

Spire Studies in Architectural History
Volume 1

**Episodes in the
Gothic Revival
six church architects**

**edited by
Christopher Webster**

Spire Books Ltd

PO Box 2336, Reading RG4 5WJ

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CIP data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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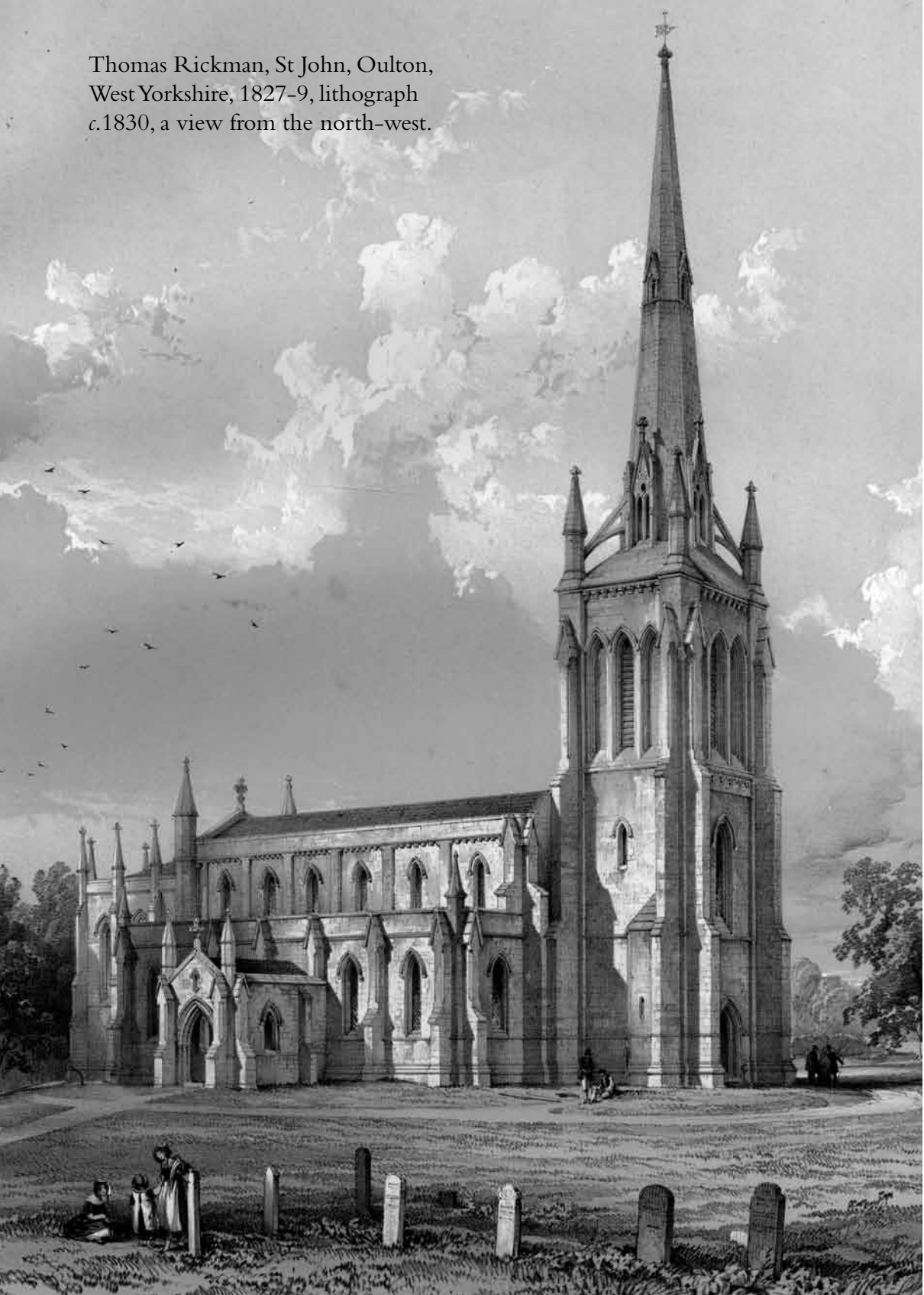
ISBN 978-1-904965-34-3

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Thomas Rickman, St John, Oulton,
West Yorkshire, 1827-9, lithograph
c.1830, a view from the north-west.



Introduction

Christopher Webster

In seeking evidence for the ‘battle of the styles’ in late Georgian architecture, one could hardly do better than read nearly adjacent articles in the September 1834 edition of J.C. Loudon’s short-lived *Architectural Magazine*. Of Anthony Salvin’s recent *Catterick Church, in the County of York*,¹ the anonymous reviewer noted ‘Our ancient church architecture is again in the ascendant, proudly triumphing over all the abominations of the dark age of English design ... which commenced with the [Reformation].’² Turn over the page and there is a ‘Notice’, taken from the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, of Leo von Klenze’s *Collection of Architectural Designs*,³ which quotes its author: ‘Grecian architecture can and must be the architecture of the world, and that of all periods; nor can any climate, any material, and difference in manners, prove an obstacle to its universal adoption.’ Commendable balance, and typical of Loudon’s editorship. However, for the Gothic camp, events that unfolded just two years later, in 1836, must have seemed propitious in the struggle to see their favoured style move from the periphery to the mainstream of English architecture. On 31 January Charles Barry was announced as the winner of the competition organised to select a design for the Houses of Parliament; the new edifice – ‘the largest construction project the country had ever witnessed’ and a building that would stand comparison with ‘the splendid monuments of St Petersburg and Paris’⁴ – really was to be late Gothic. In August, A.W.N. Pugin published *Contrasts*. Its author’s aggressively dogmatic prose could have been predicted to generate opposition – and it certainly did – but it also reflected widespread concern about the state of England in the late Georgian period; Pugin was by no means alone in believing that when modern society was compared with that of the Middle Ages, it was found wanting.⁵

An interesting link between these two important events in the Gothic Revival story is that they were largely driven by those outside the architectural profession, rather than those within it. In 1836, Pugin was, at best, a would-be architect, and anyway the principal support for his cause came from those concerned about social reform; within the profession, he generated much ridicule, especially among the old guard. It was precisely this sector of the profession that had reacted with a mixture of disbelief and anger when it was announced that entries for the Palace of Westminster competition had to be either Gothic or Elizabethan. Despite their best endeavours to open the competition to Classical designs – the style in which the profession’s luminaries believed they had the best chance of impressing the judges – the parliamentary committee established to oversee rebuilding refused to budge, determined that the new building should be an overt reference to Britain’s ancient royal and democratic traditions.

By the early 1840s, the pendulum was undoubtedly swinging in the Gothic direction. Many of the Classicists who dominated the late-Georgian profession had either died or retired, and the rising generation was more willing to embrace Gothic, although Classicism’s reign was far from over. The formation of the Cambridge Camden Society in 1839 and the appearance of its journal, *The Ecclesiologist*, two years later – along with a host of regional architectural societies that came in its wake – virtually guaranteed new churches would be Gothic. And a stream of publications on the theme of medieval architecture ensured that all strata of society, from affluent⁶ to poor,⁷ could enjoy the hugely popular past time of exploring the monuments of England’s pre-Reformation past.

Among the early commentators on the stylistic shift was James Fergusson, whose 1862 *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture*⁸ includes a chapter on ‘The Gothic Revival’.

However, Fergusson was no enthusiast for revivals of any style and nineteenth-century Gothic, even with the most studiously copied battlements, pointed arches and vaulted corridors, was ‘neither defensible [in a military sense], nor monastic, nor Medieval ... [this] is the fatal feature of the whole system’ of modern revivals.⁹ Nevertheless, he felt moved to acknowledge that ‘there were certain obvious advantages to be gained by the introduction of Gothic Architecture in church-building ... The first of these was, that when applied to a modern church every part could be arranged as originally designed, and every detail used for the purpose for which it was originally intended.’¹⁰ At the present time ‘Gothic has obtained entire possession of the Church ... Generally it may be said that Gothic is the style of the clergy, the Classical that of the laity.’¹¹

In *A History of the Gothic Revival*, Charles Eastlake, publishing only ten years later, displayed none of Fergusson's ambivalence. The revival 'represents' – his narrative was, of course, written in the present tense – 'one of the most interesting and remarkable phases in the history of art'.¹² And by the 1860s, the revival 'had so far prospered as to survive popular prejudice, to be recognised and approved by a considerable section of the artistic public, and to monopolise the services of many accomplished architects. The Classic school was by no means extinct, but it was in a decided minority, and chiefly represented by [the older] members of the profession.'¹³ In short, Eastlake could claim stylistic victory for the revival. And in this assessment, he was careful to include secular buildings alongside ecclesiastical examples to demonstrate the style's universal validity in a modern context.

George Gilbert Scott had already sought to do this. His *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture, Present and Future* of 1857 set out to extend the 'success ... of the great movement by which Pointed architecture has been revived for ecclesiastical purposes' to produce 'a corresponding effect upon our secular buildings'.¹⁴ He also wished to counter the argument that the style, 'though eminently suited to churches ... is not fitted for other classes of building' by demonstrating that far from being 'an antiquarian movement' as was often claimed, it was, in fact 'pre-eminently free, comprehensive, and practical; ready to adapt itself to every change in the habits of society, to embrace every new material or system of construction, and to adopt implicitly and naturally, and with hearty good will, every invention or improvement, whether artistic, constructional or directed to the increase of comfort and convenience'.¹⁵ Perhaps more than any other architect, he led by example and demonstrated that the style was capable of very effective use for banks, hotels, monuments, hospitals and government buildings. E. W. Godwin produced town halls, Deane and Woodward a museum, Alfred Waterhouse an Oxford college, William White a row of modest shops, and countless architects designed houses of every conceivable size. In short, there seemed no building type that defied Gothic expression.

Yet there remained lingering doubts about historicism as a viable approach to the issue of style. In his Introduction, Fergusson notes, 'The highest praise that can be bestowed on a modern building is, that its details are so perfectly copied from some other style as to produce a perfect counterfeit, such as would deceive any one ... [but] our Parliament Houses are not medieval, notwithstanding the beauty or correctness of the details; nor do any of our best modern churches attain to a greater truthfulness or originality of design ... The consequence is, we shall never look upon them with the same satisfaction as we do those of the True Styles [Fergusson's term for

pre-Reformation architecture] ... nor can we feel sure that the construction we see is a necessary part of the design, and not put there because something like it was placed in a similar situation for some other purpose in some other age ... it degrades architecture from its high position of a quasi-natural production to that of a mere imitative art.¹⁶

Fergusson's readers would indeed have had no difficulty in identifying those things worthy of 'imitation' in 1862, but for earlier generations, the study of Gothic was still very much in its infancy. For John Carter (Chapter 1) and Thomas Rickman (Chapter 2) establishing the canons of Gothic authenticity had barely started. Carter, 'unique in his attainments in Antient English Architecture',¹⁷ sought to 'provide information and instruction to the rising generation of Antiquaries and Architectural Professors'.¹⁸ According to Terry Friedman, 'The core of his polemical activity lay in his advocacy of the supremacy of medieval ecclesiastical architecture in the modern age anchored in a quest for an undiluted Gothic authenticity both in restoring old, especially cathedral fabrics and in designing new parish churches and chapels.' Rickman too is better known for his publications than for his buildings, 'The most important English writer on architecture between Wren and Pugin' as Michael Port points out, and, in George Gilbert Scott's summary: '[I]n this country chiefly through the minute observations of a Quaker student – the visions of the strange past rose before a newly awakened world.'¹⁹ 'No one' writes Port, 'had the personal knowledge of English churches that Rickman garnered, and no one of his contemporaries the analytic skill to "discriminate" them to the same degree.'

Thomas Taylor (Chapter 3) has never been afforded the status of Carter or Rickman, but his is a career of considerable interest. His projected books came to nought so it is via his buildings that his contribution to the Gothic Revival must be judged. He was probably the very first nineteenth-century architect to establish a career as a church designer; interestingly, his acquaintance with 'Gothic authenticity' came from his earlier work as a topographical painter, specialising in medieval remains. Linking Carter, Rickman and Taylor is this salutary fact: their interest in Gothic and their pioneering ability to exploit the style effectively did not arise from a conventional architectural education or career. For Carter and Rickman, their understanding of the style was a development from their antiquarian interests; for Taylor, it came from his successful vocation as an artist.

A generation later, the career of R.C. Carpenter (Chapter 4) was perfectly timed to capitalise on the early triumphs of the Ecclesiologists. Crucially, they sought a different sort of Gothic authenticity, one that would allow celebration of an Anglican liturgy that was much closer to pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism than anything that Rickman or Taylor's patrons would

either have dreamed of or dared to specify. A substantial chancel was essential, but so too steeply pitched roofs, altars raised on steps, uniform, east-facing benches and a revival of the arts of church decoration. In both his country churches, impeccably modelled on medieval examples, and in his 'town' churches, where he – like Pugin – identified the Austin Friars' church in London as a perfect model for a big, gallery-less modern edifice, he was a designer of central importance in establishing the models for lesser mortals to follow. It is a mark of his influence that he, along with Scott, was responsible for a set of prototypes that, for a decade or more, an army of architects adopted to satisfy the growing demand for Higher expressions of Anglicanism.

The beginnings of G.E. Street's ecclesiastical practice (Chapter 5) is almost concurrent with Carpenter's, yet already there were signs that the English 'authenticity' of the latter's work was too limiting. By the 1850s Street was enthusiastically studying continental alternatives as a means of enriching his own stylistic repertoire, and publishing his findings to act both as guides for travellers and inspiration for his fellow architects. Neil Jackson refers rightly to Street's biggest project, the Royal Courts of Justice (1874–82) in the Strand as 'clearly the swan-song of the Gothic Revival', yet while this was true for secular commissions, the style was so well-established for ecclesiastical work that its currency was far from over, as J.T. Micklethwaite's career shows (Chapter 6).

Micklethwaite – important for his writings, his new churches as well as his sensitive conservation projects – was one of a number of gifted late-Gothic Revivalists who, after the various mid-Victorian experiments with polychromy, continental Gothic and 'muscularity', returned to an Englishness of great delicacy and refinement. His carefully designed fittings were always of the highest quality, and of his St Paul, Wimbledon Park (1888–96), Basil Clark opined 'the late Victorian suburban church at its best'.²⁰

Among Fergusson's conclusions in his rant about revivals in general and the Gothic phase in particular was this: 'It required, therefore, neither ability nor thought on the part of the architect to attain appropriateness ... The public had become sufficiently instructed through the labours of Rickman and others' to demand correct Gothic. 'Every library furnished the requisite materials, every village church was a model; neither thought nor ingenuity was required.'²¹ He makes it seem so mindless – even banal – yet as the chapters in this book demonstrate, the quest for Gothic authenticity was hard won and once achieved, served merely as a stepping board from which a succession of exceptional architects could produce buildings of outstanding quality well into the twentieth century; the best of them are, in Professor Curl's assessment, 'sublime'.²²

Notes

1. Published by John Weale in 1834.
2. J.C. Loudon (ed.), *Architectural Magazine*, 1, 1834, 273.
3. For July 1834, p. 108, quoted in *ibid.*, 275.
4. H. de Haan and I. Haagsma, *Architects in Competition*, Thames and Hudson, 1988, 32.
5. P. Stanton, 'The Sources of Pugin's Contrasts' in J. Summerson (ed.), *Concerning Architecture*, Penguin, 1968, 120-39, esp. 132.
6. Many examples could be quoted, including those published by John Britton between 1801 and the mid-1840s, Charles Wild's *An Illustration ... of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln*, published by the author, 1819, or the Cambridge Camden Society's *Churches of Cambridgeshire*, Stevenson *et al.*, 1845.
7. Weekly papers aimed at the 'diffusion of knowledge' among the lower classes, for instance the *Penny Magazine* (1832-45) or *Saturday Magazine* (1832-43), sold at one penny per edition, regularly carried illustrated reviews of cathedrals and major churches through the 1830s and beyond.
8. J. Fergusson, *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture*, John Murray, 1862. For Fergusson, see Summerson [note 5], 140-52.
9. Fergusson [note 8], 313.
10. *Ibid.*, 319.
11. *Ibid.*, 329.
12. C.L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival*, Longmans, Green, 1872, 1.
13. *Ibid.*, 333.
14. G.G. Scott, *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture, Present and Future*, John Murray, 1857, vii.
15. *Ibid.*, viii.
16. Fergusson [note 8], 2-3.
17. 'B' [J. C. Buckler], 'Memoir of the Late Mr. John Carter, F.S.A.', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 87, 1817, 365-6.
18. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 73, 1803, 106.
19. Sir G.G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, ed. Gavin Stamp, Paul Watkins, 1995, 390.
20. B.F.L. Clarke, *Parish Churches of London*, Batsford, 1966, 277.
21. Fergusson [note 8], 319-22.
22. J.S. Curl, *Victorian Churches*, Batsford, 1995, 111.

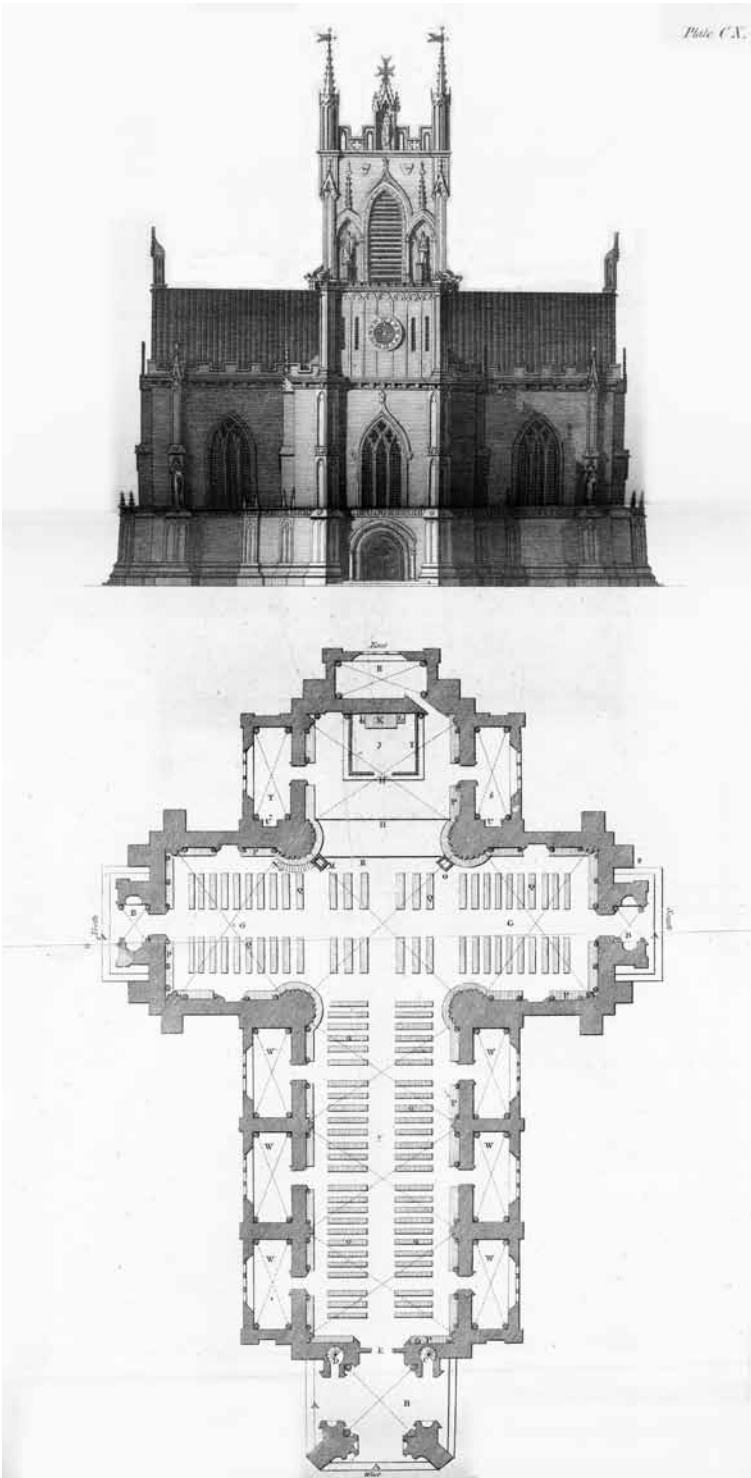
1

John Carter (1748-1817) and the Late Georgian Struggle for Gothic Authenticity

Terry Friedman

Within a month of his death at the age of 69 on 8 September 1817 John Carter was memorialised as ‘An Artist of superior eminence, and unique in his attainments in Antient English Architecture’; ‘his knowledge and experience were great’; ‘As an Antiquarian Draftsman his abilities were truly estimable; – he was extremely faithful in his delineation, – delicate and elaborate in his drawings’; ‘the unadorned and absolute facsimiles of the objects portrayed ... His death, certainly, may be considered as a national loss.’¹ The core of his polemical activity lay in his advocacy of the supremacy of medieval ecclesiastical architecture in the modern age, anchored in a quest for an undiluted Gothic authenticity both in restoring old, especially cathedral fabrics, and in the design of new parish churches and chapels.²

Carter was born in London in 1748 and at the age of 26 began earning his ‘first money’ as a draughtsman supplying illustrations of his own designs for Francis Newberry’s *Builder’s Magazine*, of which more shortly.³ In 1784 he was appointed draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries of London, producing a groundbreaking, exquisitely illustrated series of publications devoted to major medieval ecclesiastical buildings which, in his own words, were intended ‘not alone to please the eye by the beauties of the whole display, but to give information and instruction to the rising generation of Antiquaries and Architectural Professors’.⁴ His extensive excursions around the country produced the six-volume *Views of Ancient Buildings in England* (1786-93) and two-volume *The Ancient Architecture of England* (1795-1814),



1.1: John Carter, 'Design for a Church ...View taken at the West End' and 'Plan', 1 January 1777, engraving by I. Royce in the *Builder's Magazine*, 1779, pl. cx.

both substantially illustrated. In addition, large numbers of sketches and finished drawings survive.⁵ Indeed, no other English architect had previously explored the potentials of true Gothic so diligently, except for James Essex, who died in 1784, the very year Carter rose to prominence.⁶

The subject of this chapter is Carter's activities as a *practising* designer of Gothic churches, which though hampered by a paucity of executed examples have, nonetheless, unfairly received almost no close scrutiny from architectural historians. In particular, this chapter concentrates on two buildings: St Nicholas, Moreton, Dorset (1777), hitherto unassociated with the architect but harbouringconvincing circumstantial evidence and reflecting his ideas published in the *Builder's Magazine*; and St Peter's Roman Catholic chapel, Winchester (1792), his masterpiece and often cited as an icon in modern architectural literature, but rarely discussed in detail. In addition, James Donaldson's Woburn or Tavistock Chapel, London (1802, demolished 1900) is examined, an unusually interesting building of dubious artistic virtue subsequently unaccountably excluded from the history of the Gothic Revival, yet at the very heart of the issues concerned in the present chapter.

The Builder's Magazine

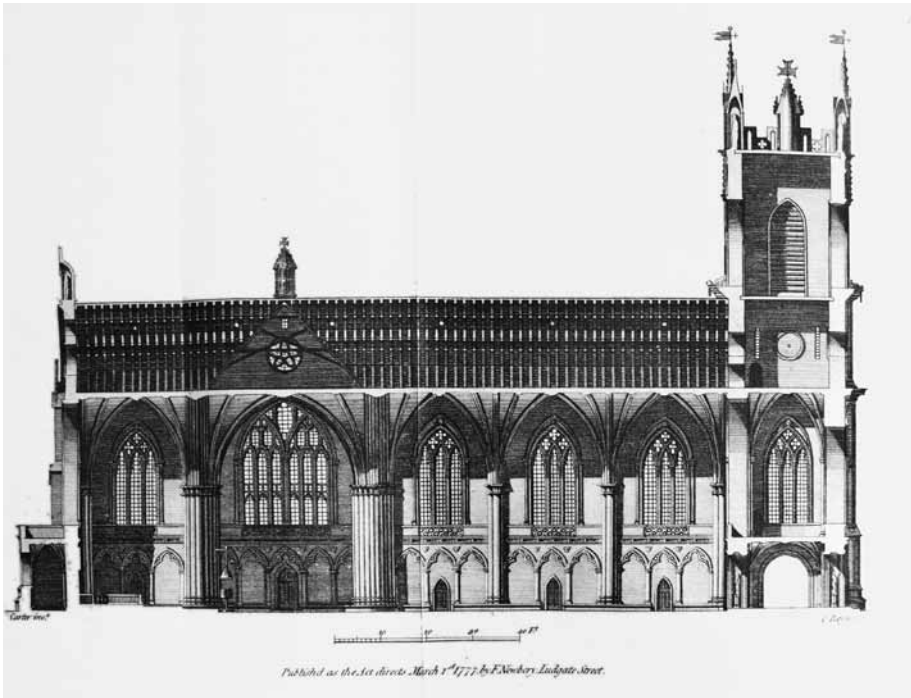
The *Builder's Magazine: or Monthly Companion ... Consisting of Designs in Architecture* was published in instalments between 1774 and 1778 (with the first collected edition appearing in 1779). According to the title page, the aim was to cater to 'Architects, Carpenters, Masons, Bricklayers, &c. as well as for Every Gentleman who would wish to be a competent Judge of the elegant and necessary Art of Building' offered 'In Every Stile and Taste, from the most magnificent and superb Structures, down to the most simple and unadorned.' These included 'Designs for ... Churches ... and other Public Buildings ... in the Greek, Roman and Gothic Taste.' Only fourteen designs in the *Magazine* fall within a Gothic remit.⁷ The majority of these look back to Batty Langley's *Gothic Architecture, Improved* (1747), and they hardly prepare one for the remarkable 'Design for a Church' dated between 1 January and 1 July 1777, uniquely represented by seven plates, accompanied by a fuller explanatory text than found elsewhere in the publication, suggesting Carter held it in special reverence. Compared to his other Gothic schemes, it alone is both free of frippery and self-evidently serious, more closely resembling an authentic medieval church in its heyday and more geared for potential actual construction, as the technical plate devoted to internal roof timberwork suggests.⁸ Perhaps here is a visual demonstration of the 'Complete System of Architecture ... so disposed, as to render the Surveyor,



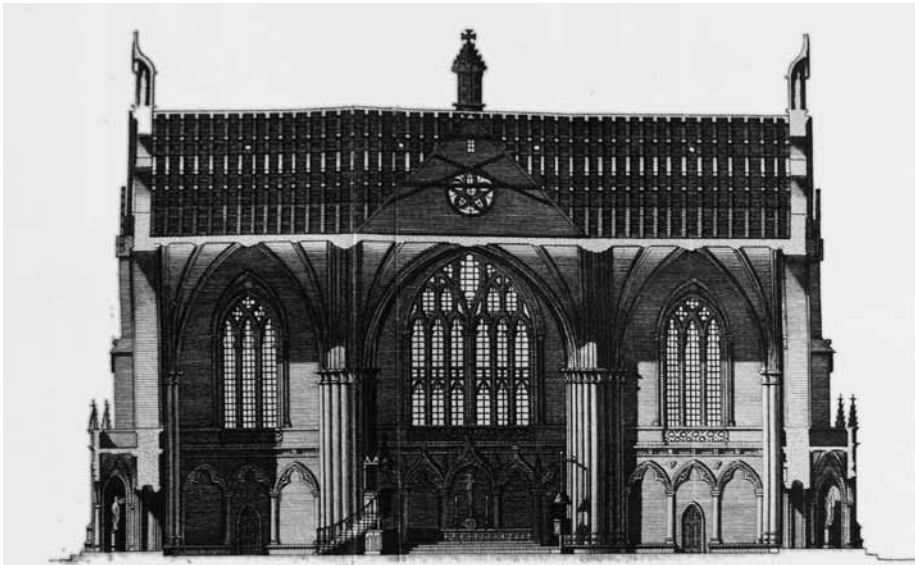
1.2: John Carter, 'Design for a Church...West Door', 1 July 1777, in the *Builder's Magazine*, 1779, pl. cxxx.

Carpenter, Mason, &c. equally capable to erect a Cathedral' advertised on the title page. While J. Mordaunt Crook's seminal *John Carter and the Mind of the Gothic Revival* (1995) summarily dismissed the scheme as 'really little better than the sort of thing [Carter] criticized so fiercely'⁹ in the work of others, this is certainly not entirely true.

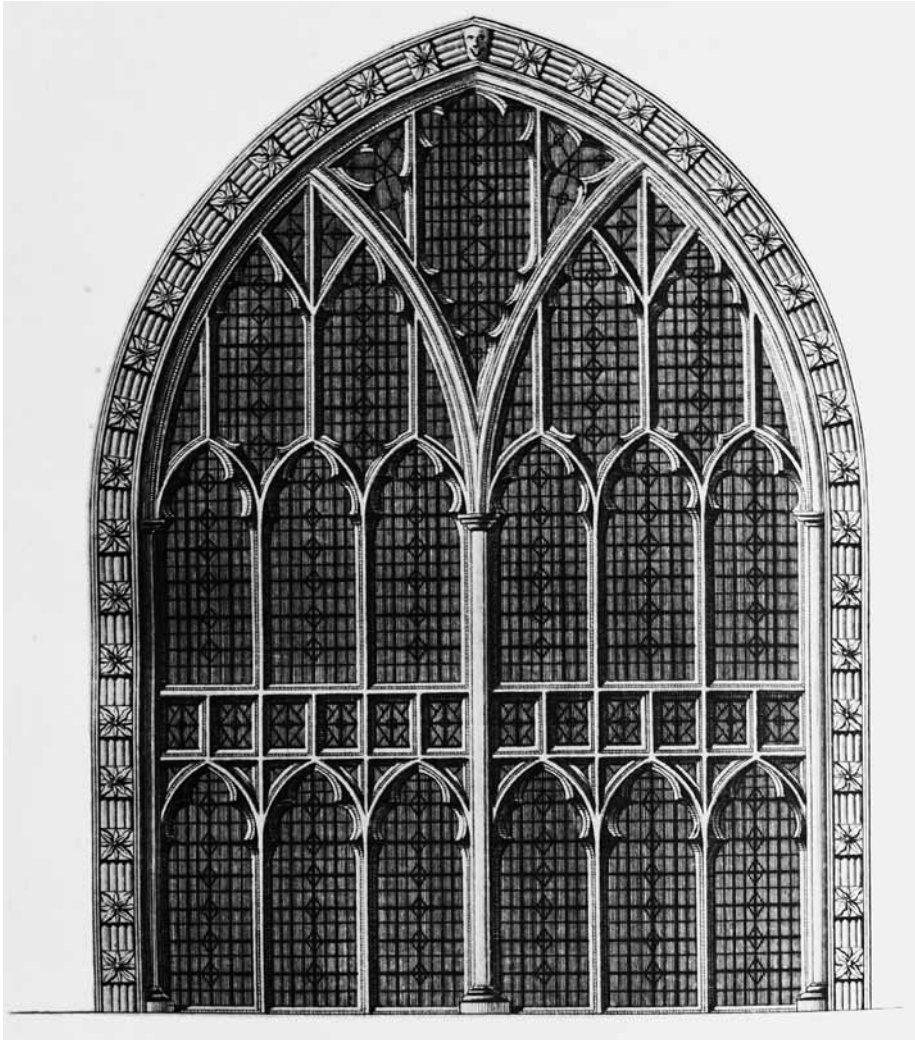
Looking closely, it is a proposal for a cruciform structure which, if built, would have measured overall 190 feet west to east, with the nave and chancel both rising to 48 feet. Carter obligingly takes the reader on a methodical tour of the building, signposted in a fully keyed ground plan (1.1).¹⁰ Ascending the west steps and through the porch with its 'grand door' (1.2), then descending one step into the body of the church (1.3) and



1.3: John Carter, 'Design for a Church...The longitudinal Section...East to West', 1 March 1777, in the *Builder's Magazine*, 1779, pl. cxvi.

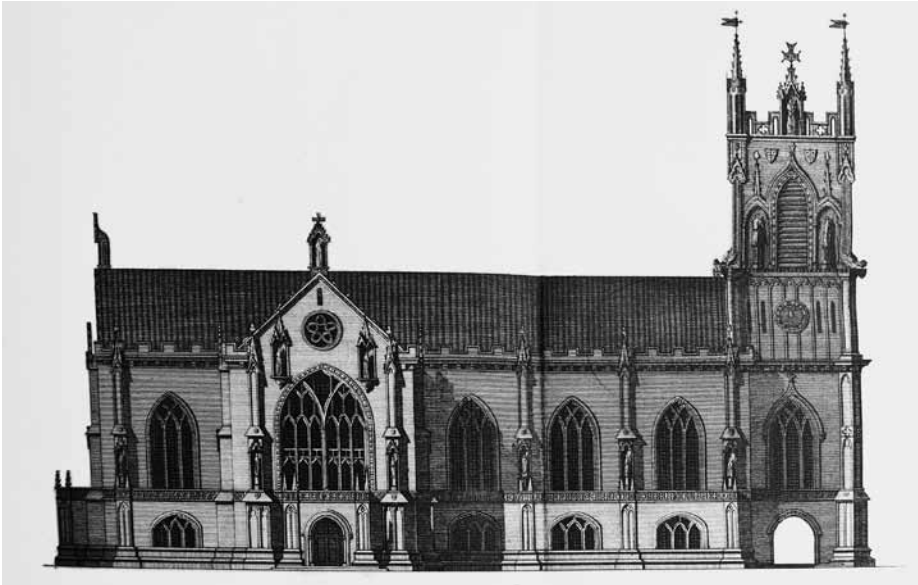


1.4: John Carter, 'Design for a Church', longitudinal section north to south, 1 April 1777, in the *Builder's Magazine*, 1779, pl. cxix.



1.5: John Carter, ‘Design for a Church ... The outside of the great north window’, 1 June 1777, in the *Builder’s Magazine*, 1779, pl. cxxvi.

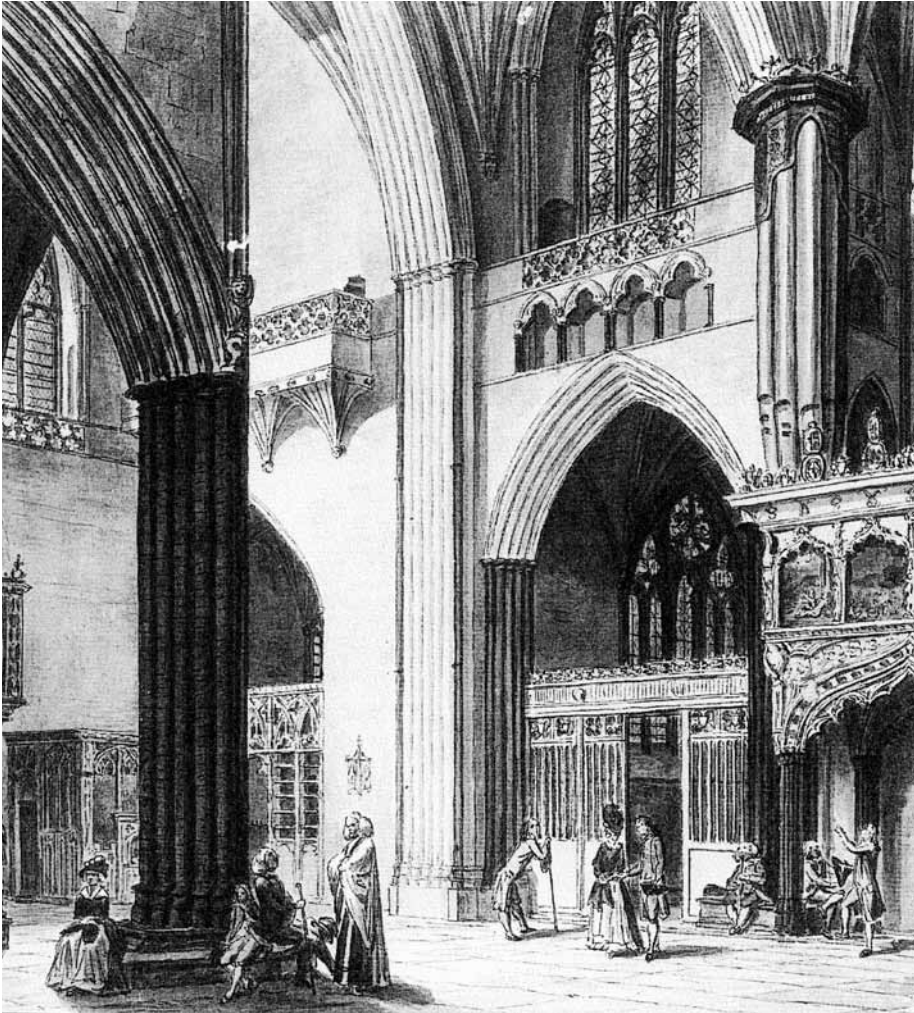
looking towards the chancel and transepts, the body is filled with ‘Seats for the common people Q.’ Then ‘having come to the center of the building ... to the left is ... the pulpit and reading-desk M’ and ‘to the right ... the font O’, both attached to a ‘cluster of columns’. ‘We now ascend the three steps leading to the altar [K with] LL Seats for the Ministers ... the railing round it, I’, to its right ‘the door leading to the sacristy R’, a place for storing ‘the utensils, the ornaments of the church, ministers vestments, &c.’, flanked by ‘a vestry-room S’, and a ‘Room for the reception of the ministers, &c T.’ Above the altar was ‘the east window’ (1.5).¹¹



1.6: John Carter, 'Design for a Church ... Elevation of the North Front...from East to West', 1 February 1777, in the *Builder's Magazine*, 1779, pl. cxiii.

Throughout the building Carter introduced authentic Gothic details which would have been recognisable to knowledgeable antiquaries of the day, and to those few architects with medieval interests. The most distinctive feature of the west tower (1.1, 1.6) is the Somerset-inspired top which is emphatic canopied niches in the centres of each side containing (unidentified) statues in place of conventional pinnacles.¹² The repeated blank quatrefoils framing the west door (1.2) recall the early thirteenth century reveals of the upper windows of Lichfield Cathedral choir.¹³ The self-contained, single-storey chapels 'over burying places of honourable families' flanking the three bays of the body (1.1 marked W, and 1.6) derive from the Perpendicular King's College Chapel, Cambridge, 'justly term'd one of the finest buildings in Europe ... after the Gothick manner', which Horace Walpole reported in the fortuitous year of 1777 as having had its 'beauty ... now ... restored, penetrated me with the visionary longing to be a monk in it'.¹⁴ Carter's immoderately massive compound crossing piers were almost certainly inspired by those in Exeter Cathedral (1270s-1340s) which he had recently drawn (1.7).¹⁵ But what is the function of this superfluous anomaly in the 1777 church scheme where they support only an insignificant superstructure, since above the cross-vault is only a roof cavity crowned by a diminutive flèche (1.3, 1.4). Perhaps this arrangement was intended to

suggest the continuing growth inherent in large medieval structures, such as Westminster Abbey, begun about 1050 and largely completed by 1534 when work ceased, although revived during the eighteenth century when the west end and north transept were finally finished, while the great crossing tower, despite many attempts, remained unrealised.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Carter's piers impressively frame the entrance to the chancel, acting as dramatic backdrops to the attached pulpit and reading desk positioned on the north-east, and to the font with a suspended cover on the south-east (1.1, 1.3, 1.4, marked M, N, O), a post-Reformation innovation following the removal of the chancel



1.7: John Carter, 'View of the north cross aisle of Exeter Cathedral, (taken 1777)', pen and ink and wash. (*British Library Board, Add. MS. 29925, f. 8.*)

screen and the bringing of the sermon and baptism into the arena of the congregation.

The seating arrangement, with stone benches provided for ‘the gentry’ integrated in blind arcading along the perimeter, and serried rows of benches for ‘the common people’ filling the body and arms (1.1, marked P and Q) represented a rethinking of both pre- and post-Reformation practices, where in the former regime congregants were rarely provided such comforts except as concessions to the elderly and infirm. Neither side galleries nor box pews, so usual at the time, clutter the interior, so anticipating Victorian improvements in churches.¹⁷ Even more prophetic was Carter’s introduction of subtly ascending steps in the worshippers’ progress from west to east, culminating in a raised and railed enclosure surrounding the altar and reredos (1.1 marked H-K, 1.3, 1.4) – a remarkable anticipation of the Ecclesiologists’ call some 60 years later for greater Catholic feeling in church design.¹⁸

Carter’s ecclesiastical Gothic credo, encapsulated in the 1777 church, appears at the conclusion of the *Builder’s Magazine*:

The student is to observe, that as all churches should be built in the Gothic taste, as being more suitable to such structures than the Grecian taste, so likewise every part appertaining to it must be in the same style ... For true it is, nothing can be more absurd than mixing one taste with the other, as is too commonly the case, for instance, the towers of Westminster abbey, what a medley of Grecian and Gothic architecture is there! The choir of the same place is *decorated* with a screen of Grecian columns, &c. to the altar, while every other object round is Gothic! ... the choir of Canterbury cathedral is Grecian, and numberless other places in England, can produce instances as ridiculous as these. I think no true considerate admirer of Grecian architecture can with confidence maintain that such *medley work* shews real taste, it can only shew a love of novelty, which will always reflect a disgrace on the intruder of Grecian architecture on Gothic remains. If any of these venerable piles need repair, or any alterations, let it be designed in the exact manner of the original work, and seek not, by introducing some new whim or fancy, to cast a *mark of scorn* on what indeed should be our pride to imitate and preserve in its original purity and grandeur. Some architects of late years have invented an extraordinary taste for Gothic buildings, as the seats of justice in Westminster-hall ... the arches that compose the same are *purely modern*, and I may say, with the rest of the ornaments, need no other conviction of their deformity and extravagance than to be compared with the old Gothic ... this is one of the noblest rooms in the world rendered odious, when before it was so truly beautiful and magnificent. I must confess myself a zealous admirer of Gothic architecture ... affirming with confidence, nothing can be more in character, and better adapted to



1.8: John Carter, attributed, west front, St Nicholas, Moreton, Dorset, 1776. (Author, 1996.)

a place of worship, than that awful style of building, and that Grecian and Roman architecture should be confined to mansions and other structures of ease and pleasure.¹⁹

It is impossible within the scope of this chapter to speculate on any possible one-to-one relationships between the 1777 church and particular medieval models, except in the cases of Westminster Abbey and Exeter Cathedral, as we have seen. According to Carter's obituarist, he lauded the former as 'the architectural wonder of [the] Kingdom' and 'from his own mouth ... all his leisure time [as a young man] was employed in examining and drawing ... all its parts, under every point of view' and that here the authorities 'introduced him into the world of Antiquities'.²⁰ This is important because not only was the Abbey then regarded as an unrivalled repository of the most authentic specimens of ancient Gothic forms and ornament, but also the focus of the Georgian controversy surrounding the schizoid mixture of Gothic and Classical in the same building – what Horace Walpole aptly

called ‘the bastard breed’ but Carter more graciously, as we have seen, ‘*medley work*’.²¹ Carter very likely read Stephen Wren’s *Parentalia* (1750), containing the 1713 memorandum by his grandfather, Sir Christopher, Surveyor of the Fabric, on an enlightened policy for the restoration and completion of the building: in this he notes that for ‘new Additions I have prepared perfect Draughts ... such as I conceive may agree with the original Scheme of the old Architect, without any modern Mixtures to shew my own Invention’ which are ‘still in the *Gothick* Form, and of a Style with the rest of the Structure, which I would strictly adhere to [since] to deviate from the old Form, would be to run into a disagreeable Mixture, which no Person of a good Taste could relish’.

Certainly the 1777 church can best be understood as a conflation of distinctive historical features to create an archetypal pattern for the future, yet, as well, it played a seminal role in late eighteenth-century church design. Take the example of St Nicholas, Moreton, Dorset, dated 1776 on the entrance door corbel, a distinguished but inadequately documented building hitherto unattached to an identifiable architect but, in the present writer’s opinion, a strong contender as Carter’s creation; or at the very least representing an early expression of Carterian forms and decoration.²²

The plan is unusual: a three-bay nave with integral semicircular chancel (1.8) and a central, square, three-storey tower attached to its south side flanked by single-storey pew blocks accommodating family and servants respectively (1.9).²³ The bold, simple geometric forms and individual details – ogee-arched door, trefoil tracery windows, pierced stone louvres of the tower’s bell-stage and rosetted quatrefoil parapets all round – are closely akin to the 1777 church.

The Roman Catholic chapel, Winchester

The opportunity that propelled Carter into the penultimate realm of Gothic authenticity was his 1791-2 commission to design a new, free-standing Catholic chapel in Winchester, one of the first built since the Reformation, in an atmosphere of uncommon religious tolerance following the Second Relief Act, which allowed the erection of recusant places of worship, provided they excluded steeples and bells.²⁴

Carter’s client (and ‘great friend’) was the Revd Dr John Milner (1752-1826), the future vicar apostolic of the Western District of England, who was appointed priest of the Winchester Mission in 1779 and took responsibility for the general concept of the building.²⁵ They employed experienced tradesmen: the principal carpenter, joiner and carver, John Lingard, received £433 9s. 5d. and probably acted as clerk of the works; among others



1.9: John Carter, attributed, south elevation, St Nicholas, Moreton, 1776. (*Author*, 1996.)

mentioned in the wage sheet and accounts is William Cave, a member of a local Catholic family of painters, who was paid a total of £97 16s. 10d. for undertaking ‘a good Altar Piece and five Pictures and all the Ornamental Painting’; the total cost of construction was £91 1s. 1d.²⁶ No preparatory drawings have been traced and tragically only the empty shell of the chapel survives (1.10), though fortunately Milner published invaluable engraved views of the exterior and interior in 1809 (1.11), accompanied by a lengthy and detailed description; together with later images these help recreate for modern readers something of the glamorous appearance of Carter’s building in its heyday.²⁷

Milner began his published peregrination at the arched entrance to the compound, ‘an exceedingly good specimen of the Saxon style ... a genuine antique’ reinstated from the demolished church of 1174 attached to nearby St Margaret’s Hospital, a rare instance of Georgian preservationist activity as well as an authentic affirmation of the new chapel’s medieval ancestry.²⁸ The entrance elevation, measuring 75 feet long by 35 feet high to the summit of its pinnacles (replaced in 1888 by simple crenellation), a ‘light Gothic building, coated with stucco, resembling free-stone; with mullioned windows, shelving buttresses, a parapet with open quatrefoils and crocketed pinnacles, terminating in gilt crosses’,²⁹ displays a row of five identical three-light Perpendicular windows, each measuring 12 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, a pattern closely resembling St Augustine, Skirlaugh, Yorkshire (c.1401-5), renowned as a perfect, homogeneous piece of late medieval architecture.³⁰ The use of quatrefoil bands were much favoured in the *Builder’s Magazine* as well as at Moreton (1.1, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9). The corbels of the chapel’s window canopies feature heads of bishops, kings and queens ‘with their respective emblems’ inspired by statues in the screen at the west front of Exeter

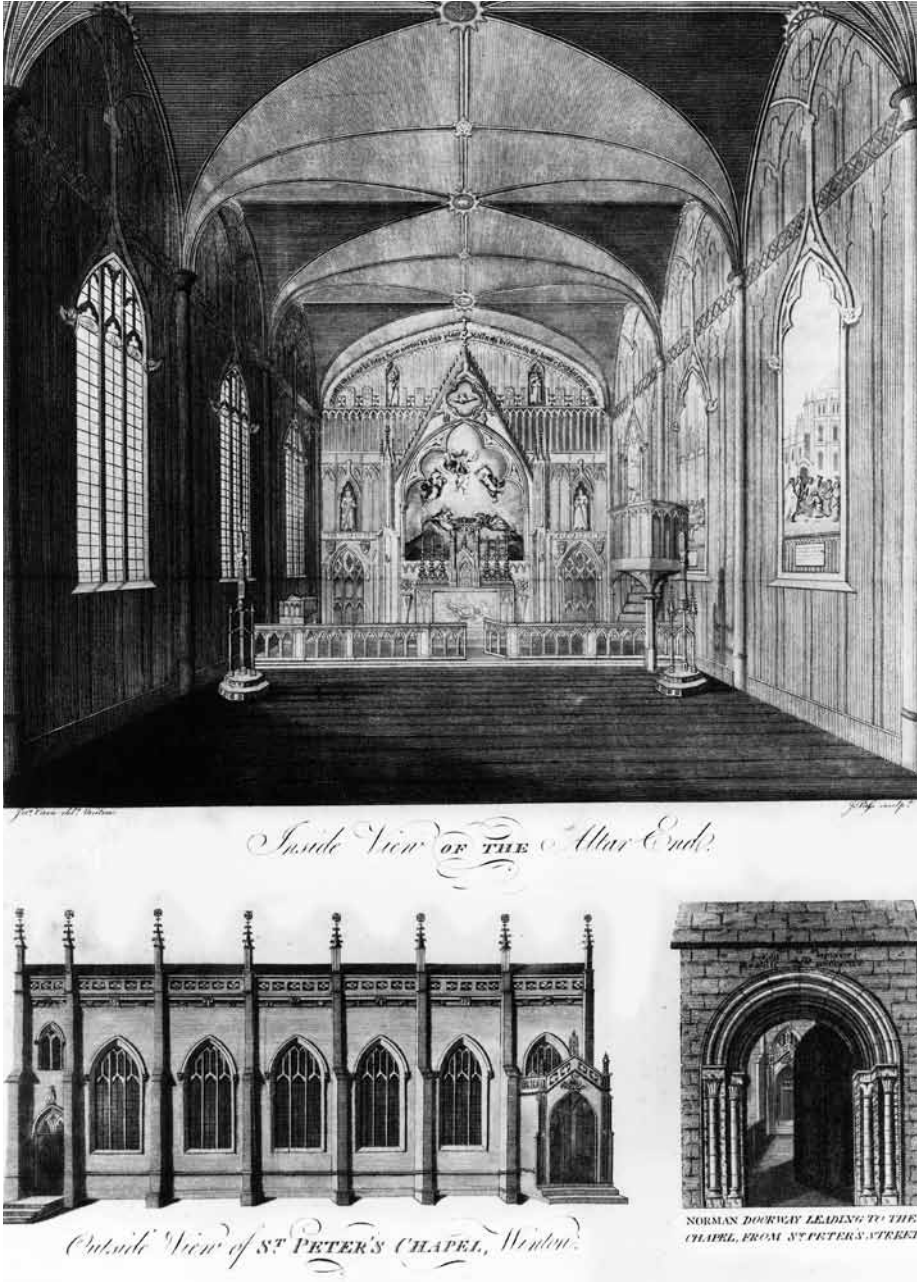


1.10: John Carter, exterior, St Peter's Roman Catholic Chapel, Winchester. (*Author, 2000.*)

Cathedral, which Carter sketched in 1792.³¹ The 'ground' glass 'admits the light but prevents any object from being seen through it'. The entrance porch was originally 'surmounted with a niche, containing a small statue of St Peter, holding his keys', while below the royal arms accompanied a Latin inscription translated as 'Erected in the 33d year of the reign of George III, king of Great Britain, and Ireland, &c. Happy, Temperate, the Assertion of Innocence, the Father of his Country'. These were clearly intended as affirmations of Roman Catholic loyalty to the Crown.³²

Inside, opposite the entrance, was a staircase leading to a loft-like gallery containing an organ – once the property of Handel, subsequently enclosed in 'a case of Gothic work' – supported on a double row of 'light pointed arches and slender columns, faced with Gothic railings' (1.12). The gallery offered 'an advantageous view' of the glories of the chapel body, accurately recorded in the Cave-Pass engraving (1.11).³³

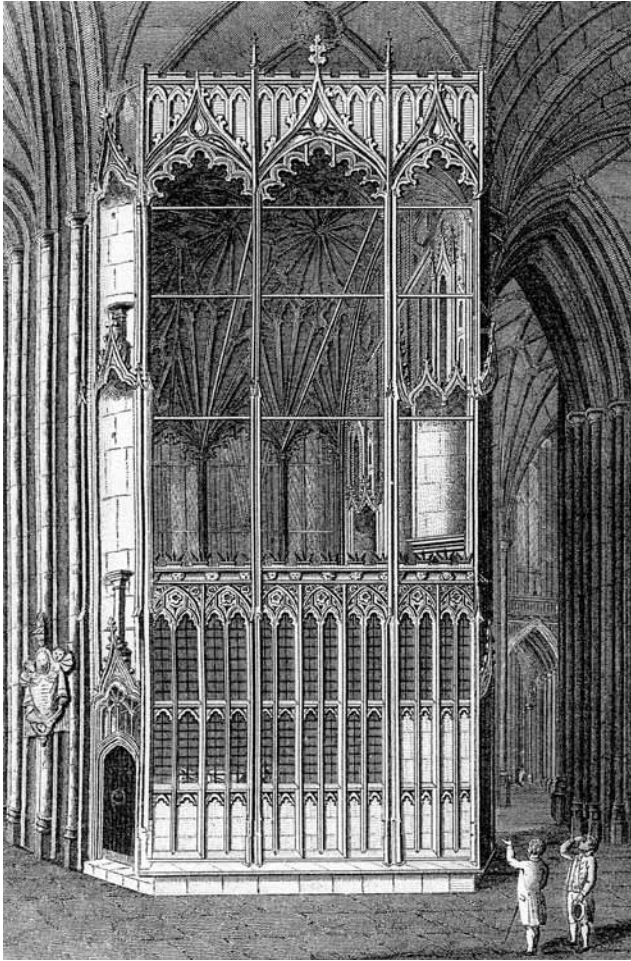
Running through Milner's description and undoubtedly his personal contribution to the decorative programme, though too complex to detail here, was elaborate Old and New Testament iconography which had by then all but vanished from post-Reformation Anglican churches. On the long unfenestrated wall and mirroring the ogee and cusped arch windows were Cave's *chiaro oscuro* paintings on canvas, *The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin*, copied from the Winchester College Chapel altarpiece by François



1.11: John Carter, 'Inside View of the Altar End', 'Outside View of St. Peter's Chapel, Winton' (Winchester) and 'Norman Doorway Leading to the Chapel, from St. Peter's Street'. (J. Milner, *The History Civil and Ecclesiastical, & Survey of the Antiquities, of Winchester*, vol. 2, 1809, Supplement, 2nd ed., engraving by J. Passe after James Cave.)



1.12: John Carter, interior towards the organ gallery, St Peter's Chapel, Winchester. (Pre-1926 photograph, Hampshire Record Office.)



1.13: 'South View of the Outside of William Wykeham's Chantry, in Winchester Cathedral'. (J. Milner, *The History Civil and Ecclesiastical, & Survey of the Antiquities, of Winchester, vol. 2, 1809, Supplement, 2nd ed., engraving by J. Passe after James Cave.*)

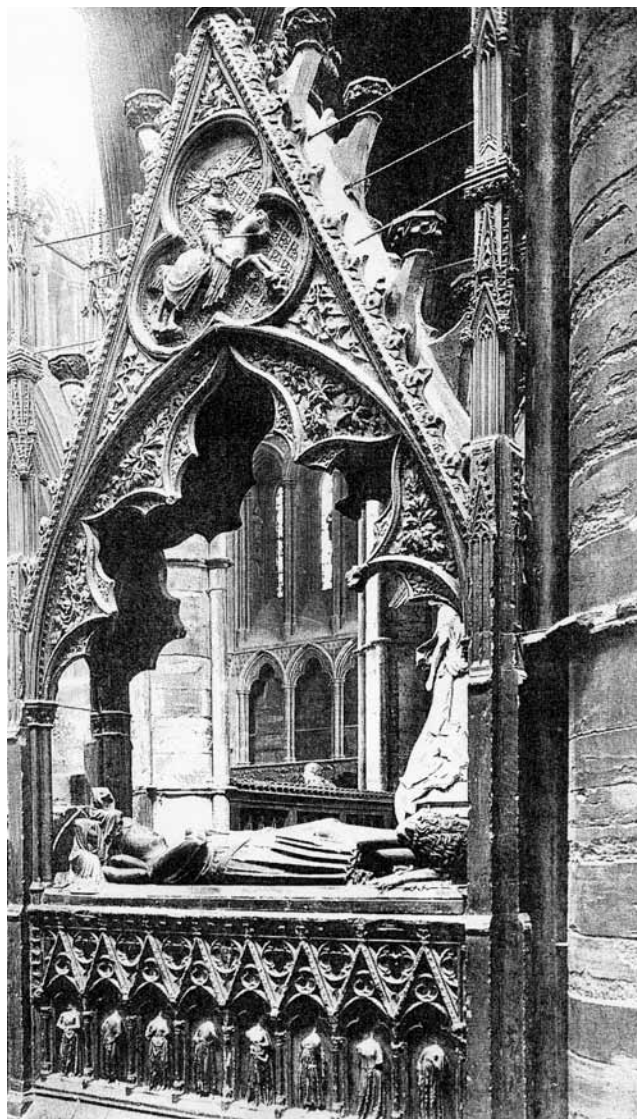
Lemoine, although here the background represented 'part of the present chapel'; *The Last Supper* after Hans Holbein; *Christ Giving the Keys to St Peter* after Poussin, updated with views of St Peter's Chapel and St Peter's, Rome; *The Death of Ananias* based on Raphael's cartoon but 'placed at the altar of the present chapel' and *Christ Casting the Moneylenders from the Temple*, located under the gallery, with the background showing the 'lower end of this chapel'. In other words it was a visual expression of the continuity of the Catholic faith through its nearly 1,800-year history, in the manner of medieval ecclesiastical storytelling. The ogee and cusped tracery patterning of the walls probably derive from William of Wykeham's Chantry in the nearby cathedral (1.13), which Milner reckoned 'the most perfect specimens extant of the time when they were performed ... The ornaments ... rich, without being crowded; the carvings ... delicate, without being finical'.³⁴

Moreover, of crucial importance was Carter's close association with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, which he recorded in a series of beautiful watercolour views between 1788 and 1790 showing some of its internal walls patterned overall with trefoil and quatrefoil low relief plasterwork.³⁵ Separating each narrative panel and corresponding window bay were 'tall [engaged] columns with plain capitals and bases ... painted of a straw colour' set against 'French grey' walls, supporting a rib vault with central bosses at the intersections 'painted and gilt with various sacred emblems' of Christ.³⁶ The body was separated from the two-bay sanctuary by a delicate railing of trefoil arches, mirroring that extending across the gallery.

The fittings and furnishings, 'all in the same style, and copied from originals of ancient date',³⁷ included a pair of 'gorgeous lamp pedestals ... borrowed from the city cross' (1.14).³⁸ The priest's chair (visible on the far left



1.14: The Butter Cross, Winchester, fifteenth century. (*Author, 1996.*)



1.15: Tomb of Aymer de Valance, Earl of Pembroke, Westminster Abbey.

in 1.11) ‘imitated’ the thirteenth century Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey made for Edward I, a poignant resurrection of an inimitable furniture model from the nation’s pre-Reformation past.³⁹ The altar, a ‘Gothic table ... supported by arches in the same style ... painted white with gilt mouldings’, featured ‘instead of an antependium’ a panel depicting the *Lamentation of Christ* ‘copied from a celebrated picture by Dominichino, in the possession of Lord Arundell’ of Wardour Castle (a leading Catholic aristocrat), here ‘painted in *chiaro oscuro*, to represent carving’. Atop the table was a ‘tabernacle ... peculiarly rich and elaborate; being a model of the west end