheduled for 28 October (St. Jude's Day), though the Trust, donors of the land, were not to give final approval to the scheme for another two months. There remained one more hurdle to negotiate, Hendon UDC, which delayed the start of work by insisting on the use of Portland cement in the foundations not the lime-based mortar specified by the architect. This increased costs but only slightly and with a clear

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[1] M. Miller and A. S. Gray, *Hampstead Garden Suburb* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1992), pp. 47-62, 76-84.

[2] Minute Book of the Church Building Committee, 26 May 1909 to 10 November 1911, still in the possession of the Church. Entry for 29 June and 13 July 1909. The site was given by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners on condition that bells were not rung before 07:55 and for more than five minutes prior to the chief service of the day.

conscience Lutyens presented a bill for £346.8.1 in the New Year.[3] The final figure was over £500 and it would go unpaid until March 1925 when the architect accepted £300 in settlement.[4] This turned out to be his second donation to the work, as we shall see.

The church is designed in a hybrid style, a somewhat uneasy marriage of vernacular and classical forms. Some of the details are awkward, especially on the interior where the relationship between aisles and nave is not well resolved. Church architecture, after all, was not Lutyens's *metier*. Still, the overall conception is bold and dramatic, and the crossing tower with its leaded spire is an extraordinary invention. All in all St. Jude's is an outstanding work of architecture, a judgment reflected in its grade I listing.[5]

The foundation stones (designed by Eric Gill) were laid in April 1910. The first part completed was the Lady Chapel (see Appendix 1 for a ground plan), which was dedicated on St. Jude's Day. Lutyens himself volunteered to furnish it at his own expense, with the exception of the seating. Then the money ran out. The indefatigable Mrs. Barnett set to raising what was needed, making a large donation herself to the cause. The crossing tower and spire were completed in 1913 along with the bulk of the rest of the church.[6]

The war brought work to a stop for ten years; the east end remained rudely finished off with a canvas and wood screen until October 1923. It was given two marble slabs inscribed with the names of the War dead.[7] The west end would be finished only in 1935.

The only documentary information in the Building Committee Minutes which has direct bearing on the later works of decoration is an entry for 27 March 1911, which records damp penetration through the stone cornice. This Lutyens advised treating with a 'solution', the constitution of which

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[3] Minutes of the Building Committee, 7 December 1909 and 21 January 1910.

[4] *Parish Paper of St. Jude's on the Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb*, 5 March 1925.

[5] I am grateful to David Crellin, currently completing a dissertation on Lutyens's late work for discussing the architecture of St. Jude's with me.

[6] Her £700 donation was earmarked for the crossing tower and spire (estimated at £1000). The Trust gave £250 to the same end. In recognition of Mrs. Barnet's generosity and support the crossing tower and spire were dedicated to her. Minutes of the Building Committee, 1 February 1911.

[7] H. Barnett, *The Story of the Growth of Hampstead Garden Suburb, 1907-1928* (London: Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, 1929), p. 28.

was not noted down. Later records (see below) indicate that this area had to be replastered in order to accept the fresco work.

II. The New Incumbent: The Rev. Basil Graham Bourchier (1881-1934)

The sequence of events that led to the new parish are, like those concerning the design and construction of the church, well documented.[8] The Reverend Basil Bourchier[9] was installed in October 1908. Two months later he was appointed chairman of the building committee. Much had to be done besides. There was not even the simplest meeting room, to say nothing of a vicarage[10], a hall, an endowment, or even a stipend, and there was still far from being enough money to complete Lutyens's design. Bourchier's other duty was to work closely the minister of the Free Church, and this he discharged happily.[11] Bourchier's way was to a large extent smoothed by his good relations with Mrs. Barnett.[12] It is also clear that he was entirely behind Lutyens's design; indeed, in 1909 he went a

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[8] See Barnet, *Story*, pp. 27-8. Further details are to be found in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners files relating to St. Jude's and now held in the Church of England Records Centre.

[9] According to the *Parish Paper of St. Jude on the Hill*, vol. 1 (1912-15), frontispiece, Basil Graham Bourchier was born in Staple Morden, Cambridgeshire, on 13 february 1881. He received a B.A. from Queens College, Cambridge, in 1903 and was ordained in 1905. He served briefly as curate at St. Anne's in Soho before taking up his appointment in the Suburb. In 1930, after 22 years association with St. Jude's he returned to Soho as Rector of St. Anne's. He died on 16 March 1934 and is buried at Bassingbourne Cemetery, Cambridgeshire.

[10] In the interim the Rev. Bourchier stayed in one of the pair of houses Mrs. Barnet had built in Temple Fortune Lane. Barnet, *Story*, 27. Lutyens first scheme for the vicarage was produced early in 1910 (Minutes of the Building Committee, 21 January), but like, the church, the estimate was too high. Revised plans were ready the following month and construction underway by June. See Minutes of the Building Committee, 21 January and 15 June 1910).

[11] Joint services were held in spring 1909 when increased numbers led to separate services. Initially the Anglican congregation met in the single-room Institute. The Free Church opted for the Working Men's Hall. See Minutes of the Building Committee, 26 May 1909.

[12] Bourchier had been appointed by the Bishop of London, Winnington Ingram, who was known to Mrs. Barnet from her days in the East End. He had been warden of Oxford House, the Oxford High Church Settlement House on Bethnal Green, in those very years when the Barnetts were active in St. Jude's Whitechapel. It would not be surprising if further research showed that Mrs. Barnett had been consulted over the choice of incumbent.

six-week lecture tour of Canada to solicit contributions to the building fund. The Earl Grey, then Governor-General and a close personal friend, was said to have made a generous donation. [13]

Bourchier is in some ways a fascinating historical character. Highly educated and of strong, determined views, he was, or at least fancied himself, something of a charismatic figure. During the 'twenties he tried to become a popular moralist of the 'Thought-for-the-Day' variety, writing newspaper articles, even books and generally wasting no opportunity to opine on whatever moral issue came his way. It is hard to tell from the *Parish Paper* just how well he succeeded. Politically he tended to conservatism; he was also an outspoken and longstanding opponent of female suffrage, a point that must be taken into account in any consideration of the Lady Chapel murals. Liturgically he was a Ritualist. In public he cultivated a secular urbanity which found expression in a taste for fashionable dress and a passion for tennis, the theatre, drinks parties, and travel to exotic destinations. He never married.

III. The First Scheme for the Lady Chapel. The Crosby Hall Exhibition of 1912

By summer 1912 there was a suggestion afoot to decorate the Lady Chapel with wall paintings, though exactly who was behind it has yet to be established. Bourchier would be the obvious candidate but for a notice in the *Parish Paper* which makes it clear that here the vicar was supporting someone else's initiative.[14]

Details of the exhibition have yet to be discovered, though it seems to have followed on from one exhibition of mural designs for schools held in January 1912.[15] The choice of venue for these two exhibitions was significant, since the promoters of Crosby Hall, among them the great Scots sociologist and planner Patrick Geddes, had hoped to decorate the re-erected medieval hall with murals illustrating scenes from the life of Thomas More (the Hall was rebuilt on land formerly belonging to

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[13] *St. Jude's Gazette*, June 1948.

[14] *Parish Paper of St. Jude on the Hill*, vol. 1 (1912-15), 7 June 1912.

[15] The Chelsea Local Studies Library has a copy of the prospectus.

More).[16] Nothing came of the St. Jude's exhibition and the plans were laid aside.[17]

IV. The Vicar and the Painter: Bourchier and Starmer

In 1916 Bourchier volunteered to serve as a chaplain in the theatre of war. He was sent to the Somme, where he was captured and sentenced to death. A brief biographical note in the *St. Jude's Gazette* for June 1948 explains that 'Only by a miracle did he escape with his life'. The exact circumstances of this event are as yet undiscovered. Afterwards, at Arras in 1918, he made the acquaintance of W. P. Starmer, a war artist who, so far as one can tell, had yet to make much of a name for himself. Recalling the event two years later Bourchier exaggerated the painter's qualifications, describing Starmer's 'success in the adornment of certain public buildings in this country ... marked him off as a man of remarkable gifts'.[18] Such evidence as we have regarding the artist (see below) suggests that he had hitherto not been in direct charge of any such scheme, although it is entirely possible that he was part of a team of artists involved in a great work of decoration.

Walter Percival Starmer (fl. from 1906 to 1960) was born at Teignmouth in Devon, the son of the Rev. Henry Starmer and Evelyn H. Marston. He was trained at the Government art schools at Norwich and then Birmingham. It would not be surprising if his mature interest in wall painting had been nurtured at the Birmingham School of Art, since this was one of the first schools to feature laboratories (constructed 1893) equipped for experiments into artists's techniques, particular fresco painting. There were craft studios attached, a reflection of the school's links with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Another decisive influence may have been the Birmingham-based painter Joseph Southall. Although he had no official links with the school, this late Victorian pioneer in the revival of true fresco opened his studio to Birmingham students.[19] As a result there was a

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[16] A. Saint, 'Ashbee, Geddes, Lethaby and the rebuilding of the Crosby Hall', *Architectural History*, vol. 34 (1991), pp. 206-17, at pp. 212-3.

[17] *Parish Paper*, 7 June and 14 July 1912. The exhibition is noted in B. Britton's short guide to the church, mimeographed typescript dated October 1979.

[18] *Parish Paper*, 11 June 1920.

[19] I am grateful to John Swift, University of Central England, School of Art, for sharing his knowledge of the school's history with me. The school archives survive but were not available for consultation in connection with this research; they are to become accessible in summer 1997. For a general discussion of the Birmingham's pioneering role see A. Crawford (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand...* (Birmingham: 1985). See also *Joseph Southall, 1861-1944. Artist-Craftsman*, exhib. catalogue, Birmingham City Museums and

lively and well regarded school of muralists associated with this institution and with the town more generally.[20]

The earliest notice of Starmer so far discovered dates to 1906, when he joined the Royal Drawing Society. We know of some work done as a book illustrator in this early period, as Starmer's designs were reproduced in G. M. Faulding's *Old Man's Beard and Other Tales* (London: Dent) of 1909. This continued after the war.[21] For a time Starmer tried teaching by correspondence. *The Studio* for 1910 carries two advertisements he placed offering 'Drawing and Painting Lessons by Post'. A prospectus could be had from 'Breezemount Studio, Mundesley-on-Sea', Norfolk.[22] Perhaps Starmer's time at the Norwich School of Art[23] had led to some permanent connection there since his only documented solo exhibition ('War Sketches', some sixty views of events and scenes in Northern France made between 1914 and 1919) took place at Dimmock's Gallery, Norwich, in May 1919.[24] In addition to being R.D.S., Starmer joined the British Water Colour Society in 1912 and the Imperial Three Arts Society. He claimed to have exhibited at the Royal Academy, but there is no notice of him in RA's comprehensive index to contributors. He provided other plaudits for his entry in the 1929 edition of *A Dictionary of Contemporary British Artists*, noting shows at various unnamed provincial galleries and even some appearances at the Paris Salon.

Most of what we do know of Starmer dates either to the period leading up to his release from war service or his post-war period as an active member of the Watford and Bushey Art Society (see below). The largest collection of his work of which I am aware is to be found at the Imperial War Museum, some thirty paintings in all, most in gouache on toned paper and executed in the Somme between 1916 and 1918.[25] Starmer's particular

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Art Gallery (1980).

[20] See, for example, 'The Birmingham School', *Architectural Review*, vol. 23 (1908), p. 101.

[21] Arthur Yapp's *The Romance of the Red Triangle* and a *Piers Plowman History* book of 1923.

[22] Issues for 5 January and 15 August 1910.

[23] The Art School's archives have not been examined but may well yield further information on the artist.

[24] Bushey Museum, Artist Date Sheet.

[25] See, the Imperial War Museum, *A Concise Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture of the First World War, 1914-1918* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1963 ed. of 1924 original), items no. 2857-77. See also the file of correspondence held in the

remit was to record the temporary relief huts which the YMCA had erected for troops behind the front lines. Some of these appeared in Arthur Yapp's *The Romance of the Red Triangle*.[26] Several other views were made with an eye for later publication in books, magazines or newspapers.

In 1931 the artist tried to interest the Museum in a further twenty 'sketches' depicting scenes of devastation. These had been kept back as potential illustrational material. After lengthy negotiations with the artist the financially constrained institution agreed to purchase half of the offered lot for 8 guineas. This correspondence is noteworthy for giving Starmer's address at this date, the year after he had completed the Hampstead murals: 103 Whitchurch Gardens, Edgeware.

Starmer appears to have developed contacts in Bushey during the 'twenties; he moved there between 1931 and 1944. Like other formerly London-based artists he was attracted by school of art founded there by the great Victorian realist Hubert von Herkomer. Starmer apparently had no official association with the school, but he was familiar with its work and teaching methods.[27] For a time Starmer rented space at the Meadow Studios, two large buildings erected by the London Transport Authority near Melbourne Road, where classes were overseen, at least initially, by Herkomer himself. The temporary wooden structures, which included very spartan living accommodation, were designed by George Harcourt. Separate, smaller studio buildings were erected nearby on LTA land. Around these studios there grew what was, in essence, a suburban artists's colony, made especially attractive by the ravages of the Blitz.[28]

In 1944 he became active in the Watford and Bushey Art Society. He was chairman in 1946, 1947, and 1955; president from 1952 to 1954; and vice-president in 1958 and 1959. His name appears in many exhibition catalogues of the period and the WBAS records contain numerous postcards from him, items chiefly interesting for recording a sequence of addresses:

Museum's archives relating to Starmer and concerning the purchase of some twenty WWI paintings in 1931. Only about one half of the Museum's holdings by Starmer are fit for production at the time of writing.

[26] The author of this report has not been able to inspect this publication.

[27] Notice in the *West Herts and Watford Observer*, 16 June 1944.

[28] H. C. White, *Bushey's Painting Heritage*, Bushey Then and Now, booklet no. 7, undated, pp. 31 and 51.

Coldharbour Lane; 13 Meadow Studios; and finally 11 Milne Field, Hatch End. The final piece of correspondence is dated November 1959.[29]

Although Starmer's work was various -- book illustrations, watercolours, card illustrations, easel pictures, altar pieces, designs for stained glass in addition to wall paintings -- he chose to describe himself as a muralist in the 1929 *Dictionary of Contemporary Artists* and again in the 1934 edition of *Who's Who in Art*. He continued to refer to St. Jude's as his principal work well into the 'fifties. Other works by him include: the Carmelite Church in Kensington, a Victorian church destroyed in the 1939-45 war[30]; St. Peter's, Piccadilly; St. Anne's Soho (also destroyed)[31]; and St. Agatha's, Shoreditch. There is one reference to an unspecified church in Birmingham, but the precise location has not been identified. A triptych for the Church of St. James's in Bushey has been attributed to him and a window in St. Mary's Church Rickmansworth. According to clippings in the Bushey Museum -- which owns one religious painting by Starmer -- the artist turned increasingly to designs for stained glass, though apart from the Rickmansworth window and those in St. Jude's no other commissions for this medium have come to light.[32] Starmer is also known to have been responsible for the restoration of the splendid eighteenth-century ceiling paintings adorning the remarkable Church of St. Laurence Little Stanmore (1715-20). Starmer's work, which amounted to overpainting, was itself removed in the 1980s, in the course of works documented by a BBC programme of 1983.[33]

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[29] Information from Christine Thatcher, Duke Street, Watford, to author, September 1996.

[30] See *The Survey of London. Northern Kensington*, vol. 37 (London: The Athlone Press in conjunction with the University of London and for the Greater London Council), pp. 35-6 and plate 27. The present structure dates to 1959 and was built to the designs of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

[31] Starmer may have got this commission through Bourchier, who left St. Jude's for St. Anne's.

[32] The above list of works is taken from the Bushey Museum's Artist Data Sheet on Starmer. I am indebted to Bryan Wood and Grant Longman of the Bushey Museum and Art Gallery for sending me photocopies of clippings and other information in their files. The 1929 *Dictionary of Contemporary Artists* also mentions a mural in a house, 'Hollywood', Whitchurch Gardens, Edgeware. The Stained Glass Museum at Ely has no further information on the artist.

[33] An inquiry lodged with the BBC in October has so far not produced any information about this programme.

V. The St. Jude's Commission, 1920 to 1930

Starmer visited Bourchier at Hampstead after the war, probably late in 1919 or early the following year. On inspecting the inside of Lutyens's great work the painter, in the vicar's words, 'with the eye of the expert artist ... saw our church as it might be -- a beautiful body, no longer cold and nude, but warm and clothed -- and he begged he might be entrusted with this delicate and difficult task'. Lutyens's approval was sought and granted. Bourchier had by this point decided that his friend's paintings in the Lady Chapel would act as our 'permanent Memorial to those who died in the War'. Only the money was lacking.[34]

By February 1921 the work was underway. The method chosen was said to be 'pure Italian fresco', one endorsed, according to the *Parish Paper of St. Jude's on the Hill*, by the architect himself. This appears not to have been entirely true (the question of technique is treated in Appendix 2). A reference in a contemporary publication indicates that the paintings executed in the 'spirit fresco' technique.[35] Before work could begin, however, 'the upper parts of the chapel have had to be replastered on account of cracks in the original coat, caused by the natural drying and settling of the building'.

The artist himself suggested the subject, 'Women in the Bible', an unusual one at length by Starmer in a notice of the work first printed in the parish *Gazette* for 1947 (and reprinted here in Appendix 3). One of the most remarkable features of this iconographic programme is the subject of the paintings adorning the dome of the Chapel's west bay, 'The Women that publish the tidings of the great host'. It features a series of portrait heads depicting eminent Victorian women and Edwardian women, from Florence Nightingale to Edith Cavell. Medieval female saint are mixed in amongst this impressive congregation of modern heroines.

As for the style of the pictures, this, Bourchier explained to his parishioners, would have to be

> decoratively treated --, i.e., no attempt at realism is intended, as, if this were so, it would be quite impossible, for instance, to represent the Kings and Shepherds in the

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[34] *Parish Paper*, 11 June 1912.

[35] J. H. Sexton, 'Fresco Painting', in *Addresses and Lectures delivered by the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators, 1924-28*, 1928 (London), pp. 3-20.

> same scene ... no attempt is made at academic portraiture or absolute realism.[36]

Each component of the scheme was conceived as one part of a larger ensemble, and the artist succeeded in this regard superbly. Arguably the Lady Chapel is the finest work of decoration in the church.

By March 1921 a special fundraising committee had been formed. It was staffed mostly by prominent women residents of the Suburb and chaired by Mrs. St. Clair Stobart Greenhalgh, who during the War had been the Directress of the Women's Hospital Unit. In this capacity she had undertaken extensive tours of the battlegrounds in Belgium and France. She was also in close communication with the Women's Convoy Corps and various other women's units.[37] Stobart Greenhalgh's book, *The Flaming Sword* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1916) records her involvement on this front, including the setting up of the many 'Stobart dispensaries'. Interestingly, she also supported the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, debating the point at length in the *Parish Paper* with the Rev. Bourchier in March 1922.

Bourchier described the female-dominated fund-raising committee thus:

> ... the task of collecting the £1,500 requisite for Mr. Starmer's work shall be entirely discharged by the women of the congregation, for two reasons -- (a) because the Lady Chapel stands for the ennobling of womanhood; and (b) because the beautifying of this portion of the Church is to form our permanent memorial to the gallant dead, and all through the cruel years of war it was upon the women of the Empire that the heaviest burden fell.[38]

By May £1,000 had been collected and Starmer had completed half the work. In the first part of June Princess Beatrice and Lord Crewe inspected the paintings. In July the rest of the money was donated in one large lump,[39] although the unnamed donor seems later to have rescinded the

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[36] Descriptions from the *Parish Paper*, 4 February 1921.

[37] See her notice of this trip in *The Hampstead Garden Suburb Record*, vol. 3 (February 1915), p. 79. The *Record* during the War years contains a great deal of information on the women's issues.

[38] *Parish Paper*, 25 February 1921.

[39] *Parish Paper*, 20 May, 17 June, and 15 July 1921.

offer.[40] The reopening was originally scheduled for the first day in the patronal festival (28 October to 1 November), but was brought forward by Bourchier to 21 October in order to accommodate the Princess Royal, who had agreed to attend. However, this too had to be rescheduled as Starmer's work was delayed further.[41]

VI. Lutyens's Opinion of the Work

History has not been kind to Starmer's work, both in the Lady Chapel and the rest of the church. Christopher Hussey, author of the standard source on the Lutyens's life and work, had this to say about the paintings:

> The interior painted decoration of St. Jude's was executed by Mr. Walter Starmer, ARSA, between 1921 and 1929. The artist consulted Lutyens, who, however, would have preferred that the church should not have been decorated in this way.[42]

One recent publication on the Suburb goes further, condemning the paintings for compromising the Brunelleschian 'purity' of the interior architecture and for casting the whole nave and chancel into excessive gloom.[43]

Neither Hussey nor anyone else who has written on the church has adduced any evidence in support of this claim, which seems based on a common view of Lutyens as an entirely architectural artist. While this may be true in a general sense, it proves nothing about Lutyens's ideas on the decoration of churches. As noted above (section V), Lutyens was said to have given his approval to the idea of covering the church with fresco. In December 1921, two months after the Lady Chapel's official reopening, he paid a special visit and praised the work unreservedly, according to the *Parish Magazine*. Towards the end of May 1923, when Starmer's scheme to cover the rest of the church with paintings had been accepted by the vestry and were progressing, Lutyens paid another visit, this time taking lunch at the vicarage with the artist. The three discussed proposals for the interior before moving into the Church itself where they spent a

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[40] According to the Minutes of the Council, St. Jude's on the Hill, 14 October 1921. These books are still in the possession of the church.

[41] Minutes of the Council, 14 October 1921.

[42] *The Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens* (Country Life: London, 1950), p. 192.

[43] Miller and Gray, *Hampstead Garden Suburb*, pp.82-4, and pl. 45.

'considerable time in conference'[44] over this and also over the position of the proposed new organ.[45] If Lutyens did object strongly, then Bourchier left no record of it.

Recent research has demonstrated that Lutyens had no strong views on church decoration. At Liverpool Catholic Cathedral, begun long after St. Jude's, he paid scant attention to this side of the work, although he did wish to see the vaults covered with mosaics. As for the crypt, the only part of this grand scheme to be carried out, this he had plastered in order to receive frescos. Correspondence from c1935 shows that he was generally in favour of this form of decoration.[46] On balance, then, we must conclude that Lutyens, although he might have objected to Starmer's artistic manner, would not have had any objection in principle to the use of frescos at St. Jude's.

VII. Starmer's Designs for the Rest of the Church, 1922-23

In January 1922, not long after the Lady Chapel murals were completed, Bourchier made a daring proposal to the parish council. After moving a vote of thanks to the artist 'for all his beautiful work therein...

> he felt that it would display a lack of faith to risk losing such eminent services of Mr. Starmer, were [he] not invited to continue his artistic labours over the whole Church and invited him to lay before the meeting a *resume* of his scheme.

Starmer, waiting to be called into the meeting and armed with preliminary sketches, then described his plans for covering the church with murals, estimating it could be completed for between £4,800 and £5,000 over the next four or five years. His fee would be an extremely modest £500. Both estimates turned out to be hugely optimistic, but those assembled to pass judgment on the scheme trusted entirely in Bourchier and his artist. The meeting was won over and directed Starmer to expand his proposals at once. At this stage the full programme of the fresco cycle was not fully worked out, but his Starmer's idea was for the north side to be covered with scenes illustrating the Parables and for the south side to show Christ's

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[44] *Parish Paper*, 1 June 1923.

[45] In December 1923, the Bishop of London offered the organ from Canon Barnett's old church, St. Jude's in Whitechapel, to Bourchier, which was 'now in the course of being pulled down'. Minutes of the Council, St. Jude's on the Hill, 17 December 1923, documents in the possession of the church.

[46] David Crellin, as above, in conversation with the author, January 1997.

Miracles.[47] At that same meeting, the Council had, reluctantly, to agree to postpone completing the west end of the church, but, at the vicar's insistence, had agreed to the idea of a chapel at the southeast corner of the church answering the Lady Chapel. It was thought that perhaps Lord Rothermere would provide the funds, and it was resolved to ask Lutyens for designs. At the April Council debate centred on whether to complete the west wall of the church -- estimated at £7940 -- or build the new chapel to Lutyens's new plans -- estimated for £6503. The chapel it was to be, presumably because a patron was ready waiting in the wings.[48] In the end, though, it turned out not to be Rothermere but Sir Leicester and Lady Harmsworth. St. John's Chapel was consecrated in October 1923.[49] The present furnishings were given by Sir Leicester and his second son, Harold, as a memorial to the eldest child, Sir Robert St. John Lovel Harmsworth in the winter of 1928-29.[50]

Meanwhile Starmer was getting on with his side of things, requesting the church Council to agree to two annual payments for £700 each to cover his fee and materials.[51] In July he began the preliminaries. By this point the work seemed assured as an anonymous donor had promised £3,500.[52] Gradually it dawned on Starmer that the project was going to take more than four or five years. By October he reckoned that ten years was more like it, and this turned out be accurate. At the same time the artist presented a specially prepared model of the Church to the Council showing his proposed decorations *in situ*.[53]

Starmer was obviously excited by this commission. In November he submitted his model and working drawings to the Royal Academy, which was planning a special exhibition on 'Art in Building Decoration' for January and February 1923 (See section XII).

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[47] Minutes of the Council, 26 January 1922.

[48] Minutes of the Council, 7 April 1922.

[49] *Parish Paper*, 13 July and 19 October 1923. Construction was to have been finished by May, the delay being caused by the difficulty in obtaining bricks to match those used in the rest of the church, which had been specially made. Minutes of the Council, 23 March 1923.

[50] *Parish Paper*, 11 January 1929.

[51] Minutes of the Council, 7 April 1922.

[52] Minutes of the Council, 21 July 1922.

[53] Minutes of the Council, 2 October 1922.

VIII. The Sequence of the Paintings and Their Place in the Artist's Oeuvre

Starmer's first payment for the work, £350, was approved by the Church Council in March 1923.[54] The first phase was completed in April of the following year, when a special unveiling ceremony was held. The Prince of Wales officiated.[55] Although the documentary evidence is not entirely clear, it seems likely that these paintings are those on the walls of the north and south aisles which show the Parables. The panels at the west end, to either side of the font, depict scenes from the childhood of Christ.[56] (See Appendix 3) Unfortunately, from this point the documentation dries up and that we have only a few scattered notices in the *Parish Paper* to chart the progress of works. It is hard to know whether, for instance, Starmer used assistants, how much time he devoted to the work, or even how much in total he received for it. If he executed a good deal of the work himself, and this seems likely, then there could not have been much time for other commissions on this scale. Certainly his rate of pay during the initial stages of the work added up to a comfortable salary, which in Starmer's case was probably augmented by income from other sources, primarily illustrations.

I make this point in part to give some sense of how the artist saw this commission in his life's work. In short biographical notices published in various dictionaries of painters from the time, and in later newspaper clippings, it is described as his principle achievement. In 1930, as the cycle was nearing completion, Starmer wrote thus about the scheme: 'I have finished the work ... which God gave me to do'.[57] St. Jude's would have taken up a considerable portion of his professional life from 1920 to 1930 and could well have provided the better part of his income.

In April 1926 the painted vaults to the nave and transepts were dedicated. The crossing dome was also completed. These paintings depict the Life of Christ from the Nativity to the Crucifiction.[58] By August Starmer was hard at work once more, finishing the southeast wall just outside the chapel of St. John: 'Under Starmer's charmed hand, the mural decorations will', the Rev. Bourchier wrote, 'proceed from stage to stage of beauty and

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[54] Minutes of the Council, 23 March 1923.

[55] Minutes of the Council, 24 April 1924.

[56] See Starmer's letter to the *Parish Paper*, 30 April 1926.

[57] *Parish Paper*, 21 February 1930.

[58] Starmer described them in a letter to the 30 April 1926 number of the *Parish Paper*.

completion'.[59] Another unveiling was held in November.[60] By this date Starmer himself is listed as one of the churchwardens.

A few basic details of these later stages of work are known. In 1926, for example, Starmer admitted that his work had been made difficult by the red brick under the plaster, though the exact nature of the problem was not recorded.[61] By this date Starmer's fees were being met in part by special offertories. The Church accounts for 1926-27 record a £400 payment to Starmer. In the next financial year £500 was paid to him, this time £193 of it having come from offertories.[62] 1928-29 was a very busy year for the artist, who received a total of £1,131.10.11 for his work (£152.4.3 from collections and the rest from a special fund raised to decorate St. John's Chapel, which had been completed in 1928).[63]

From early in 1929 Bourchier was eager to see the scheme completed, perhaps in anticipation of his move to St. Anne's Soho. In May Starmer started the apse. In June Bourchier commenced the last architectural phase of the building, the construction of Lutyens's west front design.[64] In November came news of his preferment to St. Anne's and in December the naming of the new vicar, the Rev. Edward Dudbridge Arundell formerly of Bunbury. Meanwhile works slowed. Starmer was severely ill, but by February he was ready to take up his brush once more and the apse neared completion.

Late in February, with the Rev. Bourchier now in Soho, the finishing touches were being put on the apse painting of the Last Supper, which Starmer described thus:

> Our Lord stands in the centre, all the Apostles looking earnestly at him ... [in the background] the two big pillars carry out the idea of the continuity of the Church round the central sacrament. Behind our Lord is seen the Temple. To his right, remnants of the crowd are visible, returning to Jerusalem in the distance with palms and branches. To his left, the soldiers appear coming out, *en route* to Gethsamene.

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[59] *Parish Paper*, 27 August 1926.

[60] *Parish Paper*, 5 November 1926.

[61] *Parish Paper*, 19 November 1926.

[62] *Parish Paper*, 29 April, 5 August 1927, 20 April 1928.

[63] *Parish Paper*, 5 April 1929.

[64] *Parish Paper*, 17 May and 7 June 1929.

Jesus stands midway between the world's two verdicts: (a) 'Hozanna [sic] in the Highest', and (b) 'Crucify Him'. The table is unending, to symbolise that the Bread of Life is for all, and for ever. The Lantern ominously casts a shadow of the cross under our Lord upon the table cloth. On the table are just (a) the Broken Bread, (b) the Chalice, and (c) the Dish. On the ground can be seen the pitcher of water and the towel.[65]

[65] *Parish Paper*, 21 February 1930.

IX. Later Works, Cleaning and Repairs

Starmer retained his connection with the church for a time. During the war he made at least one drawing of the interior (still in the possession of the church). In 1945 he designed two stained glass windows as individual memorials in the Lady Chapel.[66] There was slight bomb damage to the church, most notably the tower, and a backlog of problems arising from too little being spent on maintenance. An estimate of £3,650 was considered by the churchwardens.[67]A report of December 1950 described a 'bad patch inside the Sanctuary and certain leaks in the roof'. There were cracks over the transept and nave arches as well. A tender for £3300 was accepted from the builders Ward and Paterson but a shortage of cash led to a scaling back of the work. Only essential repairs were carried out in 1951.[68] The rest was left for three years, when the damage to the paintings was described in some detail.

In 1954 the roof over the transept cupola was leaking badly, 'causing damage to the painting and some plaster had fallen ... Consideration of the restoration of the painting was deferred for the time being as in any case Mr. Starmer could do nothing until the new plaster was dry'.[69] Early the following year a notice in the PCC Minutes records that the murals in the crossing were 'deteriorating' as a result of damp penetration through the 'faulty spire base'. It was decided to do nothing as the work of restoration would not be covered by the church's insurance company.[70]

The cracks in the crossing were monitored from 1955 to 1959, when they were pronounced stable.[71] In April of the following year an ageing Starmer was approached for advice on cleaning the paintings, plans were apparently underway to repair the roof. In May 1962 a good general cleaning was mooted; there is a record of the Calvary painting being cleaned in 1963. Unfortunately there is no evidence to show whether other murals were cleaned at the same time nor what method was advised by the artist. Nor is there is anything in the surviving documents to indicate

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[66] *St. Jude's Gazette*, November 1945.

[67] *St. Jude's Gazette*, September 1949.

[68] Minutes of the Finance Committee, 1937-54, 13 December 1950 and 1 March 1951. In the possession of the Church.

[69] Minutes of the Finance Committee, 5 December 1954.

[70] 18 January 1955.

[71] PCC Minutes, 4 February 1959.

whether or not Starmer carried out the restoration work which he is said to have.

The last mention of the artist's name in the church documents dates to 1964 when a memorial tablet to him was proposed in recognition of his efforts. A faculty for this was granted in February 1965.[72]

[72] PCC Minutes, 23 January and 14 July 1964, and 3 February 1965.

X. The Mural Painting Revival: An Assessment of the St. Jude's Paintings

In order to understand the art historical interest of these wall paintings, it is helpful to set them in the context of the history of mural painting in nineteenth-century Britain.

In the early years of Victoria's reign there was a self-conscious attempt to revive ancient techniques of mural painting. The impetus came from the greatest architectural commission of the epoch, the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament which had been devastated by fire in 1834. Seven years later, with the architectural part of the work well underway, a select committee on the decoration of the building was convened. Its wider remit was to consider the way in which this great project might promote the fine arts in Britain. It was proposed that the New Palaces should be decorated with history paintings executed in the manner of the great Italian Renaissance frescos, that is, using inorganic pigments painted directly onto wet plaster (*Buon fresco*) as opposed to what was then the more usual way of decorating walls, which was to simply to place oil paintings on canvas into an architectural setting. It was hoped that a great national school would constitute itself in Westminster and then disseminate. The unquestioned leader of the proposed new *scuola* was the painter William Dyce (1806-1864).

Dyce was charged to undertake research into fresco technique, sent to Italy to study the originals, and then to Germany to study the work of his younger contemporaries, the Nazarenes, German painters who in the 1820s had formed themselves into a brotherhood dedicated expressly to mastering the long dead art of historical fresco painting while pursuing a quasi-monastic life. Between 1844 and 1853 Dyce executed a series of wall paintings using his version of traditional fresco technique but time and again he met with failure. His pigments seemed never to last, the fault, it has been suggested, of the commercial manufacturers whose processes introduced many impurities into the final product. Peter Cornelius, the leading Nazarene muralist, had advised Dyce to do as the Italians did and use only earth pigments, but their subtle colouring did not suit mid nineteenth-century taste which demanded strong colour contrasts and a wider range of colours than had been available to the Italian masters. And it was that Victorian passion for detail that drove Dyce to add a great deal of work *a secco*, that is, on top of the dry plaster using a different medium, often egg tempera and sometimes oil. Renaissance painters commonly used dry work to achieve some detail but sparingly.

Despite the enormous trouble Dyce had taken to recover and update ancient technique, by the early 1860s all of his works were flaking to pieces or fading. His pigments had been impure, his technique too mixed, and the British climate and air pollution too extreme. The failures were most dramatic in the New Palaces where many of the wall paintings were

executed in rooms which were more or less open to the weather and heated intermittently by coal fires. The mural revival had failed and a special parliamentary report was compiled to explain why.[73]

XI. A Second Mural Revival, 'Spirit Fresco'[74]

In the very years that art of true fresco was being pronounced unsuitable for Victorian England, there appeared a new technique, the result of careful scientific investigation and offering what true fresco had been unable to deliver, a permanent form of decoration bonded with the wall surface. 'Spirit Fresco' was a technological product, one completely in harmony with the Victorian age. Its palette was strong and broad enough to suit contemporary taste yet durable enough to endure the cold, wet and dirty climate of the British Isles. Unlike true fresco, spirit fresco relied on an organic medium and organic pigments. First a surface was saturated with a mix of resins, oil and wax. Then a bright white ground, constituted of white lead and gilder's whiting, was applied. Allowed to dry for two to three weeks this formed a perfectly hard, flat surface on which to paint. The pigments were suspended in the same oil and wax medium which had been used to prepare the wall surface (sometimes a little spike oil was used to cut them). The principle was the same as true fresco. Medium and ground were chemically related, but in the case of spirit fresco the materials were entirely organic.

Something similar to this method had been used in Germany since the mid eighteenth century, when it was known as wax painting or encaustic. A related technique was introduced by a Dr. Fuchs, again from Germany, in 1825 under the title of the 'waterglass' technique. The person in this country to perfect the method was Thomas Gambier Parry, a gentleman painter who devised his methods in the late 1850s, just as the first epitaphs of the first fresco revival were being written. His Doom at Holy Trinity Church Highnam, a church which he had built in 1848 as a memorial to his wife, is one of the earliest examples of the medium. Before long Parry's

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[73] Wright's 'Report on the Decay of British Frescoes' of 1871. The standard source on this subject is T. S. R. Boase, 'Decoration of the New Palaces of Westminster, 1841-1863', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 17 (1954), pp. 324-58. See also M. Bond, *Works of Art in the House of Lords* (London, 1980). I am indebted to Caroline Babbington, English Heritage Conservation Studios, for allowing me to read her Courtauld Institute of Art M.W. thesis, 'Techniques and Conservation of Frescoes by William Dyce', University of London, 1988.

[74] I am grateful to Tracy Manning, English Heritage Conservation Studios, for allowing me to inspect her M. A. thesis 'Spirit Fresco: Its Genesis, Development and Dissemination', Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1994. I have relied exclusively on her account in the following section.

recipe was commercially available. Roberson and Co. sold spirit fresco materials well into the twentieth century.

Spirit fresco attracted favourable press in the early 1870s when Frederic Leighton decided to use it for the large lunettes in the South Court of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Ford Maddox Brown also used it for his Manchester Town Hall murals, carried out fitfully during the same decade. The great commercial painter-decorator firms of the day -- Crace, Clayton and Bell, Rattee and Kett, Bell of Bristol, Stansell's of Taunton, or Campbell-Smith of London -- very likely used spirit fresco and perhaps even before Parry patented it.

Spirit fresco had a longer life than many people familiar with Victorian decorative art will suppose. It was widely available and used through the interwar period. Key artist's manuals of the period (Church 1890, Jackson 1904, Ward 1909, and Laurie 1926[75]) all mention it, and in a paper read to the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators in 1924 it is described as 'quite a modern method of working'. This same author cited recent examples in the medium as Joseph Southall's panels at Birmingham Town Hall and Starmer's work at St. Jude's Hampstead.[76] Doerner, however, in his *Materials of the Artist and their Use in Painting* of 1934 regarded it as old fashioned.

It is important to note that the materials and techniques described as 'spirit fresco' in the early twentieth century were not necessarily the same ones perfected by Gambier Parry, which explains why works in this medium are sometimes mistaken for true fresco. Only a full scientific analysis of the kind that should be performed prior to the conservation of any wall painting can tell us the medium or, more likely, the media an artist used.

Although Starmer appears then to have used spirit fresco not true fresco at St. Jude's, the particular formula he was working to allowed him to recreate the general effect of true fresco, achieving a softness of colouring and line that seems to have little in common with more widely known mid-Victorian examples of spirit fresco work. And in this sense his work belongs to what it is perhaps best to think of as the 'third fresco revival', this one growing directly out of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

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[75] A. H. Church, *The Chemistry of Paints and Painting*; F. Hamilton Jackson, *Mural Painting*; James Ward, *Fresco Painting. Its Art and Technique*; A. P. Laurie, *The Painter's Methods and Materials*.

[76] J. H. Sexton, 'Fresco Painting', in *Addresses and Lectures delivered by the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators, 1924-28*, 1928 (London), pp. 3-20.

XII. Arts and Crafts Fresco Painting

The artists and designers associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement aspired to creating a totally unified interior, in which every medium, be it architecture, painting, sculpture, weaving, or stained glass, was subordinated to an overall effect with no one element standing out. Most practitioners believed that architecture played something of a leading role in this complex equation, regulating the rest as a sort of *primus inter pares*. Of course the notion of a unified interior was first self-consciously developed in Britain during the 1760s by the likes of Robert Adam and William Chambers. What distinguished the Victorian vision of artistic harmony from the Georgian one was a belief that this aesthetic totality had finally been achieved not in the ancient world or in Renaissance Italy but actually in northern Europe during the medieval period. Pugin, designer of the Houses of Parliament, was inspired by the idea as was his near contemporary John Ruskin, in whose writings the vision of a total art form is most vividly and persuasively sketched. Given new life by William Morris in the 1880s, these ideas coalesced into the artistic movement which is now commonly known by the term 'Arts and Crafts'.

Morris had from the beginning of his artistic career been interested in fresco painting, proof of which is found in the failed Oxford Union mural campaign of 1857-58, where he and other youthful followers of Rossetti, apparently unaware that fresco was at that very moment being pronounced dead, worked in tempera on plaster. Rossetti is said to have been inspired by G. F. Watts mural of 'Justice' then being completed in the new hall at Lincoln's Inn.

Spirit fresco seemed to hold out the promise of finally achieving in England what medieval craftsmen had done centuries before, but the hard-edged, garish style commonly used by the commercial decorators's firms and artists such as Gambier Parry and Styleman Le Strange were contrary to Morris's vision. Such paintings were, according to the critical criteria of the emerging aesthetic movement, too assertive and independent of their architectural settings. Hence, from the late 1880s there emerged a desire either to revisit true fresco by attending with absolute fidelity to the recipes and techniques used by the great Cinquecento muralists or to adapt spirit fresco to the visions of this new avant garde. In Birmingham Joseph Southall, noted above in the discussion of Starmer, investigated both avenues but others were less willing to treat their media opportunistically. The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society took a stern line of the subject of materials, which it insisted had to be made and applied strictly according to traditional methods.

One of the problems to be solved if England were to develop a modern school of muralists was exactly what style was most appropriate to this form of decoration. The work of the French painter Puvis de Chavannes

was thought to be most worthy of emulation. In a long notice of his work published in the *Magazine of Art* for 1894 (pp. 73-9) Prince Bajidar Karageorgevitch summed up the qualities which set the painter apart. Although Puvis worked on canvas and in the studio (indeed, many of his large schemes were exhibited at the Salon before being carted off to their final homes), their general 'softness and unity of tone' allowed to harmonise with and even to unify architectural settings. The Sorbonne amphitheatre wall paintings were declared outstanding, as were those in the museums of Marseilles, Rouens and Amiens. Puvis's art had an air of timelessness about it, something that seemed divorced from contemporary notions of style.[77] Leighton's spirit frescos in the South Kensington Museum's South Court were praised along the same lines.[78] By the turn of the century both *The Magazine of Art* and the fledgling *Studio*[79] were beginning to call attention to a new generation of British muralists, artists who were seen to herald the start of a mural movement that might eventually stand comparison with French and in particular American work.[80]

One of the earliest champions of this new generation was Alfred Lys Baldry. His *Modern Mural Decoration* (London: George Newnes) of 1902 is something of an art historical benchmark, the first of several publications written for aspiring frescoists, potential patrons, and the public at large. It treats the subject and its history exhaustively and even lists those modern artists 'approved' for emulation: of course Puvis but also Edwin Abbey,

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[77] See also *Magazine of Art*, 1897-98, pp. 659 and ff.

[78] Discussed in detail by his assistant, James Ward, in *Magazine of Art*, 1896, pp. 373-8.

[79] See, for example, vol. 12 (1898), pp. 189-91 and vol. 13 (1898, pp. 44-6. The latter calls on private patrons to commission frescoes for domestic settings.

[80] *The Studio* took a keen interest in the American mural movement, see for example, S. Brunton, 'Modern Mural Decorations in America', vol. 51 (1911), pp. 175-90. The key figures in the United States were LaFarge, Millet, Maynard, Dewing, Low, Blashfield, Abbey (English born), and the principle projects: Boston Public Library (1888 and following), the Library of Congress (1888-96), the New York City Appellate Court (1890s), the Minnesota State Capitol Building (1895 and ff.), and the Pennsylvania State Capitol Building in Harrisburg (1900 and ff.), one of the greatest sites for late nineteenth- and twentieth-century mural painting in the world. After the war was an article on the Mural Painters Society of New York appeared; see vol. 83 (1922), pp. 261 and ff. *The Studio* took pride in reporting Brangwyn's several U.S. commissions to the home audience. His success among the great American masters was proof, in the eyes of its editors, that Brangwyn had achieved international importance. See, for example, the artist's scheme for the Cleveland Court House, reported in vol. 60 (1914), p. 175 and at the Panama Pacific Exhibition, vol. 72 (1918), p. 3.

Frank Frangwyn, Burne-Jones, Leighton, Albert Moore, Rodin, Alfred Stevens, Watts, and E. A. Walton. Whilst praising true fresco as the most 'complementary' to architecture, Baldry was no purist and cared little what method was followed so long as the end result was an artistic success. For Baldry the Boston Public Library murals acmes of achievement and he had great hopes for the Royal Exchange Commission in the City of London first mooted in 1892.[81] In 1907 Baldry wrote favourably about Professor Gerald Moira's scheme for the hall of the Old Baily (c.1905-7), where his three allegorical lunettes faced three by W. B. Richmond. Moira had, Baldry wrote, done perhaps more than anyone else to encourage mural decoration in the

> large manner, broad and dignified, and distinguished by that monumental quality which is necessary in paintings destined to serve as features in an architectural scheme.[82]

By the start of WWI there was a consensus over both what a mural ought to do and which artists had succeeded in realising Baldry's ideals.[83]

At about the same time as Baldry was reviewing his subject a radically purist organisation was being formed, the Society of Painters in Tempera (from 1907 the Society of Mural Decorators and Painters in Tempera). Founded in 1901 the Society took as its point of inspiration Christiana Herringham's 1899 translation of Cennino Cennini's manual on painting. The Society's larger aim was to circulate reliable technical information and to encourage practitioners to share their first-hand experience. An early project of which the Society's committee approved was Henry Payne's painted chapel at Madresfield Court, where Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft was also involved. Southall lent his support to the organisation as did Mary Sargent Florence, whose Oakham School paintings, begun in 1903, were a pilgrimage site for those who aspired to work in traditional materials and according to Renaissance techniques. John Batten was also involved, and left a very interesting account of an experimental fresco class he taught from his house-studio in 1913.[84] Other artists who lent their support were:

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[81] R. Bowdler, 'The Royal Exchange Murals', Historical Analysis and Research Team Report, English Heritage, 1996 (CITY 94).

[82] 'Professor Moira's Recent Mural Decorations', *The Studio*, vol. 40 (1907), pp. 24-34.

[83] See, for example, *The Studio*, vol. 56 (1912), p. 254.

[84] See *Papers...*, vol. 1, 1901-7, introduction, p. 74 and *passim*; vol. 2, 1907-24, introduction and pp. 42 and ff., pp. 87 and ff.; and vol. 3, 1925-35, introduction.

Jessie Bayes, R. Anning Bell, E. R. Frampton, Charles Holyroyd, F. C. Robinson, and Frank O. Salisbury, and Marianne Stokes.[85]

Frank Brangwyn's name is strangely absent from the Society's proceedings, a reflection of the fact that he was more interested in final effect than in process. Nevertheless his wall paintings must figure prominently in any account of twentieth-century muralists.[86] Brangwyn's cycle of pictures for the Worshipful Company of Skinners in the City of London (11 panels in oil on canvas), executed from 1902 to 1909 is among the finest to be found in London from the early years of this century.[87] There followed panels for the Committee Luncheon Room in the Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1903-7), a smaller set in the Cockspur Street offices of the Canadian National Grand Trunk Railway (1909-10)[88], and the Christ's Hospital Chapel at West Horsham in Sussex (1913-23).[89] His greatest achievement was the ill-fated British Empire Exhibit Panels, intended originally to decorate the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords but eventually rejected as unsuitable in 1930 by the Royal Fine Arts Commission. (They were afterwards taken to a purpose-built exhibition hall, the Brangwyn Hall, in the Swansea Civic Centre).

During these years two exhibitions highlighting recent achievements were held in an attempt to publicise the cause of mural art. The first was staged in 1916 by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Edward Poynter, then President of the Royal Academy, allowed the Society to use the Academy's rooms in Burlington House. The exhibition, which had been prepared by the Arts and Crafts architect F. W. Troup, was very large. The catalogue[90] lists more than 700 exhibits, including cartoons for larger schemes and paintings in tempera, a technique favoured by some for mural painting. There was a special 'Municipal Room' which featured a much talked about design for a wall painting titled 'Arts of Peace' by Maurice Griefenhagen and a 'Hall of Heroes' where Joseph Southall's 'Return of Peace' attracted notice. It is clear that many other entries were intended as war memorials.

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[85] *The Studio*, vol. 62 (1914), pp. 173-82, and vol. 84 (1922), pp. 298-311.

[86] V. Galloway, *The Oils and Murals of Frank Brangwyn, R.A., 1867-1956* (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis, 1962), pp. 71-5.

[87] W. Draper, *The Historical Paintings in the Great Hall of the Worshipful Company of Skinners* (London: Cardoc Press, 1909).

[88] *The Studio*, vol. 48 (1910), pp. 31-6.

[89] A. Reddie, 'Brangwyn's Mural Paintings in Christ's Hospital Chapel, West Horsham', *The Studio*, vol. 66 (1916), pp. 151-63.

[90] The RA library has a copy.

The second noteworthy public event in the history of early twentieth-century mural decoration was the Royal Academy show of 1923, where, as noted above, Starmer exhibited his scheme for St. Jude's. The exhibition, whose official title was 'Art in Building Decoration', had been organised in autumn 1922 and was open for the first two months of 1923. Its aim, as set out in the prospectus, was

> to promote the application of the arts, in their several forms, to the permanent decoration of buildings. It is thought that the time has arrived for a public review of the possibilities of this field of art, and it is confidently expected that there will be a large response from British artists, and that they will show themselves fully capable of carrying out and developing the great tradition of such work in the past.[91]

In addition to painting, there would be design for mosaic, tapestry, stained glass, and metalwork. A special section was organised in collaboration with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, whose aims were essentially similar to those set out in the above-quoted prospectus.

The Studio was franker in assessing the show's purpose -- 'to direct the attention of the public' -- yes; however, the real purpose was to influence patrons, 'those concerned with the erection and adornment of public buildings'. The magazine's anonymous reviewer was generally favourable, if somewhat disappointed that it was smaller than the ACES show of 1916.[92]

Although a fuller study of this important exhibition has yet to be written, it seems not have been the critical success its organisers had hoped. The most telling illustration of this was the London County Council's response. The LCC had been hoping to include mural paintings in its new County Hall, a marathon building project first mooted in the 1890s. The interest of the Council had been piqued by the Chelsea Town Hall murals, which feature the work of Rickards, Sargent, and Steer. Patrick Geddes, an inspiration to the organisers of the Crosby Hall exhibition of 1912, also exercised a decisive influence over the Council. Accordingly, Frank Brangwyn was invited to paint eight lunettes for Ralph Knott's embankment design. After the war, in 1921, a special competition was held by the Council, which invited students at the Royal Academy, the Slade, and the Royal College of Art, to submit designs for the spandrils over doors in the corridors of County Hall's principal floors. Their theme was 'Life in the London Parks Controlled by the London County Council'; recent work in Stockholm Town Hall was recommended for emulation, which gives some indication

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[91] As reported in *The Times* for 12 October 1922.

[92] Vol. 85 (1923), p. 129-35.

of the level of esteem in which Britain's native muralists were held at time. The cartoons were shown *in situ* in December 1922 and then moved the Royal Academy exhibition. The building committee decided they were uniformly poor and declined to purchase any, against the advice of Knott and Riley (head LCC architect). The art schools whose students had been invited to contribute were outraged. Henry Tonks, Charles Sims, William Rothenstein and Walter Bayes publicly protested. The Council, however, would not budge.[93]

XIII. An Assessment of the St. Jude's Wall Paintings

For remarks on the physical condition of Starmer's wall paintings and a brief consideration of their medium, the reader should consult Appendix 2.

The question of their art historical interest is complicated, largely because there is hardly any scholarship on the subject, and such as there is tends to be found in monographs on artists who painted murals, the most conspicuous examples being Frank Brangwyn and Stanley Spencer (of whom more in a moment). There is as yet not clear understanding of stylistic trends, benchmarks, or important critical debates.[94]

The fact that Starmer's frescos escaped contemporary critical notice in *The Studio* or *The Architectural Review* is no reflection on their interest or quality. There was by the early twentieth century a tradition of wall painting in churches. Critics and practitioners were more interested in mural painting applied to public buildings.

Nevertheless, it is possible to relate Starmer's work to this emerging twentieth-century tradition, for, as discussed above, the style of his St. Jude's paintings are in line with prescriptions for mural decoration then widely agreed: his figures are for the most part broadly painted, with strong outlines and generalised features. The colouring and scale are carefully adjusted to harmonise with the interior architecture and contribute to a more unified effect. Herein lies their principle aesthetic merit; they are highly successful as 'decoration'. Today we tend to devalue works of this kind but Starmer's audience would have taken a very different view of the matter. As we have seen the Arts and Crafts movement, as promoted by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, hoped to encourage the collaboration of artists so that the work of painters, mosaicists, weavers,

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[93] Survey of London, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *County Hall*, monograph 13 (London: the Athlone Press in conjunction with the RCHME, 1991), pp. 57, 65-7.

[94] Our understanding of this aspect of British art history is shortly to be increased by Dr. Claire Willsdon, History of Art Department, Glasgow University, whose study of modern British mural painting is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

stained glass makers and so on, was coordinated in the interest of achieving a single overall effect, and this Starmer's murals and Lutyens's architecture do in fact achieve. It is therefore hard to separate the paintings from architecture, and since the latter is thought to be exceptional (which is reflected in the grade I listing), then so too are the paintings.

As measured against the run of church painting more generally, a few tentative conclusions can be drawn.

First, complete painted church interiors were always rare. Many architects allowed for their interiors to be painted, but there was usually not enough money to achieve these best intentions.

Second, the number of complete painted interiors has declined dramatically since 1945; many have been painted out and many have been irreparably damaged, though it is not possible precisely to document the rate at which they are being lost. The fact that all of Starmer's paintings survive in relatively good condition is a very considerable mark in their favour. The sheer extent of Starmer's work is also impressive. In this sense it is comparable with large-scale secular commissions executed since the turn of the century: the Royal Exchange and Old Baily murals noted above in addition to Goetze's Foreign Office paintings of 1912-19 and of course the wall paintings in the New Palaces of Westminster, particularly the St. Stephen's Hall Murals of 1924-27.

Third, of the schemes which have been admired, conserved and studied, most date from 1860 to 1914. I know of no other complete church schemes from the interwar period which are similar in kind (or for that matter extent) to Starmer's wall paintings.

Fourthly, there is considerable interest attaching to the subject of Starmer's Lady Chapel, 'Women in the Bible', which is rare among WWI memorials. Admittedly, the contribution of women to the war effort at home and abroad is the subject of some WWI memorial art (where the figure of Joan of Arc often functions metonymically for the collective contribution of women), but I have yet to discover such a complex iconographic programme relating to the contribution of women. Two panels in the Royal Exchange -- 'Women's Work in the Great War' by Lucy Kemp-Welch (1922) and the predella panel to 'Their Majesties George V and Queen Mary Visiting the Battle Districts in France in 1917 by Frank O. Salisbury (1918) -- are more

representative examples of works which memorialise women's war work.

Fifthly, although Starmer's paintings should be seen as uncomplicated expressions of faith cast in a Victorian mould, they have considerable socio-historical interest. The ennoblement of women can be related to issues such as the extension of the franchise (1919) and the early history of feminism more generally. This is not to say that the Lady Chapel was in any sense radical, quite the reverse, for in equating the role of various contemporary and recently deceased women (as Starmer does in the dome of the west bay) with the contribution of biblical heroines Starmer suggests that there is no need substantially to upset the *status quo*. The Lady Chapel should be seen then, in contemporary historical parlance, as a 'project', a site for the articulation of certain cultural assumptions, beliefs and ideologies. As a politico-cultural 'text' it stands in marked contrast to a work like Stanley Spencer's cycle of paintings for the Oratory of All Souls, Sandham Memorial Chapel at Burghclere, begun in May 1927. Since they were first revealed these paintings have provoked strong criticisms, mostly for the fact that God seems utterly divorced from Spencer's scenes of war and leving the viewer in some doubt as to his existence (although neither the artist nor his client took this view). The artist seems to be inviting scepticism if not downright agnosticism.[95] Spencer's and Starmer's work may be poles apart both in terms of style and content but they invite comparison as polar opposites inevitably do.

[95] Discussed in D. Robinson, *Stanley Spencer* (Oxford and New York: Phaidon, 1990), pp. 23, 32-41.

Recommendations and Suggest Action Plan

In view of their historical importance and artistic quality (which is both intrinsic and the result of their contributing to the overall effect of this outstanding work by Edwin Lutyens), the wall paintings in St. Jude's merit careful conservation.

Having established their interest and merits, the project might progress in along the following lines:

1. Under no circumstances should the wall surfaces be brushed clean or otherwise tidied up.

Action: the vicar and churchwardens.

2. Professional photography of the paintings.

Action: English Heritage in collaboration with the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England. In the process of being completed.

3. Photogrammetric documentation of the paintings for archival recording and to help in the work of conservation.

Action: Vicar to contact English Heritage Survey Branch, Paul Bryan (0171 973 3518). Chris Miele (EH, 0171 973 3729) to liaise.

4. A detailed condition survey of the paintings must be made. This should investigate the technique used, the condition of the paintings, any environmental problems (including threats to the paintings posed by problems in the fabric of the church or its maintenance), and recommendations for treatment. The brief should allow for a phased programme of conservation and suggest priorities.

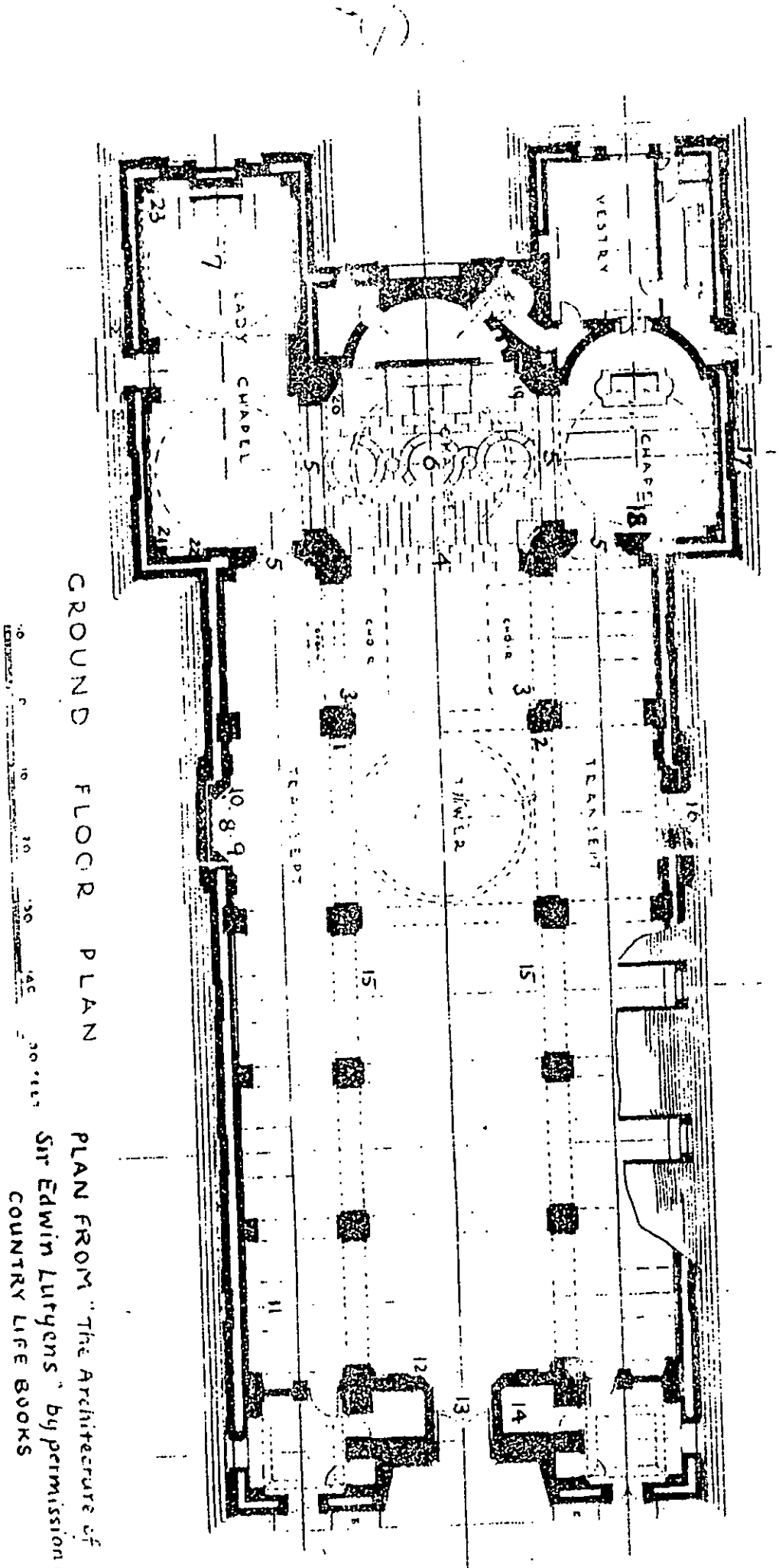
Action: the funding of a multiphase programme to be investigated, with the condition survey undertaken first and as soon as possible. English Heritage Conservation Studios can advise on the drawing up of a brief for this survey. Caroline Babbington, 0171 935 3480; Chris Miele (EH) to liaise.
Action: Potential funding sources/fund raising methods to be investigated for actual work of conservation. Vicar and/or churchwardens to seek advice from English Heritage (Robert Brabner is the officer who deals with Barnet, direct dial 0171

973 3727), in particular with regard to a joint EH/Lottery scheme. Funds from church authorities investigated. Other options considered.

Dr Chris Miele
Historical Analysis and Research Team
English Heritage

January 1997

Appendix 1: Ground Plan of Saint Jude's Hampstead Garden Suburb, from *The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens'*, Christopher Hussey.



Appendix 2. English Heritage Conservation Studios, preliminary assessment.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Dr Chris Miele
Room 227
English Heritage
23 Savile Row
London WIX 1AB

11 November 1996

Dear Dr Miele,

St Jude's on the Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb (London): wall paintings

I visited the St Jude's on the 6 November, where I met the Vicar Alan Walker and Raymond Lowe (Churchwarden). The wall paintings by Walter Starmer are highly impressive, and certainly merit detailed study.

Technique
A reference by J.H Sexton in 1928 states 'some decorations', in St Jude's [1] were executed in 'spirit fresco', which he refers to as quite a modern method of working. Interestingly, at this date the spirit fresco medium was sold for use on prepared canvases, and it may be that Starmer employed it here. However, he may not have been entirely consistent in his technique as the appearance of the paintings varies, some are slightly waxy or resinous (for example the painting behind the altar), while others have an extremely matt finish. These variations could be due to later restorations, and so unless further documentary evidence is found, analysis will be needed to confirm the media. The majority of the paintings seem to have been executed directly on the plaster, but a few are on hardboard, and one on canvas.

Condition
The condition of the paintings again varies (access was extremely limited so only general remarks can be made). On the whole the problems appear to be with the paint layer, rather than the supports. The vault paintings, and in particular areas of painted sky, appear to be very thinly painted. There are some losses evident, and some areas seem abraded and possibly lacking in cohesion. The altar painting is flaking badly, which may be due either to the original technique of the painting or a later coating, and should be treated soon to prevent further loss. There are localised areas of salt damage, particularly at the south west end of the church, which may result from water infiltration, and requires fairly urgent attention. In general the plaster supports to the paintings seemed in good condition, with no obvious areas of delamination evident, and only a few small areas of cracking.

The paintings have been restored in the past. There are areas of fairly poor quality retouching, and the Churchwarden referred to the paintings being 'brushed down' in the fairly recent past

[1] J.H Sexton, 'Fresco Painting', in *Addresses and Lectures delivered by the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators, 1924-28*, 1928, London, pp 3-20.

(this should be actively discouraged!). There may be some colour alteration, but again analysis will be needed to confirm this.

Recommendations

The paintings are clearly in need of treatment, and will continue to deteriorate if left unchecked. As a preliminary to conservation, a detailed condition survey of the paintings is recommended, giving information on technique, condition, environmental problems, and recommendations for treatment. Given the extent and complexity of the paintings, I would suggest a fairly detailed specification is drawn up for this survey (the studio could advise here). Prior to this, in addition to professional photography, I recommend a photogrammetric survey of the paintings is undertaken to facilate documentation (Paul Bryan, EH Survey dept. could advise here). Since the data is recorded digitally this will also provide a superb archival record.

Conservation will probably be best undertaken in phases because of the scale and extent of the paintings. This may also be easier for the parish to cope with from a practical viewpoint. At this stage it is not possible to estimate the extent of the work. Since the plaster appears sound for the most part, it may not be too extensive. However, treatment of the paint layer may be complex, and is dependent on a number of factors: the condition of the paint layer; the nature of past treatments; and the quality of the original technique.

Since these are relatively recent paintings there may be some resistance to embarking on such an ambitious programme. However, these paintings are good quality, and are historically significant, and deserve to be treated appropriately.

My apologies for this late response, but I was away with flu for a while. Do come and visit the Studio as we discussed. You may find it useful to talk with Tracy Manning about these paintings.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Babington

Caroline Babington
Conservation of Wall Paintings Section.

Appendix 3. Walter Starmer's description of the paintings, first published in the St. Jude's *Gazette* for 1947.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE MURAL PAINTINGS OF THE CHURCH.

By the late Mr. Walter P. Starmer, F.R.S.L., A.I.A.

General Scheme. The subjects of the Paintings represent the chief incidents and teaching in the Life of Christ. The ceiling, divided into Bays and Domes contains some of the events and miracles, while on the wall are represented some of the teaching in parables. The general effect aimed at in the ceiling is that of a procession of figures moving from the West End to the East.

The story begins in the W. End Bay, scenes from Bethlehem on one side groups of Shepherds listening to the angels' song, and on the other side are the Wise Men from the East.

The next Bay illustrates some of the events on the sea, the miracle of the great draught of fishes on one side, while on the other is our Lord stilling the tempest.

The third Bay illustrates two miracles, one side has the feeding of the five thousand, and on the other the healing of the sick, and blind and lame.

THE TRANSEPT.

At the crossing of the nave and transepts is the great central Dome with a painting of the Crucifixion. Viewed from the West End the figure of our Lord on the Cross thus occupies the highest and central position in the Church. Around the Dome are grouped representative figures such as the Virgin Mary, S. John, Pilate, the two thieves, and many spectators. The transepts on either side of the Dome are part of the same scheme, and contain incidents of the same event - on the right are the Roman soldiers casting lots for the garments - and on the left is Herod in his chariot, and a group of horsemen.

The other walls of the transept contain the denial of St. Peter on one side, and the Betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane on the other.

The Bay beyond the Dome has for its subject on one side the entrance into Jerusalem, amidst the waving of palms, and on the other is Our Lord carrying the cross.

THE CHANCEL.

Immediately behind the high altar is painted the Last Supper. The disciples are all looking towards our Lord who is the central figure. In the distance are the walls of Jerusalem and Temple, distant figures of Roman soldiers with spears and swords, and on the other side are people bearing palms. On the table the bread and wine, to the right the towel and water jug. On the floor stands a lamp which throws the shadow of a cross beneath Our Lord.

In the half dome above the Last Supper is Christ rising from the tomb, with an angel on either side, and in the Dome immediately above is the Ascension.

In the pendentives below the Ascension is represented a crowd of angels of various types, looking up and adoring the central Figure—" they shall come from the East and the West, and the North and the South." In the pendentives below the central Dome in the Church are four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

THE WALLS.

On the walls of the Church behind the choir stalls are painted subjects representative of the Apostolic Church; on the South are the Twelve Apostles setting out to preach; while on the North are incidents of persecution—Peter in prison, the stoning of Stephen, and Paul before Festus.

The walls of the aisles of the Church illustrate some of the "Parables of the Kingdom"—each parable commencing "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed," the "Kingdom of Heaven like leaven," is "like treasure hid in a field," etc.

The Bay behind the font contains baptismal subjects such as the preaching of John the Baptist, the adoration of the Child in Bethlehem, and Christ putting the child in the midst. The Bay on the other side of the Church has subjects devoted to animals—the Good Shepherd with sheep and dog, the Good Samaritan with the ass, and the beast which carried our Lord to Jerusalem.

The arches over the aisles are painted to represent the Beatitudes; at the end is a small painting of S. Jude's as " the city set on a hill."

Over the end porch on the South side is seen our Lord washing the feet of the disciples, and on the wall over the North porch is the Supper at Emmaus.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

On the pillars of the Church are the Stations of the Cross.

In a lunette on the North wall opposite the South Door is painted the Memorial to Michael Rennie, son of the Vicar, who gave his life in the Great War 1939–45 in devotion to duty.

THE LADY CHAPEL.

The paintings in this chapel were in memory of the Fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, and were started in 1919.

This part of the building is divided into two bays, the East End is full of subjects of the New Testament and the West End is the Old: the scheme of the whole being "the Ministry of Women."

Over the altar is represented the Nativity, the Virgin Mary and the Child in the centre with two guardian angels, and a group of Shepherds on one side and the Wise Men on the other. In the Dome above is a group of angels looking down.

On the South wall are incidents dealing with the lives of women; in the central panel the Virtuous Woman, also Anna, and a group of various types upon whom the light from the altar is shining. Other incidents are the Widow's Mite, Dorcas, and the woman taken in adultery.

On the North wall are parables about women—the wise and foolish virgins, the unjust judge, and the lost piece of silver.

The Old Testament Bay contains a subject on the West wall to represent the Woman and Child of the Old Testament—Hannah and Samuel, and on the North wall are wives of Patriarchs such as Sarah, Rachael, Rebecca and other Old Testament women such as Miriam, Huldah, Pharaoh's daughter and others.

The Dome is painted to illustrate the text "The Women that publish the tidings are a great host," and shows many types of women from many ages and callings, who have done great Christian work in many ways. A diagram with names hangs on the wall.

Between the two Bays is a wall whereon is one of the foundation stones of the Church laid by the Earl of Crewe in 1910. Around this are grouped various deeds showing "Gifts" to the Church; gifts in kind, in service, in devotion, and in sacrifice; in the centre being the list of the names of those from this Church who made the Great Sacrifice in the Great War 1914-1918.

S. JOHN'S CHAPEL.

The Chapel of S. John is decorated by subjects from the Revelation and Gospel of S. John the Divine.

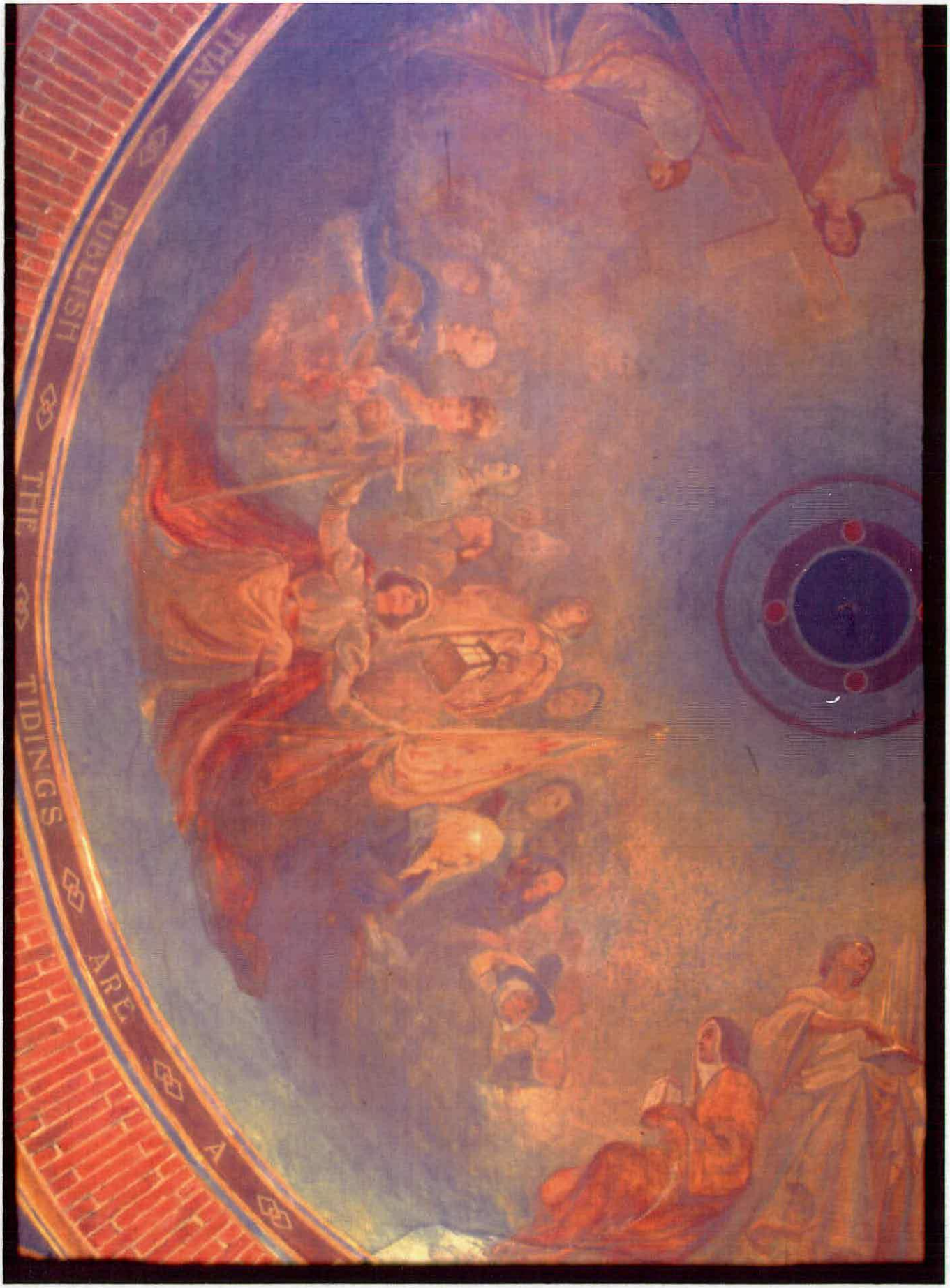
Over the altar is the raising of Lazarus, below which is a group in white apparel —"these are they who came out of great tribulation." In the Dome is the Lamb of God, and Angels and symbolic Figures from the Book of Revelation. On the West wall opposite the altar is the vision of S. John—the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the sky, and S. John and the Angels in the foreground; below in a small arch the calling of S. John.

The whole of the South wall is devoted to one subject—the descent from the Cross, Our Lord's body in the hands of the disciples, with the Virgin Mary and disciples; also Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea standing by with lamp and tomb. On one side the empty cross, and on the other the Roman guards with spears and torches coming on duty.

All the paintings are done directly on to the walls, and on specially prepared plaster.

WALTER P. STARMER.

Appendix 4. Photograph of the western dome, St. Jude's Lady Chapel, showing a selection of the Female Worthies. Source: Chris Miele



Appendix 5. Guide to the personnages in the western dome, St. Jude's Lady Chapel.
Source: Chris Miele