

A THEATRE FOR THE SOUL
ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, JESMOND:
THE BUILDING AND CULTURAL RECEPTION
OF A LATE-VICTORIAN CHURCH

NEIL MOAT

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A Theatre for the Soul

St. George's Church, Jesmond:

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Neil Moat

Abstract:

St. George's church (Osborne Road), Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1885-1891), is a Grade-I listed building, notable for its ambitious scale, unity of conception, and the quality and elaboration of its interior decoration. Commissioned and furnished in its entirety by the influential Tyneside ship-builder Charles Mitchell (1820-1895), a senior partner in the powerful armaments and engineering conglomerate of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., St. George's was the *magnum opus* of the little-known architect and artist-craftsman Thomas Ralph Spence (1845-1918). Although recognised from the first as a significant artistic achievement, and despite Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's high estimation of the church – 'Very restrained in the details... expensive and tasteful decoration, very progressive in style for its date... Arts and Crafts approaching *Art Nouveau*' – Spence's masterpiece has not to date received anything like an extended analysis.

The present study aims to re-evaluate the significance of the church, primarily in the light of recent readings in late-Victorian ecclesiology and the cultural context of North-East England. The study also collates and analyses for the first time much of the extensive archival material – including important documentation previously unavailable – correlating this with a close reading of the built fabric and with reference to local artisanal and industrial practice.

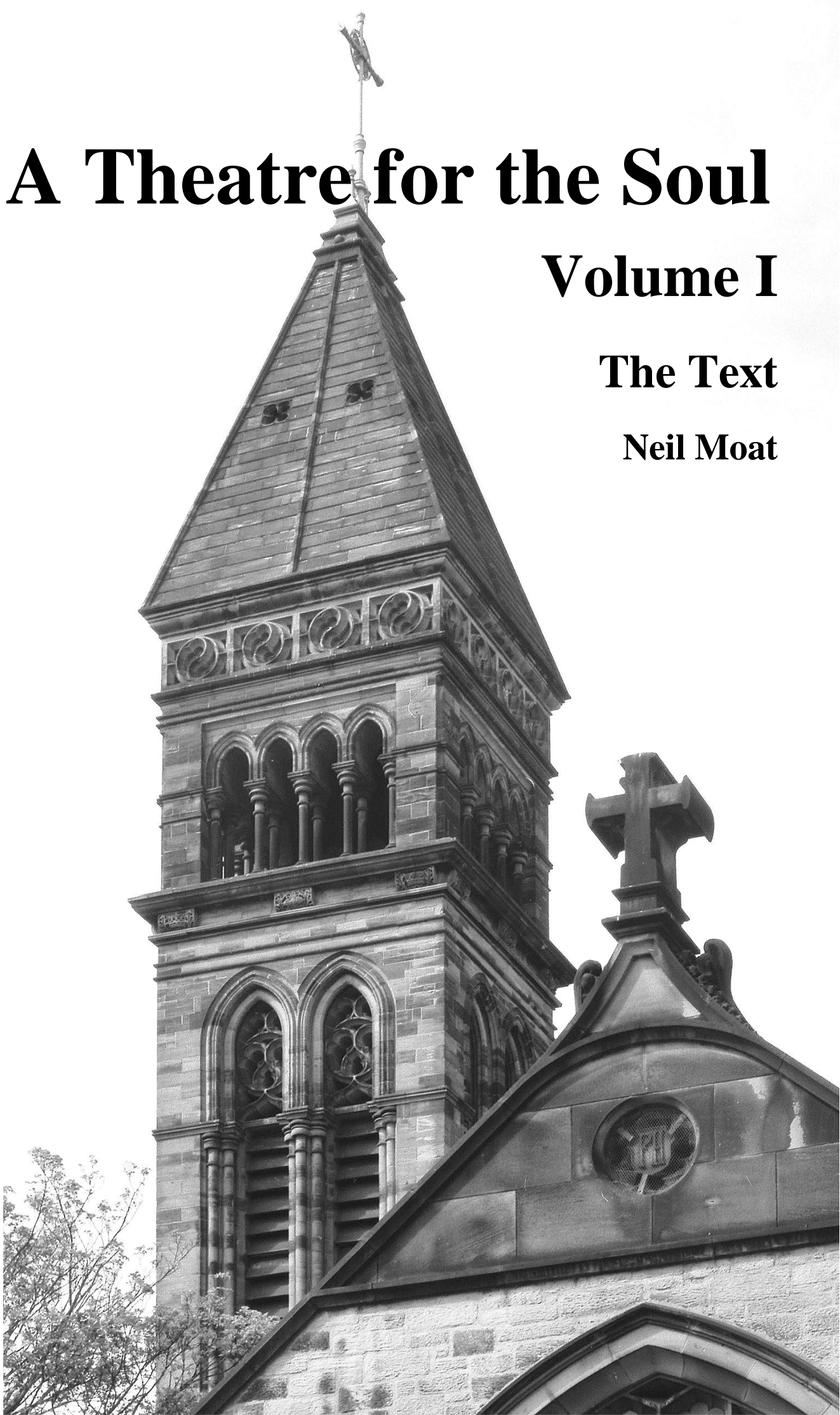
St. George's offered a fresh paradigm for Anglican church-building in the North-East of England, embodying the hopes of a newly established diocese, in one of the fastest growing industrial conurbations of late-nineteenth century Britain. It was, appropriately, the first large-scale demonstration of the aims of the newly founded Art Worker's Guild, and of the latest ideas stemming from 'new art' designers on the Continent. More so than their 'display' houses, Mitchell's church signalled the cosmopolitan interests yet fiercely regional pride of Armstrong's men, one of the most significant (and controversial) groupings of late-Victorian industrialists.

A Theatre for the Soul

Volume I

The Text

Neil Moat



TO
JULIA

Acknowledgements:

This study began life as an examination of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the North-East of England. As arguably the entry point for the Movement in the region, St. George's church, Jesmond, seemed a good place to start, but it soon transpired that there was more than enough material for a study of this church in its own right. This, and a lifetime spent ruminating on its many beauties.

I wish in particular to thank the vicars, wardens and parishioners of St. George's church for their many acts of kindness and encouragement over the years.

The unfailing dedication and courtesy of the many librarians and archivists consulted during the course of this study has been one its greatest pleasures – you are a credit to your profession.

To my doctoral supervisor, Dr. H. J. Louw, an especial thanks, for his toleration, patience and kindly criticism.

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Photo: the author, December 1991

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Photo: the author, March 1996

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Photo: the author, March 1992

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Photo: the author, November 2002

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Photos: the author, December 1991 (photomontage June 2009)

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Photo: the author, November 2002 (two disfiguring mending leads have been digitally removed)

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Photo: the author, July 1995

Abbreviations adopted in the text (in alphabetic order):

<i>A</i>	The Artist (periodical)
<i>AA</i>	Archæologia Æliana (Journal of the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle-upon-Tyne)
<i>AC</i>	Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (exhibition catalogues)
<i>AH</i>	Architectural History (Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain)
<i>A</i>	The Art Journal (periodical)
<i>AR</i>	The Architectural Review (periodical)
<i>AWG</i>	Art Workers' Guild
<i>B</i>	The Builder (periodical)
<i>BA</i>	The British Architect (periodical)
<i>BN</i>	The Building News and engineering journal (periodical)
<i>BQ</i>	Bills of Quantities (May 1886) re. St. George's church, Jesmond ¹
<i>DAS</i>	Journal of the Decorative Arts Society: 1850 to the present
<i>DBA</i>	Dictionary of British Architects (R.I.B.A.)
<i>DNB</i>	Dictionary of National Biography
<i>DSA</i>	Dictionary of Scottish Architects [online resource]
<i>E</i>	The Ecclesiologist (Journal of the Ecclesiological (late Cambridge Camden) Society)
<i>JAH</i>	Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians (U.S.A.)
<i>JCE</i>	Jesmond Church Extension scheme: Minute Book (1886-1890) ²
<i>JSG</i>	Journal of Stained Glass (Journal of the British Society of Master Glass Painters)
<i>M1-2</i>	Charles Mitchell Esq. personal ledgers no.1 and/or 2 (1880-90) ³
<i>MA</i>	The Magazine of Art (periodical)
<i>MC</i>	The Monthly Chronicle of North Country Lore and Legend
<i>NCL</i>	Newcastle Central Library
<i>NDC</i>	Newcastle Daily Chronicle (newspaper)
<i>NDJ</i>	Newcastle Daily Journal (newspaper)
<i>NRO</i>	Northumberland Record Office (now Woodhorn Museum, Ashington, Northumberland)
<i>NWC</i>	Newcastle (Weekly) Courant (newspaper)
<i>ODNB</i>	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (OUP) [online resource]
<i>SGPM</i>	St. George's Parochial Monthly (former parish magazine of St. George's Jesmond)
<i>TWA</i>	Tyne & Wear Archives (now Discovery Museum, Blandford House, Newcastle-upon-Tyne)

Conventions adopted in the text:

Illustrations (prefixed by Arabic numerals) and catalogue items (prefixed by Roman numerals) are referenced in the text in **[bold]**.

The North-East region of England is here taken to encompass the historic (i.e. pre-1974) counties of Northumberland, Durham, and the extreme northern section of the North Riding of Yorkshire. In a narrower sense, where the context specifically demands, the term should be understood as applying to the coastal strip between Blyth (Northumberland), south to Newcastle and almost to Scarborough (North Yorkshire), which during the period covered by this study, functioned very much as a single socio-economic unit, despite straddling several different county administrations.

Biblical quotations are taken from the Authorised King James (1611) version.

For ease of comparison between original documents:

All measurements are in Imperial units; i.e. miles, feet and inches.

Monetary units are pre-decimal; i.e. pounds sterling, shillings and pence.

On maps and plans, north is at the top of the page (and east to the right), unless otherwise specified.

A Faculty in the Church of England is a legally constituted dispensation to undertake alterations or additions to a licensed place of worship. Currently, in the Diocese of Newcastle, historic faculty papers are deposited with the Northumberland Record Office, whose up-dated (online) catalogue prefixes the former faculty number (derived from the cumulative register operated by the Diocesan Registry) with the designation DN/E/8/2/2/... The latter form is used throughout this study, followed by the date when the faculty was issued, and the name of the parish.

The terms Chairman, Churchman, etc., are adopted, as reflecting the male-dominated values of the period under study. They should not be understood as necessarily condoning the use of such heavily gendered terminology today.

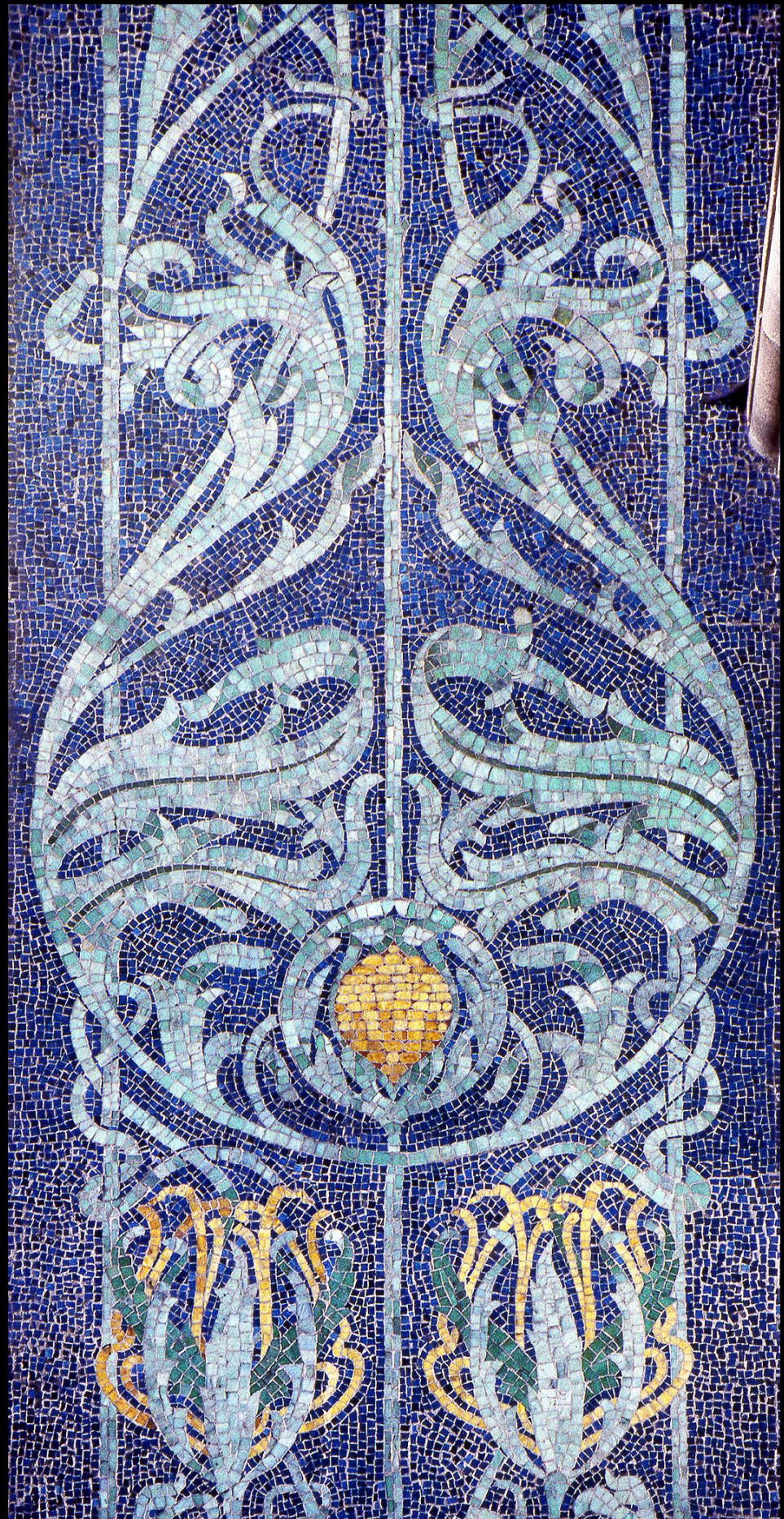
Notes to Prefaces:

¹ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.II, *The Bills of Quantities (May 1886)*

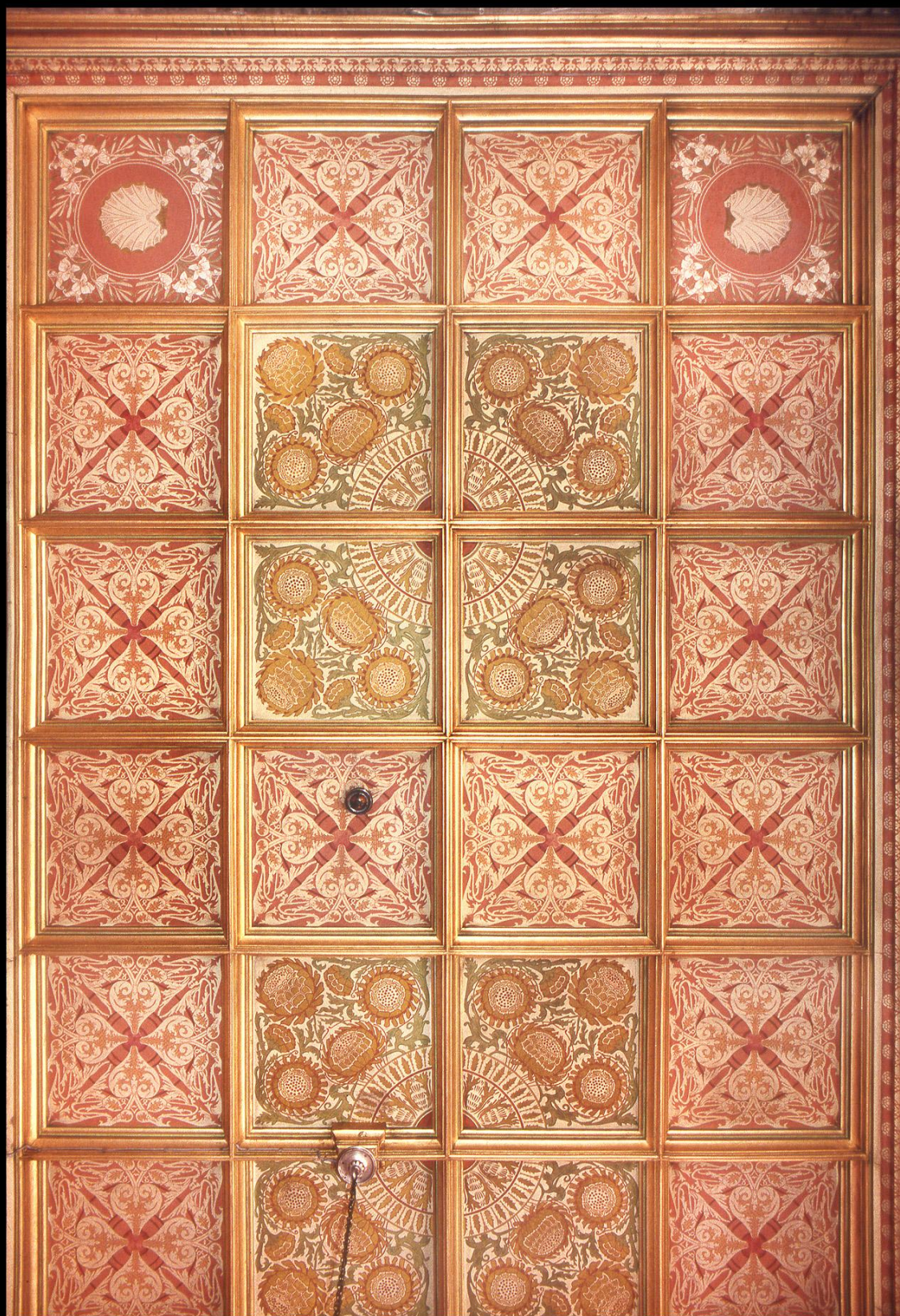
² Ref. Vol.II, Cat.IV, *Jesmond Church Extension scheme: Minute Book 1886-1890.*

³ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.III, *Charles Mitchell Esq. Ledgers (Nos. 1 & 2).*





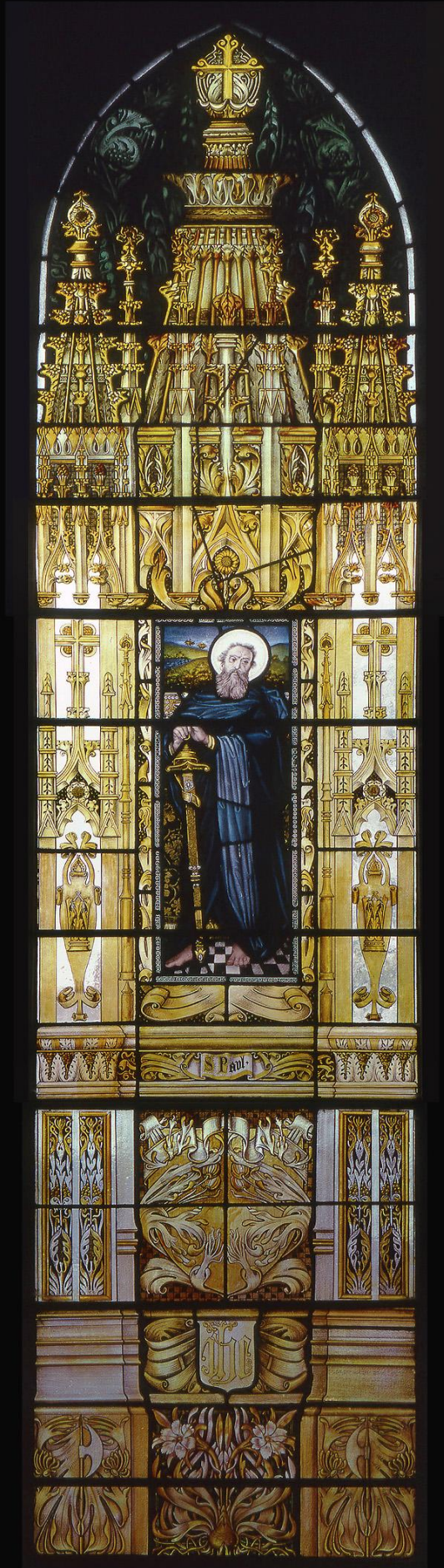








Pl.6

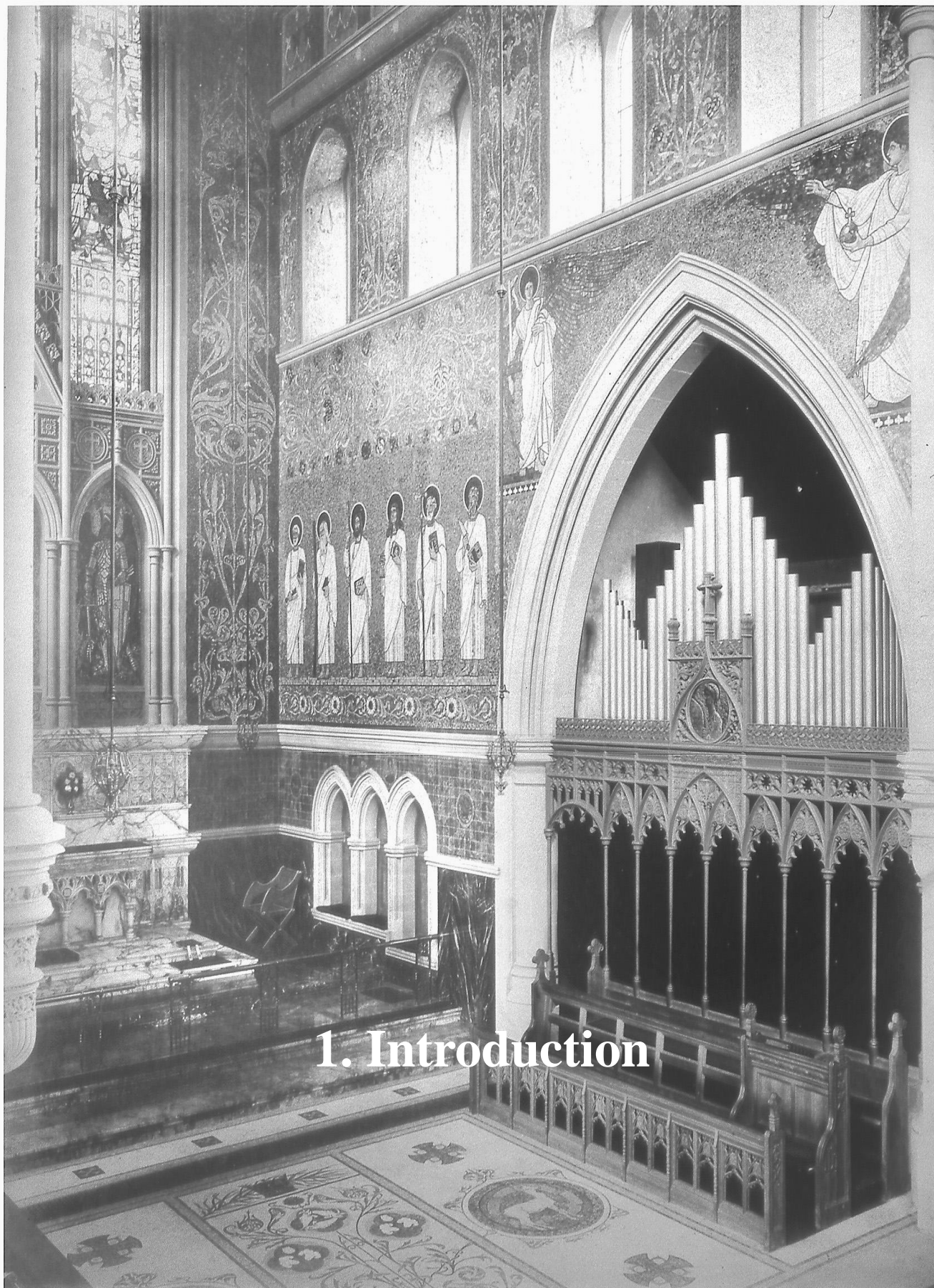


Pl.7



P1.9





1. 'On Going to Church':

The Cultural Reception of a late-Victorian church

1-1 Introduction:

I was lately walking in a polite suburb of Newcastle, when I saw a church – a new church – with of all things, a detached campanile; at sight of which, I could not help exclaiming profanely: “How the deuce did *you* find your way to Newcastle?” So I went in, and after examining the place with much astonishment, addressed myself to the sexton, who happened to be about. I asked him who built the church, and he gave me the name of Mr. Mitchell, who turned out, however, to be the pious founder – a shipbuilder prince, with some just notion of his princely function. But this was not what I wanted to know; so I asked who was the – the word stuck in my throat a little – the architect. He it appeared was one Spence. “Was that part of his design?” said I. “Yes” said the sexton, with a certain surliness, as if he suspected me of disapproving. “The ironwork is good,” I remarked, to appease him; “who did that?” “Mr. Spence did”. “Who carved that wooden figure of St. George?” (the patron saint of the edifice). “Mr. Spence did”. “Who painted those four panels in the dado with figures in oil?” “Mr. Spence did: he meant them to be at intervals round the church, but we put them all together by mistake”. “Then perhaps he designed the stained windows, too?” “Yes, most of ’em”. I got so irritated at this – feeling that Spence was going too far – that I remarked sarcastically that no doubt Mr. Spence designed Mr. Mitchell’s ships as well, which turned out to be the case as far as the cabins were concerned’. Clearly, this Mr. Spence is an artist-craftsman with a vengeance.

G.B. Shaw: *On Going to Church. An Article* (1896)¹

So wrote George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) in 1896, in a short essay entitled *On Going to Church*. The journalist, critic and controversialist – not yet a successful playwright – was perhaps recollecting a visit of November 1894, when he came north to publicly endorse Fred Hammill as the Independent Labour Party nominee for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and to address the local branch of the Fabian Society.² Shaw’s account is so vivid that we overlook its lapses, keen to place him on the spot in Jesmond – the ‘polite suburb’ of Newcastle [1.2-4]. Much of what Shaw purports to have seen was freely available in contemporary architectural periodicals or on view at London’s Arts and Crafts exhibitions. Indeed, Shaw may well have been acquainted with the architect of St. George’s church, Thomas Ralph Spence (1845-1918), through meetings and foreign excursions of the (London) Art Workers’ Guild.³ He nevertheless got his facts wrong – the statue of St. George was in bronze [1.7, 7.31], not wood; there are five painted panels let into the dado panelling of the aisles, not four, and the so-called sexton’s excuses for their positioning makes little sense on the ground. Moreover, there never was a sexton, although the church did employ a full-time caretaker.

This was not the first occasion, nor would it be the last, on which Shaw would write a puff piece, usually on behalf of himself. *On Going to Church* was a characteristically Shavian exercise in irony. For Shaw the atheistic Socialist, one does not go to church in order to demonstrate belief in a supernatural deity or an objective morality, nor even as a civic duty – ‘I dwell in a world which, unable to live by bread alone, lives spiritually on alcohol and morphia’.⁴ Shaw’s opening argument laments the human race’s unfortunate propensity for intoxicating substances (here speaks Shaw the ardent tee-totaller), addicted alike to liquor, drugs, tobacco, newspapers, party politics – and religion. ‘My own faith is clear; I am a resolute Protestant; I believe in the Holy Catholic Church; in the Holy Trinity of Father, Son (or Mother, Daughter) and Spirit’, that ‘salvation depends on redemption from belief in miracles... [and] that the real religion of today was made possible... by the materialist-physicists and atheist-critics, who performed for us the indispensable preliminary operation of purging us thoroughly of the ignorant and vicious superstitions which were thrust down our throats as religion in our helpless childhood’.⁵ Shaw wants to wrest control of church buildings from out the hands of narrow-minded sectarian interests, and claim them for the many, of whatever faith or none. ‘In the church alone can our need be truly met, nor even there save when we leave outside the door the materialisations that help us to believe the incredible, and the intellectualisations that help us to think the unthinkable... and going in without thought or belief or prayer or any other vanity, freed from all that crushing lumber, may open all its avenues of life to the holy air of the true Catholic Church’.⁶ And for this, the decoration of a church must be, not shop-soiled wares purchased at so many pence per yard, but the honest life-enhancing work of real artist-craftsmen. ‘The chancel with its wonderful mosaics [**1.8-9, page 1**], the baptistery with its ornamented stones [**9.7**], the four painted panels of the dado, are only samples of what the whole interior should and might be. All that cold contract masonry must be redeemed, stone by stone, by the travail of the artist church-maker’.⁷

Shaw was hardly being original. His essay is a mish-mash of opinions culled from the writings of the modern church architects John Thomas Micklethwaite (1843-1906) and John Dando Sedding (1838-91),⁸ coupled with such Arts and Crafts luminaries as John Ruskin (1819-1900), William Morris (1834-96) and Walter Crane (1845-1915). In fact, Shaw’s ‘prescription’ was not very far from the secularised view of ancient churches, as repositories of the nation’s artistic consciousness, espoused by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – although St. George’s Jesmond was surely too modern for that. But if not to worship in, what else was a modern church for? As an aesthetic refuge from the day-to-day cares of the world; a free art gallery for the masses; a place where artist-craftsmen could exhibit their talents on behalf of the many, not the few? Only in one important respect could Shaw’s essay be said to be original. As the only contemporary religious building mentioned approvingly by name in the entire essay, Shaw had singled out a building in far-away Newcastle as his model for what a

modern church could and should be. Shaw had since ascertained that the Jesmond church had cost well over £30,000, a figure that placed the ‘shipbuilder prince’ Charles Mitchell (1820-95) in the league of serious church-builders.⁹ It would be its architect’s only church and the work for which he would be best remembered; truly a *magnum opus*, built on a metropolitan scale and sumptuously decorated in a strikingly modern manner.

One will seek in vain for references to the Jesmond church or to T.R. Spence in histories of Victorian architecture and the decorative arts. This is perhaps all the more surprising, given that Shaw’s essay was the opening fire-cracker in the very first number of *The Savoy* magazine. Intended as a quarterly, *The Savoy* was one of a handful of periodicals that came to define the Symbolist and Decadent circles of *fin-de-siècle* London. Its provocative tone was set by the cover illustrations and titles of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) [1.10-11], and included further contributions from such luminaries as the writers Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson and W.B. Yeats, and artists such as Selwyn Image, C.H. Shannon, Charles Conder and Max Beerbohm, to name only a few [1.12-3].¹⁰ The luxuriously satiating decorative scheme at St. George’s seems wholly of a piece with this heady artistic *milieu* [1.9, Pl.1, 4-5], so it comes as something of a surprise to discover that the church was completed almost a decade earlier (designed 1885-6; foundation stone laid January 1887; consecrated October 1888; finishing touches December 1891). This would appear to make St. George’s an early, if not the earliest, exhibition on an architectural scale of motifs regarded as typical of turn-of-the-century Art Nouveau [Pl.2-3, 6]. This may in part be explained by Charles Mitchell’s international business connections, as a senior partner in the armaments, shipbuilding and engineering conglomerate Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., as well as his cosmopolitan tastes in art. It would be a mistake therefore to regard St. George’s as necessarily a provincial work, although the fact that the church stood some three hundred miles north of London was unlikely to have improved its critical reception in the capital. Was there perhaps a perception that the church was not the work of a ‘real’ architect? Indeed, T.R. Spence was much better known and respected in the capital as an artist and decorator, and aside from acting as Mitchell’s one-time shipyard architect, his architectural work was virtually unknown outside of Newcastle. Nevertheless, the precociousness of the Jesmond church would seem to run counter to the received view, that *l’art Nouveau* was not itself a native English phenomenon, but was a Continental import, albeit developed under strong English influence.¹¹

It would be another fifty years before St. George’s received anything like a laudatory mention. In 1905, Shaw had *On Going to Church* reprinted separately at Boston (Mass.) in order to block the circulation of unauthorised (and bowdlerised) editions in the United States, where the essay was widely admired.¹² The German critic Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927)

missed Spence's work altogether in his comprehensive *Die neuere kirchliche Baukunst in England* (1901), published in Berlin,¹³ but so too did Charles Nicholson (1867-1949) and Charles S. Spooner (1862-1933) in their joint survey (1912) of recent English church building.¹⁴ The church subsequently made a brief, but disguised, appearance in two short stories published in 1918 by the Russian novelist Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884-1937). Seconded as a naval architect (designing icebreakers) to the Tyneside shipyards of Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Ltd (formerly Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co.), Zamyatin took lodgings in Jesmond for the duration of his eighteen-month (1916-7) stay.¹⁵ The church stood at the northern extremity of the township, on the southern edge of the extensive Jesmond Towers estate [3.6], its bell-tower dominating the surrounding district [1.1]. Although its patron, Charles Mitchell, and his business partner Lord Armstrong (1810-1900) had long passed away, the houses and villas of their fellow directors and managers continued to cluster around the church, like planets round the sun. Why did Zamyatin settle in Jesmond, to this day one of the most fashionable residential districts in Newcastle? At the time, the district was home to Newcastle's burgeoning professional classes, and noticeably more welcoming of incomers than perhaps other districts on Tyneside. Even so, Zamyatin appears not to have mixed socially with the Armstrong managers, wary perhaps of exposing his revolutionary political views. He may well have recalled Mitchell's pivotal role, almost half-a-century earlier, in the modernisation of the Russian Imperial naval dockyards at St. Petersburg. Although Zamyatin's return to Russia would be forced by the crisis of 1917, his (admittedly ambivalent) experiences of English suburban life would subsequently feed into his novella *Islanders* (1918), set in a fictionalised and much parodied Jesmond, whilst a thinly disguised St. George's was transplanted to London in the short story *The Fisher of Men* (also 1918).¹⁶

Thereafter, St. George's Jesmond fell from the critical radar, as the vast majority of Victorian buildings came in for general condemnation. Although a re-appraisal of the Victorian achievement began after 1945, for St. George's the results were somewhat mixed. The seminal figure here was the German refugee art-historian Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-83), whose particular view of Victorian architecture became embedded in the national psyche, primarily through his editorship of the county-by-county volumes of the *Buildings of England*, uniquely sifting and codifying the architectural heritage of an entire nation, but also through his criticism for the *Architectural Review*. Pevsner claimed to show, not only that the International Modern Movement was 'a style of the twentieth century, completely independent of the past' yet historically determined, but that it was fully at home in England, where it had 'originated during the last years of Queen Victoria's reign', before being taken up by Continental and American architects.¹⁷ Thus Modernism was not a foreign import, but a true child of these islands, reflecting its national character – 'And since simplicity, uniformity, rectangularity, abrogation

of ornament have been specifically English in the past, a movement dependent so much on these cannot be un-English as such'.¹⁸ With respect to late-Victorian church building, Pevsner largely followed the lead previously offered by Hermann Muthesius, e.g. in his enthusiasm for the work of the Lancaster-based practice of Messrs. Paley & Austin, whilst seeking out those antecedent features which, in terms of form and/or style, could be claimed as anticipating the Promised Land of International Modernism. Pevsner was by no means the only post-War advocate for Victorian churches, e.g. H.S. Goodhart-Rendel (1887-1959)¹⁹ and Peter F. Anson (1889-1975)²⁰ were persuasive apologists, although both adopted a noticeably more whimsical (English?) approach to the subject than did Pevsner. Nor did his historiographical method go unchallenged – Sir John Summerson (1904-1992) was one notable dissenting voice²¹ – yet Pevsner's opinions carried considerable weight nonetheless, e.g. as chairman of the Victorian Society (1963-76), with sometimes unfortunate consequences. His sweeping condemnations of the more extreme formal experiments of the mid-Victorians, or of a too close adherence to historical precedent by post-1900 architects – 'All reviving of styles of the past is a sign of weakness'²² – were frequently cited as arguments for demolition by over-zealous town-planners and church authorities.²³

St. George's Jesmond resurfaced to critical view in the first (1957) Northumberland volume of the *Buildings of England*.²⁴ Pevsner's comments make clear that he was unaware that Spence had moved his Newcastle practice to London shortly before work began on the church. Pevsner treated the building therefore as essentially *sui generis*. In some respects, his instincts were quite correct, as there was nothing quite like St. George's even within Spence's *oeuvre*, either in terms of its scale or its sheer fecundity of invention. But as with so much of Pevsner's *critique* of Victorian architecture, his pronouncements with respect to St George's – 'A very ambitious church... E.E. [i.e. Early-English Gothic], but with a tall campanile of Italian outline at the E end of the s aisle. Very restrained in the details... Expensive and tasteful decoration, very progressive in style for its date... Arts and Crafts approaching *Art Nouveau*' – have coloured all subsequent discussion.²⁵ There is here a startling divorce between the building itself, considered as contributing nothing that was new, and the decoration with which it is clothed and which alone is seen as the progressive element; an historicist carcass clothed as it were in modern apparel. Although the subsequent editors of the revised (1993) Northumberland volume of the *Buildings of England* have sought to temper Pevsner's assessment – e.g. asserting that Spence 'followed the precepts of the Arts-and-Crafts movement and integrated the decoration with the structure' – the Pevsnerian line has proven remarkably tenacious.²⁶ Thus the eminent northern architectural historian, Thomas Faulkner (2006), in his most recent appreciation of the church, remarks that 'This is one of the largest and most richly decorated churches in the North East... Externally, St. George's is for the most part conventional... the

whole [decorative] ensemble is not only extremely elaborate but also artistically advanced for its period'.²⁷

What may be termed the 'standard' view of St. George's, as outlined by Pevsner, Faulkner, *et al.*, has accordingly embedded itself in the current Statutory List description – '13thC style with Venetian campanile... enriched throughout with Arts & Crafts decorative work of outstanding quality'.²⁸ Statutory designation, in the English system, denotes the estimation of a building's art-historical significance as a measure of the official protection it may be afforded from damaging developments. Thus the Grade-I designation of Spence's church, the highest grade, reflects both the quality and completeness of the ensemble [3.1], as well as the townscape value of the building and its historical associations with a member of Lord Armstrong's circle. The church hall, also by Spence, is additionally listed as Grade-II [1.29g].²⁹ This is no mean feat for the work of a largely unknown designer of uncertain pupillage. Of the around twenty-five to thirty Anglican churches built between 1880 and 1910 and designated as Grade-I, the overwhelming majority are by London-based architects of national importance – G.E. Street, J.L. Pearson, G.F. Bodley, R. Norman Shaw – or by their pupils or disciples, with an especially strong showing by architects of the Arts and Crafts generation. Designers of a more traditionalist bent, e.g. Ninian Comper, W.D. Caröe, Walter Tapper, Walter Brierley (York), John Douglas (Chester), R.J. Johnson (Newcastle), Messrs. Hicks & Charlewood (also Newcastle) and Messrs. Paley & Austin (Lancaster), are noticeably under-represented, no matter the artistic quality of their work, reflecting once again the historiographical line stemming from Pevsner.³⁰ Of the sample, only two other churches are so designated in the North-East of England, both major achievements of their respective architects. St. George's, Cullercoats (Northumberland) by J.L. Pearson (designed 1878; built 1882-4) [6.20-2], is an austere beautiful example of this master's characteristic early-Gothic manner, whilst St. Andrew's, Roker Park, Sunderland (Co. Durham), designed by Edward S. Prior assisted by A. Randall-Wells (1905-8), has come to be regarded as the archetypal large town-church built according to Arts and Crafts principles. Notwithstanding this select company, the general lack of critical references to St. George's Jesmond suggests that it remains largely unknown and under-appreciated.

1-2 The Case for a Re-appraisal of St. George's Church, Jesmond:

This study aims, not only to rescue this singular church from what seems an undeserved obscurity, but also to demonstrate that it is far from being peripheral to the received trajectory of English nineteenth-century architecture and the applied arts. There are several reasons for making the attempt. The Pevsnerian determination of the art-historical significance of the church is itself seriously open to question, predicated as it is on the codification of style change.

As such, the building is valued less for its qualities in and of itself as a work of art, than for its putative position on an evolutionary timeline. In *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914), the English critic Geoffrey Scott (1883-1929) warned Modernist apologists of the dangers inherent in this ‘biological fallacy’:

The object of ‘evolutionary’ criticism is, *prima facie*, not to appreciate but to explain. To account for the facts, not to estimate them, is its function. And the light which it brings comes from one great principle: that things are intelligible through a knowledge of their antecedents... The interest of the study shifts from the terms of the sequence to the sequence itself... More than this, the minor periods, the transitional and tentative phases, acquire, when our interest is centred in the sequence, a *superior* interest to the outstanding landmarks of achieved style... The question is no longer what a thing ought to be, no longer even what it *is*, but with what it is connected.³¹

This is not to say that knowledge of the historical progression of art does not have its proper place, but that such considerations should not be made the chief criterion of artistic significance. A further peculiarity of the Pevsnerian art-historical approach is the lack of attention paid to architectural ends (function or purpose) at the expense of means (form and style), a curious lapse considering the Modernist emphasis on functionality as the basis of design. One consequence of this essentially formalist approach is a total disregard for the social and symbolic functions of architecture, and especially of ‘ideal’ public buildings such as churches whose utilitarian purposes are not so immediately apparent.³² As Karsten Harries (1997) has recently argued,³³ what might be characterised as the ‘ethical function’ of architecture has traditionally been one of the most important concerns of public building, the ‘Commoditie’ of Sir Henry Wotton’s (1624) three Vitruvian conditions for ‘well building’.³⁴ As such, public buildings were important, not so much for what they did (if anything), than as the embodiment of a particular ethos or world-view. The purely formalist appreciation of St. George’s is therefore only half the story, and even then, perhaps the least significant part. If we would seek a fairer estimation of the church and its significance, we need to attend to its success or otherwise – its ‘Commoditie – as a religious building and public monument in the social context for which it was created.

These caveats aside, it has to be admitted that Pevsner’s deterministic view of modern European architectural history – as a predominantly secular, anti-historicist progress towards a functionalist, universal style of building – was not wholly alien to the late-Victorian mindset. The inevitability of ‘progress’ was assured, if not its ultimate tendency. Apprehensive for the future, English architectural periodicals paraded a weariness with the round of style revivals, or the illicit marriages of period details enforced almost out of desperation – what Goodhart-Rendel lovingly referred to as the ‘Bric-à-brac’ style.³⁵ Architects lamented not only their loss

of historical innocence, but also their inability to evolve a ‘modern’ style appropriate to the age, by extending the coherent tradition delivered into their hands. This conflicted with the national sense of material and scientific progress, of institutional and cultural advance. Whether a particular style or feature might allow for future ‘development’, under modern conditions and with modern materials, assumed therefore a surpassing significance. Thus the first local reviews of St. George’s Jesmond, following the opening of the church, delighted in the ‘many new departures [that] have been made in the internal decorations’, and the ‘novel treatment’ and ‘ingenuity’ of its forms [10.11-12].³⁶ Moreover, Charles Mitchell suggested his guests take an appreciative note of these innovations: ‘As many of them [the audience] would observe, the elements in St. George’s Church were treated considerably different to what was seen in everyday churches’.³⁷

Mitchell’s invitation was concerned with more than just matters of taste. Many of the ‘new departures’ revolved around issues of liturgical planning and iconography peculiar to the circumstances of the commission, reflecting both the churchmanship of the congregation and the religious politics of the district as a whole. Others concerned the organisation of the works, or the specific roots of what we might term the ‘Jesmond style’, e.g. in the artistic ‘branding’ of Mitchell’s shipbuilding business. That this was the first large-scale public building funded in its entirety by any one of the Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. directors was itself a novelty for the region. As a partner in one of the nation’s most vital industrial enterprises, Mitchell might have been forgiven for thinking that his church would count for more than its place in a quiet Newcastle suburb. His personal expenditure on the church was on a scale once thought the sole prerogative of the English aristocracy – a sure sign that this particular grouping of industrialists had become a cultural force to be reckoned with. And whereas a typical Victorian church might take decades to bring to completion,³⁸ St. George’s Jesmond was finished within a mere seven years, and without stinting in any way.

In one further respect, however, Pevsner’s labelling of the Jesmond church as ‘Arts and Crafts approaching *Art Nouveau*’ has continued to prove problematical. Are we to understand (Continental) Art Nouveau as the logical successor to the (English) Arts and Crafts Movement? Or that the decorative scheme at St. George’s combines motifs familiar from the work of e.g. William Morris, Walter Crane, Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) and later Art Nouveau designers such as Victor Horta (1861-1947) and Hector Guimard (1867-1942)? Pevsner’s terminology follows Continental art-historical practice, which views these style-terms as differing aspects of the same European-wide *fin-de-siècle* design-reform movements, embracing the likes of *l’art Nouveau*, *Nieuwe Kunst*, *Jugendstil*, *style moderne* and National Romanticism. However, in the English-speaking world, the term Arts and Crafts has usually

been taken to imply an ethical stance towards the social function of the arts and their means of production, stemming from both the paternalistic Toryism of John Ruskin and the Revolutionary Socialism of William Morris. Thus, the architect and designer Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942) angrily denounced Hermann Muthesius for persistently misrepresenting the aims of the English movement, as only an improved means of modern design and manufacture:

There is something in the glamour that Herr Muthesius missed. There are many of us in the Guild [of Handicraft] – I for one – who, if it was a mere business enterprise, would have no further interest in it. Mere business we could pursue more profitably elsewhere and unencumbered with *altruism*...the Guild is a protest against modern business methods, against the Trade point of view, against the Commercial spirit...³⁹

For Ashbee and likeminded artist-craftsmen, Art Nouveau was a creature of the ‘Commercial spirit’, and would (and did) quickly pass, like any marketable style. In stark contrast, the Arts and Crafts emphasis on the morally uplifting value of individual handwork was little short of a lifelong vocation. Whilst this had implications for the aesthetic qualities of the buildings and artworks themselves, e.g. in conspicuous displays of handicraft, the movement itself was not concerned with style *per se*. English critics then and since have therefore attempted to draw a firm line between the Movement and its (supposed) Continental cousins, often in the teeth of persistent misunderstandings. Thus Linda Parry and Karen Livingstone (2005):

Critics not directly involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement made no division between this and other contemporary artistic developments. This led to a confusion in particular between Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau... The two movements were often seen as one... [and] This situation has proliferated to the present day... Both movements qualified for the description of ‘new art’, but straight translations of foreign journals have led to some developments of the Arts and Crafts Movement being classed specifically as Art Nouveau. Yet the two movements were so different that they can be described as the antithesis of each other.⁴⁰

For a modern historian of the English movement such as Peter Cormack (2005), the Arts and Crafts were ‘the only significant art movement to be wholly initiated in Britain’, and although hugely influential beyond these shores, its distinctiveness should not, and must not, be subsumed under an internationalist flag.⁴¹

This is all very well, except that the English ‘ethical’ understanding of the Arts and Crafts is not readily applicable to St. George’s Jesmond. Designs and fittings from the church were shown at the Second (1889) and Third (1890) London Arts and Crafts exhibitions, but the

ethical stance of these earliest exhibitions was somewhat flawed. The 1890 exhibition came in for particular criticism,⁴² and it was only when the Society switched to triennial shows from 1893 onwards that it fully achieved its *raison d'être*. T.R. Spence did continue to be an active member of the Art Workers' Guild, from 1886 until his retirement in 1913, and he recruited several Guildsmen to work alongside his northern colleagues on the church. Thomas Faulkner (2006) again argues that this 'was typical of the Arts and Crafts Movement's collaborative approach'.⁴³ It is, however, a very one-sided form of collaboration, where the architect designs virtually everything – bar some figures in the stained glass and mosaics – whilst his 'collaborators' provide only the executant hands [10.5-7]. Nor is there that insistence on revealed handwork, simplicity of effect or primitive rusticity now thought most typical of the Arts and Crafts in England. That Spence and his collaborators were also heavily indebted to Aesthetic Movement notions of beauty and 'art for art's sake', i.e. that the practice of Art was primarily a reflexive rather than an ethical activity, is as clear from the iconographic programme of the church, as it is from Spence and Mitchell's shared history together as artist and patron. On these grounds, Cormack would simply deny that St. George's was Arts and Crafts at all.⁴⁴ Marvellously wrought though it is, we perhaps need to remind ourselves that St. George's was begun almost a decade before terms such as Arts and Crafts or Art Nouveau had achieved either a common currency or strongly defined meanings, and whilst various notions of what might constitute a 'modern' work of art were contending for ascendancy.⁴⁵ To its begetters, it was simply and pre-eminently a modern church.

St. George's may however have a fair claim to be the first building in Britain in which the aims of the Art Workers' Guild were comprehensively demonstrated, and on the largest of scales. The church is therefore a crucial document in the development of Arts and Crafts theory, as well as for the first stirrings of the 'New Art'. That this happened in Newcastle, and not in London, is itself worthy of comment. Geoffrey Scott's comments notwithstanding, St. George's repays our attention not only by virtue of its singular qualities as a work of art, but precisely because it is a transitional work. This state of flux extends well beyond matters of purely art-historical definition. The 1880s saw a marked acceleration in the already unprecedentedly rapid industrialisation and cultural transformation of Tyneside. The region was propelled into the international limelight, as Her Majesty's Government competed with foreign buyers for Tyne-built warships and armaments. Almost overnight, Charles Mitchell found himself enrolled in one of the most powerful groupings of industrialists ever seen in this country. The political and cultural aspirations of a region long held in check were about to be fulfilled. That indefinable sense of standing on the threshold of something bold and new also informed Charles Mitchell's church.

1-3 New Horizons:

With the apparent waning of the Modernist hegemony, and of its deterministic view of art-history, the opportunity has arisen for a critical re-examination of the late-Victorian architectural scene, and especially of its church buildings. The period saw major investment in new church buildings across all denominations, in part due to the nation's vastly increased wealth and burgeoning population, but also as a by-product of continuing sectarian competition, leading in some areas to an over-provision in places of worship. For ideological reasons, the preferred style was still overwhelmingly Gothic. Whilst the churches of J. D. Sedding (q.v.) [6.9] and his disciples have continued to receive a degree of critical attention – considered as 'progressive' because of their direct association with the Arts and Crafts Movement – the works of Sedding's more 'conservative' Gothic Revival colleagues remains somewhat problematical. From the late 1860s onwards, the 'school' of church building stemming from George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) [6.3] – and his fellow travellers Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912), Thomas Garner (1839-1906), George Gilbert Scott junr. (1839-97), Basil Champneys (1842-1935) and J.T. Micklethwaite (q.v.) – became, in effect, the default position of Anglicanism, imitated by countless church architects across Britain and in North America until well after the First World War.⁴⁶ These architects sought inspiration in the accomplishments and 'refinement' of the later historic Gothic styles, reflecting an increasingly Idealist conception of Anglican ecclesiology and liturgy. In addition, the movement influenced a number of Roman Catholic and Nonconformist architects, albeit to a more limited extent, and even gained a degree of acceptance within the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk. Such an abstracted self-effacing ideal is difficult to appreciate today, now that an overtly individualistic cult of originality is the more highly prized. Even so, these buildings were amongst the chief ornaments of the age, and it is perhaps premature to dismiss them as the dying gasps of a religion retreating before the forces of modern science and secularism. This would be to wilfully ignore what was clearly an extraordinarily widespread and long-lived social phenomenon, and one which inspired some of the period's finest architects and craftsmen to give of their very best.

The past twenty years have seen therefore a welcome effort to re-habilitate this last phase of the Victorian Gothic Revival, led by a handful of English scholars, most notably Anthony Symondson (on liturgy), Gavin Stamp (on G.G. Scott junior), Michael Hall (on G.F. Bodley) and Paul Snell (on J.D. Sedding). At times this re-appraisal has assumed the nature of an anti-Pevsnerian crusade, with the German-born art-historian cast as the putative author of a failed Modernist experiment in England.⁴⁷ Pevsner was himself more favourably disposed to the finest achievements of late-Victorian Gothic than some of his critics have perhaps been prepared to concede.⁴⁸ This new work has nevertheless yielded some valuable insights, and chiefly in two areas directly relevant to the situation of St. George's Jesmond. These are (1) the centrality of

doctrinal and liturgical developments as a driver of style-change in Victorian ecclesiology, and (2) a rediscovery of the architectural discourse of the period, e.g. the key concepts of ‘development’ and ‘refinement’. The new understanding offers not only a critical framework and terminology, distinct from the formalist categories employed (retrospectively) by Pevsner *et al.*, but one more attuned to the concerns of the period under study. However, this is a less straightforward operation than simply replacing one ready-made theoretical construct with another. Terms such as ‘development’ and ‘refinement’ – and likewise ‘Englishness’, ‘quaint’, ‘artistic’ and ‘art workmen’ (the latter pair of terms were used by Charles Mitchell with respect to St. George’s)⁴⁹ – were notoriously elastic in later nineteenth century usage, attracting a wide range of additional meanings during the 1870s and 80s. Michael Hall’s reading of ‘refinement’ in the work of Bodley – e.g. in his seminal essay *What do Victorian Churches Mean* (2000)⁵⁰ – as necessarily antithetical to the concept of ‘development’, thus seems unduly restrictive. Gavin Stamp (2002), in surveying much the same late-Victorian discourse with respect to the younger Gilbert Scott, adopts a more relaxed view of this terminology, one that seems to accord better with contemporary usage.⁵¹ Nor did anyone ever claim that the ‘Free-style’ Gothic of Sedding and his disciples was in any way lacking in ‘refinement’. Nevertheless, it should be possible to enquire: (a) how a well-informed churchgoer of the period might have understood a building such as St. George’s Jesmond; and in the light of this knowledge, (b) whether our understanding and appreciation of St. George’s has been advanced, such that the significance of the building is appreciably enhanced? Although, stylistically speaking, Spence’s church appears to stand somewhat apart, both from the regional and national contexts, its patrons and architect were evidently well versed in the latest metropolitan developments in Anglican ecclesiology and the Arts and Crafts. Despite its many novelties and peculiarities, the ‘message’ embodied in the building was thought sufficiently intelligible not to require further explanation – in public at least, architect, patron and parish priest remained more-or-less tight-lipped about their motivations in building the church. Like so many great works of art, St. George’s was presented as an ‘open book’, to be ‘read’ and understood by anyone exercising a modicum of discrimination and taste

With respect to the first part of our enquiry, there is an abundance of documentary evidence relating to Charles Mitchell’s church.⁵² Several (albeit incomplete) suites of contract drawings exist for the church, apparently in the architect’s own hand, chronicling the evolution of the design.⁵³ Summary drawings also exist for the parochial hall, vicarage, and for Mitchell’s mansion, Jesmond Towers, and its estate buildings, allowing one to trace the development of the ensemble as an urban entity. A *Bills of Quantities* – in essence a tender document – also survives for the church, which in terms of its contents and layout, is an extremely rare and interesting document in its own right, shedding considerable light on building practices in late-

Victorian Newcastle.⁵⁴ These documents can be supplemented by several albums of photographs commissioned by Charles Mitchell on the completion of the church, although interestingly, no photographs survive of the building in the course of erection – the finished work was evidently the greater concern of its patron.⁵⁵ In a few rare instances, particular fittings can be traced from Spence's design, *via* the craftsmen's workshop (where archive holdings exist) to the finished product.⁵⁶ Much of this documentation has long been in the public domain, deposited in regional archives in the north of England, but this is the first study to attempt to collate and compare this material with respect to the existing buildings.

Since the church was in the nature of a private gift, and built on land presented by the donor, the parish itself had a correspondingly slight involvement with its erection. Not until the creation of a separate ecclesiastical district, on 29 January 1889, as a daughter of Jesmond Parish Church (JPC), does the congregation of St. George's step out of the wings. From this date onwards, there exists a complete run of the parish magazine, offering an insight into the personal dynamics operating between the vicar, his congregation and their benefactor.⁵⁷ This was always Mr. Mitchell's church, and its architect was never accorded even a mention. Indeed the minutes of the *Jesmond Church Extension scheme* committee (beginning March 1886 and closing in November 1890), reveals the extent to which Mitchell's wishes were deferred to, even in areas ostensibly the preserve of the congregation, e.g. the erection of the parochial hall and vicarage, and the creation of the new ecclesiastical district.⁵⁸ In the end, the complex of church and ancillary buildings became as much an ornament of Mitchell's park as a building dedicated for public use [1.2, 3.4].

Reviews of St. George's church, and articles on its architect, appear for example in the *Builder* [1.27] and *Magazine of Art*, but not, surprisingly enough, given the proto-Art Nouveau character of its decorative scheme, in the *Studio*.⁵⁹ Even so, the coverage of St. George's reveals just how superficial – and thoroughly misleading – the Victorian building press could be, and especially with respect to buildings outside of the capital.⁶⁰ In this respect, the Newcastle newspapers are far more trustworthy, with copy supplied directly by the patron and/or his architect. Unfortunately, there is no biographical account of Thomas Ralph Spence. His death, on 12th April 1918, occurred during the closing months of the First World War, and even went un-noticed by the congregation at St. George's Jesmond.⁶¹ The Spence family home, at 214 Croydon Road, Beckenham (Kent), was damaged during the London blitz, taking with it many of the artist's drawings, designs and papers. His career can however be fairly accurately reconstructed with the help of material collated by his descendants, and on the basis of surviving art-works, contemporary reviews, exhibition catalogues, directories, etc.⁶² The author has moreover made a particular study of Spence's work in stained glass, and especially for

Messrs. Sowerby & Co. of Gateshead (also known as The Gateshead Stained Glass Company) [4.2-5], who undertook a large part of the glazing at St. George's. The Rev. Somerset Pennefather (1848-1917), Charles Mitchell's friend and colleague during the building of St. George's, and its first vicar, was the subject of a privately printed memoir (1918) compiled by his widow. Its tone can be gauged from the forward: 'Friends having asked me for some records of my husband's life and work, I have consented to print... these excerpts from a manuscript which I had written, in the form of letters, for my children's eyes only'.⁶³ The larger scheme of the memoirs adapts the familiar Evangelical trope of the 'conversion narrative'. Thus her 'types' – the railway workers of a Wakefield parish, the Unitarian landowner, or the Scotch shipbuilder (Charles Mitchell) – rather than being convicted of their sins and called to repentance and conversion, are nevertheless 'converted' to the Established Church, as a mark (or 'sign' in the Biblical sense) of the righteousness of her husband's work. We need therefore to treat the historicity of Catherine Pennefather's account, and especially what she has to say about Mitchell and the building of St. George's, with a fair degree of scepticism.

Lord Armstrong's celebrity has long overshadowed that of his former business colleague and neighbour. Despite his national importance as a shipbuilder, philanthropist and patron of the arts, Mitchell still lacks an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, although less senior Armstrong directors have been given their due. It was not until 1988 that a biography of Charles Mitchell was published. Donald McGuire's research was in many respects exemplary, despite the somewhat populist tone of his book.⁶⁴ If one must fault McGuire's approach, it is that he rather gives the impression that Mitchell concerned himself solely with the mercantile marine side of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. Mitchell was no pacifist. Although personally reserved and somewhat diffident, he was evidently a shrewd and hard-headed businessman, and his shipbuilding expertise was to prove central to the success of Armstrongs as an internationally renowned defence contractor. That he also kept a personal journal(s) is attested by the remarks of his son,⁶⁵ but McGuire seems not to have been granted access to these, if they survived at all. Unfortunately, a large amount of archival material was dispersed when the estate and contents of Palinsburn house, in north Northumberland (and formerly in the Mitchell direct male line), were sold in May 2005.⁶⁶ Luckily, McGuire had earlier persuaded several of Mitchell's descendants to deposit important papers or facsimiles (the originals for which seem now to be lost) with various public archives in the region. Perhaps the most interesting of these items, as an insight into Mitchell's character, is a newspaper scrapbook, covering the years 1868-93, which he divided in roughly equal measure between his business and artistic interests.⁶⁷

A more recent serendipitous discovery (2006) concerns two volumes of Charles Mitchell's private financial ledgers, covering the decade 1879-89, and currently in private hands.⁶⁸ If McGuire ever had sight of these, he either did not realise their significance, or chose to ignore them. Evidently prepared as a 'handy' compendium of his assets (they were professionally audited on a regular basis), the two ledgers include details not only of Mitchell's extensive shareholdings in ships, shipyards, supplier companies and property speculations, but of his personal subscriptions and donations, as well as summary accounts both for Jesmond Towers and for St. George's church. Although far from being the primary building accounts, the latter are, nonetheless, sufficiently detailed to be able to derive the precise costings and chronology for many of the fixtures and fittings in the church. As such, the ledgers have revealed the works organisation on the church to have been more than usually complex, as well as overturning our previous understanding of the relative contributions made by individual artists and/or contractors, e.g. in the stained glass and woodwork. However, they are not without their own interpretative problems, for which we may never adequately know the answers, e.g. why, in June 1887, did Mitchell record a visit to Edinburgh in connection with the glazing of the church, when the contractors hailed from London and Gateshead?⁶⁹ All the same, it is difficult not to overstate the significance of the Mitchell ledgers for a re-appraisal of St. George's, nor for our knowledge of one of the major figures in British industry during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and for whom so few personal papers appear to have survived.

Taken together, these documents offer a more detailed insight into the building and fitting out of a late-Victorian church than is currently possible for anywhere else in the North-East of England. Nevertheless, we still lack any first-hand account of St. George's Jesmond, and why it took the particular form it did. Much may be inferred from the building's style and iconography, from contemporary ecclesiological practice and architectural discourse, and from the patterns of Mitchell's artistic patronage and philanthropic activity. 'Mr. Mitchell's church' is singularly free of those self-congratulatory texts and memorials so beloved of Victorian church-builders, extolling the virtues of pious benefactors, whilst committing their souls to the keeping of Almighty God. Thus, like Bernard Shaw, the modern visitor may be left wondering, 'who built the church'? *Lector, Si Monumentum Requiris, Circumspice*. In a memorial address to his former benefactor, Canon Pennefather reported that 'To Dr. Mitchell it was not a question of the cost of erecting that church; it was a question of what was most suitable. He [Dr. Mitchell] once said to him (the preacher) – "I have built a great many ships, and I have put the best material in them from one end to the other; I am now building one house for God, and I wish to put the best material into that". That was the secret of his life; the best had to be done'.⁷⁰ Within a generation of Mitchell's death, Jesmond Towers was sold and its art

collections scattered [2.21, 4.10-11]; only scraps survive of its once magnificent interior decoration [4.8]. The estate was divided into housing plots, and the sylvan environs of its church built over. The cabin interiors that Thomas Ralph Spence designed for Mitchell's ships are likewise lost, and neither photographs nor drawings would seem to have survived to give any hint of their splendours. Yet the church remained, to tease, perplex and inspire us.

1-4 Methodology and Layout of this Study:

It may be worthwhile stating at this stage what this study is not about. Although the life and works of Thomas Ralph Spence are certainly relevant to our enquiry, they are not the primary aim of this study. That is for another day, should it ever prove possible or desirable. Nor shall we argue that Spence is some neglected genius, in need of our rehabilitation, although one would hope that this study does awaken some further interest in his *oeuvre*. Spence's later work is certainly worthy of further investigation, and like so many of his talented generation of turn-of-the-century designers, he was perhaps more influential than posterity has conceded, consigned to critical obscurity by the latent snobbery that would condemn the 'commercial spirit'.⁷¹

This study is rather in the nature of an experiment. Much has changed in the realm of Victorian art-historical studies since St. George's Jesmond was first inscribed as a statutorily listed building. The leading artworks and artists of the period have been re-admitted to the canon, and the canon itself has been both redefined and refined. There is, arguably, more work still to be done. The work of re-appraisal has largely bypassed significant buildings and artists such as St. George's and its architect. We intend, therefore, to take Spence's only church very seriously, and accord it the critical attention deserving a building of this quality. The study divides into two volumes. Whilst the first volume presents the argument of the thesis proper, the second includes the illustrations to the text, and offers in addition an analytical catalogue of the primary manuscript and documentary evidence. The first volume is itself divided into two substantial sections. In the first, a theoretical framework is established, examining the cultural and ecclesiological contexts for St. George's in the light of recent readings, and particularly with respect to the North-East of England. In the second, the theoretical findings of the previous section are applied directly to the case of St. George's, correlating the extensive archival material with a close reading of the built fabric and with reference to local artisanal and industrial practice.

We need also to have particular regard to the semiotics of a religious building such as St. George's. This was the normative understanding of the time, as the leading church architect

G.F. Bodley reminded his audience at the 1881 (Anglican) Church Congress, held that year in Newcastle: ‘Architecture is in some respect like Music, the expression of abstract ideas. It is eminently expressive and symbolic and fitted for the use of Religion.’⁷² The symbolic aspects of a religious building are thus a primary aspect of its ‘Commoditie’, but as Harries (1997) has noted, ‘a great deal of the symbolism we find in nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture takes the form of a play with the symbolism of the past, which is no longer or only inadequately understood... Symbols now become representations of symbols: *metasymbols*’.⁷³ Thus, whilst much of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England claimed to be revisiting the ancient symbolic usages of the Church, the world-view that these embodied was no more. Even the most ardent of Anglo-Catholics lit their churches with gas or electric light, installed central heating systems, and bought machine-printed hymn-books by the dozen. That Victorian churches symbolically re-presented an idealised pre-industrial past, for a modern audience in modern dress, is part of the fascination of these buildings. The manner of this re-presentation at St. George’s Jesmond is particularly fascinating, and quite possibly unique, and forms the subject of the final chapter, ‘A Theatre for the Soul’.

Between 1851 and 1853, Ruskin brought out the three volumes of his seminal work, *The Stones of Venice*. Nearly thirty years later he returned to the subject, in his collection of essays *St. Mark’s Rest* (published in parts 1877-84; first complete edition 1884), and more specifically, to a re-appraisal of St. Mark’s basilica.⁷⁴ The later essays have generally been over-looked in comparison with the earlier work, coming as they do just at the start of Ruskin’s first major bout of mental illness, but they repay our attention nonetheless. Ruskin had significantly revised his thinking when he came to write *St. Mark’s Rest*, from an estimation of ancient buildings as artworks in and for the present, to a reconsideration of their original purpose and meanings, based on the available documentation and the evidence of the buildings and artworks themselves.⁷⁵ This was in itself a novel approach. Ruskin was perhaps the first modern art-historian to attempt such an imaginative reconstruction of the mindset of the architects, artists and patrons of the past, as a means to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Venice’s buildings. His historiographical method was equally novel. Ruskin presents a cultural ‘biography’ of the city as seen refracted through the fabric, contents and setting of its princely church. Nor is this a history of Venice’s cultural high-points, but rather in terms of artworks or historical periods deemed as ‘transitional’. The result is episodic rather than a continuous historical narrative, a series of sketches, as it were, viewed from differing perspectives. Only thus could he adequately evoke his emotional and intellectual responses to the multi-layered nature of St. Mark’s basilica as a work of art.

Ruskin's later Venetian essays were published as a single volume shortly before work began on St. George's Jesmond. His non-linear art-historical method seems therefore peculiarly appropriate to a study of this complex and multi-faceted building, with its rich marbles, Byzantine mosaics and Venetian tower [page iii]. In offering a range of perspectives on the church, this study cannot claim to be at all comprehensive or definitive. There are certainly many possibilities for further avenues of study. However, it is to be hoped that something of the depth and richness of Thomas Ralph Spence's *magnum opus* will be communicated in these pages. If some of the conclusions appear to contradict each other, that is in the nature of a work of art, and all the better for that:

THE artist is the creator of beautiful things.

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material

His impression of beautiful things...

Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new,
complex and vital.

When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself.

Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891 *Preface*) ⁷⁶

Notes to Chapter 1:

- ¹ Shaw, G.B.: *On Going to Church. An Article in The Savoy* No.1 (London, January 1896), pp.13-28 (22).
- ² NWC (3 Nov. 1894), *The Independent Labour Party in Newcastle. Mr. Hammill's Candidature. Mass Meeting in the Town Hall*.
- ³ Holroyd, M.: *Bernard Shaw* in 3 vols. (London, 1988-91), Vol.I (1988), *The Search for Love 1856-189*, 8 pp.219 & 314. Although Shaw did not formally become a member (Honorary) of the Art Workers' Guild until 1921, he accompanied the AWG on visits to Italy during the autumns of 1891 and 1894. As an intimate of William Morris' circle from the mid-1880s, he was also on friendly terms with many of the Guild's members. Spence was a member of the AWG's general committee 1891-3, overlapping with Morris' tenure as Master of the Guild in 1892.
- ⁴ Shaw (1896), Op.cit., p.13.
- ⁵ Ibid., pp.26-7.
- ⁶ Ibid., p.28.
- ⁷ Ibid., p.23.
- ⁸ E.g. Micklethwaite, J.T.: *Modern Parish Churches* (London, 1874), sections XXIX & XXXIII; also Sedding, J.D.: 'On the Relations of Architecture and the Handicrafts', in *American Architect and Building News*, Vol.21, No.600 (25 June 1887), pp. 307-11.
- ⁹ The figure of £30,000 was quoted by the *Times* (26 Aug. 1895), p.7, obit. *Mr. Charles Mitchell*; also *NDJ* (27 Aug. 1895), p.6, *The Late... Dr. Mitchell's Career. Interesting Details*. See also Micklethwaite (1874), Op.cit., pp.333-6, 'What man, even in our wealthiest towns, ever thinks of asking for £30,000 for a new church, yet that is no unusual sum to be spent upon [restoring] an old one'.
- ¹⁰ For the background to *The Savoy*, see Calloway, S.: *Aubrey Beardsley* (London, 1998), pp. 143-56.
- ¹¹ Greenhalgh, P.: 'Le Style Anglais: English Roots of the New Art', in Greenhalgh, P. (ed.): *Art Nouveau 1890-1914* (London, 2000), pp.124-45.
- ¹² Shaw, G.B.: *An Essay: On Going to Church*. (Boston, 1905).
- ¹³ Muthesius, H.: *Die neuere kirchliche Baukunst in England* (Berlin, 1901).
- ¹⁴ Nicholson, C. & Spooner, C.: *Recent English Ecclesiastical Architecture* (London [1912]).
- ¹⁵ Myers, Alan: *Zamyatin in Newcastle* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2004) [electronic resource].
- ¹⁶ Zamyatin, Y.: *Islanders and The Fisher of Men*, first published in Russian, 1918 (trans. Sophie Fuller & Julian Sacchi, Edinburgh, 1984).
- ¹⁷ Pevsner, N. (1938-9): 'The Modern Movement in Britain' (Bridget Cherry (ed.)), in *Twentieth Century Architecture* 8 (London, 2007), pp.12-38 (17). Pevsner's essay remained unpublished due to the onset of war, but the views he articulated here informed much of his post-War criticism.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.33.
- ¹⁹ Goodhart-Rendel, H.S.: *English Architecture since the Regency* (London, 1953).
- ²⁰ Anson, P.F.: *Fashions in Church Furnishings 1840-1940*, first published 1960 (London, second edn. 1965)
- ²¹ Salmon, F.: 'Those Dammed Victorians!' John Summerson's changing vision of the Victorians' in Hill, R. et al. (eds.): *Victorians Revalued* (London, 2010), pp.74-89 (77-9).
- ²² Pevsner, N.: 'Modern Architecture and the Historian, or the Return of Historicism' in *RIBA Journal*, vol. 68, No.6 (6 April 1961), pp.230-40 (230); quoted in Forty, A.: *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London, 2004), p.199.
- ²³ Cherry, B.: 'Pevsner and the churches of Victorian London' in *Victorian*, No.20 (November, 2005), pp. 7-10 (7-8).
- ²⁴ Pevsner, N. & Richmond, I.: *The Buildings of England: Northumberland* (Harmondsworth, 1957), pp.59 & 255-6
- ²⁵ Ibid. Pevsner mistakenly attributed the commission to Charles William Mitchell (1855-1903), the artist son of the patron, probably because the younger Mitchell was involved in aspects of its design.
- ²⁶ Pevsner, N. & Richmond, I., et al.: *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*. (London, second revised edn. 1992), pp. 109-10 & 508-9.
- ²⁷ Faulkner, T.E., et al.: *Newcastle & Gateshead. Architecture and Heritage* (Liverpool, 2006), pp.204-5.
- ²⁸ English Heritage Building ID: 304765 (inscribed 14 June 1954; last reviewed 1987)
- ²⁹ English Heritage Building ID: 304766 (inscribed 30 March 1987)
- ³⁰ Figures derived by the author, collating various English Heritage online databases. To date, there is no straightforward means for achieving a synoptic overview of the ecclesiastical building stock in England, and the figures quoted may be an underestimate. The Church of England currently quotes its

- building stock at 16,000, of which approximately 12,200 are listed. I am grateful to Dr. Joseph Elders (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, Archbishop's Council, C-of-E) for his assistance.
- ³¹ Scott, G.: *The Architecture of Humanism*, first published 1914, revised edn. 1924 (David Watkin (ed.), London, 1980), pp.168-70.
- ³² See also Cherry (2005), Op.cit., pp.9-10.
- ³³ Harries, K.: *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, first published 1997 (Cambridge, Mass. USA, 2000), pp.284-8.
- ³⁴ Wotton, H.: *The Elements of Architecture* (London, 1624), p.1: 'The end is to build well. Well building hath three Conditions. Commoditie, Firmeries, and Delight'; also Scott (2000), Op.cit., pp.3-4.
- ³⁵ Goodhart-Rendel (1953), Op.cit., pp.152-80.
- ³⁶ NDJ (13 Oct. 1888), p.6, *The New Church at Jesmond. Description of the Building. The Opening Services*.
- ³⁷ NDJ (17 Oct., 1888), p.5, (*St. George's Church, Jesmond*) *Report on Consecration Service*
- ³⁸ Saint, A.: 'The late Victorian church' in Sladen, T. & Saint, A. (eds.): *Churches 1870-1914* (London, 2011), pp. 7-25 (9-10).
- ³⁹ Ashbee, C.R.: *An Endeavour towards the teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* (1901), p.20; quoted in Crawford, A.: *C R Ashbee* (New Haven & London, 1985), p.410.
- ⁴⁰ Parry, L. and Livingstone, K.: 'Introduction. International Arts and Crafts' in Livingstone, K. & Parry, L. (eds.): *International Arts and Crafts* (London, 2005), pp.10-37 (12).
- ⁴¹ Cormack, P.D.: 'A Truly British Movement' in *Apollo* No. 518 (London, April 2005), pp. 48-53 (49).
- ⁴² E.g. *B* (10 Oct. 1890), pp.262-3; also *B* (11 Oct. 1890), pp.283-5.
- ⁴³ Faulkner, *et al.* (2006), Op.cit., p.205.
- ⁴⁴ Peter Cormack in conversation with the author.
- ⁴⁵ E.g. Crane, W.: 'The English Revival of Decorative Art' in *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.LVII Old Series, Vol.LII New Series (London, July-Dec.1892), pp. 810-23, in which Walter Crane (1845-1915) views the Arts and Crafts as only one amongst a great variety of similar tendencies.
- ⁴⁶ Stamp, G.: 'The Architecture of Good Taste. Anglican Churches in 1914' in Sladen & Saint (eds.) (2011), Op.cit., pp. 144-65 (148-50).
- ⁴⁷ E.g. Symondson, A.: 'Look With Your Ears. Some 20th-century Attitudes to the Late-Gothic Revival' in Whittingham, S. (ed.): *Victorian Society Annual 1996* (London, 1997), pp. 37-49 (46-8).
- ⁴⁸ Cherry (2005), Op.cit., p.8, 'From the late 1860s onwards it was the work of Street, Pearson, Bodley and Brooks, the 'more civilised leading architects'... that were particularly admired by Pevsner...'
- ⁴⁹ NDJ (17 Oct. 1888), p.6, (*St. George's Church Jesmond*) *Report on Consecration Service*
- ⁵⁰ Hall, M.: 'What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture 1850-1870', in *JAH*, Vol.59, No. 1 (March, 2000), pp.78-95.
- ⁵¹ Stamp, G.: *An Architect of Promise: George Gilbert Scott Junior (1839-1897)* (Donington, 2002), pp. 38-63.
- ⁵² Vol.I, Appendix (1).
- ⁵³ Vol.II, Cat.I, *The Drawings*.
- ⁵⁴ Vol.II, Cat.II, *The Bills of Quantities (May 1886)*.
- ⁵⁵ Vol.II, Cat.V, *Three Albums of Photographs c.1888-90*.
- ⁵⁶ E.g. Appendix (1c) TWA DT.RH/1-25 *Ralph Hedley (Craftsmen) Ltd.*
- ⁵⁷ Vol.I, Appendix (1a) *St. George's Parochial Monthly (SGPM)*, in monthly instalments, Vol.1 no.1 inaugurated January 1889.
- ⁵⁸ Vol.II, Cat.IV, *Jesmond Church Extension scheme: Minute Book 1886-1890 (JCE)*.
- ⁵⁹ E.g. *B*, Vol. 56 (30 March 1889), page 243 + illus.; also Vol. 59 (15 Nov. 1890), p.386 + illus.; also Vol. 83 (25 Oct. 1902), p.370 + illus.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. Vol.II, Cat.I, **I.27**.
- ⁶¹ To date, the author has been unable to trace an obituary notice for T.R. Spence. He died 12 April 1918, survived by his widow Charlotte M. Spence (née Barber). They had four children, Gwendolyn, Launcelot, (Ralph) Norman and Thomas, of whom Launcelot assisted his father in later years. I am grateful to Simone Harris (Local Studies Library, Bromley) and Francesca Debenham (Local Studies Library, Croydon) for their assistance.
- ⁶² E.g. Vol.I, Appendix 1a, g & h. I am especially grateful to the artist's grandsons, the late John (d. 2003) and Barrie Spence (in Australia), for all their assistance.
- ⁶³ Pennefather, C.: '*Fervent in Spirit*'. *Memories of The Rev. Prebendary Pennefather, D.D.* (privately printed, London, 1918), *Foreword*.

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- ⁶⁴ McGuire, D.F.: *Charles Mitchell 1820-1895. Victorian Shipbuilder* (London, 1988). The parochial council of St. George's Jesmond also has in its possession many of McGuire's research notes for his book; see Vol.I, Appendix (1d).
- ⁶⁵ Crawford, T.: *Nineteenth Century Notes on Walker* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1904), pp.134-4.
- ⁶⁶ For the Palinsburn sale, see Vol.II, Cat.III, note 1.
- ⁶⁷ Vol.I, Appendix (1a).
- ⁶⁸ Vol.II, Cat.III, *Charles Mitchell Esq. Ledgers (Nos.1 & 2)*.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.[III. 5. F.].
- ⁷⁰ NDJ (26 Aug. 1895), p.5, *The Late Dr. Charles Mitchell. Pulpit Reference at St. George's Church*.
- ⁷¹ E.g. W.A.S. Benson (1854-1924) and Lewis F. Day (1845-1910), as founding members of the Art Workers' Guild and of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, have both been the subject of recent monographs; see Hamerton, I. (ed.): *W.A.S. Benson. Arts and Crafts luminary and pioneer of Modern design* (Woodbridge, 2007); also Hansen, J.M.: *Lewis Foreman Day (1845-1907). Unity in Design and Industry* (Woodbridge, 2007). However, equally influential designers of the period, e.g. George C. Haité (1855-1924), still await critical reappraisal, but see White, G.: 'The Work of George C. Haité, Designer and Painter' in AR, Vol.1 (London, Nov. 1896-May 1897), pp.83-98.
- ⁷² Bodley, G.F. : 'The Modes in Which Religious Life and Thought May be Influenced by Art' in Swaby, W.P. (ed.): *Official Report of the Church Congress held at Newcastle-on-Tyne..., 1881* (London, 1882), pp.325-30 (325-6).
- ⁷³ Harries (2000), Op.cit., p.132.
- ⁷⁴ Ruskin, J.: 'St. Mark's Rest. The History of Venice: Written for the Help of the Few Who Still Care for Her Monuments', in Cook, E.T. & Wedderburn, A. (eds.): *The Complete Works of John Ruskin, Library Edition*, Vol.XXIV (London, 1906), pp.193-400.
- ⁷⁵ Unrau, J.: *Ruskin and St. Mark's* (London, 1984), pp.171-89; also Wheeler, M.: *Ruskin's God* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.241-50
- ⁷⁶ Wilde, O.: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published London, 1891 (Bristow. J. (ed.), OUP, Oxford, 2006), pp.4-5.



2. Figures in a Landscape

2.1 Figures in a Landscape:

The Social and Urban Setting of St. George's Church Jesmond

2.1-1 Introduction

At half-past-two on a Saturday afternoon in January 1887, a small gathering waited upon the first Bishop of Newcastle, Ernest Roland Wilberforce (1840-1907) [2.1], the Archdeacon of Northumberland, Hans Hamilton (1823-1905), and the vicar of Jesmond, Somerset Edward Pennefather (1848-1917). They were there to bless the foundation stone of a new church.¹ With attendant clergy and choir singing, they processed the short distance from a temporary cast-iron chapel, and onwards to a tree-fringed building site on the outskirts of Newcastle. The weather was hardly propitious, which no doubt accounted for the low attendance at the ceremony. Soaked and chilled through, little can Bishop Wilberforce have imagined that this church was destined to become one of the most remarkable ecclesiastical edifices in his diocese, or indeed in the north of England. Ever since his installation as vicar of Jesmond in 1882, Somerset Pennefather had sought to address the pressing religious needs of a semi-rural district rapidly disappearing under a sea of new housing.² And in the shipbuilder Charles Mitchell (1820-95), Pennefather had found a truly munificent and discriminating patron for his project. The plans for the building, which the Bishop had personally approved well over a year before,³ were already much augmented, and there were to be further and constant revisions, tending to an ever more sumptuous decorative elaboration. Of the many large churches then rising around Newcastle, St. George's Jesmond was to prove unique. On a scale itself exceptional for the age, it would be finished within five years, a singularly beautiful example of modern ecclesiastical art, engaging some of the brightest decorative talents of the day. Steeped as they were in the latest artistic developments at home and abroad, its patron and architect might have felt fully justified in thinking that their achievement would prove to be of more than merely local interest.

This chapter examines the careers, characters and social connections of the men who built St. George's Jesmond.

2.1-2 Priest and Parish:

St. George's was a daughter of Jesmond Parish Church (JPC) [6.19, 3.5], a stately Gothic pile built in 1859-61 for the foremost (and wealthiest) Evangelical congregation in Newcastle, who had themselves seceded from their former home nearer the town centre in 1856.⁴ The trustees had initially preferred to erect a proprietary chapel (as the Clayton Memorial Church), but the then Bishop of Durham, Dr. Longley (1794-1868; Archbishop of York from 1860, and of Canterbury from 1862) – no doubt with an eye to the rapid urbanisation of the Jesmond

district – insisted that an ecclesiastical district also be attached.⁵ In May 1882, Somerset Pennefather [2.2] was invited to succeed the late Berkeley Addison (1815-1882) as only the second vicar of Jesmond.⁶ The same month also saw the inauguration of a new Anglican diocese of Newcastle, encompassing the largely rural county of Northumberland, the industrialised north bank of the River Tyne and Newcastle itself, with the ancient city church of St. Nicholas adapted as its cathedral. Whereas the diocese would increasingly gravitate towards Anglo-Catholicism, Jesmond Parish Church remained a ‘stronghold’ for Protestant sentiment in the region.⁷ Although the Dublin-born Pennefather already had considerable parochial experience, it was evidently his impeccable Evangelical credentials and talents as a preacher and missionary that had commended him to the attention of JPC’s trustees.⁸ Yet from the first, matters did not all go the trustees’ way, as Catherine Pennefather records:

The old Jesmond church was large and built in the early Victorian style. It had galleries all round, and the pulpit was high so that the preacher could be seen well from them. It had been built as a kind of protest against anything that did not seem, to the people who came to it, to be truly evangelical. There were pews with doors, and those who rented them never wished any stranger to be shown into their seats. This went very much against the feeling of the new vicar, so he told the people one Sunday, from the pulpit, what he desired the church to be, i.e. a centre for the entire parish, and that he hoped to send round invitations to every home to let the inmates know how welcome they would be. It took some time for the congregation to understand all this, but after many calls and long talks with heads of families, the church was at length filled.⁹

This was not an attack on the system of pew rents operating at JPC, although there was certainly much debate amongst local churchmen concerning the ‘Free Church Sitzings’ movement.¹⁰ Rather, Pennefather was demonstrating his commitment to the comprehensiveness of the Church of England. He insisted his congregation take seriously their wider parochial responsibilities as members of the Established Church, rather than persist in sectarian exclusiveness. And in truth, Pennefather had already begun to distance himself from his Evangelical roots, adopting the moderate High Churchmanship of his diocesan (Bishop Wilberforce). As one of Pennefather’s obituarists remarked (1917), it was whilst ‘at Newcastle... [that] he definitely took a place among the moderate High Churchmen, gently and without the occurrence of anything to cause regret on either side withdrawing himself from the more marked of ‘Evangelical’ affinities, among whom his upbringing had been passed’.¹¹ Later, as vicar of St. Mary Abbot’s, Kensington (1897-1917) and prebendary of St. Paul’s cathedral, Pennefather would act as a respected representative of the moderate High Church party in the diocese of London. Catherine Pennefather (1918) noted her husband’s ‘steady advance of his opinion [at this time] which culminated in the restoration of the Eucharistic vestments in the very last year of his long and useful life’.¹²

Amongst the first of Pennefather's actions, as the newly installed vicar of Jesmond, was the promotion of a parish extension scheme. The 1870s and 80s had seen a significant acceleration in the urban expansion of Jesmond. A dormitory suburb of terraces and smart villas, built for the newly emerging managerial and mercantile middle-classes of Newcastle, was creeping relentlessly northwards and away from the immediate neighbourhood of JPC [3.5]. After an abortive start – interrupted by Pennefather's lengthy convalescence following his involvement in a serious rail accident¹³ – a further attempt was made in 1885.¹⁴ This time round, Charles Mitchell stepped in, offering a portion of his own land for a church plant, where Osborne Road skirted the southern edge of his Jesmond Towers estate [3.2]. Here a cast-iron church was erected, but whether Mitchell already harboured ambitions for its grander replacement is a moot point.¹⁵ Catherine Pennefather strongly implies that Charles Mitchell was unchurched before their friendship – put-off by the interminable sermons of his childhood in Scotland – and that he had a reputation for being tight-fisted as a donor.¹⁶ Pressure of work (and especially during the period 1882-5) may well have inhibited Mitchell's regular attendance at church, but he was certainly not lacking in religious sympathies. On the evidence of his personal ledgers, Mitchell was making significant donations to High Church clergy, churches and charities well before Pennefather was inducted to JPC.¹⁷ However, once set on providing a new church for the district, few doubted Mitchell's credentials as a churchman.

Although 'people were soon drawn to it',¹⁸ it is likely that Pennefather valued his new congregation less for its numerical size than for its devotional commitment – already distinct from the Evangelicalism of its parent at Jesmond Parish Church – a bond strengthened by his relocating the vicarage to Eldon House (demolished), a newly built red-brick villa close by on Osborne Road [3.2].¹⁹ Pennefather was duly installed as their vicar (resigning the living at JPC) when the new parish of St. George, West Jesmond, was formally created in January 1889, his institution to the living coinciding with the dedication of the new peal of bells in the tower.²⁰ The tone of the parish magazine is a fair indication of the energy with which Pennefather approached the challenges of his new charge. His 'manliness', administrative abilities and business-like manner soon commended him to the new diocesan administration, whilst Mitchell half-jokingly remarked that Pennefather had missed his vocation in the shipping business.²¹ However, to regard St. George's as merely the result of a secession by the more High Church members of JPC's congregation may be a little too simplistic, although Bernard Shaw (1896) noted nonetheless that 'some of the congregation thought... [the new church] too ornamental'.²² Neither Pennefather nor Mitchell could be accused of promoting Ritualism. Nationally speaking, the influence of the Evangelical party in the Church of England was on the wane, whilst the more Catholic wing of the Church was in the ascendant. JPC may have been locally influential and wealthy, but its churchmanship was running well against the national trend. In

dedicating their new church to England's patron saint, Pennefather and Mitchell were affirming St. George's as a bastion of the Established Church in Jesmond – both Protestant (i.e. reformed and national) and Catholic (comprehensive and universal). Fittingly, the foundation stone was laid during the very first week of Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, whilst the western gables of the church and parochial hall each bear the date 1887 [7.5, 1.29i]. So far, so conventional. And yet the need to define itself with respect to the new diocese of Newcastle, and apart from Jesmond Parish Church, lent a certain edge to the iconography of St. George's, with anything but conventional results.

2.1-3 The Patron:

Charles Mitchell [2.3] was apprenticed as an engineer's draughtsman in his native Aberdeen, before joining one of the earliest iron-shipbuilding yards on Tyneside.²³ Transferring to a marine-engineer's in London, he thereupon resolved to become an iron-shipbuilder himself. In 1852 he returned to the Tyne to set up his own yard at Low Walker, a few miles downriver of Newcastle [3.7a, 3.8]. As his son would later testify, it was a measure of Mitchell's determination that, on his first arriving on the Tyne with very little money, and after settling his expenses for the passage out of his weekly wage of only 10s, 'he sent back to his father the balance that had been handed to him...', and resolved 'that if it were possible he would never again ask anyone for a farthing, and this he religiously carried out'.²⁴ Similarly, whilst in London, he lodged with a French family in order to gain some proficiency in the language; his son later claimed that his father was of the opinion 'that to his knowledge of French, which was then not very common amongst business men, he owed almost every success which he attained in after life'.²⁵ On 9 May 1854, Charles married Ann Swan (1828-99), one of eight surviving children of William Swan (1799-1849) and Ann Sheriton (1800-70) of West Farm, Walker. The couple settled down to family life close by the shipyard, but of their three children, only the eldest, Charles William (1855-1903) survived beyond infancy. Charles became in effect head of the Swan clan, and going on the evidence of their memorials at Walker and Longbenton, his new in-laws appear to have been of a strongly High Church persuasion.²⁶ Family members were also recruited into the shipbuilding business and trained-up at the Low Walker yard, to be promoted later as managers with yards in which Charles had acquired a controlling interest. Perhaps the closest relationship was with his youngest brother-in-law, twenty-two years Charles Mitchell's junior. Henry Frederick Swan (1842-1908) [2.15] was apprenticed at the Low Walker yard at the age of sixteen, and by his mid-twenties was taken on as his brother-in-law's business partner.²⁷ He would subsequently make a name for himself as one of the greatest naval architects of his generation. In 1862, the Low Walker yard was awarded the contract to convert the Imperial Russian naval-dockyards to iron-shipbuilding, and Swan spent three years in St. Petersburg as the company's on-site representative. On his return to England in 1865, he took

charge of the Low Walker yard during Mitchell's convalescence following a prolonged bout of ill-health.²⁸

From 1867 onwards, Charles Mitchell & Co. began highly profitable relations with Sir William Armstrong's [2.8-9] engineering and armaments works at Elswick, upriver of Newcastle, who were in need of a deep-water shipbuilding capacity [3.7a]. Their burgeoning business relationship was physically cemented when Mitchell purchased the Jesmond Towers estate in 1869 [2.12, 3.3], directly adjoining Lord Armstrong's property (Jesmond Dean). In 1871, they were joined by Armstrong's works manager, Andrew Noble (1831-1915) [2.10], who took the property (Jesmond Dene House) immediately behind Mitchell's, whilst Mitchell leased the adjoining property (North Jesmond House) [2.16] on his estate to his brother-in-law. In 1882, the two businesses merged, to great acclaim, as Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., and almost overnight the new concern became the major industrial conglomerate on Tyneside, with increasingly lucrative defence contracts both overseas and with Her Majesty's Government. Armstrong's ennoblement in 1887 was symptomatic both of his developing status as a national celebrity and regional 'hero', and of the increasing identification of the company's interests with the needs of the State. His preference in later years for 'Cragside' [2.11], his country estate at Rothbury in north Northumberland, in effect left Mitchell as the most senior of the partners resident in Jesmond. Even so, Armstrong's name would long remain associated in the public mind with Jesmond. As such, Mitchell's gift of the church was as much a mark of corporate pride as of his own personal largesse. With Mitchell and Noble as the most prominent members of its congregation [2.14], and H.F. Swan installed as churchwarden (and chairman of the Jesmond Church Extension Committee), St. George's was a company church in all but name [I.28].

Charles Mitchell was in his late-sixties when work began on St. George's church. He had worked strenuously since his teens, and indeed overwork was rumoured to have caused his earlier collapse. Nor had his workload lessened with advancing years. The amalgamation with the Elswick works required, if anything, even greater attention from its directors in order to steer the nascent company safely through the major trade recession of the mid-1880s.²⁹ Although the merger of the companies made Mitchell a very wealthy man, there was perhaps little time left to enjoy his wealth with ease. Catherine Pennefather quotes a remark of Mitchell's in connection with the building of St. George's – 'I have learned that the House of Prayer, and God's House, should be exceedingly magnificent'³⁰ – a reference to a verse in I Chronicles, concerning King David's plans for the Temple in Jerusalem, which surely mirrored Mitchell's apprehensions:

And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.³¹

If Charles Mitchell likened his situation to that of King David, did he then see his only son as Solomon, ‘who shall be a man of rest’,³² bringing to completion his father’s philanthropic works? Interestingly, Charles William [2.6] did not immediately follow his father on to the Board of Directors, only being appointed in 1900 in order to bolster (Sir) Andrew Noble’s increasingly beleaguered position as Chairman (in succession to the late Lord Armstrong).³³ He had always been of uncertain health but had shown signs of artistic ability from an early age. Thus rather than follow his father into the shipbuilding business, the son was encouraged to develop his talents, pursuing his studies on the Continent, principally in the Parisian *atelier* of Pierre Charles Comte (1823-95), a purveyor of technically proficient if somewhat bloodless historical costume pieces.³⁴ Happily, Charles William did not follow his master’s example, and although he achieved only the one striking success with his *Hypatia* [2.7] at the 1885 Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, his small and highly competent *oeuvre* nevertheless reveals a predilection for ‘poetic’ Classical allegories after the manner of Walter Crane (1845-1915), Frederic Leighton (1830-96) and William Blake-Richmond (1842-1921). He was an early (but not a founding) member of the Art Workers’ Guild, being elected in 1884,³⁵ and an interest in the relationship of the arts to industry would remain a central concern of his later years, e.g. in his novel restructuring of the Newcastle School of Art to accommodate crafts training on the Birmingham model.³⁶ The profits accruing from Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. (as Armstrongs were titled after 1897) would also guarantee Charles William a degree of financial independence and privileges (e.g. town houses in the most fashionable districts of Kensington),³⁷ so that he no longer had to practise art for a living. Instead, he turned his attentions to promoting the wider public appreciation of art in the North-East, extending and developing on his father’s example. His early death in 1903 occasioned an extraordinarily fulsome series of tributes from the region’s artistic community, sensing that a great prophet and champion for their cause had been snatched away.³⁸

Like the Biblical temple in Jerusalem, Charles Mitchell was occupied seven years in building St. George’s.³⁹ Having thus far cheated death, he immediately turned his attentions to the University Extension Scheme in his native Aberdeen, encouraging the rebuilding of Marischall College on a prodigious scale. As he wrote to his son in 1892, ‘I send you a paper which will show you how I am threatening to play ducks and drakes [i.e. referring to the game of pond-skipping] with your money. However, I have long desired to do something for Aberdeen, and Marischall College presents a proper opportunity’⁴⁰ The final total of his

benefactions amounted to around £31,000, but the college authorities found the precise sum difficult to quantify, due to Mitchell's habit of constantly supplementing his gifts.⁴¹ In recognition, the University Senate conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D in February 1893. The project finally outlasted him, and became an obligation dutifully shouldered by his son. As Charles William recalled, his father's largesse had:

... encouraged the University to embark on a scheme very considerably greater and more expensive than it would otherwise have done... and more particularly in the way in which he encouraged the completion of... the ornamental portions of the building ...he felt that it would be very much easier to find money for the most useful parts of the building, but he did not see that anybody would be likely, or rather that the public generally would be likely, to subscribe to mere ornament, and therefore he was particularly anxious that the hall and tower should be gone on with, and it was for that particular purpose that he contributed what he did.⁴²

It is perhaps all too easy to think of Mitchell, late in life, as building monuments to perpetuate his memory. This would be to do him a disservice. Only one – the gilded spires of the Mitchell Tower above Marischall College – ever bore his name or any mark that he was their author, and that a posthumous honour. St. George's is itself unusual amongst Victorian churches in wholly eschewing the familiar marks of a founder's piety and munificence. Of his character, one obituarist remarked that 'Mr. Mitchell was not so well known to the public as he ought to have been; but in public, as in private, he was unassuming and courteous to an extreme degree'.⁴³ Overall, Mitchell did not seek to trumpet his donations – a habit of mind also inherited by his son – perhaps taking to heart Matthew 6.1-4, 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them'.⁴⁴

Donald McGuire has argued that Mitchell's 'generosity was probably second only to that of Lord Armstrong in total',⁴⁵ but aside from his major benefactions, the sums recorded in Mitchell's ledgers as donations and such like are not all that large.⁴⁶ In rejecting the somewhat scattergun approach of Armstrong's largesse, Mitchell preferred to direct his benefactions towards single achievable ends amenable to his direct personal control – no project was ever left incomplete for lack of funds. He was careful nonetheless to avoid direct competition – or comparison – with his senior business partner, choosing rather to support bodies, e.g. artist's associations and the Church, largely passed over by Armstrong. Mitchell's direct patronage reveals something of his cast of mind, being less concerned with disciplines one would have thought as of immediate practical benefit to a major industrialist, such as the teaching of science or engineering. Rather, his benefactions were directed towards more ineffable ends, and especially the wider appreciation of art. Indeed, Mitchell seems to have genuinely preferred the company of artists, taking a leading role on the committees of the short-lived Newcastle Arts

Association (1878-83), and later, of the Fine Arts section of Newcastle's Royal Jubilee exhibition (1887).

2.1-4 The Architect:

If St. George's was an old man's project, it was nevertheless a young man's work. Virtually all of the leading craftsmen employed on the building were in their thirties or early forties, and often at the outset of their careers as independent artists. It may have suited Mitchell's pocket to promote fresh talent. Reputations could be won (or lost) on such a prestigious commission; only the best would do, even if it meant working at a loss. For the artist-architect Thomas Ralph Spence (1845-1918) [2.17], the church complex was a tremendous opportunity granted to a still relatively young artist, setting the seal on his decade-long association with Charles Mitchell. And Spence certainly rose to the challenge. The contract drawings that do survive attest to the reams of detail drawings from his hand that must once have existed.⁴⁷ His workload at this time can be gauged by his general absence as an easel artist from the major London galleries.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Spence's *magnum opus* came too early in his career. Despite his later success in the capital as an artist and art-decorator, he never again received commissions on the scale of Jesmond. This may in part explain the slightly ironic tone of an 1899 article of his, reporting on Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock ('the mosque, or, rather, the Shrine of Omar'):

Standing in this shrine, a conviction arises that it is the creation of one supreme artistic mind... A tradition exists that, after the completion of the mosque, the architect was beheaded to effectually prevent him from being the creator of any other fabric that should rival or supersede this. *Such a summary process may have its advantages to minds that blossom fully only under one supreme effort* [my italics].⁴⁹

Like his patron, T.R. Spence was not a native Tynesider. Born in the village of West Gilling, near Richmond (North Yorks.), his father was a cabinetmaker and builder. According to family tradition, John Spence (1820-92) would not consent to his son pursuing a career as an artist, and the profession of an architect was settled on instead. He trained in several architectural offices, both in the north of England and in London, but details of Spence's architectural pupillage are otherwise hard to come by. Although Spence would later lecture at meetings of the Architectural Association and the Royal Institute of British Architects, he never registered with either of these bodies. His friend and colleague Frederick Hamilton Jackson (1848-1923), writing in his 1903 retrospective on the artist, noted that it was whilst Spence was employed by a Newcastle architect that he made the acquaintance of Charles Mitchell.⁵⁰ This strongly suggests that he was in the office of Thomas Oliver junr. (1824-1902), who from 1869 onwards had been engaged on major estate works for Mitchell at Jesmond Towers.⁵¹ The

seamless and highly idiomatic nature of Spence's own later (1883-5) additions to the house further hints at his intimate knowledge of the earlier work [2.12].⁵² Spence was also beginning to make a name for himself in Newcastle's artistic circles (where he would also have met Mitchell), and around 1877 or 1878, he was appointed shipyard architect to Charles Mitchell & Co. The design and fitting-out of the on-board accommodation of modern steamships was a novel and highly specialised role, and Mitchell & Co. were amongst the first of a clutch of shipyards and shipping lines to engage professional architects for this work. The creation of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. provided further opportunities for Mitchell to promote his young protégé.⁵³ Jesmond Towers was in need of further enlarging, as a 'display house' with which to woo prospective customers, and partly to claim parity with Armstrong's 'Cragside' in north Northumberland. Spence's work here virtually doubled the size of the house, creating one of the largest mansions in Victorian Newcastle [2.12-13].⁵⁴ St. George's church marked the climax of these estate works for Mitchell, and of this particular phase in Spence's career, although he would continue to work for his benefactor, and his son, until well into the new century.⁵⁵

Spence moved to London late in 1885, where he established himself as an 'architectural decorator' just off Oxford Street, in a district noted for its many artisan cabinet-makers, high-class decorating firms and art-suppliers.⁵⁶ It seems probable that the move was encouraged by C.W. Mitchell, in order to capitalise on the latest metropolitan developments as design work began on his father's new church. Thus in January 1886, T.R. Spence joined the younger Mitchell as a member of the Art Workers' Guild, during J.D. Sedding's tenure as Master.⁵⁷ Spence seems to have especially valued the *camaraderie* of the Guild [2.18-19], and he was to remain an active member, at meetings and on its committees, until his retirement in 1913. In addition, he resumed his ambitions as an easel artist, exhibiting English and Continental landscapes, Biblical scenes and larger essays in the manner of Walter Crane (q.v.) and (Sir) Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) [4.27-9]. He continued nonetheless to be highly respected as a decorative artist and designer, e.g. as one of the founding members of the Society of Designers (established 1896),⁵⁸ contributing stained glass, metalwork (he became something of a specialist designer of light fittings) and decorative schemes for such varied architects as Basil Champneys (1843-1935) [4.20], John McKean Brydon (1840-1901) [4.21-2], Aston Webb (1849-1930) [4.23-4] – with Ingress Bell (1837-1914) – and Henry T. Hare (1860-1921) [4.25-6]. There is moreover a significant body of work in South Africa [4.17-8], largely commissioned through Frank Emley (1861-1938), a former pupil of Messrs. Oliver & Leeson in Newcastle,⁵⁹ who had emigrated to the Transvaal for health reasons, later establishing the prestigious practice of Messrs. Leck & Emley in Johannesburg.⁶⁰ Spence's work for these architects, chiming so effortlessly with their eclectic 'Free-style' idiom, is certainly less individual than his work for Charles Mitchell, and is perhaps for that reason easily overlooked.

As such, Spence's post-Jesmond work is entirely typical of that large body of British turn-of-the-century designers – some, such as Lewis F. Day (1845-1910) and George C. Haité (1855-1924), only now receiving their due – who embraced the teachings of Ruskin, Morris and Sedding, whilst also acknowledging the particular role of industry and commerce in promoting a commonwealth of the arts. It should however be noted that Hamilton Jackson, who was noticeably more sympathetic towards Continental Art Nouveau than most English critics of the time,⁶¹ nonetheless held T.R. Spence to be a great innovator, and as having adopted 'those qualities of line which formed the basis of the 'new art' ... long before they became fashionable'.⁶² Similarly, in a retrospective article on Spence's metalwork (1902), Jackson voiced a complaint that the artist's many imitators had coarsened and exaggerated his 'characteristic treatment', a 'vexation to which every inventor is liable, and which he must make up his mind to endure' [4.14-5].⁶³ This may well reflect Spence's own view of the matter.

2.1-5 The Park (Jesmond Towers):

No study of Spence's only church would be complete without examining its relationship to Charles Mitchell's house and the estate on which it was built. This is difficult to appreciate today on the ground, due to the division and residential infilling of Mitchell's park during the last century. However, an examination of the estate's transformation during Mitchell's tenure makes clear that the location of the new church was no accident, nor was Mitchell's donation an entirely disinterested act of generosity. In common with many wealthy Victorian landowners, Charles Mitchell set about improvements to his Jesmond estate with an eye to creating a legacy for his son, and as an appropriate vehicle for public display.

Despite the prosperity brought by the coal trade, Newcastle had remained a remarkably compact town up until the middle decades of the nineteenth century, barely expanding beyond its medieval limits [3.5].⁶⁴ Most of the significant commercial and industrial districts were close to the river, and this continued to be the case as heavier industries invaded the river basin during the economic boom of the later nineteenth century. To the north-east of the town, large parts of Jesmond, Heaton and Jesmond Vale, following the picturesque course of the Ouse Burn, remained in a semi-rural state, pockmarked here and there by former coal pits. Following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, these formerly independent districts were incorporated into the newly reformed borough of Newcastle, thus opening the way for the town to expand beyond its former limits. The later 1830s would see smart residential developments begin around the Barras Bridge, and gradually creep north-eastwards along the straight length of the newly laid out Jesmond Road.⁶⁵ When Charles Mitchell acquired West Jesmond House – which he subsequently renamed Jesmond Towers – together with North Jesmond House and

approximately fifty acres of parkland in 1869, the West Jesmond district still consisted of farmsteads and isolated villas [3.3]. Mitchell accordingly confined his improvements to the house and the regularisation of the park boundaries on its northern and western approaches.⁶⁶ Ten years later, as Reid's map (1879) [3.5] shows, the encroaching town remained some way off still, but by the early 80s housing developments were threatening the southern boundary of the estate. However, unlike his partner, Lord Armstrong, who retreated to the country, Mitchell chose to stay put, endeavouring to manage rather than submit to the impending changes.

Mitchell had purchased the Jesmond Towers estate off Richard Burdon-Sanderson II (1821-76), representative of a long established and staunchly Evangelical Jesmond family.⁶⁷ The sale was a prelude to Burdon-Sanderson disposing of further parcels of land for development to Alderman William Temple [3.3]. Much of the middle-class terraced housing erected by Temple during the 1870s still stands, centred on the long straight of Osborne Road (a former farm track) and distinguished by its white (glazed) brickwork and local sandstone dressings. The Burdon-Sandersons remained nonetheless significant landholders in Jesmond,⁶⁸ and from 1883 onwards, Burdon-Sanderson's son – also Richard Burdon-Sanderson (1851-1909)⁶⁹ – began the speculative development of the northern reaches of Osborne Road, almost to the gates of Jesmond Towers.⁷⁰ The character of this development was to be more highly differentiated than Temple's, with terraced housing on the west side of Osborne Road [1.2], principally in red-brick with fashionable 'Queen-Anne' detailing, facing onto detached villa developments to the east. Progress on the latter was halting: in 1886-7, Osborne Road could still be described as ending 'in the country' at Eldon House (3.2),⁷¹ the first of Burdon-Sanderson's new villas. It would take more than a decade to dispose of the remaining plots. Burdon-Sanderson's development nevertheless gave a lead to Lord Armstrong's agent and surveyor, the architect F.W. Rich (1840-1929), who c.1890 laid out an estate of detached villas, immediately to the east of Mitchell's park, between Osborne Road and the sylvan course of the Ouse Burn (i.e. Jesmond Dene, gifted to the city in 1883 by Lord Armstrong as a public park).

Like the later villas along Osborne Road, the plots of the Armstrong-Rich development, i.e. the present Adderstone (formerly Burlington) Crescent and Lindisfarne Road, were developed by their individual owners as bespoke designs [3.2]. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they lack coherence as a group, freely mixing a range of fashionable idioms, 'Queen-Anne', neo-Georgian and Arts and Crafts. It could all have been so very different. There are indications that Burdon-Sanderson had intended a more unified approach, somewhat on the lines of the famous Bedford Park development recently inaugurated (and then still rising) in Chiswick (London).⁷² Moreover, Mitchell was also implicated in these developments. Flush with funds from the merger with Elswick, Mitchell built a new south lodge – providing a further access point from

his park onto Osborne Road – as a prelude to a further remodelling of The Towers [1.14-5, III.2]. Land for the lodge was purchased off Burdon-Sanderson in August 1882, with work completed by the close of June 1883.⁷³ But whereas Mitchell's previous estate lodges were stone-built with chunky High Victorian detailing, the new south lodge, designed by T.R. Spence – his first independent architectural work of which we can be certain – injected a note of urbane gentility, employing red-brick with stone dressings, tricked out with fashionable 'Queen Anne' detailing in the best metropolitan taste.⁷⁴

Burdon-Sanderson followed suit. The first of his new villas in Osborne Road, Eldon House (1884-5; now demolished), was a rather gaunt unimaginative red-brick design, designed by a minor local architect.⁷⁵ Burdon-Sanderson did much better with the next two, (1887-8) *Tudor Lodge* and *Highfield* (still extant as nos. 98 and 100 Osborne Road), his architect being none other than T.R. Spence, only recently removed to London [1.16-7].⁷⁶ That they were intended as model speculations, somewhat on the lines of Norman Shaw's and Maurice B. Adams's standardised designs for the Chiswick development, is suggested not only by the title numbering of the drawings, but also by their contrasting characterisation. *Tudor Lodge* (design No.1) [1.18] was given Anglo-Dutch gables and stone trim, whilst *Highfield* (No.2) [1.19] sported fashionably 'Queen Anne' timberwork – the latter amongst the best detailing of its type to be found on Tyneside. Otherwise, the two designs are remarkably similar in terms of planning and materials, e.g. the use of soft red-brick inset with numerous moulded terracotta panels, although in terms of scale and the size of the garden plots they far exceeded their Bedford Park models.⁷⁷

Burdon-Sanderson's scheme failed. By the late 1880s, he had abandoned speculative building and began disposing of his remaining land. The remaining villa plots on Osborne Road, closer to St. George's church – e.g. *Dunira* (1889; also demolished), a singularly flashy design by another local architect⁷⁸ – set the pattern for the subsequent development of Lord Armstrong's estate. Mitchell did not however abandon his plans. Burdon-Sanderson's original scheme had retained a narrow corridor of land [3.3], flanking the north side of Osborne Road and abutting the southern edge of the Jesmond Towers estate. It was here in 1882 that Rev. Pennefather had first proposed to build a chapel-of-ease for Jesmond Parish Church.⁷⁹ At this stage, Burdon-Sanderson was still intent on the residential development of his land, but at 10s per sq. yd. (i.e. £2,420 per acre), the plot was unaffordable even for Pennefather's affluent congregation, and the church extension scheme temporarily lapsed.⁸⁰ Even so, some lingering resistance to Pennefather's developing faith position, so at variance with the Sanderson family tradition of 'unworldly' Evangelicalism, cannot be ruled out. When Pennefather returned to the

church scheme in 1885, Burdon-Sanderson's agents refused to budge, thus precipitating Mitchell's intervention.

In offering a portion of his own land close by the site of Pennefather's original proposal, Mitchell may have sensed an opportunity, using the new church as leverage to prise land off Burdon-Sanderson, and thus prevent villa developments overlooking his park. The minutes of the Jesmond Church Extension Committee⁸¹ reveal Mitchell's concerns for the aesthetic relationship of his church to the new parochial hall and vicarage, the latter ostensibly the sole responsibility of the parish.⁸² Whilst the committee sought economies, Mitchell constantly interfered, offering his own design suggestions and additional financial support, to the end 'that the group of buildings may prove an interesting and useful feature of the neighbourhood'.⁸³ The site for the hall was changed four times, specifically in order to prevent villas being built between the church and the road, whilst numerous revisions were forced upon its hapless architect by both parties (T.R. Spence of course, appointed by Mitchell).⁸⁴ All the while, Mitchell nibbled away at Burdon-Sanderson's narrow tract of land, progressively adding to his park [3.4]. Only slowly did the arrangement of the church and its ancillary buildings take shape, grouped around a green or 'church field' [3.1]. If Burdon-Sanderson had harboured any qualms over Somerset Pennefather's churchmanship, he now saw the advantages of the new church for his own property speculations, and in May 1886 he enrolled amongst the principal subscribers for the parochial hall.⁸⁵

As a result of these manoeuvres, Mitchell obtained a strikingly impressive show-front for his estate, and staved off further encroachment on its perimeter. Moreover, the long defile of Osborne Road was co-opted as a borrowed landscape feature, the view north closed by the Italianate *campanile* of the church aligned on the axis of the street [1.1]. As one rounded the bend, the vista suddenly opened out over gently rising ground towards Jesmond Towers – this was the only point on the estate's perimeter from which one could glimpse the great house in its parkland setting [1.2]. In the foreground, the church and its ancillary buildings were grouped as if around a 'village' green [1.4]. The iconography was that of a stable and hierarchical social order. Indeed, C.W. Mitchell would later install the Jesmond Cricket Club on the field behind the church – what could be more quintessentially English? Charles Mitchell was however no aristocrat, and although he was granted arms in 1888,⁸⁶ the church and its buildings remained devoid of the traditional manorial trappings of ownership, title or lineage. The scale of Mitchell's church was not that of the country, but rather of the town; likewise, the 'church field', landscaped and railed about, had more the air of a residential park in the metropolis [1.4]. Here Mitchell's estate turned an urbane face towards the south, and the rows of terraces and villas relentlessly creeping northwards from the city. The provision of a new church building, in

advance of residential developments, had long been a ploy of property speculators in London and elsewhere, the Church being seen as a means for influencing the moral tone and quality – and therefore the property values – of a neighbourhood.⁸⁷ Thus in Newcastle, St. Thomas' church (1827-30) [6.18, 3.5], on the Barras Bridge, and Jesmond Parish Church (1857-61) [6.19], further out along Jesmond Road, had both been built in advance of the smart residential districts they would serve.⁸⁸ In this respect, St. George's followed a recognised pattern. At over 180 feet to the tip of the finial cross, Spence's tower was both a landmark on the city's skyline, and a beacon for Establishment values – no other church in the district could vie with it.

Charles Mitchell's gift of St. George's church was not therefore an isolated gesture, but rather the culmination of a twenty-year programme of estate improvements, progressing in a more-or-less counter-clockwise fashion around the perimeter of his property [3.4]. At its southern tip, the estate met the advancing town, and here Mitchell concentrated his energies. On the way, Mitchell assumed the cultural leadership of West Jesmond, in succession to Lord Armstrong, and the disposition of Mitchell's estate was adjusted to proclaim the fact. This is not quite the self-effacing Mitchell his obituarists would have us remember, but rather a singularly determined and astute businessman, one who was very sure of his purpose and how to achieve it. Subsequent developments have tended to dissipate Mitchell's hegemony. Within only a few years of his death, the Jesmond Towers estate was out-flanked by the tide of new housing. On inheriting the property, Charles William Mitchell (1855-1903) made further improvements to The Towers itself, but he also saw a speculative opportunity, submitting plans in 1902 for the laying out of the western half of the estate for housing [3.6].⁸⁹ The development only gained significant momentum four years later, after Mitchell's death, and after his uncle (H.F. Swan) had given up North Jesmond House for Prudhoe Hall, a country house ten miles west of Newcastle. The semi-rural setting of St. George's church survived, despite all the odds, until 1926, when The Towers was sold and the estate parcelled-out on the death of C.W. Mitchell's widow. Largely due to the piecemeal division of the estate, the present street pattern in this part of West Jesmond reflects the original disposition of the park to a remarkable degree, e.g. the modern Towers Avenue follows the straight line of the former carriage drive from the west lodge [3.2]. North Jesmond House clung-on as a convent, whilst The Towers was occupied by a succession of fee-paying schools.⁹⁰ The buildings have recently become vacant, and whilst the future of the former is very uncertain, conservative proposals are under discussion for the latter. Above all, the church remains as a dominating presence, cherished by the neighbourhood it was built to serve. Charles Mitchell would surely have had it no other way.

Notes to Chapter 2.1:

- ¹ NDJ (8 Jan. 1887), *St. George's Church Jesmond. Laying the Corner Stone*.
- ² Ibid.: also NDJ (13 Oct. 1888), p.6, *The New Church at Jesmond...*; also NDC (13 Oct. 1888), p.5, *St. George's Church, Jesmond*; also NWC (20 Oct. 1888), *St. George's Church, Jesmond. Consecration Service*.
- ³ See Vol.II, Cat.I, I.1-4.
- ⁴ Munden, A.: 'The Origin of Evangelical Anglicanism in Newcastle upon Tyne', in AA, Fifth Series, Vol.XI, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1983), pp.301-7 (304-6). The secession in 1856 followed a dispute over the right of appointment to St. Thomas' chapel (Barras Bridge), the congregation's previous home in Newcastle.
- ⁵ Munden, A.: *A Light in a Dark Place. Jesmond Parish Church* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2006), pp.42-52.
- ⁶ *Times* (30 Aug. 1917), p.8 obit. *Prebendary Pennefather*; also *Guardian* (7 Sept. 1917), obit. *Somerset Edward Pennefather*; also Pennefather (1918): Op.cit., pp.1-4.
The scion of an Irish Establishment family of lawyers, Somerset Edward Pennefather took his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, but received his 'spiritual' training from his uncle in London, Rev. William Pennefather (1816-73), Vicar of St. Jude's Mildmay Park. He was ordained in 1871, and had already served in three Midlands parishes, the last two as incumbent, before his move to Jesmond.
- ⁷ By 1879, Newcastle, and particularly Jesmond Parish Church, was 'one of the twelve centres of provincial Evangelicalism' outside of London; see Munden (1983), Op.cit., p.301.
- ⁸ Pennefather (1918), Op.cit., pp.17-8.
- ⁹ Ibid., pp.19-20.
- ¹⁰ The appropriation of pews was a recognised system for supplementing the stipends of clergy, see e.g. NDJ (20 Dec. 1884), p.8, *'Free and Open Churches'*, in which the two churchwardens at Jesmond Parish Church write in its defence. However, the issue also had doctrinal overtones, as the 'Free Church Sittings' movement was strongly supported by Anglo-Catholics, chiefly on the grounds that pew rents excluded the poor.
- ¹¹ *Guardian* (7 Sept. 1917), obit. *Somerset Edward Pennefather*.
- ¹² Pennefather (1918), Op.cit., pp.34-4.
- ¹³ Ibid., pp.21-5.
- ¹⁴ It was about this time that Pennefather became attracted to Freemasonry, being initiated into the Northumberland Lodge No. 685 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), 3 Feb. 1885, joining the Royal Arch of the Northumberland Chapter No. 685 (Newcastle), 20 April 1886, and becoming Master of the Lodge 1893-4. Pennefather continued his Masonic activities in London from 1897 onwards (St. Mary Abbots Lodge, No.1974 (Kensington)), but let his membership lapse in 1901. I am grateful Peter Aitkenhead, Assistant Librarian, the Library and Museum of Freemasonry (London).
- ¹⁵ See Vol.II, Cat.I, I.5.
- ¹⁶ Pennefather (1918): Op.cit., pp.20-1 & 25-6.
- ¹⁷ M1, *Subscriptions, Donations & Gratuities*, folios 16-19; e.g. 7 Oct. 1881, *Rev. O. Churchyard Charitable Contribution* (£20-0-0). Oliver Churchyard (1844-1905) was vicar of Longbenton (see note 26 below), and from 1883, vicar of St. Matthew's Summerhill, the Anglo-Catholic bastion in the west end of Newcastle.
- ¹⁸ Pennefather (1918), Op.cit., p.25.
- ¹⁹ For Eldon House, see below, note 75.
- ²⁰ Order in Council 29 Jan.; gazetted 5 Feb.; institution of Rev. Pennefather to the living and dedication service for the new peal of bells, 10 Feb. 1889; see *SGPM*, Vol.1, No.1 (Mar. 1889), pp.26-7.
- ²¹ Pennefather (1918), Op.cit., pp.20-1: 'He [Mitchell] often took him into his private study and showed him the plans for ships and delighted in [Pennefather's]... keen attention: 'Mr. Pennefather, you ought to have been in the shipping business; you have mistaken your vocation' he said. This impression, however, we soon found was wrong, for during another talk he was heard to say: 'The Vicar of Jesmond is the first clergyman I have met who is not only a minister in the Church but such a splendid man of business''.
- ²² Shaw (1896), Op.cit., p.22.
- ²³ *Times* (26 Aug. 1895), p.7, obit. *Mr. Charles Mitchell*; NDJ (23 Aug. 1895), p.8, *Death of Dr. Charles Mitchell*; also NDJ (27 Aug. 1895), p.6, *The Late... Dr. Mitchell's Career. Interesting Details*; also Crawford (1904), Op.cit., pp.117-23.
- ²⁴ C.W. Mitchell, quoted in Crawford (1904), Op.cit., p.134.
- ²⁵ Ibid., pp.134-5.

- ²⁶ Charles Mitchell is buried with his wife and infant children in the Swan family vault at Longbenton parish church, the ancient burial ground for Walker district. H.F. Swan's memorial windows in Walker parish church, to his parents, first wife (Mary Calvert Swan, d. 1869 aged 27 years) and infant son, all employ a High Church iconography (and artists).
- ²⁷ *Times* (26 Mar. 1908), p.8, obit., *Colonel Henry Frederick Swan C.B.*; also *NDJ* (25 Mar. 1908), *Death of Col. Swan C.B.*; also *Shipbuilder*, Vol.2 (Spring number), pp.229 & 238-9.
- ²⁸ *NDJ* (27 Aug. 1895), p.6, 'In 1865, Mr. Mitchell, for reasons of health, decided to withdraw from the great strains inseparable from the administration of a large industrial establishment, and with this object, went to reside at Surbiton, near London, occasionally visiting Newcastle, and making extended journeys abroad from time to time'.
- ²⁹ Bastable, M.J.: *Arms and the State. Sir William Armstrong and the remaking of British naval power, 1854-1914* (Aldershot, 2004), p.250.
- That Mitchell still put in long hours at the shipyards after the merger of the companies is implied by Catherine Pennefather: 'We soon had the pleasure of knowing him [Mitchell] well, and we began to go to see him in his home every Saturday afternoon when he was sure not to be in the works...'; see Pennefather (1918), *Op.cit.*, pp.20-1.
- ³⁰ Pennefather (1918), *Op.cit.*, pp.26-7.
- ³¹ 1 Chronicles 22.5.
- ³² 1 Chronicles 22.9, 'Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days'.
- ³³ Warren, K.: *Armstrongs of Elswick* (London, 1989), pp.90-1
- ³⁴ *Times* (2 Mar. 1903), p.7, obit. *Mr. Charles W. Mitchell*; also *NDJ* (2 Mar. 1903), p.4, *Mr. Mitchell's Death*; also Crawford (1904), *Op.cit.*, pp.124-39.
- ³⁵ AWG, *Guild Minute book No.1* (1884-6), elected at third Guild committee meeting, 13 May 1884.
- ³⁶ Peart, T. & Moat, N.: 'The Lost Art-Workers of Tyneside. Richard George Hatton and The (Newcastle) Handicrafts Company' in *DAS* No.17 (London, 1993), pp.13-22.
- ³⁷ 28-9 Hyde Park Gate until c.1890, then 195 Queen's Gate (all Kensington).
- ³⁸ E.g. 'In Memoriam. C.W. Mitchell' in *Pen and Palette Club Papers*, No.IV (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Dec. 1903), pp.131-5; also 'Mr. Charles W. Mitchell' in *MA* (1903), p. 310.
- ³⁹ 1 Kings 6.37-38.
- ⁴⁰ C.W. Mitchell, quoted in Crawford (1904), *Op.cit.*, p.136.
- ⁴¹ *NDJ* (27 Aug. 1895), p.6, which details Mitchell's various gifts to Marischall College (Aberdeen).
- ⁴² C.W. Mitchell, quoted in Crawford (1904), *Op.cit.*, p.137.
- ⁴³ *NDJ* (27 Aug. 1895), p.6.
- ⁴⁴ Matthew 6.1-4: 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them;... But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly'.
- ⁴⁵ McGuire (1988), *Op.cit.*, p.30.
- ⁴⁶ Between Jan. 1881 and Dec. 1889, Mitchell's annual disbursements for *Subscriptions, Donations and Gratuities*, as recorded in his ledgers, fluctuated between a low of £182-10-2 (1882) and a high of £1853-9-3 (1889), with a noticeable jump after 1884, as the profits from the amalgamated business began to accrue. However, very few of the individual amounts ever exceeded £100. A notable exception was the £300 gift (ledger no. 1, *folio* 70, 27 Jan. 1885) to Rev. Pennefather towards the purchase of the iron church from the congregation of St. George's church, Cullercoats.
- The ledgers record Mitchell's annual *Special Expenditure* on himself and his family – photography, jewellery, personal insurance, individual allowances, travelling expenses and such like – as relatively modest, the highest point being 1881 (£1697-18-6), and the lowest in 1888 (£83-12-11) and 1889 (a mere £39-10-0). The latter are somewhat surprising, and it is possible that Mitchell's accountant had become adept at burying the details elsewhere in the accounts.
- ⁴⁷ See Vol.II, Cat.I, pp.188-9.
- ⁴⁸ E.g. T.R. Spence did not exhibit at the Royal Academy between 1883 and 1891, the period of major building projects for Charles Mitchell. Thereafter he was a fairly regular contributor to the Academy's exhibitions.
- ⁴⁹ Spence, T.R.: 'Jerusalem: Architectural Study' in *AR*, Vol. 6 (London, 1899), pp. 253-262 (259).
- ⁵⁰ Jackson, F. Hamilton: 'The Work of T.R. Spence, Designer, Decorator and Architect' in *MA* (London, 1903), pp.80-84 (81).

- ⁵¹ TWA Newcastle Building Control Records, T186/3577 *West Jesmond House* (Jesmond Towers), stables (Aug. 1869); T186/3615 *West Jesmond House* (Jesmond Towers), enlargement (Sept. 1869); T186/3847 *Jesmond Towers*, north lodge (May 1870); T186/4854 *Jesmond Towers*, west lodge, (May 1873). The architect for all but the last is named as Thomas Oliver (Newcastle), although on stylistic grounds the west lodge can also be attributed to Oliver.
- ⁵² TWA Newcastle Building Control Records, T186/10355 *Jesmond Towers* extensions (Dec. 1883; architect T.R. Spence, 25 Blackett Street, Newcastle); also M1, *folios* 52, 54, 56, 58, 66, 68, 80, 82, 84. Building work began Feb. 1884 and was completed Sept. 1885, the contractor being Messrs. Walter Scott (of Newcastle).
- ⁵³ Pennefather (1918), *Op.cit.*, p.26: 'The thought grew in his [Mitchell's] mind that a permanent church should be his [spiritual] work and before very long he asked [Pennefather]... to come into his library to see some designs which a young friend of his, an architect, had drawn'. Of course, Spence is never named in Catherine Pennefather's memoir of her late husband.
- ⁵⁴ See note 52 above. The work substantially involved extending Thomas Oliver's earlier neo-Gothic work, particularly on the north front of the house, the remodelling of the interior in a modern Aesthetic taste, and the provision of a large (70 by 30 by 26 feet high) top-lit picture gallery.
- ⁵⁵ E.g. the further remodelling of the interior at Jesmond Towers, c.1902, and the glazing of the hall (now King's Hall) in the completed Armstrong College (Newcastle); for the latter, see 'Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne' in *BA* (6 July 1906), pp.15-6. C.W. Mitchell had chaired the college's arts committee.
- ⁵⁶ Progressively: at 30 Berners Street; at 45 Rathbone Place after June 1889; at 28 Newman Street after 1899. All three addresses were just off the north side of Oxford Street. See also advertisement, *BA* (20 Nov. 1885), p.i.
- ⁵⁷ AWG, *Guild Minute book No.1* (1884-6), 15 Jan. 1886 meeting.
- ⁵⁸ Parry, L.: *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London, 1988), p.102.
- ⁵⁹ Mitchell's former architect, Thomas Oliver junr. (1824-1902), had taken Richard John Leeson (d.1914) into partnership in 1879. As Messrs. Oliver & Leeson, the practice operated during the 1880s from 'Bank Chambers', 30 Mosley Street, Newcastle, specialising in commercial and institutional buildings, and also to a lesser extent, in churches. For Frank Emley (1861-1938), see Vol.I, Chap.3.1-3.
- ⁶⁰ For the South African career of Frank Emley, see *Dictionary of Architects in South Africa* <<http://artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/archframes.php?archid=471>> [accessed May 2011].
The Belfast and Glasgow trained William Leck (c.1852-1907) emigrated to the Transvaal from London in 1889, before entering into partnership with Emley in the late 1890s. They were responsible for some of Johannesburg's most impressive turn-of-the-century houses and commercial buildings. Of these, the National Bank (1903) – now First National Bank of South Africa – and the third incarnation of the Rand Club (1904), all feature metalwork designed by T.R. Spence. Also notable were the substantial wrought-iron balconies, designed by Spence, for the second of three incarnations of the 'Corner House' (c.1895), Hermann Eckstein & Co.'s offices in Johannesburg (replaced in 1902-4); see Jackson, F. Hamilton: 'Metal-Work of an Architect and Designer – T. R. Spence' in *MA* (London, 1902), pp. 365-370 (365-6).
- ⁶¹ E.g. Jackson, F. Hamilton: 'The New Art' as seen at the Paris Exhibition', in *MA* (London, 1900), pp.123-30.
- ⁶² Jackson (1903), *Op.cit.*, p.84.
- ⁶³ Jackson (1902), *Op.cit.*, pp.370.
- ⁶⁴ Pevsner & Richmond *et al.* (1992), *Op.cit.*, pp.408-17, offers a summary of Newcastle's urban development.
- ⁶⁵ Dendy, F.W.: 'An Account of Jesmond', in *AA*, Third Series Vol.1 (1904), pp.1-193 (169-78).
- ⁶⁶ Ref. note 51 above.
- ⁶⁷ TWA old accession cat. 604/57, *Jesmond Towers*, prospective sale brochure, Sept. 1910, p.11 & note 5(c). The conveyance is dated 11 Nov. 1869.
For the Burdon-Sandersons, see Welford, R.: *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, in 3 vols. (London & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1895), Vol.I, pp.436-41 (Sir Thomas Burdon (1758-1826)); Vol.III pp. 345-9 (Richard Burdon-Sanderson I (1791-1867)) and pp. 352-5 (R. Burdon-Sanderson II (1821-76)); also Dendy (1904) *Op.cit.*, pp.74-8 & 173. According to Welford, West Jesmond House was begun by Richard Burdon-Sanderson I to replace his father's residence of North Jesmond House, which had become dilapidated due to mining subsidence, hence the relationship of the two houses as part of a single estate.
- ⁶⁸ Dendy (1904) *Op.cit.*, p.176.

- ⁶⁹ Burdon-Sanderson's father died in 1876 of injuries sustained in the rail accident at Abbots Ripton (Cambridgeshire); see *NWC* (28 Jan. 1876), *Frightful Railway Accident*. The family had ceased to be resident in Newcastle since the sale of West Jesmond House in 1869.
- ⁷⁰ Dendy (1904), *Op.cit.*, p.176.
- ⁷¹ E.g. *Ward's Directory* (1887-8) for Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- ⁷² For Bedford Park, see Girouard, M.: *Sweetness and Light* (Oxford, 1977), pp.160-76; also Saint, A.: *Richard Norman Shaw*, first published 1976 (New Haven & London, 1983), pp. 201-10. The estate was being laid out 1875-6. In 1877 Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) and Maurice B. Adams (1849-1933) replaced E.W. Godwin (1833-86) as chief architects, Shaw designing the estate's public buildings, e.g. *The Tabard Inn* and *Stores* (1879-80) and St. Michael's parish church (1879-82). Shaw resigned in 1879-80 to be replaced in turn by E.J. May (1853-1941). The majority of the houses were built during the early 80s, as the estate acquired the cachet of a fashionably 'artistic' middle-class suburb.
- ⁷³ M1, folio 192, *Balance Sheet* (31 Dec. 1883), *New Lodge Cost to date*; also M1, folio 28, *New Road & Lodge at Jesmond*. Mitchell paid R. Burdon-Sanderson £311-7-2 for the land (22 Aug. 1882), whilst the final payments for building the new lodge and access road were made 30 June 1883, the building itself costing £856-17-4.
- ⁷⁴ TWA, Newcastle Building Control Records T186/9846 *Jesmond Towers*, south lodge (Aug. 1882-3); also Vol.II, Cat.III. **III.2.**, M1, folio 28, two payments totalling £50-0-0 (7 Mar. 1883), re. *Spence Commission on New Lodge* (£31-10-0) and *Do. Lodge Accounts* (£18-10-0).
- ⁷⁵ TWA Newcastle Building Control records T186/10782 *Eldon House* (passed 17 Dec. 1884; architect Thomas Mackay, 55 Grove Street, Newcastle) for R. Burdon-Sanderson Esq. It was acquired almost immediately by Rev. Somerset Pennefather as a vicarage for Jesmond Parish Church; after c.1890 it was occupied by the local historian F.W. Dendy (1849-1940) until his death.
- ⁷⁶ TWA Newcastle Building Control records T186/12217 *Highfield* (7 Sept. 1887) [existing no. 100 Osborne Road] and T186/12254 *Tudor Lodge* (21 Sept. 1887) [existing no. 98 Osborne Road], both for R. Burdon-Sanderson Esq. The former has since been subdivided into apartments.
- ⁷⁷ Spence's villa designs each have an additional servant's staircase rising to the first floor only, a measure of their market status, whereas the (smaller) houses at Bedford Park were usually lacking in this facility.
- ⁷⁸ TWA Newcastle Building Control records T186/13015 *Dunira* (20 Feb. 1889; architect John W. Taylor, 33 Westgate Road, Newcastle). The house was commissioned by Thomas Cairns Esq. on a plot supplied by the Burdon-Sanderson trustees.
- ⁷⁹ Vol.II, Cat.IV, *JCE* (11 Nov. 1889) rehearses the parish's failed negotiations of 1882 with the Burdon-Sanderson estate.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* (19 Nov. 1886) where Pennefather relates the circumstances.
- ⁸¹ Vol.II, Cat. IV, *JCE*.
- ⁸² E.g. *JCE* (19 Nov. 1886 & 13 Nov. 1889).
- ⁸³ *Ibid.* (14 Jan. 1887), quoting correspondence between Mitchell and the committee.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.* The original location for the hall was on Osborne Road itself, somewhat to the south of its present location, and on land purchased directly from Burdon-Sanderson by the Jesmond Church Extension committee. When the former (1882) site for the church was put back on the market, Mitchell financially assisted the committee in a land swap; at this stage, the hall was still to front onto Osborne Road. Later, having acquired land off Burdon-Sanderson in order to improve the access to this side of his park, Mitchell offered a new position for the hall, on his own land to the west of the church, thereby opening up a view of the church from Osborne Road. The present site, to the south and east of the church, was not finally settled until mid-January 1887.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.* (5 April 1886).
- ⁸⁶ Mitchell (of Jesmond Towers): Sable on a bend wavy Or between two mascles of the last as many mascles of the field. Motto *Spernit humum* (Horace, *Odes*, Book III, 2); Harleian Society's Grantees of Arms 1888, Vol.LXIV fol.140.
- ⁸⁷ E.g. this was a well-known feature of the London property market; see Saint, A.: 'Anglican Church Building in London' in Brooks, C. & Saint, A. (eds.): *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester and New York, 1995), pp.30-50 (38-45).
- ⁸⁸ Dendy (1904), *Op.cit.*, p.182.
- ⁸⁹ The sub-division of the Jesmond Towers estate can be followed in some detail in TWA Newcastle Building Control Records T186/V324 *Jesmond Towers Estate*; also TWA 1172/80-83 *Property Valuations*, 4 Vols. (so-called 'Domesday Books').

⁹⁰ For most of the last century, Jesmond Towers has been a fee-paying school. Of the estate buildings, only the north and south lodges remain, the latter as a detached property. The future of North Jesmond House is currently uncertain. Lord Armstrong's 'Jesmond Dean' house was demolished c.1930; perhaps surprisingly, given the celebrity of its former owner, there are no good images of the property. Andrew Noble's 'Jesmond Dene' house has recently been converted to a luxury hotel, after a number of years as a children's care institution.

2.2 ‘A generosity worthy of imitation’:¹

The Cultural Politics of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co.

2.2-1 Introduction:

In Umberto Eco’s ‘historical’ romance *Baudolino* (2002),² the eponymous rogue saves the life of the Byzantine courtier Niketas. In gratitude, Niketas attempts to wrest from Baudolino’s chaotic ‘memories’ some semblance of historical truth, to give back to him a personal history. Strangely fantastical though Baudolino’s tales are, they nonetheless plausibly intersect all the known ‘facts’ of history. However, the effort proves too much for Niketas, who comes to prefer his own, more edifying version of history, *sans* Baudolino. Discussion of the cultural politics of late-nineteenth century Newcastle and Tyneside has at times seemed little different from Niketas’ self-imposed task. Much of the available writing in this area adopts a reductive, theory-ridden approach to the English class system, and especially with regard to the region’s newly moneyed industrial and mercantilist classes. Aristocratic landowners and radical politicians, self-made industrialists, lawyers and bankers, merchants and scholars, all are subsumed into a single, undifferentiated and ‘uniquely’ cohesive regional elite.³ This tells us little that is really very useful. The putative characteristics of this hegemonic class – close social connections, large houses and private galleries for the conspicuous display of wealth and/or taste, the investment of a significant fraction of their surplus capital on philanthropic works – were far from being the preserve of a single dominant section of society.⁴ Historians of a more empirical tradition, such as Norman McCord (1979), have often had cause to challenge such simplistic assessments:

...if social class does not provide us with a reasonably precise indicator of human behaviour, we do not yet possess any satisfactory alternative set of categories for social analysis which can be reliably applied to the understanding of a large and varied society. In these circumstances, however, it is better to avoid the misleading precision of class terminology and to accept that diversity and complexity of behaviour at all social levels have been the norm and any high level of class cohesion and uniformity distinctly unusual. Otherwise the historian can be easily misled...⁵

Thus with regard to Sir William Armstrong and Charles Mitchell, we should like to know how and why these men, and not others, exercised such patronage as they did, and what tensions, as well as alliances – e.g. in education, religion, politics, the exercise of a personal taste and patterns of collecting – existed between them and their like-minded colleagues. How like was the late-nineteenth century cultural scene of Newcastle and Tyneside to developments elsewhere, or did special circumstances operate?

2.2-2 The Contest for the Conservancy of the Tyne:

Tyneside was not, as has so often been supposed, an old established industrial centre, like Manchester, Leeds or Glasgow. Although an early participant in the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution, it was not until the middle decades of the nineteenth century that large-scale industrialisation of the river basin took place. Only then did Newcastle begin to think of itself as an industrial town, and as the commercial and financial hub of a vast conurbation comprising shipyards, steel, chemical and engineering works – and their associated urban developments – stretching ten miles downriver to the North Sea, and almost as far again upstream [3.7].⁶ The reasons for the delay in the fuller development of Tyneside's industrial potential are not hard to discover, although the region's historians have generally failed to follow through the cultural implications. In contrast, Victorian commentators were virtually unanimous in pinning the blame on the Corporation of Newcastle and their abject mishandling of the Tyne's Conservancy, i.e. the maintenance and management of the river on behalf of its users.⁷

The Newcastle of the later eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was a focus for mostly small-scale manufactories, concentrated along the river frontage and in the valley of the Ouse Burn to the east of the town [3.5]. Long after the inroads of a national railway system, direct access to the river would remain vital for the shipping of goods, fuel and materials, the transport of labour, and the development of Newcastle's satellite settlements, Gateshead and the harbour ports of North and South Shields [3.7b]. However, away from the river and the noise and bustle of its quayside, Newcastle would define itself, not in terms of industry, but as a town of wide, elegant streets and Classical facades, the acme of civilised values. The entrepreneurs who promoted Newcastle's modern industries were largely drawn from a tightly-knit oligarchy of merchant families and manufacturers, and capitalised by local aristocrats and minor gentry keen to diversify their financial interests (largely derived from agricultural improvements). Although many of these families continued to form the backbone of the civic and county administration until well into the twentieth century, they were far from being a 'closed-shop'. Thus Oliver Lendrum (2001) argues that:

One of the driving forces behind Newcastle's economic development was the existence of a highly successful local entrepreneurial elite... who came from a wide variety of backgrounds, some being local and some coming from abroad, some having the most humble of births while others were born into the aristocracy. However, once in business on Tyneside they gelled to form an elite, united not only through common business interests, but also often through marriage.⁸

The father of the future Sir William George Armstrong (1810-1900) [2.8] offers a classic example of social and economic advancement within this group. The son of a Cumbrian yeoman, William Armstrong (1778-1857) had prospered as a corn merchant on coming to Newcastle, marrying the daughter of a local coal-owner and rising to the position of town councillor and latterly its mayor (1850-1), his brother-in-law, Addison L. Potter (1783-1854) having been mayor five years previously. When in 1847 the younger Armstrong set up an engineering works at Elswick, a mile up-stream of Newcastle, in-laws and close associates of his father were numbered amongst the five original business partners, e.g. Potter and Armorer Donkin (1779-1851), in whose legal office Armstrong had trained as a solicitor.

However, it was not industry that had brought prosperity to Newcastle, but its control of the river's trade - and especially the ubiquitous coal trade – on the tidal reaches of the Tyne, over which the Corporation exercised a centuries-old monopoly by virtue of ancient charters. Despite regular legal challenges by the harbour ports, these had remained in force into the early nineteenth century, the Corporation appropriating the river dues to its own purposes – primarily in offsetting the municipal rates – rather than on maintenance of the channel.⁹ The appalling condition of the river – beset by dangerous shoals, its foreshore reclaimed by opportunist landowners (thus reducing the scouring effect of the tidal flow) – had become a serious impediment to traffic and the heavier industries beginning to colonise the riverbanks. In 1800 the ship-owners of Shields had preferred an indictment against the Corporation over its mismanagement of the river, but to no avail. An 1816 survey by the engineer John Rennie (1761-1821) stated that the depth of water on the harbour bar was a mere six feet at low water, and there was a minimum depth in the sailing channel of only four feet up to Newcastle.¹⁰ With the advent of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, hopes that Newcastle's reformed administration might take their responsibilities more seriously were quickly dashed. It is not hard to understand their inaction; in the forty years since 1809 the Corporation had received £957, 973 in river dues on shipping, but discharged only £397, 719 on the river's administration and maintenance, leaving a difference of well over half a million pounds 'appropriated to the paving, watering and scavenging [of] the streets of Newcastle'.¹¹ In 1848, 'the coal, harbour and ballast dues [alone] reached £27, 997, of which £17,172 went in aid of municipal expenditure in Newcastle, while the total raised by the rates in that town was only £7,241'.¹² Even as late as 1880, i.e. long after the question of the Tyne's Conservancy had been settled, the Corporation's recalcitrance in this respect could still elicit a wry comment from one of the river's historians:

The reformed Corporation also laboured under great difficulties... but had these been overcome, as they should have been, and the river revenues devoted by the Council to well-considered and judicious plans of river improvement, a richer

harvest of beneficial results would have been reaped than the little saving of some rates which the use of the river funds afforded.¹³

Matters came to a head in 1848, when the Corporation sought to move a Tyne Navigation Bill in Parliament, further extending and consolidating its powers over the river. This prompted a counter Tyne Conservancy Bill by the harbour boroughs of South Shields and Tynemouth (the latter including North Shields) acting jointly, and backed by many of the river's shipbuilders and industrialists. The latter Bill was strongly supported by the Admiralty, and proposed an elected commission equitably representative of the river boroughs, the dues to be devoted entirely to the improvement of the channel. The two Bills were placed before the sessions of 1849-50. Although the compromise Tyne Improvement Bill, thrashed out in 1850, appeared to give the upper hand to Newcastle – the Council cannily saddled the new Tyne Improvement Commission with £67,000 of debts incurred during the recent extension of the town's quayside, whilst reserving five-eighths of the coal dues for its own purposes – the Corporation nevertheless fought the new Bill all the way through the Lords. Newcastle's cause fell when the new Bill (largely unaltered) finally received the Royal Assent on 18 July 1850. The Tyne Commission's borrowing powers were progressively strengthened by subsequent Acts of Parliament, enabling the financing of large capital projects, such as the Tyne piers at the harbour mouth.¹⁴ The same Acts, by increasing the number of elected commissioners representing other users on the river, e.g. coal-owners, ship-owners and traders, and the newly incorporated boroughs of Jarrow and Wallsend, also reduced the Corporation's influence over the Commission.¹⁵ In 1870, Newcastle finally surrendered its reserved river dues to the Tyne Commission on payment of £130,000 in compensation – by then, the urban expansion of the town was raising more than enough through the rates. By 1881, the *Newcastle Courant*, which could usually be relied upon to support the Corporation, nevertheless had to concede that the Tyne Improvement Commission was '*de facto* and *de jure* the paramount power on the Tyne'.¹⁶

2.2-3 City and Region:

The battle over the Tyne's Conservancy had wider political and cultural ramifications than merely control of the river. A great deal of bitterness and resentment had been stoked up by the contest. The collective memory of Newcastle's satellite communities would long remain of a Corporation that had always acted to further its interests, and usually to the detriment of its neighbours, whilst claiming for its own the achievements of others. Meanwhile, Newcastle continued to hanker after the trappings of dominance, securing city status for itself in 1882 (and the creation of a new Anglican diocese of Newcastle), and even persisting in the ancient custom of Barge Day, whereby the Corporation still insisted on proclaiming its jurisdiction over the bed of the tidal river.¹⁷ However, as the work of the Tyne Improvement Commission bore fruit and the river basin became increasingly dominated by heavy industry, Tyneside at last witnessed the

economic miracle it had so long been denied. Newcastle was demoted to the role of senior partner in a wider regional enterprise of which it was no longer the master. In 1882, the first ever *North-East Coast Exhibition of Naval Architecture, etc.* was held, not at Newcastle, but at Tynemouth on the coast.¹⁸ Its patrons comprised most of the political and industrialist classes drawn from a region that straddled the seaboard of south Northumberland, County Durham and north Yorkshire. Durham coking coals fed the steel furnaces of Consett and Tees-side, in turn supplying the shipyards of Tyneside and Wearside. By the close of the century, the river basins of the Tyne, the Blyth, Wear and Tees, were functioning as a single integrated industrial conurbation, culturally and economically distinct from the predominantly rural hinterlands of the Cheviot and north Pennine hills.

The first 'life members' of the Tyne Improvement Commission, two each drawn from Newcastle and the harbour boroughs, reflect something of this mid-century realignment of forces on Tyneside. Newcastle looked to its traditional oligarchy, and nominated (Sir) Joseph Cowen (1800-73; MP for Newcastle 1865-73), as the chief promoter of the Tyne Navigation Bill, and the younger Armstrong. Although Armstrong's name was dropped (in favour of William Rutherford Hunter) at the final reading of the Tyne Improvement Bill, his subsequent fortunes would nonetheless be closely tied to those of the Commission. The success of the Walker and Elswick shipyards was inconceivable without the Commission's dredging and re-alignment of the channel, or the removal of the Tyne bridge at Newcastle as an obstacle to shipping – the replacement swing-bridge (1868-76) was, naturally enough, supplied by Sir W.G. Armstrong & Co. The foremost proponent of the Conservancy Bill had been the Glasgow-born and educated James Cochran Stevenson (1825-1905), eldest son of James Stevenson (1786-1866) of South Shields, a one-time Glasgow cotton-broker turned newspaper proprietor and owner of the Jarrow Chemical Works.¹⁹ As an incomer, and the youngest of the life commissioners, Cochran Stevenson represented the new breed of entrepreneurs making their fortunes in the region. Elected Chairman of the Tyne Commission in 1880, a post he was to hold for the next twenty years, Stevenson would consistently champion the development of the river as a port to rival the Clyde and the Mersey.

As a philanthropist himself, James Cochran could hardly claim to be in Armstrong or Mitchell's league, but as a clan, the Stevensons had a more considerable cultural impact in the region. In their houses, and those of their fellow members on the Tyne Commission and associates in the Liberal Party, the ideals of the Aesthetic Movement were first introduced to Tyneside. Cochran Stevenson's younger brothers, the London-based architect John James (1831-1908),²⁰ and the Tynemouth connoisseur and collector, Alexander Shannan (1826-1900),²¹ were both key figures in the movement, as was J.J. Stevenson's friend and collaborator,

the artist-decorator Daniel Cottier (1838-91), who undertook a great deal of work in the region [4.1].²² English critics are perhaps want to underestimate Cottier's importance as an international figure, preferring to see him solely as a Scottish phenomenon. But with branches in Glasgow, London, New York and Sydney, Cottier's business as an art-furnisher and picture-dealer (promoting principally Barbizon and Hague School painters) spanned the globe. Such an enterprise was made possible by the increasing comfort and reliability of ocean-going passenger steamers, the latter, more often than not, built and/or fitted out by Clyde and North-East shipyards [5.10] – J.J. Stevenson even claimed to be the first professional architect involved in the design of ship interiors.²³ And perhaps more so than on Tyneside, Cottier has been credited with a seminal role in the introduction of Aesthetic Movement ideas to the United States, where his brand of Japanese-inflected Neoclassicism struck just the right note of cosmopolitan modernity. Indeed, so valuable did the American market become that the New York branch of Cottier & Co. eventually eclipsed those at home, becoming a staple for America's leading architects.²⁴

Out-manoeuvred and politically marginalised, Newcastle's Council declined as the principal economic and political forum on Tyneside. To be sure, the city continued to enjoy a certain prestige as the cultural and commercial heart of the region, but its administration languished in the doldrums, a byword for inaction and corruption. As Maureen Callcott (2001) notes, parliamentary elections in the city continued to be keenly contested, but by the close of the century 'No one would take the slightest interest in what the Council did'.²⁵ Her observations on the city's administration during these years are especially damning:

Apathy towards elections, the undoubted control of a small number of businessmen, together with the record... of reluctant activity in all major fields, makes this judgement not entirely unfair... the limited and reluctantly agreed range of municipal activity in Newcastle as compared with some other Victorian cities has to be seen as resulting, in large part, from clear evidence of incompetence, mismanagement, nepotism, pilfering and absenteeism in major departments over a long period. Active local government was normally costly, in the short term at least, and those who paid rates and taxes understandably lacked enthusiasm for higher taxation by a municipal authority whose reputation regularly came under fire.²⁶

Although a reluctance to spend ratepayer's money was not uncommon across the North-East, this was particularly pronounced in Newcastle, where it became a matter of pride to maintain the traditional policy of low rates that had (supposedly) contributed to the city's prosperity. Urban expansion filled the Corporation's coffers, as Callcott again observes: 'The rise in ratable value exceeded population growth by about four times in the Victorian period. The scale of this rise was spectacularly greater than the national average, which between 1842

and 1904 was 295.5 per cent against Newcastle's rise of 698 per cent'.²⁷ But in marked contrast to the industrial cities of Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands, Newcastle noticeably failed to develop any sense of a 'civic gospel' as the locus for municipal pride. The new Town Hall (John Johnstone (c.1814-84) and W.H. Knowles (1857-1943), 1855-63; demolished) was a mean affair on a cramped site squeezed between the Groat and Cloth Markets, and barely distinguishable from the neighbouring banks and insurance offices: it always was and would remain inadequate for the purposes of running a major city. Provision of even the most basic of public services – police, utilities, public health, municipal housing, libraries, recreational facilities such as parks and gardens – was usually won only after prolonged public agitation and in the teeth of municipal antipathy. For northern industrialists with wide-ranging, even global interests, the city's administration can have mattered very little, so long as it did not materially impede their enterprise. It is little wonder therefore that when patrons such as Armstrong or Mitchell did extend their largesse towards Newcastle, it was not the offices and trappings of the city's political elite that benefited, but the wider public good, through museums, colleges, churches and parks.

This much is clear, both from Victorian commentators, and from more recent economic historians of the region. Particularly on Tyneside, early involvement in the Industrial Revolution did not bring immediate and automatic benefits, and it was only with the forcible removal of Newcastle's monopoly over the river that the wider economy entered upon a period of sustained and unprecedented growth. Although contemporary commentators would date the region's new found prosperity to around the beginning of the Queen's reign – itself a potent symbolic point of departure – the greatest advances had only recently been achieved, following the inauguration of the Tyne Improvement Commission.²⁸ Yet, in spite of the intelligibility of the economic and political forces at work on Tyneside, the region's art-historians have persisted nonetheless in deploying a model of cultural development in which the economic benefits arising from the Industrial Revolution accrued more-or-less synchronously across the country. The beginning of Tyneside's industrial expansion is therefore back-dated to the end of the eighteenth century and in step with the great industrial towns of the Midlands and Yorkshire. In cultural terms, the later nineteenth century is seen, not as a new departure, but as only an intensification and consolidation of earlier developments. Very little account is taken of the bitter contest for control of the Tyne, as a tipping-point in the relationship between the region's major industrialists and the civic and cultural institutions of Newcastle. At issue is a persistent, if understandable, confusion between Newcastle, considered as a distinct urban entity, and the North-East as a whole. Viewing Newcastle as synonymous with the wider region, the region's art-historians have claimed that the North-East – for which read Newcastle – was peculiarly

retarded in the development of its cultural institutions, as exemplified by the almost legendary philistinism of the city's Corporation with respect to the funding of a municipal art gallery.

Repeatedly throughout the nineteenth century, voluntary arts organisations in Newcastle – e.g. the Northern Academy of Art (1828-31), the North of England Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts (1837-43), the Newcastle Arts Association (1878-1883) – failed for lack of wider support. Indeed, not until late in the century was there a sufficient body of middle-class support for the arts to halt this stop-go pattern of elite patronage. Newcastle was one of the last major centres in England to acquire a municipal art gallery, which, after nearly eighty years campaigning by artists and art-lovers, finally opened in 1904.²⁹ Funded by public subscriptions and a singularly hefty donation from Alexander Laing (1828-1905), a wealthy wine and spirit merchant in the city, the Laing Art Gallery functioned as an adjunct to the city's public library and at first was without even a permanent collection. The explanations for this state of affairs have been many and various. Paul Usherwood (1984) and Laura Newton (2003) have suggested that the intermittent promotion of public exhibitions in Newcastle by wealthy patrons, chiefly as a means for improving the public taste, may have inadvertently encouraged the notion that private enterprise, rather than the public purse, could adequately provide for the city's cultural institutions.³⁰ E. M. Atkins (1996) has argued that the Corporation was wary of the contrast between the elitist values of 'high art', associated with a hegemonic group of patrons, and more populist working-class concerns.³¹ In similar vein, the American art-historian D.S. Macleod (1989) points to the *avant-garde* tastes, e.g. for Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Movement art (itself a problematic interpretation), of a hegemonic grouping of wealthy industrial-mercantilist collectors across the region as antagonising an uncomprehending public.³² John Millard (1992) has tentatively suggested that the tastes of wealthier collectors, 'for the art of London or Paris', impeded the development of a local school of artists, and by implication, popular support for the arts.³³ Newton again (2001) sees the '(perhaps) unique social structures of the North-East' as the reason for the absence of a 'civic gospel' in Newcastle. Her observations reveal a classic instance of the art-historian's merging of city and region:

With many of the major industrialists emerging from the pre-existing merchant/gentry class and therefore having little common bond with the newly-created, very diverse middle-class sector of society... the diverse and fragmentary nature of the north-east middle classes made for a broad range of patronage. But the adverse effect of this diversity included a lack of common ideology or shared vision of civic identity, and hence the absence of civic projects which would define and symbolise this identity.³⁴

A common thread throughout these analyses is that the region's newly wealthy entrepreneurial class either failed to live-up to its cultural obligations or that they acted as an obstruction to cultural advancement. And this claim is advanced despite the evidence of

significant cultural institutions amongst Newcastle's satellite communities. Thus a number of Mechanics' Institutes e.g. those at Walker and South Shields, amassed substantial libraries and/or art collections, which later became the basis for public foundations.³⁵ Moreover, it is to assume that the region's industrialist patrons should have continued to figure prominently in the city's administration, or to have cared much for its particular civic expression. Although the heirs to Newcastle's early nineteenth century manufactories – e.g. the Bells, Loshes, Crawhalls and Cooksons – did continue to wield some clannish influence in the region, the vast majority of the region's newer industrialists and merchants were first generation entrepreneurs, often incomers or the sons of incomers, based without Newcastle. Considered purely in economic terms, it was only in the last decades of the century that the region's patrons had acquired the wherewithal to finance public buildings or arts institutions on the scale and sophistication of a St. George's Jesmond or the Laing Art Gallery. The character of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Tyneside – i.e. until the crisis of the First World War – was in fact much closer to that of an emergent industrial powerhouse, such as the coal-and-steel belt of the United States, or the rising industrial provinces of Belgium and northern France, than the older established manufacturing centres of Britain. Above all, there was a pervasive sense of having just arrived and of hurriedly catching-up with the outside world. Thus, rather than carp at the tardiness of Newcastle's cultural development, historians should perhaps marvel that so much was achieved in the space of barely fifty years.

2.2-4 The Spirit of the North:

The profound consequences of this rapid transformation for the regional economy have been amply documented by D.J. Rowe and N. McCord, amongst others.³⁶ Population statistics offer only one out of many sets of indicators. At the 1801 census, the combined populations of Northumberland and Durham numbered 317,000. By the middle decades of the century, this had more than doubled, and had almost trebled again by 1901. Northumberland, the fifth largest of the old English counties, saw the greatest increase, from 168,000 in 1801 to 1,187,000 a century later.³⁷ This was almost wholly confined to the industrial south-east of the county, along the river basins of the Tyne and Blyth. Around ninety-per-cent of the county remained largely rural, and in the isolated hill country there was a significant fall in population.³⁸ The pattern of industrial and urban growth across the region was no respecter of the older mercantile and political centres. In County Durham, towns such as West Hartlepool, Jarrow, Consett and Middlesbrough, sprang from almost nothing to service the new ports, shipyards, chemical and steel works. Middlesbrough saw perhaps the most spectacular expansion of all, as the iron ores of the Cleveland Hills were progressively exploited for steel. Here the population soared from less than two hundred in the first decades of the century, to around five and half thousand in 1841, almost nineteen thousand by 1861, and trebled again within twenty years.³⁹

Across the industrial belt of the North-East, much of this growth was achieved through immigration, 75,000 alone coming into the region during the decade 1861-71.⁴⁰ Scots formed a significant contingent in shipbuilding, marine engineering and river management, largely drawn from Aberdeen and the Clyde, transferring their advanced skills in iron-shipbuilding to the Tyne and Wear. Charles Mitchell is of course a prime example. So many Scots were employed in the Hebburn yards of the Shetland-born Andrew Leslie (1819-1894), that the district (on the opposite river bank to Mitchell's yard at Low Walker) was known as 'Little Aberdeen'. In Sunderland, the distinctive form of single-storey terraced cottage, which made up so much of the town's housing around the shipbuilding districts, may have arisen through a merger of the local vernacular with the cottage-row, imported from the east coast of Scotland.⁴¹ Glass-workers from the Midlands made-up a significant proportion of the workforce in the glass-making districts of Gateshead. Two German-born industrialists are typical of those who made a particular success of the North-East. Christian Allhusen (1806-90) was born in Kiel, but set up as a chemical manufacturer on Tyneside, taking an active part in local politics as a town councillor for Gateshead and as a Tyne Commissioner. A prominent Liberal (Unionist) and Anglican, he acquired Elswick Hall on the western outskirts of Newcastle, whilst his daughter Annie married into the aristocracy. Allhusen's one-time business partner, the Mecklenburg-born ironmaster Henry Bolckow (1806-78), was in effect the founder, principal employer and chief philanthropist in Middlesbrough. Bolckow was duly elected mayor of the newly incorporated borough in 1853, and its first Member of Parliament from 1868 until his death, also acting as a J.P. and deputy-lieutenant for the North Riding of Yorkshire.

This pattern of inward recruitment and assimilation was to be seen in the professional classes as well as in the labouring workforce. From rural north-Yorkshire came the architects Robert James Johnson (1832-1892) and Frank West Rich (1840-1929), and the artists Ralph Hedley (1848-1915) and Thomas Ralph Spence (1845-1918), all taking advantage of the opportunities offered by Tyneside's booming economy. From further afield came Johnson's one-time pupil and later partner, William Searle Hicks (1849-1902), a Dorset man who would establish one of Newcastle's most enduring architectural practices. Richard George Hatton (1864-1926), a Birmingham-born and trained artist, was recruited to re-organise Newcastle's School of Art on the latest Arts and Crafts lines.⁴² Incomers such as these nevertheless helped to forge the region's developing sense of cultural identity. Jesmond proved especially attractive as a residential district for Newcastle's immigrant professional and managerial classes. In his *An Account of Jesmond* (1904), Frederick Walter Dendy (1849-1940) relates the history of this once independent township, its medieval origins and notable personalities, the development of its estates and housing, churches and other cultural amenities, latterly as a suburb of Newcastle.

⁴³ Dendy was however born and raised in Great Yarmouth. Coming to Newcastle, he made a

successful career from 1875 onwards as a solicitor and public notary, immersing himself in the cultural life and institutions of the town.⁴⁴ The *Account* is thus not only a work of deep scholarship, taking up an entire volume of the proceedings of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries, but is a testament to the world-view of Jesmond folk, and of the sense of their growing importance in the wider scheme of things.

Dendy was certainly not alone. Like so many incomers, he sought to identify with the customs and history of the region in which he had made his fortune. Publications, albeit short-lived, such as the *Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend* (1887-91)⁴⁵ and the *Northern Counties Magazine* (1900-1),⁴⁶ aimed to foster a more cohesive sense of northern identity. Tyneside's late-Victorian enterprise and ingenuity was likened to the Imperial Roman fortitude that built Hadrian's Wall, the artistic glories of seventh and eighth century Lindisfarne, or the fiercely independent spirit of the Border reivers and mosstroopers.⁴⁷ Whilst the fruits of North-East industry sustained the British Empire and policed its seas, the region's distinctive folk cultures and dialects were celebrated to a greater extent than ever before. The work of the artist Joseph Crawhall II (1821-96) forms a notably sophisticated example of this vernacular revival in the fields of typography and illustration, inspired by the cheap broadsheets and chapbooks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [2.4-5].⁴⁸ On the other hand, architecturally speaking, there was very little in the way of a local idiom worth reviving, with the possible exception of the early-nineteenth century Neoclassicism of Newcastle's town centre,⁴⁹ and here and there, a few mannerisms peculiar to the region's medieval churches and castles. As the North-East, and more especially Newcastle, began to attract artistic talent from further afield, it became increasingly difficult to speak of a specifically northern style or traditions in the arts. Ever-faster communication and travel enabled the region to feel more keenly than before the tug of metropolitan fashion, whilst its newly prosperous middle-classes aspired to the same material comforts as elsewhere in Britain. For these reasons, Paul Usherwood (2001) has argued that the work of the engraver Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) and his workshop represented the last, and perhaps only, occasion in the past two centuries when one might distinguish an indigenous 'school' of artists in the North-East.⁵⁰

2.2-5 A Cuckoo in The Nest:

If we have to discount the presence of a uniquely integrated and localised elite in either Newcastle or the wider North-East, it is nevertheless the case that the directors and managers of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. certainly did achieve an unparalleled regional advantage during the last decades of the century. As the paramount industrial enterprise of late-nineteenth century Tyneside, the Elswick works has attracted some considerable attention, the studies by Kenneth Warren (1989)⁵¹ and Marshall Bastable (2004)⁵² being amongst the more penetrating

of the recent accounts. It cannot be said however that the expressions of cultural dominance presented by Armstrong's men amounted to a uniformly consistent pattern. Some were involved in regional or national politics, yet others were not; some chose to dispense their fortunes through philanthropic works, yet others did not. Despite his eminence, Armstrong's personal example was rarely followed by his junior directors, except perhaps for his loyal 'lieutenant' Andrew Noble, who engaged the architect Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) for the remodelling of Jesmond Dene House in direct emulation of the similar work at 'Cragside' [2.11].⁵³ There is, however, general agreement that there were significant tensions on the Board of Directors, although such disputes were usually kept well hidden from the public gaze so long as Armstrong was alive. With their Chairman's death in 1900, the tensions on the Board broke out into open hostilities and the firm 'entered a period of internal strife and factional struggles for power'.⁵⁴

The roots of these disputes can be traced back to the merger with Charles Mitchell & Co. in 1882, and beyond, to Armstrong's very first ventures into shipbuilding during the later 1860s. Mitchell & Co. had already proven themselves as a supplier of iron-clads and technological expertise to the Russian Imperial Navy. At home, the Mitchell yard at Low Walker was regularly engaged, from 1866 onwards, as a sub-contractor on Admiralty contracts, building gunboats to a pattern supplied by George W. Rendel (1833-1903) of Armstrongs. This joint venture proved hugely profitable. With their deep water berths, downriver of Newcastle [3.7-8], the Low Walker yard provided the necessary shipbuilding capacity that Elswick lacked, allowing Armstrong's guns to go to sea, and not only for the British Navy. There was every expectation that the arrangement would be formalised, and during the early 1880s, the two companies began discussions towards a merger.⁵⁵ The prospectus for the new company was published in November 1882, and offered the clearest of rationales for the merger.⁵⁶ By converting to a limited liability company, Armstrongs was effectively pursuing a recapitalisation exercise in order to finance a new steel plant and naval yard, up river at Elswick [5.5]. The initial valuation was set at the unheard of figure of £2 million (in 20,000 shares of £100 each),⁵⁷ and based on the profits of the previous five year's joint operations, the projected annual dividend was estimated at a phenomenal ten per cent. Even so, the new venture was only nominally a publicly limited company, as the vendors retained fully two-thirds of the proffered shares. In effect, Armstrongs had acquired Mitchell and Swan's capital, along with their shipbuilding expertise, on behalf of a concern whose success was a near certainty. Although the company slightly under-performed during its first four years of operation, thereafter it consistently out-performed all expectations; for the period 1887-95 the annual dividend was rarely below eleven percent.⁵⁸ Economic conditions during the early 1880s were also extremely challenging. Nevertheless, the international scope of Armstrong's business allowed the company to ride through cycles of economic depression at home relatively unscathed.⁵⁹

Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. would grow whether or not those around her prospered, and like a cuckoo in the nest, the company would assume an ever more dominant position in Tyneside's industrial base.

Whether one should also view the merger as a hostile takeover by Armstrongs is a moot point. The creation of a naval dockyard at Elswick freed the new conglomerate of wholesale dependence on Low Walker, whilst enfolding Mitchell & Co. in a corporate embrace also removed a potential competitor. Nevertheless, the new company had not one, but two shipyards, and seemingly in competition with each other. The arrangement was rationalised to some extent by encouraging a degree of specialisation between the two yards; warships at Elswick, and merchant shipping (but not exclusively so) at Low Walker [2.9, 5.4].⁶⁰ Mitchell and Swan assumed responsibility for the shipbuilding division of the new concern, e.g. in designing the new berths at Elswick [5.3-4], whilst the ample technical resources of the new company allowed Swan to develop a range of innovative designs for icebreakers, train ferries (principally for the Russian market) and ocean-going petroleum tankers, in which Armstrongs had virtually a monopoly.⁶¹ The Elswick engineering division, specialising in bridges and hydraulic cranes, were also afforded the ready prospect for diversification into merchant marine.⁶² Even so, some of Armstrong's *coterie* never wholly reconciled themselves to the presence of Charles Mitchell and Henry F. Swan on the Board of the new company. (Lord) Stuart Rendel (1834-1913) – a younger brother of G.W. Rendel (q.v.) – was an especially vociferous critic, and would later complain that 'we put a needless million into the Mitchell and Swan pockets over the purchase of Low Walker, only to find Low Walker a grievous loss and perpetual embarrassment'.⁶³ Following Mitchell's death, Armstrong still felt the need to defend the terms of the merger to Rendel: 'The Mitchell connection was of great value at the outset of our shipbuilding business, and though mistakes have certainly been made, Low Walker is a very valuable auxiliary in our present programme...'⁶⁴

There was, however, some justice in Lord Rendel's complaint. Charles Mitchell and Henry Swan had declined to commit all their eggs to one basket. Their profits from Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. were re-invested in deeper water capacity, downriver again from Walker at Wallsend. The diversity of Mitchell's investment portfolio during the 1880s is revealed in his personal ledgers, with especially strong interests in the Wallsend Slipway (primarily a ship repair and marine engineering business) and Wallsend Pontoon (the construction of floating and dry docks) companies.⁶⁵ By the middle of the decade, Mitchell's investments in both of these concerns had almost doubled, although still eclipsed by his interests in Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. Henry Frederick Swan also held interests in the Slipway Company, as well as in C.S. Swan & Hunter Ltd., initially managed by his late brother Charles Sheriton Swan (1831-79).⁶⁶ Both

the Slipway Company and Swan & Hunter had been set up in 1871-3 with financial backing from Mitchell, the latter specifically to take excess orders from the Low Walker yard, but by 1893 Swan & Hunter headed the river in tonnage output.⁶⁷

Mitchell and Swan's cross-financing of shipyards, marine engineering and out-fitters was symptomatic of the increasingly inter-connected nature of the industry on the Tyne, and would have important consequences for the works organisation at St. George's Jesmond. Nevertheless, it was not without its advantages for Armstrongs. As Sir William reminded Stuart Rendel in 1896, 'no one concurs in your apprehensions that serious responsibilities might be incurred by [Elswick] placing orders at market prices with the Slipway Company, merely because a junior director [Swan] has an interest in it'.⁶⁸ *Contra* Rendel, Armstrong had correctly foreseen the desirability for enmeshing rival concerns in the fortunes of the Elswick works. Thus from around 1900 onwards, virtually all Tyne built warships – e.g. those from R. & W. Hawthorn, Leslie & Co. (Hebburn) or Palmer's Shipbuilding & Iron Co. (Jarrow) – were out-fitted with a full compliment of ordnance manufactured at Elswick. In effect, the river basin had become a single integrated manufactory, with Armstrongs as paramount rulers.

In addition to their individual skills as businessmen, engineers or applied scientists, the directors of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. were drawn from a remarkably diverse range of backgrounds, including aristocrats and Members of Parliament, lawyers and diplomats. Of the original thirteen directors, only three were native-born Tynesiders, with Armstrong himself providing a last direct link with the original partnership drawn from Newcastle's old oligarchy.⁶⁹ William Donaldson Cruddas (1831-1912), the financial manager since 1861, was the son of one of Armstrong's original partners. Four others came over from the armaments and engineering business of Sir William G. Armstrong & Co. Of these, the Edinburgh-born civil engineer Percy G.B. Westmacott (1830-1917), after an apprenticeship in Blackwall (London), had joined Armstrongs as a draughtsman in 1851, becoming a partner in 1863 and manager of the Elswick works. The new deputy chairman, Andrew Noble, was a former Scots artillery captain (born Greenock, Renfrewshire) and a specialist in ordnance; he had been a partner in the Elswick works since 1860. The Rendels' father, James Meadows Rendel (1799-1856), was of Devonshire farming stock; as a prominent civil engineer, he had long enjoyed a working relationship with the Tyne Improvement Commission. In terms of political or philosophical views the new directors were an equally heterogeneous body; Mitchell, Swan and William Cruddas were staunch Tories, whilst Stuart Rendel was an M.P. (for Montgomeryshire) and Gladstonian Liberal. Sir William Armstrong was also a life-long Liberal, but latterly as a Liberal (Unionist) opposed to Gladstone's Home-Rule policy on Ireland. As such, he was persuaded to stand for the Newcastle seat in the 1886 General Election, but his poor showing

put paid to any political ambitions. Whereas Cruddas, Noble, Mitchell, Swan and Westmacott were all committed Churchmen, Armstrong himself seems to have had no strongly held religious beliefs, indeed he was conspicuously absent from both the foundation laying and consecration ceremonies at St. George's, Jesmond.⁷⁰ However, as befitted his social standing, Armstrong did contribute handsomely to a number of church restoration and extension funds. What bound these men together was a commitment to the success of the firm; as Bastable (2004) notes, 'disputes over business strategy caused far greater disruption than any ideological differences'.⁷¹

Only very occasionally did the Boardroom rivalries escape into the open. The building of Mitchell's new church seems to have been a particular point of friction, as was to become apparent during the erection of the parochial hall in 1887.⁷² Mitchell seems to have settled on the location of the parochial hall (its fourth and final change of site), hard by the boundary with Lord Armstrong's Jesmond Dean estate [3.4], perhaps to forestall the development of the adjoining field (on Armstrong's land) for housing.⁷³ However, rather than Armstrong being the aggrieved party, it was the antagonistic actions of his land agent, the architect F.W. Rich, which gave Mitchell the pretext, through the Jesmond Church Extension Committee, to seek reparations from Armstrong. Mitchell can certainly be accused of having acted somewhat presumptuously, but clearly neither he, nor his brother-in-law H.F. Swan (acting as Chairman of the Church Extension Committee), were prepared to defer to their senior business partner over matters of art or religion.

2.2-6 The Year 1887:

As the senior partners in the newly amalgamated business, it was Armstrong and Mitchell who would prove to be the most conspicuous in their public philanthropy, and on a scale increasingly to rival the region's traditional aristocracy. Whilst the post-1900 directors at Armstrongs were remarkable, less for their public spiritedness, than for their personal profligacy, their predecessors aspired to a 'just notion' of their 'princely function', as required of Victorian gentlemen accorded privileges beyond the common man. Those privileges were indeed considerable. Mitchell's ledgers record that his total assets almost doubled with the merger of the two companies, from around £262,000 in 1879-80 to £425,000 in 1882-3, rising to £472,000 by 1889-90 as the success of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. was assured.⁷⁴ In modern monetary values, Mitchell was worth between £20 million (1879-80) and 39 million (1889-90), although a better indicator of Mitchell's actual purchasing power might be in terms of his *per capita* share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁷⁵ Such figures would therefore equate to around £180 million (1879-80) and 290 million (1889-90) today. In 1889, whilst a fifth (19.7%) of Mitchell's portfolio was tied up in his property at Jesmond (which included the new church,

parochial hall and vicarage), nearly two thirds (59%) consisted of investments in Armstrong, Mitchell & Co, the Wallsend Slipway Co. and sundry shareholdings in steamers, shipping and marine outfitting/supplier companies. These yielded a combined dividend of just under £25,500, equivalent to around £2.1 million today, or £15.7 million in terms of *per capita* GDP.⁷⁶ At his death in 1900, Lord Armstrong was already of millionaire ranking with an estate worth approx. £1.4 million, equivalent to three times Mitchell's fortune.⁷⁷

Armstrong's benefactions to his native town were many and well publicised,⁷⁸ although not all were of a disinterested nature, e.g. the Armstrong Road Bridge (1876-8) at Benton Bank, crossing the ravine of the Ouse Burn at a height of 65 feet, gave access from the town to an up-market housing development on Armstrong's land at Heaton.⁷⁹ The bridge, at a personal cost of £20,000, along with the 26 acres of landscaped park below (which became Armstrong Park), were presented to the Corporation in 1878, to which Armstrong added a further 54 acres of his park upstream (i.e. Jesmond Dene) in 1883. The scale and munificence of these gifts were widely reported, but he may also have been off-loading his estate in order to protect his patrimony from further development – Jesmond was after all Armstrong family territory and his father's former political power base. 'Cragside' had now assumed the larger place, both in his affections, and as the preferred venue for entertaining corporate customers. Indeed, the *Newcastle Courant* reported in August 1884, with somewhat undisguised glee, that the Prince and Princess of Wales had declined the Duke of Northumberland's offer of Alnwick Castle during their summer visit to the North, preferring instead Armstrong's Rothbury fastness.⁸⁰

In his *An Account of Jesmond* (1904), F.W. Dendy casually remarks that the tower of St. George's 'forms a landmark over the surrounding country and can be seen from over the hills above Rothbury'.⁸¹ This feat is certainly possible with a good pair of binoculars when viewed from the Simonside hills above 'Cragside', although it is a moot point whether St. George's was ever visible above the smoke of the city in Dendy's day.⁸² There was however a certain irony in Dendy's rhetorical linking of Armstrong and Mitchell, Jesmond and Rothbury. As a symbol of corporate pride, marking out Armstrong's *pied-à-terre* in Newcastle and the estates of his colleagues, the church was a building for which he almost certainly had little enthusiasm. Mitchell may not have chosen to personally trumpet his philanthropy, but neither can it be said that he was at all retiring in the matter. Where Armstrong acted as president of the short-lived Newcastle Arts Association, Mitchell chaired its executive committee – its eight members included Alex Shannan Stevenson, Joseph Crawhall, the glass-worker and artist John George Sowerby (1850-1914) and the Pre-Raphaelite patron, James Leathart (1820-95) – and personally underwrote its exhibitions.⁸³ He would offer similar support to its longer-lived successor, the Bewick Club, evidently relishing the opportunity to fraternise with artists.⁸⁴ In 1883, Joseph

Crawhall issued a characteristically ‘artistic’ refashioning of William Gray’s *Chorographia or A Survey of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1649), the first printed history of Newcastle, in celebration of the town’s recently acquired city status. The new edition [2.4-5] was largely financed by and dedicated to Mitchell, ‘in friendly remembrance of an earnest endeavour to promote the cause of art in Newcastle’, thus confirming his position as an honorary Tynesider and a leading patron of the arts in the region.⁸⁵ The same year would see Mitchell embark on a further refashioning of Jesmond Towers, creating a display house with which to impress prospective clients and to better accommodate his burgeoning art collection [2.13-4]. Mitchell had previously enlarged the house when he acquired it in 1869-70, i.e. at the beginning of his business association with Armstrong. The new work doubled its size again, creating the largest and most dramatic of all the Jesmond mansions [2.12], far larger even than Armstrong’s or Noble’s, which it overlooked.⁸⁶ Any notion that Mitchell was lacking a competitive streak is further dispelled by one of his pocket notebooks, now preserved in the Northumberland Record Office. In this, Mitchell has carefully ranked a series of exhibition and reception spaces (by size, and in some cases, by volume), both public and private, in Britain and on the Continent, as a means for judging the huge top-lit picture gallery (internally 70 by 30 by 26 feet high) [4.10] he proposed to add to The Towers.⁸⁷

The year of the Queen’s Jubilee (1887) was an especially auspicious one for Armstrong’s men. The first of the new *Victoria* class of battleship was launched 9 April [5.6]; sitting low in the water, fast and lightly armoured, *HMS Victoria* famously sported two 110-ton guns amongst her compliment.⁸⁸ The 1880s would see Government policy gradually shift in favour of a massive re-armament of the navy. Although not the first warship to issue from the Elswick yards [5.3-4],⁸⁹ *HMS Victoria* signalled the beginnings of a rapprochement between the military establishment and Sir William Armstrong’s view of Britain’s future defence needs. Thereafter, Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. would become an indivisible aspect of the Empire’s political-military and military-industrial complex. Newcastle’s armaments king had long been fêted in his native town; he was now accorded the status of a national hero. In the Queen’s Jubilee honours list, published on the 20th June, Armstrong was raised to the peerage, as the First Baron Armstrong of Cragside. The honour had long been anticipated, and was some compensation for his abortive foray into politics. As the region’s principal contribution to the Jubilee festivities, Newcastle’s *Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition* had also opened in May on a large open site at the south-eastern tip of the city’s Town Moor [3.9].⁹⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. figured prominently amongst the exhibitors, H.F. Swan also securing representation by the Italian government in the wake of their recent successful joint venture with Armstrongs at Pozzuoli (Naples).⁹¹ At the opening ceremony, Armstrong and Mitchell each personally conducted their honoured guest, H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, over

the exhibition site, dividing their responsibilities respectively between the engineering and manufactures sections, and the Fine Art galleries.⁹²

Charles Mitchell could have felt justifiably proud of the latter. A Fine Art section had not formed any part of the original scheme, and it was only through Mitchell's personal intervention that the arts were represented at all, housed in a separate annexe to the exhibition buildings.⁹³ The membership of the organising and hanging committees (the former chaired by Mitchell) were largely drawn from the Bewick Club, and a stipulation was laid down that 'no paintings executed previously to the time of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) should be accepted'.⁹⁴ This attempt to slant the hanging heavily towards the modern British school and its Continental affiliates, and away from inherited taste and privilege, was nearly scuppered by the Duke of Northumberland's insistence that he loan some 'fine examples of great Italian masters'. The latter were tactfully shunted off into a corner of the Foreign Loan Collection (Room VI), where their presence was leavened by more recent works.⁹⁵ The tone of the hanging was emphatically in favour of the new, the progressive and the cosmopolitan. Large-scale Aesthetic Movement works dominated the rooms, e.g. *The Fate of Persephone* (1878-9) by Walter Crane (1845-1915),⁹⁶ and the *Romaunt de la Rose* (1874-82) embroidered hangings for Rounton Grange (N. Yorks.) by Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), the latter loaned by the iron-and-steel master (Sir) Isaac Lowthian Bell (1816-94).⁹⁷ There was, in addition, a strong showing of *paysanneries* and *paysages rustiques* by contemporary French and Hague School artists – principally lent by Mitchell, Alex. Stevenson, Percy Westmacott and Daniel Cottier – to complement the works of the local men, e.g. Ralph Hedley (1848-1913), Robert Jobling (1841-1923) and A.H. Marsh (1842-1909), themselves strongly influenced by French realist painting.⁹⁸ And on a screen in Room IV could be found the designs for one of the stained glass windows in Charles Mitchell's new church.⁹⁹

On leaving the exhibition, visitors would have seen the horizon skirted by projects to which Armstrong's men, but principally Armstrong, had substantially contributed [3.9]. To the south-west lay the new Natural History Museum (officially opened during the Royal visit of 1884), to which Armstrong had subscribed £10,000.¹⁰⁰ Beyond, farther to the west, the first wing of the recently inaugurated College of Physical Science was beginning to rise (later renamed as Armstrong College and the nucleus of the present University); Armstrong would lay the foundation stone in June of that year.¹⁰¹ To the east lay the Northern Counties Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and in the further distance, over fields not yet buried under housing, scaffolds stood around the large new church of St. George's Jesmond. Here, on Armstrong's home turf, would rise the only one of these projects to which Armstrong had not himself contributed.

Notes to Chapter 2.2:

- ¹ NDJ (10 Jan. 1887), p.7, *St. George's Church Jesmond. Laying the Corner Stone*: 'Mr. Mitchell, with a generosity worthy of imitation by wealthy Churchmen in other parts, some time ago announced his intention to erect a permanent church for West Jesmond, and the work has been commenced...'
- ² Eco, U.: *Baudolino*, first published 2000 (trans. William Weaver, London, 2002).
- ³ E.g. Benwell Community Project: *The Making of a Ruling Class* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1978). Although a seriously tendentious document, the report does nevertheless present a great deal of important empirical research concerning the social advancement of Tyneside's industrial and mercantilist classes.
- ⁴ Cf. Macleod, D.S.: 'Private and Public Patronage in Victorian Newcastle' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol.52 (Warburg Institute, 1989), pp.188-208; also Atkins, E.M.: 'The Genesis of the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne' in Faulkner, T.E. (ed.): *Northumbrian Panorama* (London, 1996), pp.195-220.
- ⁵ McCord, N.: *North East England. The Region's Development 1760-1960* (London, 1979), p.18.
- ⁶ On Newcastle's later self-image, see Usherwood, P.: 'William Bell Scott's 'Iron and Coal': northern readings' in Macleod, D.S. & Vickers, J. (eds.): *Pre-Raphaelites. Painters, Patrons and the North-East* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1989), pp.38-56 (49-50).
- ⁷ For the contest over the Tyne's Conservancy, see Guthrie, J.: *The River Tyne. Its History and Resources* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne & London, 1880), pp. 45-92; also Hodgson, G.B.: *The Borough of South Shields...* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1903) pp.328-47.
- ⁸ Lendrum, O.: 'An Integrated Elite: Newcastle's Economic Development 1840-1914' in Colls, R. & Lancaster, B. (eds.): *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History* (Chichester, 2001), pp.27-46 (27-8).
- ⁹ E.g. Gardner, R.: *England's Grievance Discovered in relation to the Coal-Trade*, first published London, 1655 (reprinted North Shields, 1849).
The Newcastle Corporation's jurisdiction was defined from a point out at sea called Sparr (Sparrow) Hawk, ten miles downstream of Newcastle, to the Hedwin Streams, eleven miles upriver, and comprising all of the river's tidal reaches.
- ¹⁰ Guthrie (1880), *Op.cit.*, pp.59-60.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79.
- ¹² Hodgson (1903), *Op.cit.*, pp. 332.
- ¹³ Guthrie (1880), *Op.cit.*, pp.79-80. James Guthrie (1826-80) was secretary of the Tyne Improvement Commission from 1861 until his death in February 1880.
- ¹⁴ The two Tyne piers, at a little over a mile (south) and two-thirds of a mile (north) in length, were amongst the boldest of the Tyne Improvement Commission's undertakings, and one of the largest civil engineering projects of the time in England. The foundations were ceremonially laid on 15 June 1854, and the piers formally inaugurated, after several changes of plan, on 11 Nov. 1895, although storm damage necessitated further structural revisions in 1896-7 and 1909.
- ¹⁵ For the changing composition of the Tyne Improvement Commission for the period 1850-95, see Johnson, R.W.: *The Making of the Tyne. A Record of Fifty Years' Progress* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne & London, 1895), pp.345-52.
- ¹⁶ NWC (17 June 1881), *Who Owns the River Tyne?*
- ¹⁷ See Charleton, R.J.: *Newcastle Town*, first published London, 1885 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1978), pp.269-70; also MC, June 1891, pp.275-7, *Barge Day on the Tyne*; also Osler, A.: 'Newcastle's Last Mayoral Barge' in AA, Fifth Series Vol.XVI (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1988), pp.239-43.
Traditionally, Barge Day was held annually on Ascension Day, when the Mayor, members of the Town Council, Assize Judges and representatives of Trinity House and the ancient merchant Guilds of Newcastle were ceremonially rowed to the tidal limits of the river and the Corporation's rights proclaimed. After the passing of the Tyne Improvement Act in 1850, the Corporation still proclaimed its ownership, not of the tidal waters, but of the river bed itself, although the ceremony dwindled to a triennial and latterly a quinquennial event. Whilst the Crown challenged the Corporation's claim in the Courts (successfully), newly-formed ratepayers associations also campaigned against the cost of the junket. The last Barge Day took place in 1901.
- ¹⁸ [North-East Coast] *Exhibition of Naval Architecture, Marine Engineering, Fisheries, etc.*, Official Catalogue of (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1882); also NWC (8 Sept. 1882), *Opening of the North-East Coast Exhibition*.
- ¹⁹ For the Stevensons of South Shields, see Stevenson, H.: *Jobs for the Boys. The Story of a family in Britain's Imperial Heyday* (London, 2009).

- ²⁰ For John James Stevenson, Ibid. pp.144-61; also *DSA* [accessed June 2008] and *ODNB* [Paul Waterhouse, rev. D.E.B. Weiner, 2004-8]; also Girouard, M.: 'The Architecture of John James Stevenson', in two parts, in *The Connoisseur*, Pt. One (Nov. 1973), pp.166-74.
- ²¹ For Alex. Shannan Stevenson, Ibid. pp.134-43; also Macleod & Vickers (1989), *Op.cit.*, pp. 96 & 130; also Stephens, F.G.: 'The Private Art-Collections of England No.IV' in *The Athenæum* (27 Sept. 1873), pp.406-9 (406-7).
- ²² Donnelly, Max: 'Daniel Cottier: Pioneer of Aestheticism' in *DAS*, No.23 (London, 1999), pp.32-51; also Donnelly, Michael: *Scotland's Stained Glass. Making the Colours Sing* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp.27-35. Cottier & Co. decorative schemes survive in a number of Tyneside houses connected with the Stevenson circle, e.g. Westoe Hall, South Shields (1864-6 and 1868, for J.C. Stevenson) and Prudhoe Hall, Northumberland (1868-70, for Matthew Liddell M.P.), and are known to have existed in others, e.g. Davison, T. R.: 'Rambles in the North of England-I: Tynemouth' in *BA*, (9 Oct. 1874), pp.231-3 (232), re. the *Old House*, Tynemouth for Alex. S. Stevenson.
- ²³ Between 1879 and 1902, Stevenson designed six ship interiors for his Anderson in-laws, owners of the Orient Line, beginning with the Clyde-built *SS Orient* (1879); cf. Stevenson (2009), *Op.cit.*, 155-6. Interestingly, Charles Mitchell engaged T.R. Spence as his shipyard architect at much the same time as Stevenson's first shipwork.
- ²⁴ Girouard (1977): *Op.cit.*, pp. 208-11. Cottier & Co. decorative schemes featured e.g. at Trinity (Episcopal) Church, Boston, Mass. (1872-77) and the William Watts Sherman house, Newport, Rhode Island (1874-6), both seminal works of the architect H.H. Richardson (1838-86).
- ²⁵ Callcott, M.: 'The Governance of the Victorian City' in Colls & Lancaster (eds.) (2001), *Op.cit.* pp.71-92 (74), quoting vol.217 of Beatrice and Sydney Webb's early-20th century survey of English local government.
- ²⁶ Ibid., pp.74 & 92.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.91.
- ²⁸ E.g. [North-East Coast] *Exhibition...*, Official Catalogue (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1882), pp.i-xviii; also *The Jubilee Chronicle of the Newcastle Exhibition* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887), pp. 3-5.
- ²⁹ For the foundation of the Laing Art Gallery, see Macleod (1989), *Op.cit.*, pp.207-8; also Millard, J.: *A Romance with the North-East. Robert & Isa Jobling* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1992), p.46; also Atkins (1996), *Op.cit.*, pp.195, 206-8 & 220.
- ³⁰ Usherwood, P.: *Art for Newcastle* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1984), pp. 18-27; Newton, L.: *Cullercoats. A North-East Colony of Artists* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2003), pp.40-66.
- ³¹ Atkins (1996), *Op.cit.*, pp.202-5.
- ³² Macleod (1989), *Op.cit.*, pp.198-207.
- ³³ Millard (1992), *Op.cit.*, p.16-7.
- ³⁴ Newton, L.: *The Cullercoats Artists' Colony c.1870-1914* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Northumbria, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2001), pp.63-4.
- ³⁵ For South Shields Mechanic's Institute (established 1825), see Hodgson (1903): *Op.cit.*, pp.444-5; the Institute formed the basis of the town's Library, Museum and Art Gallery. The collections of the Walker Mechanic's Institute (established in 1861 by Charles Mitchell) contributed some of the Laing Art Gallery's prize holdings in watercolours.
- ³⁶ Rowe, D.J.: 'The Economy of the North-East in the Nineteenth Century: A Survey' in *Northern History*, Vol.6 (Leeds, 1971), pp.117-47; also McCord, N.: 'Some Aspects of North-East England in the Nineteenth Century in Northern History', Vol.7 (1972), pp.73-88; also McCord, N and Rowe, D.J.: 'Industrialisation and Urban Growth in North East England' in *Cambridge International Review of Social History*, Vol.32 (Cambridge, 1977), pp.30-64; also McCord: 'Some Aspects of Change in the Nineteenth-Century North-East' in *Northern History*, Vol. 31 (Leeds, 1995), pp.241-66; also McCord (1979), *Op. cit.*
- ³⁷ McCord (1995), *Op.cit.* p.241.
- ³⁸ Rowe (1971), *Op.cit.*, p.123.
- ³⁹ McCord & Rowe (1977), *Op.cit.*, pp.48-9; McCord (1979), *Op.cit.*, pp.53 & 121.
- ⁴⁰ Rowe (1971), *Op.cit.*, p.120.
- ⁴¹ See Long, A.: 'The Sunderland Cottage' in Faulkner (1996): *Op.cit.*, pp.97-122 (117).
- ⁴² Peart & Moat (1993), *Op.cit.*, pp.13-22.
- ⁴³ Dendy (1904), *Op.cit.*
- ⁴⁴ *Obit.* F.W. Dendy in *AA*, Fourth Series Vol.20 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1942), pp.1-7.
- ⁴⁵ (Anon): *The Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne and London, 1887-91).
- ⁴⁶ Pease, H. and Galloway, W. (eds.): *The Northern Counties Magazine* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1900-01).

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- ⁴⁷ The classic statement of this iconographic formula are the eight murals painted 1856-61 by the Edinburgh-born artist William Bell Scott (1811-90), and commissioned by Sir Walter and Lady Pauline Trevelyan for the central hall of Wallington Hall, near Cambo (Northumberland). The set was exhibited at Messrs. Gambart's 'French Gallery', Pall Mall (London) in June 1861 to general acclaim.
- ⁴⁸ Felver, C.S.: *Joseph Crawhall: The Newcastle Wood Engraver (1821-1896)* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1972); also Hall, Marshall: *The Artists of Northumbria*, first published 1973 (third revised edn., Bristol, 2005), pp.90-2; also Wood, M.: *Joseph Crawhall (1821-1896). Arts, Humour and the Chapbook Revival in Newcastle* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2006).
- ⁴⁹ Revivals of Newcastle's distinctive early-19th century Neoclassical architectural tradition were nevertheless few, the Hancock (Natural History) Museum (1874-84; architect John Wardle) being a notable exception.
- ⁵⁰ Usherwood, P.: 'Art on the Margins; from Bewick to Baltic' in Colls & Lancaster (eds.) (2001), Op.cit., pp.246-66 (247).
- ⁵¹ Warren (1989), Op.cit., p.6, views Armstrongs as 'an excellent test case of British industrial growth, increasing difficulties and failure...'
- ⁵² Bastable (2004), Op.cit., pp.250-3, challenges the thesis that entrepreneurial verve and business success are natural correlates. Rather, Armstrong's success was due to a synergy between the economic, military and political structures of the day.
- ⁵³ Saint (1983), Op.cit., pp. 408. Shaw's work was largely obliterated in Noble's subsequent remodelling of the house c.1896-7, his architect being another of Armstrong's protégés, Frank. W. Rich (1840-1929) of Newcastle.
- ⁵⁴ Bastable (2004) Op.cit., p.236.
- ⁵⁵ On the Armstrong-Mitchell merger, see Clarke, J.F.: *Building Ships on the North-East Coast*, in two parts (Whitley Bay, 1997), Pt. One, pp. 225-8; also Warren (1989), Op.cit., pp.21-5; also Bastable (2004), Op.cit., pp.175-6.
- ⁵⁶ NDJ (18 Nov. 1882), *Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell and Co.* (prospectus); copy pasted into NCL L 623.8 – Cr. 957723A *Charles Mitchell's scrapbook*.
- ⁵⁷ Approx. £100 million at present monetary values; this was before the creation of Armstrong's subsidiary at Pozzuoli (Naples) – begun 1886 and completed 1892 – and the acquisition in 1897 of their Manchester (Openshaw) rivals, Sir Joseph Whitworth & Co.
- ⁵⁸ For a tabulation of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. capital and dividends, 1883-95, see Johnson (1895), Op.cit., p.355.
- ⁵⁹ Rowe (1971), Op.cit., p.137, suggests that the increasing dependence of the regional economy on heavy industry and exports made it unusually sensitive to cyclical fluctuations in trade.
- ⁶⁰ Clarke (1997), Pt. One, Op.cit., pp. 226.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, pp.174-7; also Johnson (1895), Op.cit., p.292.
- ⁶² McCord (1979), Op.cit., p.221; also Lendrum (2001), Op.cit., p.44.
- ⁶³ Warren (1989), Op.cit., pp.24-5, quoting Stuart Rendel, undated letter c.1901; also Dougan, D.: *The Great Gun-Maker. The Life of Lord Armstrong*, first published 1970 (reprinted Morpeth, 1991, p. 154.
- ⁶⁴ Lord Armstrong to (Lord) Stuart Rendel (24 Dec. 1896), quoted by Bastable (2004), Op.cit., pp.231-2; also Warren (1989), Op.cit., pp.64-5.
- ⁶⁵ M1, folios 181-200, *Balance sheets* and *Schedule of shares*; M2, folios 180-93, *Balance sheets* and *Schedule of shares, folios 196-8, Revenue Account*.
- ⁶⁶ See Chap. 3.3-5.
- ⁶⁷ Clarke (1997), Pt. One, Op.cit., pp.126-8; also Middlemiss, N.L.: *British Shipbuilding Yards* (in 3 vols.), Vol.1, *North-East Coast* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1993), pp.11-5; also McGuire (1988), Op.cit., pp. 17-8.
- ⁶⁸ Warren (1989) Op.cit., p.64-5, quoting Sir William Armstrong to Stuart Rendell (24 Dec. 1896).
- ⁶⁹ The thirteen listed directors were Sir W.G. Armstrong (chairman), W.D. Cruddas (director of finance), Sir James McGarel Hogg (Chairman of the (London) Metropolitan Board of Works), Charles Mitchell, (Capt.) A. Noble, Hamilton O. Rendel, (Lord) Stuart Rendel M.P., (Sir) C.W. Siemens, Lord Sudely, Henry F. Swan, Lord Thurlow, Lieut. Gen. Charles Younghusband, Percy G.B. Westamcott.
- ⁷⁰ NDJ (10 Jan. 1887), p.7; NDJ (17 Oct. 1888), p.5.
- ⁷¹ Bastable (2004) Op.cit. pp.229-232.
- ⁷² See Vol.II, Cat. IV, *JCE*.
- ⁷³ See Vol.I, Chap.2.1-5.
- ⁷⁴ M1 folios 181-2 *Balance sheets* (31 Dec. 1879), total assets £261,419-9-6; folios 189-91, *Balance sheets* (31 Dec. 1882), £424,572-18-0; ledger no.2 folios 192-3, *Balance sheets* (31 Dec. 1889), £472,327-5-4.

- ⁷⁵ Based on the *Measuring Worth* model developed by Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson *et al.*; <<http://www.measuringworth.com>> [accessed Nov. 2009]
- ⁷⁶ M2 folio 194, *Schedule of Investments*; folio 195, *Schedule of Shares in Shipping Companies & Steamers*; folios 196-8 (196), *Revenue Account – By Dividends* (31 Dec. 1889), £25,344 -9-4.
- ⁷⁷ ODNB (Stafford M. Linsley, 2004-10).
- ⁷⁸ E.g. 'Fortunes Made in Business No. XXXIV. Sir William Armstrong, Mitchell & Co.' in *London Society*, Vol.48, no.285 (Sept. 1885), pp.209-40 (224-6).
- ⁷⁹ Penn, J.: 'The Enigmatic Architect: Frank West Rich (1840-1929)', in AA, Fifth Series, Vol.XXXVI (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009), pp.139-49 (143-4).
- ⁸⁰ NWC (1 Aug. 1884), *The Royal Visit to the North*. During the three days of the visit (20-22 August 1884), the Royal party formally opened Jesmond Dene as a public park, and conducted a progress of the river Tyne; see ditto, 22 Aug. 1884.
- ⁸¹ Dendy (1904), *Op.cit.*, p.183.
- ⁸² The author has personally tested Dendy's claim.
- ⁸³ NWC (6 Sept. 1878), *Newcastle Arts Association. The Picture Exhibition*; NWC (25 Jan. 1884), *The Bewick Club Exhibition*; also Newton (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.19-24; also Newton (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.42-51.
- ⁸⁴ Newton (2001), *Op.cit.*, p.24; also Newton (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.51-5.
- ⁸⁵ Gray, W.: *Chorographia or A Survey of Newcastle upon Tyne*, first published Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1649 (new edn., illustrations and typography by Joseph Crawhall (1821-1896), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1883-4), quoting the dedication title-page.
- ⁸⁶ TWA Newcastle Building Control Records T186/10355 *Jesmond Towers* extensions (Dec. 1883); also NCL, *Local Newspaper Cuttings*, Vol.92, p.16, [NDC ?] (20 June 1885), *Country Seats in the Northern Counties. Jesmond Towers*; also M1, folios 52, 54, 56, 58, 66, 68, 80, 82 & 84, *Buildings at Jesmond Towers* (Jan.1884-Nov. 1885). The work cost £6,444-10-0, exclusive of further decorative work in the house, and works on the estate.
- ⁸⁷ NRO 497/A2 *Charles Mitchell Notebook 'No.1'* c.1870-90, p.68. The handwritten list includes the principal exhibition/reception spaces at e.g. Dudley Gallery (London); Kensington Town Hall (London); Cromwell House (London); Old Watercolour Gallery (London); Grosvenor Gallery (London); Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool); Newcastle Assembly Rooms; Jesmond [Dene] Banqueting House (Newcastle); the Bishop of Newcastle's drawing room; Newcastle Council Chamber; Petit's Gallery (Paris); Royal Institute (London); Royal Academy [of Arts] (London); etc.
- ⁸⁸ *HMS Victoria*'s heavy guns were to be her undoing. On 22 June 1893, during manoeuvres off Tripoli (Lebanon), she was accidentally rammed by the *Camperdown*, and sank at an alarming speed, bow first in 500 feet of water, claiming the lives of 358 of her crew.
- ⁸⁹ The first of the new breed of fast, lightly armoured warships built by the amalgamated companies was the cruiser *Esmeralda*, launched at Low Walker, 6 June 1883, and completed 15 July 1884. Commissioned by the Chilean navy, she was subsequently sold to the Japanese in 1894 and renamed the *Izumi*. Two cruisers of the same class, *Panther* and *Leopard*, christened the new berths at Elswick. Commissioned by the Austro-Hungarian navy, they were launched in June and September 1885 respectively.
- ⁹⁰ NWC (13 May 1887), *Supplement. The Newcastle Royal Jubilee Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition*. The exhibition opened 11 May and ran until 29 October.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.* For the Pozzuoli episode as an incipient multi-national venture, see Warren (1989) *Op.cit.*, pp.69-80; also Bastable (2004), *Op.cit.*, pp.131-4.
- ⁹² For the opening ceremonies, see NWC (13 May 1887); also *Jubilee Chronicle of the Newcastle Exhibition* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887), pp.73-8.
- ⁹³ *Jubilee Chronicle...* *Op.cit.*, *The Fine Art Section*, pp.104-8; also Newton (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.24-6
- ⁹⁴ *Jubilee Chronicle...*, pp.104-5.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.105 & 108.
- ⁹⁶ *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887), Official Catalogue of, p.279 (cat. 304). The large tempera recently sold at Christies (London), 12 June 2002, Sale 6583 Lot 44; <<http://www.Christies.com/LotFinder/>> [accessed July 2009].
- ⁹⁷ *Newcastle-upon-Tyne... Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of, p.289; also Wildman, S. and Christian, J. (eds.): *Edward Burne-Jones. Victorian Artist-Dreamer* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1998), pp.180-87.
- ⁹⁸ *Newcastle-upon-Tyne... Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of pp. 300-5; also Newton (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.24-6; also Newton (2003), *Op.cit.*, p.54.
- ⁹⁹ *Newcastle-upon-Tyne... Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of p.294 (cat. 671).

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- ¹⁰⁰ *NWC* (22 Aug. 1884), *The New Museum*. Lord and Lady Armstrong led the donors, subscribing £10,000 and £2,500 respectively. Of the remaining twenty-one donors listed, three subscribed between £4,000 and £1,000 (I. Lowthian Bell), nine between £305 and £105 (100gns), including Capt. Andrew Noble (£305) and W.D. Cruddas (£250), and twelve more donated £100, including Charles Mitchell, H.F. Swan, Joseph Cowen M.P., Sir Matthew White Ridley M.P., the late Sir Walter Calverley Trevelyan and Sir Charles E. Tevelyan (of Wallington Hall, Northumberland). Mitchell's donation is recorded in M1, *folio* 16, *Subscriptions, Donations & Gratuities*, 7 Oct. 1881.
- ¹⁰¹ See *NWC* (17 June 1887), *The New College of Science in Newcastle. Foundation Stone Ceremony*. Lord Armstrong laid the foundation of the north front, the first wing to be completed, on 15 June 1887.

2.3 The Rise, Fall and Rise of late-Victorian Gothic:

Anglican Ecclesiology in late-nineteenth century England

2.3-1 Introduction:

In an article published in the *Architectural Review* to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria (1897), Professor Frederick M. Simpson (1855-1928) offered an overview of the architectural achievements of the queen's reign.¹ After a survey of the chief buildings of the mid-century, Simpson alighted on one of the giants of the period, George Edmund Street (1824-81), as embodying all that he thought wrong with the work of the previous generation:

Street... never founded a school; and yet he had the materials for one in his numerous pupils and assistants – Mr. Philip Webb, Mr. Norman Shaw, both the Seddings, to say nothing of the many younger men who worked for him when the Law Courts were being built... [Was this] owing to the fact that Street's work is, and always was, unsympathetic? His churches are robust and muscular, carefully planned, and thoroughly thought out, but they leave one absolutely cold. One recognises his force and power, his laudable love of a good plain wall, his wonderful power of draughtsmanship... but one cannot discover in his work a trace of that indescribable something which is present in old and in the best modern work, and which makes one catch one's breath on first seeing it, and exclaim 'By Jove, that's jolly!'²

Whether or not the chief aim of architecture should be its joviality, Simpson was not being entirely fair to Street. Although the latter was a pupil of that other giant of the age, Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78), no more did Scott found a 'school'. And amongst Scott's most talented pupils – his eldest son George Gilbert Scott junr. (1839-97), George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907), R.J. Johnson (1832-92), T.G. Jackson (1835-1924), E.R. Robson (1835-1917), Thomas Garner (1839-1906), and J.T. Micklethwaite (1843-1906) – all alike repudiated their master's work, as did Street's pupils, in favour of softer and more humanised styles. Simpson catches the promise of this later manner for Victorian ecclesiastical architecture in a discussion of Bodley & Garner's church of St. Augustine, Pendlebury Greater Manchester (1870-4).³ The building fuses a unitary plan of distinctly Continental derivation – a single expansive volume framed by internal buttresses pierced to create low passage aisles – with 'English' Gothic detailing of late-fourteenth century derivation:

This plan is completely unlike any known English medieval plan, although it is found abroad... it is one eminently fitted for English church worship, and it is consequently only natural that it should have been copied in later churches by other Architects... Messrs. Bodley and Garner's church has probably influenced recent work more than any other church of its time... Since Pendlebury Church was built, ecclesiastical work has advanced by leaps and bounds. There is a vigour, an originality, a discarding of

precedent for merely precedent's sake, and an evident desire to let the requirements rule the Design, which augurs well for the future.⁴

Well indeed; the manner inaugurated at Pendlebury prospered until the First World War and beyond into the middle years of the twentieth century, e.g. in the hands of such talented architects as Temple L. Moore (1856-1920) and W. D. Caröe (1857-1938), or the partnership of Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) and Bertram Goodhue (1869-1924) in the United States. Although later Victorians believed that the efforts to attain a universal 'style for the century' had failed, in church work at least a remarkable consensus and steadiness of purpose was achieved. The longevity of this 'tradition' is itself worthy of note amidst the artistic revolutions of the later-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, culminating in such masterpieces as St. Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue, New York, U.S.A (Cram & Goodhue, 1905-13), or the Anglican cathedral at Liverpool (Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960); begun 1904, completed to a revised design 1978). Nor has the scholarship and sophistication of these buildings, their abstract architectural qualities, ever been questioned. What has been debated, and repeatedly so ever since Pendlebury church rose above its mill town, is the spirit that animated them.

2.3-2 The Fall and Rise:

In public at least, Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) expressed only admiration for Bodley's work, an admiration which seems to have deepened over time, so that he became for Shaw 'beyond all doubt the most accomplished and refined architect in Europe'.⁵ But the artistic direction of the new Gothic caused at first not a little soul-searching amongst even its most ardent admirers. Thus Shaw, writing in 1882 to his close friend John Dando Sedding (1838-91), aired in private his disquiet over a design of Bodley's:

Look at the enclosed photo, and say if it is not *copied* (and I use the word advisedly). I don't mean imitated, but clean copied from old work, general design and detail down to the smallest cusp. Is it possible that this can be *great* art? I fear not, and yet it is a good work of Bodley's, a man we both sincerely admire.⁶

Shaw could well have had in mind a work such as Bodley's church of the Holy Angels, Hoar Cross, Staffs. (begun 1872, final revisions 1907-9) [6.3], a rural estate church commissioned by a wealthy aristocratic patron.⁷ The performance is astonishingly assured, even flawless, and yet there is little here that does not have some identifiable precedent in one form or another. Even the strangely asymmetric plan – the huge windows and high vaults of the chancel contrasting with the low skulking nave (without clerestories) and side chapels – raises the accidental, additive character of many an English medieval church into a formal principle of the design. Of Bodley's powers as an architectural designer in the abstract Shaw had little doubt, but his observation did nevertheless suggest that his idol might be tempted to take the easy road. By 1912, such disquiet had become tinged with weariness. Sir Charles Nicholson

(1867-1949), in summing up recent achievements in British ecclesiastical architecture, lamented the fact that Gothic had once again reverted to being an exclusively ecclesiastical mode, and the lack of any ‘dominating personalities’, as had previously served the Gothic Revival during the middle years of the nineteenth century. But his harshest criticisms were directed at the public taste:

... for the ordinary Englishman is a very orderly person, divided up neatly into pigeon holes, in one of which he keeps his Religion... So it is not unnatural that he wraps up this religion of his in a conventional suit of clothes with some vague idea in the back of his mind that any breach of convention in these matters would be a piece of bad taste, and therefore not to be tolerated... [When] a new church has to be built nowadays, it appears that the only possible solution is generally one upon Gothic lines.⁸

For others, the problem with modern Gothic was even more fundamental. In his late masterpiece, the church of the Holy Trinity (Sloane Street), Chelsea, London (designed 1887; built 1888-90) [6.9], J.D. Sedding had combined a Flamboyant late-Gothic, derived from the Low Countries, with fittings and detailing of early Italian Renaissance inspiration [6.7, 9.15-6]. For the stained glass artist Christopher Whall (1849-1924), this eclectic approach was not an altogether happy match (although it too had good precedent), as he reported of a visit made to the church in the company of its architect:

We went together to see Holy Trinity, Sloane Street. I looked at it in silence, trying to take it in. He [Sedding] cocked his head on one side and said: “Well? Well, is it too naughty? I hope it’s not too naughty?” I said, “I don’t see your point in mixing the styles. It’s using *style* all the same, only you use two styles instead of one”.⁹

Whall was wholly with William Morris (1834-96) in believing that the only viable route to the ‘art of the times to be’ lay through the practice of the crafts. Only thus could the endless round of stylistic revivals that had dogged the century’s art be stemmed; practical necessity and experimentation, rather than conscious thought, would naturally evolve of itself a universal vernacular mode of design.¹⁰ Sedding was certainly one of the most original church architects of his generation, and was as ardent an advocate of the Arts and Crafts as Whall and Morris, but his continued adherence to ‘stylism’ – no matter how freely treated or eclectic – was, so far as Whall was concerned, simply a blind alley.

Late-Victorian Gothic thus came to be seen as merely an archaeological architecture, servicing a moribund atavistic morality. The charge stuck especially to the socially conservative, Idealist works of Bodley and his ‘school’, as a consequence of their close identification with the Established Church (the equally conservative Shaw and Sedding were

largely excused through their involvement with the nascent Arts and Crafts Movement).¹¹ But when, after the inevitable generational reaction, a scholarly reappraisal of Victorian architecture began in the years following the Second World War, it was the (supposed) formal originality of the architects of the middle years of the century that came in for renewed admiration, and not the assured but ‘reactionary’ work of the late-Victorian Goths. Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s (1958) remarks concerning Pendlebury are typical: ‘Crisp and almost mechanical in its detailing, this tall rectangular mass... wholly abjures most of what had for two decades given vitality to English neo-Gothic’.¹² The tables were turned on F.M. Simpson’s reading of the century’s achievements; the middle decades were now dubbed ‘High Victorian’ and paradigmatic of the age. In Hitchcock’s survey of the past two centuries of Western architecture, the situation in England for the two decades 1850-70 is given fully twenty pages of discussion, whereas the following half century is summarily dismissed in two.¹³ Historians such as Hitchcock, and here in Great Britain, more especially (Sir) Nikolaus Pevsner, constructed a purely formalist historiography in which the High Victorians were deemed to have begun that engagement with new materials and technologies – and the consequent rejection of historical styles – that would finally climax in the triumph of Modernism. The work of Bodley and his acolytes was viewed as unaccountably *retardataire* and outside of the historically ordained trajectory, whereas the Arts and Crafts Movement – although as equally committed to tradition and precedent – could the more easily be accommodated within the Modernist narrative because of its rejection of ‘stylism’.¹⁴ Nor was disdain for late-Victorian Gothic confined solely to those sympathetic to the Modernist cause. H.S. Goodhart-Rendel (1887-1959), dismissive alike of both Modernism and Arts and Crafts ‘functionalism’, nevertheless argued for a more traditional approach in terms of architectural principles (not styles). As such his *English Architecture since the Regency* (1953)¹⁵ proved to be a remarkably sympathetic survey of Victorian architecture, but he was noticeably ambivalent concerning the later Gothic Revival:

All the later churches of Pearson, and of Bodley, all the churches of Moore, accord very much with what at the moment is considered to be good taste than any designs by the equally competent architects preceding theirs... That the sort of building these men delighted to produce, with its masonry finely designed and sympathetically executed, with its sober colouring, its graceful proportions, and its careful avoidance of all vulgarity and violence, is an excellent sort cannot be denied... Nevertheless, the material they handled always is old, correctly medieval, and unadventurous, and we cannot look back from it with anything but regret to the days when Butterfield and Street, their heads full of fancies, eagerly took toward novelty and development steps their successors made a point of re-tracing. All that these successors could teach to their disciples was good taste, and the history of art has shewn, here as always, that in the not very long run, the wages of good taste is death.¹⁶

Twentieth century historians have undoubtedly exaggerated the degree of formal novelty deployed by High Victorian architects, and downplayed the latter's dependence on historical exemplars in contra-distinction to their successors.¹⁷ In reality there was a far greater continuity of thought between the generations. Strip G.E. Street's seminal paper *On the Proper Characteristics of a Town Church* (1850), published in the *Ecclesiologist* – and supposedly a touchstone for High Victorian church architecture – of its insistence on the use of one paradigmatic style (in Street's case, 'Middle-Pointed' Gothic), and we see in embryo the future development of Victorian Gothic for the remainder of the century.¹⁸ Street concludes his paper thus:

Some explanation I ought perhaps to give you of the real extent of my admiration of Third-Pointed town churches. I do not in the least wish to see them copied as they are, but I wish that the truths which they teach should be made applicable (as they may be) to our new Middle-Pointed buildings. There is no reason why thoroughly fine Middle-Pointed churches should deviate from any one of the canons which I have attempted to deduce from the examination of later buildings and from the consideration of the peculiar local associations which, in town, really affect us.¹⁹

Indeed, the vast majority of the medieval churches which Street cites as exemplary in terms of their composition, massing, materials and townscape value are late in style, and of precisely the type fastened upon by later Victorian architects. He praises even the Renaissance steeples of Christopher Wren's post-Fire of London churches. Moreover, Street calls for the Anglicanization of continental models: 'My own feeling is, that a diligent study of many of the examples which the large continental churches furnish, would, if accompanied by a thorough knowledge and respect for those Anglicanisms in art of which we have so much reason to be very proud, do very much for us'.²⁰ Following Street's exhortation, many of the later Victorian church architects became inveterate travellers (usually on the Continent), and the eclectic formal principles established by High Victorian architects simply continued in a more 'refined' stylistic dress. Thus the supposed 'Englishness' of large town churches such as St. Agnes', Kennington Park, London (G.G. Scott junr., begun 1874, structurally complete 1888-90; now demolished) [6.5] or St. German's, Roath, Cardiff (Bodley & Garner, 1882-6) [6.4] was only skin deep; look deeper and the formal principles of the design remain wedded to Continental exemplars.²¹ And in the later works of Street, James Brooks (1825-1901) and J.L. Pearson (1817-97) – architects usually thought of as thoroughly representative of the High Victorian era²² – there is a discernible readiness to accommodate the 'softer' aesthetic of the younger generation.²³ The sharp disjuncture between the High Victorian and late-Victorian modes supposedly seen in the careers of some the period's leading architects – the case of G.F. Bodley at All Saints Cambridge (1862-4 and 1869-71) has been frequently cited as the paradigmatic

example²⁴ – was perhaps less precipitate, and the outcome a more logical development, than was previously thought.

2.3-3 ‘Development’ and ‘Refinement’:

Two authors in particular have been foremost in arguing for a critical rehabilitation of late-Victorian Gothic. Anthony Symondson’s 1995 article *Theology, worship and the late Victorian church*²⁵ has proven perhaps to be the most significant contribution to the subject since Peter Anson’s *Fashions in Church Furnishings 1840-1940*, first published in 1960.²⁶ Both are in essence cultural histories, but whereas Anson adopts a gently satiric tone – he perhaps could do no other given the tenor of the times – Symondson takes very seriously the liturgical and doctrinal changes that took place in the Church of England (and principally in its High Church wing), and the effects these had both on church planning and on architectural style. Symondson does not attempt to develop the latter point, beyond noting a general disposition by architects in favour of the later Gothic styles, but his argument nevertheless challenges a purely formalist interpretation of these developments; internal dynamics alone cannot account for style change. As Symondson amply demonstrates, these buildings displayed both an admirably functionalist approach – in providing a workable space for the exercise of an increasingly elaborated religious ritual – and an appropriate signification, i.e. the style and planning of the interior spaces advertised the party allegiances of the patron(s), the incumbent and his congregation, and/or their architect. However, as we shall see, correctly interpreting the signification of these churches is fraught with difficulties.

The second of these authors, Michael Hall, has focused his attention on the work of G.F. Bodley, as without doubt the most influential church architect of his generation and a paradigmatic figure typifying many of the issues and dilemmas of the time. Hall’s work is to some extent complimented by Gavin Stamp’s study (2002) of Bodley’s close friend and colleague, G.G. Scott junr.,²⁷ but Hall has attempted a more thorough-going examination of Bodley’s career with respect to contemporary cultural debates. The progressive development of Hall’s thinking can be followed through a succession of papers and articles; from a trenchant assertion of his subject’s adoption of a strictly ‘English’ late-Decorated Gothic, to a more nuanced acceptance of the foreign components in Bodley’s work as operating throughout his long and busy career.²⁸ Nevertheless, if there is one constant throughout Hall’s thinking on Bodley, it is in setting forth the contemporary notion of ‘refinement’ as an antithetical principle to ‘development’. In the 1850s, Street and the elder Gilbert Scott had advanced the concept that the historic Gothic styles could be creatively ‘developed’, by eclectic adaptation, in terms of

modern conditions and materials.²⁹ The perhaps inevitable vulgarisation of this position, satirised as ‘Go’, produced its consequent reaction, as rehearsed by J.T. Micklethwaite in 1874:

‘Go’ takes a very great variety of forms... The common symptoms of it in our churches are harshness, even to brutality, of general design, with studied ugliness and systematic exaggeration of details, stumpy banded pillars, stilted arches, a profusion of coarse carving, notches, zigzags... ‘Go’ is, in fact, architectural rant, and may be defined as the perpetual forcing into notice of the personality of the architect.

The most perfect art, whether in architecture, sculpture, poetry, or anything else, is that in which the artist does not appear at all, where everything is arranged in a natural perfect order, which so entirely satisfies the mind, that a man would as soon think of demanding why this or that is so, as he would of inquiring why the wind blows or why the sky is blue.³⁰

Thus for Michael Hall, the self-effacement of ‘refinement’ is the characteristic of late-Victorian Gothic, and a total repudiation of mid-nineteenth century ‘development’.

In Hall’s paper, *What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870* (2000), the author offers perhaps the most thought-provoking of essays on the probable stylistic signification of late-Victorian Gothic, expanding on hints given in Symondson’s work.³¹ The case is well made that for Bodley, ‘refinement’ directly equated with the use of a late-Gothic style and the High Church cause (and perhaps vaguer notions of national virtue). However, Hall goes much further, in arguing that ‘refinement’ reflected the ‘Gothic Revival’s new emphasis on a timeless abstract language of architecture as an alternative to the notion of development’,³² an ideal architecture, standing ‘outside of time’, that mirrored the immutable nature of the Mass as a counterpoise to the secularism of the new earth sciences. As Hall himself admits, ‘there is no evidence that Bodley intellectualized the process of architectural design’,³³ so that it is questionable whether ‘for Bodley and for architects who thought like him, architectural styles existed as paradigms, as Platonic ideals that were given physical embodiment in buildings according to modern needs’.³⁴

Bodley was certainly less inclined than some of his colleagues – e.g. G.E. Street, G.G. Scott junr. and J.D. Sedding – to engage in print with contemporary architectural debates, but what is recorded of his views tends rather to a notion of ‘refinement’ as both a positive and a progressive attribute common to all good art. In an address he gave before the Royal Academy of Arts (London), the venue was surely more significant than its title, *Some Principles and Characteristics of Ancient Architecture, and their Application to the Modern Practice of the Art* (1885):

What is the history of architectural art but the history of refinement in the art?... What was the one principle that led on from century to century, from style to style, but that of a true artistic feeling – the desire for refinement. Nature, our great guide, never stops in her refinement... Now it is in refinement for architectural work that this expression of life and its variety is chiefly shown. According to the material and means at command, there should be the careful expression of artistic power to bring out the utmost expression of life. This expression is a great principle of all art...³⁵

Bodley characterised the faults of contemporary architecture as a ‘lack of refinement of design’.³⁶ His notion of ‘refinement’ is essentially aesthetic, not theological, and draws upon a well-rehearsed usage of the term in the Fine Arts. Thus Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), in his fifteenth *Discourse* (1790), commenting on the ‘artificiality’ of the High [Renaissance] Style as exemplified in the work of Michelangelo, notes that ‘men are not born with a relish for those arts [in this instance, music and painting] in their most refined state... [but that] we may be confident that the highest state of refinement in either of those arts will not be relished without a long and industrious attention’.³⁷ These, and similar comments by Bodley’s colleagues – e.g. G.E. Street³⁸ and J.T. Micklethwaite³⁹ – suggest that, whatever else ‘refinement’ may have signified for their clerical clients, at least for the leaders of the architectural profession, the term encapsulated their attempts to maintain and enhance their distinction as artists against the ‘commercial spirit’ of the age. In this respect, the ‘rise of refinement’ did not so much supplant the notion of ‘development’, as subtly redirect its energies. Bodley’s actual practice reveals how this was achieved.

2.3-4 Towards a Semiology of late-Victorian Gothic:

Bodley & Garner’s church of St. German’s, Roath [6.4], has already been mentioned,⁴⁰ and is far more typical of their work together during the 1880s than the aristocratic foundation of Hoar Cross. With St. German’s, Bodley established a number of formal elements that would be repeated in his larger town churches well into the new century – e.g. the London churches of St. Mary of Eton, Hackney Wick (1890-2, enlarged 1910-2 by Bodley’s pupil Cecil G. Hare (1875-1932)) and Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road, Kensington (1901-6) – most notably the lofty hall-church plan derived from Continental mendicant churches. Hedged about by terraced housing, St. German’s is otherwise unremarkable externally, except that all the windows are set high in order to gain better internal lighting. The ‘English’ Gothic detailing nevertheless reflects the Anglicanism of its congregation, in this, the industrial heartland of Wales. A particularly striking feature of the interior is the manner in which the mass of the walls appears hollowed out or tunnelled through, e.g. to form niches framing the aisle windows, thereby creating additional spaces at their feet for side altars (not all of which have been filled). A particularly complex articulation of spatial volumes is created by the intersection of the chancel with the

side aisles; here low vaulted chapels are created on the ground floor (carried on as a blind arcade into the sanctuary framing the sedilia) with a tribune above housing the organ. The effect is intensified as one enters the chancel, where the high windows have galleries at their feet punched through the thickness of the wall, climaxing in the doubled-up tracery of the east windows. The timber-boarded wagon roof of the chancel is further divided into bays by masonry diaphragm arches braced externally by flying buttresses; structurally speaking, these are wholly unnecessary, but they undoubtedly enhance the visual articulation of the space as the symbolic focus of the interior.⁴¹ Considered purely in the abstract, this is architecture of a very high order.

There are a few other points worth noting however. For all the complexity of the architectural articulation, its detailing remains subservient to the decorative enrichment of the fittings and the large expanses of stained glass.⁴² There is a general absence of architectural sculpture, whilst the piers have only simple moulded capitals. The plain walls (now whitewashed) and boarded ceilings were painted with repetitive, emblematic devices, in muted tones of madder, leaf green, gold and flake-white. The aggressive ‘muscularity’ of the typical mid-Victorian church interior has given way to something altogether more intimate (despite the enlarged scale) and contemplative. In its creative amalgam of historical exemplars, both English and Continental, something new has been created in the service of an Anglican liturgy which took note of medieval Catholic precedent, but reinterpreted this in terms of modern congregational worship.

As Symondson and Hall both point out, around mid-century there was a significant shift in the Anglican understanding of the sacraments and the signification of the liturgy.⁴³ In a number of High Church circles there was a reassertion of traditional Catholic teaching on the doctrine of the ‘real presence’ and the ‘sacrifice’ of the Mass, and a consequent reinforcement of the rite of Holy Communion as a personal devotional action rather than as a symbolic communal meal.⁴⁴ This renewed understanding was authoritatively proclaimed in John Purchas’ *Directorium Anglicanum* of 1858 (revised edition by Rev. Frederick George Lee, 1865),⁴⁵ a manual of directions (based on thorough historical research) for the proper conduct of the Mass, which attempted a scholarly recreation of the Catholic ritual of the Reformed English Church before its later contamination by Protestantism. As such, the *Directorium* became the standard work of High Church Anglican liturgiology for the next half-century. For Purchas, ‘there is one Book of Holy Scripture – the Apocalypse – which reveals to us the Ritual of Heaven. That Ritual is the normal form of the worship of the Christian Church’,⁴⁶ and the earthly celebration of the Eucharist is but

the shadow cast upon earth from the throne of God of the Worship which was to be in heaven after the Incarnation and Ascension of the God-Man, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who pleads before the throne His Sacrifice, at once the Victim, the “Lamb as it had been slain”, and High Priest. The Ritual of Heaven is objective, and the principal worship of the Church on earth is equally so by reason of its being identical with the Normal and Apocalyptic ritual, and thus containing a great action, even the perpetuation of the Sacrifice made on the Cross, in an unbloody manner on the altar... therefore the Ritual of Heaven and earth must be one, – that is, in intention and signification, though under different conditions as to its expression.⁴⁷

In other words, the Christian Mass is a type of that heavenly and eternal worship before the throne of God which is described in the Revelations of St. John the Divine. In contrast to a world which modern science had increasingly revealed as mutable and contingent, the liturgy proffered a timeless, immutable reality. For the ecclesiastical arts, this shift in understanding had major repercussions. The first Cambridge Camdenians, following the medieval *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* of Gulielmus Durandus,⁴⁸ had encouraged a view of church buildings as expository of Christian doctrine, through the symbolism of their plans and parts, and the narrative cycles on their walls and in their windows; a missionary tool with which to call an errant society back to God. In contrast, the newly revived Eucharistic teaching spoke of a transcendent presence which continued participation in the Mass made imminent on earth. The choreography of the liturgy and its architectural setting thus offered a physical anticipation of a spiritual ideal; the serried ranks of sainted images in windows and on reredoses and screens prefigured the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ of Heaven itself.⁴⁹

The most highly developed liturgies, and the most sophisticated ritual arrangements and sacred arts, had been created for the later medieval Church. But as the Reformation had destroyed so many examples at home, it was to surviving examples in northern Europe that English liturgists now looked for appropriate models. In spite of previous objections that English Perpendicular – and Continental Flamboyant – were decadent and debased modes, these were now seen as the natural (although by no means inevitable) architectural foil for the new Anglo-Catholic liturgies. Bodley’s church interiors reflected this understanding precisely. The furnishings and fittings, for all their decorative elaboration, increasingly conformed to an archaeologically correct ideal, frozen in time, the creative individuality of their craftsmen ruthlessly suppressed. The buildings, however, remained the personal ‘expression’ of the architect as artist, who selected and orchestrated the whole. Thus ‘development’ was not so much repudiated, as severely circumscribed in the architect’s favour.

In his 1858 Preface to the *Directorium*, John Purchas had argued that the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) was never intended to be a ‘Complete Directory’, and that it was clearly

written with reference to a background of common practice and written guidance: ‘the Priest had *other written* directions for his guide which we unfortunately do not possess; in fact, in most churches the Priest was dependent on those other guides almost exclusively: the Missals being well nigh devoid of Rubrics’.⁵⁰ In order to fill out the rubrical *lacunæ* in the Prayer Book – i.e. to reinstate those Catholic practices which were presumed still to be licit, as statutable and having only fallen into desuetude – it was necessary to compare Anglican practice with that current in the Roman Catholic Church. Later liturgiologists would take issue with this aspect of the *Directorium*, as it failed to take adequate account of post-Tridentine developments within Roman Catholicism.

Purchas’ work appeared nonetheless to sanction the wholesale importation of modern Roman rites, just so far as they could be construed to conform to Anglican rubrics.⁵¹ Such an open accommodation with Roman Catholicism was contemptuously dubbed as Ritualism by its opponents, and unsurprisingly, it alarmed both Protestant and moderate High Church opinion in the Church of England alike.⁵² More importantly, it had significant architectural consequences; thus at St. German’s, Roath, the elevation of the chancel appears to acknowledge Roman Catholic manuals on church planning as codified in the early seventeenth century by S. Carlo Borromeo (1538-84).⁵³ The east window is therefore set high – and in Bodley’s earlier churches at Scarborough (1861-3) [6.1-2] and Pendlebury the window is set very high – in the gable in order to reduce glare. The gorgeously coloured reredos effects the necessary transition down onto the altar itself, as well as providing an appropriately scaled visual focus [6.6]. The wide sanctuary and chancel, raised up by steps and unobstructed by screens, allows the full visibility of the liturgy from the body of the church.

Whilst the ground plan and overall structure of St. German’s alludes to the great mendicant basilicas of France and Italy, its stained glass and furnishings evoke the arts of late-medieval Flanders and Germany, and its liturgical planning reinterprets Ecclesiological norms in terms of post-Tridentine Catholicism. The use of ‘English’ late-Gothic at St. German’s was therefore only one amongst a number of possible signifiers advertising the Ritualist sympathies of its congregation. This point needs to be stressed, as the recent revival of interest in late-Victorian Gothic has perhaps concentrated too much on the switch to the later Gothic styles. There are any number of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century churches, erected on behalf of Ritualist congregations, which do not affect a late-Gothic style at all – the later works of both J.L. Pearson [6.22] and James Brooks are perhaps amongst the most notable of these – but whose liturgical sympathies are abundantly evident from the plan-form of the buildings or the arrangement of the furnishings.

The dangers in fixating on stylistic issues are revealed by the younger Gilbert Scott's church of St. Agnes', Kennington Park (q.v.) [6.5].⁵⁴ After Bodley & Garner's Pendlebury church, St. Agnes' was perhaps the most influential English church of the later nineteenth century, in that it 'became the centre of the revival of pre-Reformation ceremonial, as far as it was then understood, based upon the Sarum Missal'.⁵⁵ It was here that there began a movement to de-Romanise Purchas' work, and sanction only those elements which could be historically demonstrated as having been the practice of the English Church at or immediately before the Reformation. Hence the extraordinary compartmentalisation of the interior by screens, rood lofts and singing galleries, on the pattern of the late-medieval English parish church. Even so, virtually everything that was seen at St. Agnes' was sourced from north European exemplars (more so than in Bodley's equivalent works), despite the avowedly Anglicising tendencies of its congregation. And yet, St. Agnes' was thought peculiarly 'English' by its admirers and critics alike. J.D. Sedding – a staunch advocate of English Perpendicular and no mean scholar himself – stoutly defended Scott's work, in the *Building News* of 1875, against accusations of crudity (particularly in the exterior elevations) and of introducing a 'debased' (i.e. a late-Gothic) style. According to Sedding, St. Agnes' possessed:

- 1) A carefully thought out plan of an English church, suited to the exigencies of modern worship.
- 2) An entire mastery of the details and spirit of English Gothic, as manifested in ancient examples.
- 3) A simplicity and natural quaintness of treatment the more valuable as it opposes the tawdry picturesqueness and theatricality of the half-assimilated Gothic of contemporary work.
- 4) That it is an independent effort based on a period of English architecture almost wholly un-represented in modern design.⁵⁶

Clearly, in Sedding's mind, 'Englishness' consisted in more than matters of style, but equated also with (supposedly) national characteristics such as naturalness, 'simplicity' and 'quaintness of treatment'. Sedding's assessment seems to have been especially coloured by the liturgiology of the congregation.⁵⁷ Frederick Simpson would similarly note of Pendlebury church that it was a building 'eminently fitted for English church worship'. The conundrum of an 'Englishness' that was, stylistically speaking, not at all English, had to await a younger generation, and the 'radical medievalism' of such as John Ninian Comper (1864-1960), e.g. St. Cyprian's, Clarence Gate, London (1902-3), which denied even Bodley's notion of 'refinement' in favour of pure archaeology.⁵⁸

These difficulties are compounded when we consider those Roman Catholic architects, e.g. John Francis Bentley (1839-1902), Archibald M. Dunn (1832-1917) and Leonard Stokes (1858-1925) – the latter a one-time office assistant of both Street and Bodley & Garner – who

pursued a similar stylistic course to their Anglican colleagues.⁵⁹ Indeed what could be more ‘refined’ (in Bodley’s sense of the term) or quintessentially ‘English’ (in Sedding’s sense) than Bentley’s Church of the Holy Rood, Watford, Hertfordshire (1883-1900)? Thus, although Symondson’s and Hall’s work does offer valuable pointers to a semiology of late-Victorian churches, the foregoing should have indicated that a more general application of their ideas is highly problematic, not least because of their almost exclusive focus on developments within the High Church party of the Church of England. Clearly there is more work to be done here, and especially in examining the cultural context that encouraged a wider dissemination of the late-Victorian Gothic styles.

2.3-5 Modern Gothic:

Paul Snell’s recent study (2006) has done much to re-instate John Dando Sedding [2.20] as one of the ablest and most original church architects of his generation, and not just as a footnote in the history of the Arts and Crafts.⁶⁰ Snell demonstrates how Sedding’s last works offered both a viable alternative to Bodley’s archaeological mode, and an answer to Norman Shaw’s anxieties over the future course of the Gothic Revival. Through his many articles and lectures of the late 1870s and 80s, Sedding argued that, outside of the Academic book-learned Classicism of the Renaissance, the spirit of Gothic had lived on, in the hands of traditional artisans, absorbing just so much of new styles and ornaments as was needed. Gothic had not expired, exhausted and incapable of further development,⁶¹ nor was its spirit confined only to periods of unmatched accomplishment and refinement.⁶² The style had simply evolved, transforming itself, messily, without system, as any real living language does. For Sedding, the demise of this architectural vernacular was the result, not of the English Reformation – where every architect, critic and churchman since A.W.N. Pugin and the Ecclesiologists had placed it – but of the Gothic Revival itself, and its ideological need for archaeologically correct, historically informed (and usually foreign) detailing:

The old *Téméraire* of English art having been sent to her last home, a bright Venetian gondola takes her place, with seven lamps at her prow – an Oxford graduate and a few other able enthusiasts to work the oar, fire off the guns, and take care of the cargo of sketch-books and romantic literature on board... you find them flying about in all directions, and bringing home valuable spoils in the shape of numberless new sorts of doors and windows to offer at the feet of a grateful people; and the merit of the new types consists in this, that they are quite unique in England, and that the British workman cannot move a step as he copies them without full-sized details of every part.⁶³

Several things flowed from this. Firstly, it was not in the purity of the ‘language’ wherein lay the true genius of Gothic: ‘Now without in anywise intending to ask our Gothic designers to ‘forget’ the old Gothic... I do claim that they should handle the old forms in a more elastic way,

and bring a more humane and natural and a more essentially modern spirit to bear upon their work'.⁶⁴ This could even extend to the admission of classical forms, the artisan-built City churches of Christopher Wren (but not yet St. Paul's cathedral) being seen as essentially Gothic in spirit, like their medieval predecessors. Sedding would essay only a single example of an Anglican church in full-blown Renaissance style – Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell, London (1886-8)⁶⁵ – but Norman Shaw's church of St. Michael, Bedford Park, Chiswick (London) is perhaps the strangest reflection of this line of thinking. Designed in 1877-8 (built 1879-82), the contractual arrangements were the standard ones for the time. However, St. Michael's looks for all the world as if put up by a gang of jobbing builders in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration, all red-brick and white painted trim (or 'artistic' green within), and with just enough Gothic detail about it to convince of its credentials as a church.⁶⁶

Sedding's commitment to the modern 'development' of Gothic may well have reflected his personal attachment to a Romanising Anglo-Catholic churchmanship, one that deliberately transgressed the insularity of the Established Church, but he barely allowed his religion to intrude on his writings. He simply addressed his fellow architects as brother artists. And for Gothic to live and grow again, English architects had to look seriously to their responsibilities as modern artists, and not feel hampered by historical precedents: 'The best corrective to all our improper leanings upon old art is, then, the fostering of individuality. And there never was a time more favourable to the exhibition of genuine individual character than the present ... In this emphasis of personal character, lies, I verily believe, the brightest hope for modern art'.⁶⁷

These ideas were given fullest expression at Holy Trinity (Sloane Street), Chelsea, London (designed 1887; built 1888-90). This was Sedding's first new church, since St. Clement's, Boscombe, Bournemouth (principally 1871-3, completed 1891), for which there were ample funds and no restriction of space.⁶⁸ It was very different from the pure West Country Perpendicular of the earlier church, and marked a considerable advance towards a truly modern Gothic. As Sedding originally conceived the tremendously wide, open-planned interior [6.8]⁶⁹ – its ranks of corbelled-out statuary lining the drum piers, rising to the painted wide-spreading timber vaults – the impression of a great Flemish burgher's church would have been very strong. Unfortunately, much of the decoration was left unfinished at Sedding's death in 1891.⁷⁰ Sedding's treatment of the predominantly Flamboyant Gothic idiom exhibits nevertheless an astonishing elasticity combined with the maximum of 'refinement'. As we have seen, this kind of visual language had become something of a *leitmotif* of Anglican Ritualism, and that it was so understood as advertising the Anglo-Catholicism of its congregation can be gauged from a contemporary notice in the *Church Times*, which commented that the interior was reminiscent of 'some of the early Jesuit churches in Germany'.⁷¹ As Symondson has also

noted, the ultramontane sympathies of Holy Trinity were made abundantly clear through certain aspects of its liturgical planning,⁷² as well as in the Renaissance style (and therefore an implied *Romanitas*) of many of the fittings. This aside, perhaps what strikes one most about the building is its singularity; that it is so utterly unlike the regulation view of a Victorian church. Holy Trinity offered, not the re-presentation of an idealised past, but a Gothic that was alive and fully capable of continued ‘development’. As his pupil, John Paul Cooper (1869-1933) noted *in memoriam* of his master:

Though an experimentalist, he was not ‘at home in all the styles’. He dallied with many, as was the fashion of the day, but only one was deeply affected. That one was his own solution of Gothic. It was an attempt to take up the threads of Gothic tradition, where they were left in the fifteenth century, and weave into them the weft of modern need and thought.⁷³

Charles Harrison Townsend (1851-1928) was even more fulsome concerning Sedding’s early passing: ‘English architects have lost in the full flush of his ripened power, that Moses destined to lead them out of the wilderness of doubt and weakness’.⁷⁴

Notes to Chapter 2.3:

- ¹ Simpson, F.M.: *Architectural Developments during Victoria's Reign* in *AR*, Vol.2 (London, June- Nov. 1897), pp.90-94. Prof. Frederick M. Simpson (1855-1928) had been an articulated pupil of G.F. Bodley (1827-1907), and in 1894 accepted the Chair of Architecture at Liverpool University.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp.91-2.
- ³ G.F. Bodley took Thomas Garner into informal partnership in 1869, largely to assist with the pressures of an expanding practice after Bodley was left permanently disabled (following a bout of illness). After c.1885, commissions were allocated to one or other of the partners, working independently, but the partnership was dissolved following Garner's conversion to Rome in 1896.
- ⁴ Simpson (1897), *Op.cit.* p.92.
- ⁵ Correspondence (May 1903) quoted in Saint (1983), *Op.cit.*, p.274.
- ⁶ R.N. Shaw to J.D. Sedding (Nov. 1882), quoted in *Ibid.*, p.218.
- ⁷ For Hoar Cross, see Hall, M.: 'Emily Meynell Ingram and Holy Angels, Hoar Cross, Staffordshire: A Study in Patronage' in *AH*, Vol.47 (2004), pp.283-328.
- ⁸ (Sir) Charles Nicholson in Nicholson & Spooner [1912]: *Op.cit.*, pp.3 & 6.
- ⁹ Whall, C.W.: 'An Appreciation of J.D. Sedding', in *AR*, Vol.4 (London, June-Nov. 1898), pp. 34-6. (36). Whall may well have embroidered the report of this visit, as many of the more obviously Italianate fittings had yet to be installed by the time of Sedding's death in 1891.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Whall, C.W.: *Stained Glass Work*, first published 1905 (London, 1920 reprint), pp.243-4.
- ¹¹ Cf. Hall, M.: "'A Patriotism in our Art': Ideas of Englishness in the Architecture of G. F. Bodley" in Crellin, D. & Dungavell, I (eds.): *Architecture & Englishness 1880-1914* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 7-24 (21): 'Yet despite the subtlety of thought and practice we can discern in the buildings of Comper, Scott junr., Micklethwaite and Sedding, it was the comparatively unintellectually grounded architecture of Bodley that most significantly shaped the image of the Church of England in the period'.
- ¹² Hitchcock, H-R.: *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, first published 1958, fourth edn. 1977 (Harmondsworth, 1982 reprint), p.270.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* pp.247-67 and 269-70. Matters have only slowly improved since. A standard work such as Dixon, R. and Muthesius, S.: *Victorian Architecture* (London, 1978) accords twenty pages to High Victorian developments, only three for Bodley and his successors, and four for later Roman Catholic churches and the influence of the Arts and Crafts. A more recent survey, Curl, J. Stevens: *Victorian Churches* (London, 1995) is better balanced, but the emphasis still lies strongly with the High Victorian generation (twenty four against sixteen pages). More recent still, the Victorian Society symposium, Sladen & Saint (eds.) (2011): *Churches 1870-1914*, *Op.cit.*, perhaps indicates that critical opinion has finally relented with respect to late-Victorian Gothic.
- ¹⁴ E.g. Muthesius, Stefan: *The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-1870* (London and Boston, 1972), which presented a wholly formalist analysis of the High Victorian 'Movement', ignoring the liturgical and doctrinal issues that were the undoubted drivers behind many of the subsequent developments in church work.
- ¹⁵ Goodhart-Rendel (1953):*Op.cit.* Originally delivered as a series of Slade lectures at Oxford in 1934, and later published in a revised form.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.221. Anthony Symondson has suggested that Goodhart-Rendel's 'emotional resistance to the classic face of Anglicanism' was conditioned by his reception into the Roman Catholic church in 1935; see Symondson (1997): *Look with your Ears...* *Op.cit.*, pp.43-4.
- ¹⁷ For a discussion of this issue, see Stamp, G.: 'High Victorian Gothic and the Architecture of Normandy' in *JAH*, Vol.62, No.2 (June 2003), pp.194-211; also Jackson, N.: 'The Un-Englishness of G.E. Street's Church of St. James-the-Less' in *AH*, Vol.23 (1980), pp.86-94 &191-5.
- ¹⁸ Street, G.E.: 'On the Proper Characteristics of a Town Church' in *E*, Vol.XI (London, 1850), pp.227-33.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.232.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.232.
- ²¹ See e.g. Hall, M.: 'The Later Gothic Revival in England. A National or International Style?' in De Maeyer, J. & Verpoest, L. (eds.): *Gothic Revival. Religion, Architecture and Style in Western Europe 1815-1914* (Leuven, 2000), pp.221-28 (225-8).
- ²² This generational divide is to some extent deceptive; Street (1824-81) and Brooks (1825-1901) were not much older than Bodley (1827-1907), but the latter is usually grouped with the younger men, such as Philip Webb (b.1831), Shaw (b.1831), Robson (b.1835), Sedding (b.1838) and Scott junr. (b.1839). On the other hand, both Butterfield (1814-1900) and Pearson (1817-97) were of much the same

- generation as A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52), but continued in active practice well into the last decade of the century.
- ²³ E.g. Brooks' churches of SS Peter & Paul, Dover, Kent (1891-3) and All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London (designed 1889, begun 1892; unfinished), which combine a First Pointed lancet style with Flamboyant Gothic detailing.
- ²⁴ E.g. Hall, M.: 'The Rise of Refinement: G.F. Bodley's All Saints Cambridge and the Return to English Models in Gothic Architecture of the 1860s' in *AH*, Vol.36 (1993), pp. 103-26.
- ²⁵ Symondson, A.: *Theology, Worship and the Late Victorian Church* in Brooks & Saint (eds.) (1995), Op.cit., pp.193-222. However, it should be borne in mind that the principal thrust of Symondson's research is for the critical rehabilitation of (Sir) John Ninian Comper (1864-1960), as the heir and summation of all the ecclesiological developments of the previous half century.
- ²⁶ Anson (1965): *Fashions in Church Furnishings...* Op.cit.
- ²⁷ Stamp (2002) *An Architect of Promise...* Op.cit.
- ²⁸ E.g. Hall (1993), Op.cit., p.111, re. St. Wilfrid's, Hayward Heath, Sussex (1863-5): 'There is however no trace of Continental influence'; Hall (2006), Op.cit., p.19, re. St. Michael's, Folkestone, Kent (1870-3): 'St. Michael was indeed foreign looking; its canted east end, banded brick-and-stone walls, and butterfly-pattern tracery all suggested late-medieval north European influence...'
- ²⁹ E.g. Street, G.E.: 'The True Principles of Architecture and the Possibility of Development', in *E*, Vol. XIII (1852), pp.247-62.
- ³⁰ Micklethwaite (1874), Op.cit., pp.264-5.
- ³¹ Hall (2000): *What do Victorian Churches Mean?...* Op.cit., pp. 78-95.
- ³² Ibid. p.89.
- ³³ Ibid. p.89.
- ³⁴ Ibid. p.90.
- ³⁵ Bodley, G.F.: 'Principles and Characteristics of Architecture' (address to the Royal Academy of Arts, London) in *BN*, Vol. 48 (27 Feb. 1885), pp.317-19 (p.317).
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Reynolds, J.: *Fifteen Discourses delivered in the Royal Academy*, published separately London, 1769-91 (Ernest Rhys (ed.), Everyman Edition, London, no date), pp.258.
- ³⁸ Cf. Street, G.E.: 'A Course of Lectures delivered before the students of the Royal Academy in the Spring of 1881; Lecture I – The Study and Practice of Architecture' in Street, A. E.: *Memoir of George Edmund Street RA 1824-1881* (London, 1888), pp.315-35 (320): 'What, for instance, is the story of the long and slow development of Doric architecture, but one of an attempt to secure more refinement by the gradual perfection of every detail?'
- ³⁹ Micklethwaite (1874), Op.cit., pp.263-6.
- ⁴⁰ *BN*, Vol.41 (23 Dec. 1881), p.824 + illus. St. German's was designed to accommodate 700 sittings. The foundation stone was laid 18 April 1882, and the completed church consecrated 9 March 1886.
- ⁴¹ There are precedents for this feature in a number of medieval great halls (not churches), notably Conway Castle, Gwynedd, Wales (an alteration of 1346-7) and the Old Palace, Mayfield, East Sussex (c.1350). Similar arches can also be found in the great hall of Adcote house, Shropshire, designed by R. Norman Shaw (1876-81), and modelled somewhat after the hall at Ightham Mote, Sevenoaks, Kent; see Saint (1983), Op.cit., pp.100-01.
- ⁴² The present reredos was not erected until 1922, but the perspectives in the *Building News* (ref. 40 above) make clear that something of the sort was envisaged from the first.
- ⁴³ Symondson (1995) Op.cit., pp. 196-8; Hall (2000) Op.cit., pp.86-7.
- ⁴⁴ See Herring, G.: 'Tractarians and Ritualists' in *Ecclesiology Today*, Issue No. 29 (Sept. 2002), pp. 51-60 (51-2).
- ⁴⁵ Purchas, J.: *The Directorium Anglicanum. Being a Manual for the Right Celebration of the Holy Communion, ... according to the Ancient Rite Use of the Church of England*, first published London, 1858 (second revised edn., Rev. F.G. Lee(ed.), London, 1865).
- ⁴⁶ Purchas (1865): Op.cit., First (1858) Preface, pp.vi-xxvi (ix-x).
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Neale, J.M. & Webb, B. (eds.): *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, written by William Durandus*, first published, London, 1842 (reprint, London, 1893).
- ⁴⁹ Epistle to the Hebrews 12.1: 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us'.
- ⁵⁰ Purchas, (1865), Op.cit., First (1858) Preface, pp.vi-vii.

- ⁵¹ Yates, N.: *Buildings Faith and Worship*, first published Oxford, 1991(reprinted Oxford, 2006), pp.140-3; Symondson (1995), Op.cit., pp.212-18. In the wake of Italian unification (completed by 1870), and the Papacy's loss of all temporal powers, it was perhaps easier for Church of England priests to openly acknowledge the *spiritual* authority of the Pope, and even to work towards a hoped for reunification of the two Churches.
- ⁵² Yates, N.: *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain 1830-1910* (1999), pp.150-212, offers a detailed analysis of the response to the phenomenon of Ritualism.
- ⁵³ Re. the *Instructiones Fabricæ et Supellectillis Ecclesiasticæ* of S. Carlo Borromeo (Milan, 1577), and its 1857 English translation by the architect George J. Wigley, *S. Charles Borromeo's Instructions of Ecclesiastical Buildings*, see Gallegos, M.E.: 'Charles Borromeo and Catholic tradition regarding the Design of Catholic Churches' in *Sacred Architecture Journal* (Fall/Winter 2004) <<http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/pubs/saj/articles/borromeo.php>> [accessed Sept. 2007]; also O'Reilly, S.: 'Roman versus Romantic: Classical Roots in the Origins of a Roman Catholic Ecclesiology' in *AH*, Vol.40 (1997), pp.222-40 (223-6 & 230-5), In theory, the *Instructiones* was opposed to any window behind or above the altar, preferring a clerestory of clear glass on either side to light the sanctuary.
- ⁵⁴ For an extended discussion of St. Agnes', Kennington, see Stamp (2002) Op.cit., pp.74-90.
- ⁵⁵ Yates (2006) Op.cit., pp.143-5; Symondson (1995) Op.cit., pp. 205-7 (207).
- ⁵⁶ *BN*, Vol.29 (1875), p.183; quoted in Snell: *The Priest of Form. John Dando Sedding 1838-91 and the languages of late Victorian Architecture* (unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University, 2006), p.148.
- ⁵⁷ Girouard (1977), Op.cit., pp. 10-37. Girouard was perhaps the first historian to fully describe the equation of an English nationalism in the arts – as a revolt against 'muscular' High Victorian Gothic – with aesthetic qualities such as simplicity, delicacy, tenderness and quaintness. Bodley, G.G. Scott junr., D.G. Rossetti and Wm. Morris were all key players in the evolution of this new sensibility, although they subsequently went their separate ways.
- ⁵⁸ Symondson (1995), Op.cit., pp.212-7
- ⁵⁹ Cf. O'Donnell, R.: 'Roman Catholic Architecture in England. 'Irish occupation' or 'Italian mission'?' in Crellin & Dungavell (eds.) (2006), Op.cit., pp.59-71; Howell, P.: 'Between Medievalism and the Counter-Reformation: Catholic church building after Pugin' in Sladen & Saint (eds.) (2011), Op.cit., pp.26-43. Neither author really tackles the 'English' connotations of Victorian late-Gothic.
- ⁶⁰ Snell (2006) Op.cit.
- ⁶¹ Cf. Scott (junr.), G.G.: *An Essay on the History of English Church Architecture* (London, 1881), p.186: 'Pointed architecture in England died a natural death. It was not forcibly supplanted, but sank to rest in a vigorous and green old age'.
- ⁶² Cf. Bodley, G.F. (1882): *The modes in which Religious Life and Thought may be influenced by Art*, Op.cit., p. 327: '...we need not invent a new language to write a new book. Our beautiful old English Gothic will serve for all our [future] requirements, and is capable of infinite variety and freshness of design. Let us keep to our own manner of English architecture.'
- ⁶³ Sedding, J.D.: 'The Modern Architect and his Art', in *BA* (14 Nov. 1884), pp.232-6 (236).
- ⁶⁴ Sedding, J.D.: 'Modern Ecclesiastical Art', in *BA* (26 Dec. 1884), pp.309-13 (310-11).
- ⁶⁵ For a discussion of Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell (London), see Snell (2006), Op.cit., pp.178-80.
- ⁶⁶ For St. Michael's, Bedford Park, see Saint (1983), Op.cit., pp.209-10, 284 & 420; also Girouard (1977), Op.cit., pp.168-71.
- ⁶⁷ Sedding, J.D.: 'Modern Design', in *BN* (9 Mar. 1883), pp.278-80 and 16 Mar. 1883, pp.311-2 (311).
- ⁶⁸ Snell (2006), Op.cit., pp.180-88; also Skipwith, P.: *Holy Trinity Sloane Street* ([London], 2002), pp.11-2 & 16-7.
- ⁶⁹ 'Architecture at the Royal Academy and at the Salon-I' in *B*, Vol.56 (4 May 1889), pp.327-9 (328): 'Bay of Nave Arcade. New Church, Sloane Street' in *B*, Vol. 57 (12 Oct. 1889), p. 260 + illus.
- ⁷⁰ Snell (2006), Op.cit., pp.183-4; also Skipwith (2002), Op.cit., pp.21-22. As Snell has argued, it was only after the building was sufficiently advanced – and with a fresh injection of funds from the patron – that Sedding began to contemplate an integrated scheme of fittings and decoration, executed by a team of his fellow artists drawn from the Art Workers' Guild. Unfortunately, Sedding's proposals for the decorative scheme were only partially implemented, whilst the fitting-out of the church dragged on into the 1920s. Perhaps worst of all, the interior has been white-washed following damage sustained during the London Blitz.
- ⁷¹ *Church Times*, Vol.29 (1891), p.399; quoted in Snell (2006) Op.cit., p.183.
- ⁷² Symondson (1995), Op.cit., pp.207-10.

⁷³ Cooper, J.P. and Wilson, H.: 'The Work of J.D. Sedding – Conclusion' in *AR*, Vol.4 (June-Nov. 1898), pp.33-4 (33).

⁷⁴ *Journal of Architectural Association*, vol.38 (1892), p.103; quoted in Snell (2006), *Op.cit.*, p.27.

2.4 'The Land of the Lindisfarne Saints':¹

Anglican Ecclesiology in late-nineteenth century Tyneside

2.4-1 Introduction:

The present chapter offers a coda to the first part of this study, drawing many threads together from the preceding discussion. It examines the impact of the new ecclesiology on Tyneside during the latter-half of the nineteenth century, a subject that has received conspicuously less attention than is perhaps merited by the ability of the region's architects, or the quality of their achievements. This is in part a consequence of entrenched historical perceptions. Thus Jeff Smith's account (2001) of the events that led up to the creation, in 1882, of a new Anglican diocese of Newcastle, re-iterates a widespread belief in an Established Church rapidly haemorrhaging political prestige and membership, increasingly marginalised and in terminal decline:²

The Anglican resurgence [on Tyneside] had been confined largely to a social constituency in which the working classes were grossly under-represented. The Church's failure, which would continue into the 20th century, rested on the fact that only a proportion of society owed any allegiance to it, whilst it claimed the rights and privileges accorded to a national church. Its high point of influence was long gone by 1882, and attempts at restitution were too little and too late.³

In other words, the later history of the diocese is an irrelevancy; the contest with Nonconformism and secularism had already been lost. The architectural historian Thomas Faulkner has encountered a similar lack of engagement with post-1882 ecclesiological developments in the region,⁴ in marked contrast to the interest shown in Newcastle's earlier nineteenth century architects, e.g. John Dobson (1787-1865). Credited with establishing a distinctively regional architectural tradition at Newcastle itself, Dobson has joined the engraver Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), and the engineers George Stephenson (1781-1848) and Sir William Armstrong (1810-1900), in a pantheon of 'local heroes'.⁵ As we saw in Chapter 2.2, the 'myth' of the North-East as a place of resolutely independent traditions, culturally and economically remote from the centres of power (in the South-East), only took hold in the later nineteenth century.⁶ Indeed, Faulkner (2000) has argued that 'what were perceived as local traditions in the architecture of the North-East had hitherto been over-emphasised. In fact, indigenous and vernacular forms, however deeply rooted, came to be replaced over the centuries by fashionable styles from the south'.⁷ In support of this view, Faulkner cites both the long-established trading connections between the North-East and London, and the metropolitan sophistication of Newcastle's early-nineteenth century town-centre improvements, literary-artistic institutions and polite culture. Many of the region's leading architects either trained in London, or continued to maintain strong links with the capital, Robert James Johnson (1832-

1892) being perhaps the prime example amongst the later generation; trained in (Sir) George Gilbert Scott's office, Johnson claimed G.F. Bodley (1827-1907), E.R. Robson (1835-1917) and J.J. Stevenson (1831-1908) amongst his close friends.⁸

It is however true that Tyneside cannot boast a Victorian townscape on the scale or quality of a Manchester, Liverpool or Leeds. As we saw in Chapters 2.1 and 2.2, urban development outside of Newcastle was severely circumscribed until the latter half of the century, when the region's economy began to 'take off' in spectacular fashion. The benefits of this economic boom were almost wholly confined to the eastern seaboard of the region, and more particularly to the river basins of the Tyne, the Wear and the Tees. The opportunities for grandiose building projects were limited therefore by a concentration of resources within a geographically small area, and over a span of, at best, fifty or sixty years. After the First World War, the region began to experience a number of economic reverses that would undermine the gains made in the previous half-century, leaving many church projects struggling to finish. As with the other cultural institutions of Tyneside, it is not the lack of achievement, but that so much was achieved at all, that is perhaps the greatest surprise.⁹

2.4-2 John Dobson and Ecclesiology:

At his death in 1865, John Dobson was regarded, and is still lauded, as the most prominent and prolific nineteenth century architect to have practiced out of Newcastle. But in comparison with his elegantly neoclassical villas and housing developments, it must be admitted that, as a church architect, Dobson is a severe disappointment. Probably his finest church is also amongst his first, St. Thomas' (1827-30) [6.18], on the Barras Bridge, Newcastle. Its galleried and plaster-vaulted interior, modelled on the hall-choir of London's Temple church, served a wealthy and well-connected Evangelical congregation amidst the leafy terraces and villas then rising on this northern edge of the town.¹⁰ Unfortunately, Dobson's later churches barely advance on this. Where he did adopt Ecclesiological principles for Anglican clients, it cannot be said that he did so from any strongly held personal convictions. A late work, such as St. John's, Otterburn, in rural Northumberland (1855-7), is indeed correctly Ecclesiological both in plan and style (Second Pointed Gothic), but hard and mechanical in the manner of the 1830s and 40s, its *mélange* of details culled from pattern books as much from personal observation.¹¹

Like many of his northern colleagues, Dobson designed churches and chapels for a wide variety of denominations without the slightest partisan spirit, and in an equally diverse range of styles.¹² In part, this reflects the poor standing of the Established Church, and especially on Tyneside, where a tradition of Nonconformism and political Radicalism had strongly taken root.

Thus Dobson's church of St. Peter, Ellison Place, Newcastle (1840-3; demolished), built for one of the pioneering Tractarian congregations in Newcastle, was designed in English Decorated Gothic, as was his chapel for the Unitarians (1853; also demolished) just around the corner on New Bridge Street, the two buildings distinguished only by their plans.¹³ In the case of the large and impressive Jesmond Parish Church (1859-61) [6.19], amongst the last of Dobson's major Anglican churches, Decorated Gothic offered potential for a lavish display of carving and complex traceries, reflecting the wealth and ambition of its patrons.¹⁴ Perhaps there was an intentional irony here, as English Decorated had also been employed for the cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin (A.W.N. Pugin; 1842-4, but completed later), still rising on the opposite side of town on behalf of Newcastle's Roman Catholic community. Jesmond Parish Church was commissioned as a self-consciously 'old school' temple of Anglican Protestantism by a doggedly Evangelical congregation which had only recently seceded from St. Thomas', Newcastle.¹⁵ Its interior remained (and to some extent still remains) decidedly pre-Ecclesiological – galleried on three sides, with only a short chancel and a central pulpit.

The relative lack of sophistication in the region's recent ecclesiastical architecture was to change dramatically within only a few years of Dobson's death. In 1862, Robert James Johnson (1832-1892) returned to Newcastle and set up in partnership with the 'scholarly' Thomas Austin (1822-67) [6.16-7], one of the founder members of the Northern Architectural Association.¹⁶ In 1865 the partners bought out the late John Dobson's practice, and in 1866 they took on as a pupil the brilliant seventeen year old William Searle Hicks (1849-1902) from Dorset. Johnson came to rely increasingly on the younger man after Austin's premature death in 1867, offering Hicks a partnership in the practice in 1875, but in 1882 they each went their separate ways.¹⁷ Although both men accepted secular commissions, they became known primarily for their work for the Church of England (both were staunch High Churchmen), to which they injected a degree of invention and knowledge of metropolitan fashion altogether new to the region. That they were able so to specialise reflects not only the improving economic fortunes of the region, but also the concerted mobilisation of resources on behalf of an embattled Church of England.

2.4-3 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed:

Across England, the revival of Anglican fortunes followed a well-tried pattern; the under-representation of the Established Church in the economically most significant regions was to be countered by visibly raising its public profile. This required new churches to be built, or old ones restored, and on a scale that would leave no one in any doubt that the Church of England was both comprehensive and Established.¹⁸ The Church Act of 1836 likewise tackled the Church's administration, mostly by redrawing the boundaries of the historic dioceses (which

had barely changed since the Henrician settlement), in an effort to address the demographic shifts brought on by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Where need was thought greatest, a number of new or suffragan sees were created, on the grounds that improved pastoral oversight would naturally follow from an expansion of the episcopate. However, in the long-term, the Act still left the Church of England without the necessary legal mechanisms to deal with continued population pressures or territorial issues.¹⁹

In 1854, the Corporation of Newcastle sought (unsuccessfully) to revive its historic claims as the seat of a new diocese by petitioning Parliament. There was, however, no disguising the fact that the appeal had little to do with ecclesiastical administration, but was rather aimed at bolstering Newcastle's economic and cultural prestige, and especially in the wake of the Tyne Improvement Bill.²⁰ Not until the Bishoprics Bill of 1877-8 was the Church of England finally given the legal means to subdivide dioceses as per need. By then, pastoral pressures from within the ancient diocese of Durham – stretching from the rivers Tees to the Tweed – had focussed minds as inexorably in favour of division, as had the efforts of Newcastle's politicians to add lustre to their civic image. Not all in Newcastle welcomed the prospects of a new diocese. Joseph Cowen (1831-1900) M.P., the long-standing senior member for Newcastle,²¹ savaged the Bishoprics Bill at the committee stage.²² As a Radical Liberal, Cowen had joined with other Dissenting and Disestablishmentarian opinion in opposing the Bill, claiming that there was a lack of wider public support for the extension of the Anglican episcopate, with all its attendant privileges:

The Bill proposed to establish a Bishopric in Northumberland. There was once a Bishopric in that county – that of Lindisfarne. It existed in the mists of history. Pleasant memories, however, of the lives and labours of the Lindisfarne Prelates had descended even to the present time. Those men were really pastors of their flocks. They interested themselves in the material and moral, as well as in the spiritual, welfare of those amongst whom their lot was cast. They were the guides, philosophers, and friends of their neighbours and parishioners. But they lived before the time when Bishops had begun to raise their mitred fronts in Courts and Parliaments. There was not one attribute in common between the ancient and apostolic Bishops and the modern ecclesiastical creations. No one... would object to an increase of such Bishops as there once lived at Lindisfarne; but what they did resent was the increase of such State officials as the Bill before them sought to establish.²³

Nevertheless, the Bishoprics Bill – which initially allowed for the creation of the four new sees of Liverpool, Newcastle, Southwell and Wakefield – cleared its final hurdles on the afternoon of 14 August 1878.²⁴ However, in the case of Newcastle there was to be a considerable delay. Fundraising to raise a sufficient endowment for the diocese coincided with a general depression in trade and agriculture, as well as a number of damaging industrial disputes;

it was not until 23 May 1882 that the new bishopric was created by Order in Council.²⁵ James Atlay, writing in 1912 as the authorised biographer of Ernest Roland Wilberforce (1840-1907), the first bishop of Newcastle, described the scale of the task that then presented itself:

Of the nine new dioceses which have been created since the year 1877 [Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Newcastle, St. Albans, Southwark, Southwell, Truro and Wakefield,] there is not one in which the initial difficulties were greater, or the prospect less alluring than the see of Newcastle-on-Tyne... Badly furnished, ill-endowed, under-manned, the Church in Northumberland was a bare and inchoate ecclesiastical territory rather than a diocese. Of organisation there was little, and the thread of what existed had been cut by the severance from Durham. Here and there individual clergy did their work bravely and faithfully, but without cohesion or common purpose. Corporate feeling was hardly known. There was no cathedral staff, and the Bishop had to select and train his helpers, as it were, under fire.²⁶

The new bishop laboured under the responsibility of being the third son of the late Bishop of Oxford and Winchester, Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73), perhaps the leading moderate High Churchman of the mid-century.²⁷ Nevertheless, doubts over the elder Wilberforce's loyalty to the Church of England had dogged his career, following the conversion to Rome of several of his closest relatives. Atlay therefore remarks of the younger Wilberforce's appointment, that 'the name of Wilberforce was almost inevitably tainted with 'Puseyism''... [and] there was a disposition to watch jealously the lightest words and most trivial actions of the new Bishop, and the judgement of the observers was not always conspicuous for charity'.²⁸ In addition, Nonconformity had gained a strong hold upon the region's middle-classes, so that 'open and renewed activity by Churchmen was resented as an intrusion'.²⁹ Atlay may have exaggerated the difficulties, but the new diocese was certainly lacking in buildings where it mattered most. Almost the first act of the new bishop was to set up a commission to 'inquire and examine into the spiritual wants and requirements of the several parishes on the north side of the river Tyne, both with regard to the supply of clergy and the Church accommodation', i.e. those districts where there had been the greatest expansion of industry and of population.³⁰ The commission duly reported late in 1883, and recommended the establishment of a fund to aid the building of new churches in 'spiritually destitute' areas.³¹ It is immensely to Wilberforce's credit that the 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund' raised within ten years in total £104,092, aside from the large amount of localised fundraising occurring across the diocese.³² All told, sixteen new parishes were created, thirty new churches built and eighty enlarged or restored throughout the diocese.³³

In 1980-1, a volume of essays was commissioned to celebrate the centenary of the diocese, under the omnibus title *A Social History of the Diocese of History of Newcastle* (editor, Rev. Dr. W.S.F. Pickering).³⁴ One thread runs consistently through all the varied contributions;

that of a concerted effort to maintain the visible unity of the Church, whatever differences of doctrine, or of liturgical practice, might exist amongst its representatives in the diocese. This was however no modern fudge, but a conscious policy dating back to its formative years. Atlay quotes an appreciation of Wilberforce (by Canon Edward Gough, latterly vicar of Newcastle), which gives a good account of this spirit of toleration:

The Bishop much disliked affectation of any kind. He would describe the little mannerisms in the conduct of Divine Service with a pungent criticism: I think they offended his sense of gentlemanliness and good taste. He liked a common-sense and manly bearing in religion and in its exercises, especially in the celebration of Holy Communion, and disliked what seemed to him effeminate or affected. At the same time, he was very tolerant of ceremonial, even when it went beyond his personal tastes, if he saw reality and devotion behind it. It was not external actions, but the spirit in which they were done, and from which they issued, that moved him to approval or disapproval.³⁵

Like his father, Ernest Wilberforce was a moderate High Churchman, whose *vademecum* was the Book of Common Prayer, without any additions or omissions; he was as opposed to dogmatic Protestantism as he was of Ritualism. However, in practice Wilberforce tolerated a great deal, just so far as the loyalty of his priests was assured and the authority of the Prayer Book was not diminished. In this, he was generally followed by his successors. It was a policy no doubt borne of necessity, for in the remoter and more sparsely populated parts of Northumberland, any expression of the Established Church was preferable to none. As Gough later recalled: ‘there arose in the new diocese over which for its first thirteen years he [Bishop Wilberforce] presided, a sober standard of Churchmanship, which for the most part, exists still. Of course there were, and are, ‘excesses’ and ‘defects’; but few dioceses perhaps presented so even a standard, at any rate, in Bishop Wilberforce’s time’.³⁶

In the urban heartlands of the diocese, ‘advanced’ Anglo-Catholicism was making significant inroads. St. Cuthbert’s, Melbourne Street, Newcastle (A.R. Gibson, 1878; demolished) – a big-boned red-brick church in the manner of William White (1825-1900) or James Brooks (1825-1901) – became a centre of Ritualism on the east side of town, ministering to a predominantly working-class district. Between 1888 and 1890 a striking reredos, designed in the Netherlandish taste by W.S. Hicks, was installed in the raised apsidal sanctuary.³⁷ The reredos included a gradine, predellæ (with separate folding wings), and above, the principal triptych (also with wings) surmounted by a tall spire enclosing a Crucifixion group. The ensemble continued around the apse in a series of panel paintings sheltered by canopies. The carved work, in lime wood and mahogany, was executed by the workshop of Ralph Hedley (Newcastle), the panel paintings by the High Church specialists and protégés of Bodley & Garner, Messrs. Burlison & Grylls (London). The piece is known only from press descriptions

and some photographs, but it would appear that the iconography was organised around the Joyful (wings open) and Sorrowful (wings closed) ‘mysteries’ of the Rosary cycle.

On the opposite side of town, R.J. Johnson’s large new church of St. Matthew’s, Summerhill Street, was also beginning to rise on Westgate Hill [6.25-7]. It was to be its architect’s favourite work, a ‘beacon’ of Anglo-Catholicism set amidst artisan housing, dramatically sited on the western horizon of the town. Its remarkable five-aisled trapezoidal plan took abundant advantage of a difficult sloping site [6.27], closely hemmed in by housing on three sides. Begun in 1877, the first ‘fragment’ was consecrated in June of 1880, although it was to be another fifteen years before the building and its dominating tower were largely completed [6.25].³⁸ Finally, in 1882, Bishop Wilberforce appointed his close friend Arthur Thomas Lloyd (1844-1907) as vicar of Newcastle, i.e. to St. Nicholas’ cathedral church (not being an ancient foundation, the cathedral was without a dean until very recently).³⁹ In the absence of an effective cathedral or diocesan administration, Lloyd acted as Wilberforce’s trusted lieutenant in the new diocese, its most senior clergyman after the two archdeacons (inherited from the previous administration) and the bishop himself. Much loved and respected, and of pronouncedly Anglo-Catholic sympathies, it was Lloyd who oversaw the refitting (1883-7) of St. Nicholas’ interior, under Johnson’s direction, in a manner befitting its new found dignity as the cathedral church of the diocese [8.2-3].⁴⁰ In time Lloyd would become its third bishop (1903-7).

If Joseph Cowen was sensible of the High Church drift of his constituency, this may explain some of his seemingly more intemperate attacks during the passage of the Bishops Bill. Thus he claimed that ‘the only persons, as far as he knew, who had concerned themselves for the Bill were women, clergymen, and that small but intelligent section of laymen who took an aesthetic and architectural interest in ecclesiastical matters’.⁴¹ History has perhaps shown that Cowen was not far off the mark, as the diocese of Newcastle came to be regarded as amongst the most Catholic in the northern Province of the English Church.⁴² But the policy of toleration adopted by Wilberforce, and by most of his successors, has perhaps tempted commentators into thinking that the diocese was free from internal divisions and/or competing expressions of the Church.⁴³ Tensions there certainly were. Accused of illegal Ritualist practices, the Rev. H.C. Armour, vicar of Christ Church, Shieldfield, on the east side of the city, testified in 1905 before the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, that ‘The church was built in memory of a Mr. Boyd a banker of Newcastle, in 1861, by his family; and it has been a great disappointment to them that for so many years the church has been in the hands of an extreme [i.e. Protestant] party’.⁴⁴ To be sure, there was little of the bitter partisanship that was such a striking feature of the ecclesiology of Victorian London or Brighton – the latter was Wilberforce’s nemesis as

Bishop of Chichester (1896-1907), testing his declared policy of toleration to breaking point.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, in those districts with the means and opportunity, as in the wealthier suburbs of the city, it was possible to exercise a choice both as to one's churchmanship as well as denomination. Thus two churches, representing radically divergent aspects of Anglicanism, would come to stand at either end of Osborne Road in Jesmond, with a knot of Nonconformist chapels – Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian– lying between.

2.4-4 'The Land of the Lindisfarne Saints':

When W.S. Hicks died in November 1902, in the full tide of his creative powers, the *Newcastle Diocesan Gazette* published an eloquent tribute to their late diocesan surveyor:

To him was given to realise in wood and stone the spirit of the Lindisfarne Church, and it is no matter of small importance that he was given to the Diocese at a period of activity in building and restoration. With future generations, as with the present, he will rank high in the list of Benefactors, Founders and Worthies of the Diocese, while the reverence and spirituality of his art will unconsciously influence them in their worship of Almighty God. We who knew him, knew that that reverence and spirituality was but the reflection of his own personality, and that his one aim in all he did was to set before men the glory of God and the beauty of holiness. With a rugged solidarity of exterior befitting our northern climate and an artistic spirituality of interior befitting the land of the Lindisfarne Saints his churches stand true types of the Christianity of Northumberland. To the church of this Diocese he was a true son, her's is the loss.⁴⁶

The new diocese would increasingly hide its internal differences behind this appeal to the 'spirit of the Lindisfarne Church'. Durham cathedral might house still the relics of Bede, Oswald and Cuthbert, but Northumberland was the 'land of the Lindisfarne Saints' where they had actually walked and taught. The spirit of the Lindisfarne saints would even be invoked against the Established Church by its opponents; thus had Joseph Cowen inveighed against the extension of the northern Episcopate during the committee stage of the Bishopricks Bill. Cowen later had the good grace to acknowledge Bishop Wilberforce's achievements and moral standing. As James Atlay noted, Wilberforce modelled his particular sense of mission on the 'heroic' age of Northumbrian Christianity, a mission both to the swelling numbers of the working classes on Tyneside, and to the remoter extremities of his still predominantly rural diocese. In some parts of Northumberland it was even rumoured that they had not seen a bishop since the days of St. Cuthbert.⁴⁷ By the time Atlay was writing (1912), such sentiments had become something of a commonplace not just in the diocese of Newcastle, but of Anglican and Roman Catholic iconography throughout the North-East. And yet for all the lip-service paid to the Anglo-Saxon church as the embodiment of a specifically northern Christianity, the visual expression of the Established Church in the North-East was virtually indistinguishable from

national trends, and despite the vast majority of commissions being placed with local architects.⁴⁸ As elsewhere, and even in High Church contexts, this did not preclude the use of alternative styles according to situation or on grounds of cost. Thus the exquisite twin-celled chapel of SS. Mary & Patrick, Lambley, in south Tynedale (W.S. Hicks, 1884), is as ‘refined’ an exercise in English early-thirteenth century Gothic as any by J.L. Pearson (indeed the chancel is vaulted in stone, as were many of Pearson’s churches), and built in a part of rural Northumberland where churches of a later medieval character are virtually unknown. At St. Hilda’s, Sunderland (W.S. Hicks, 1892; demolished), the choice of a similarly austere ‘First Pointed’ Gothic undoubtedly reflected the straightened circumstances of its predominantly working-class congregation. However, where funds allowed, the preferred manner was almost always a ‘refined’ late-Gothic in the Bodleian mode.

In what ways therefore were the churches of Johnson or Hicks perceived to stand as the ‘true types of the Christianity of Northumberland’? As Thomas Faulkner (1994-5) has noted, quite what it was about the work of these two Newcastle architects that could be described as distinctively ‘Northumbrian’ or ‘northern’ is hard to pin down.⁴⁹ It clearly had nothing to do with parentage or upbringing; Johnson hailed from north Yorkshire, and was trained in Darlington before joining Gilbert Scott’s office in London. Hicks was the son of a Dorset clergyman. Outside of the county, the two men worked in much the same style; more archaeological perhaps than Bodley’s manner, evoking more precisely the atmosphere of an English Perpendicular church, but just as eclectic. St. Matthew’s, Summerhill Street (Newcastle), is typical of Johnson’s approach. Whereas the canted east end takes its cue from Bodley & Garner’s Pendlebury church (St. Augustine’s, 1870-4), its dominating tower [6.25] was modelled on West Country types, such as the great western tower of St. Giles, Wrexham, Clwyd (Wales). Only occasionally do these buildings reference vernacular forms in order to bind their wide-ranging eclecticism to a specific place. Thus the central tower of St. Hilda’s, Whitby, Yorkshire (R.J. Johnson, 1884-5; tower completed 1938 by Messrs. Hicks & Charlewood to a revised version of Johnson’s design), ‘restores’ the lost crossing tower (known from engravings) of the ruined medieval abbey on the opposing headland [6.23-4].⁵⁰ Likewise, the simple arch-braced roofs (with bosses at the intersections) of St. Matthew’s, Summerhill and All Saints, Gosforth (Johnson, 1885-6; tower completed 1897 to Johnson’s design by A. Crawford Hick) [6.29-30], which adopt the local vernacular of Newcastle’s ancient medieval churches.

A similar pattern is traceable in the rival practices of Frank W. Rich (1840-1929) – a Yorkshireman, like Johnson – and Charles Hodgson Fowler (1840-1910), the latter based in Durham (and another pupil of Sir G.G. Scott). Both worked in very similar and equally eclectic

idioms, largely free of local references. Thus the low-slung proportions of Rich's only large church, St. Gabriel's, Heaton, Newcastle (begun 1898-1905) [6.35], nods to metropolitan fashion and recent work by G. Fellowes Prynne (1853-1927), W. Douglas Caröe (1857-1938) and J.D. Sedding (1838-91), and especially the latter's unrealised proposals for St. Peter's, Ealing (1889-91) [6.10].⁵¹ Not that these northern architects were wholly dependent on the national leaders of their profession. Although Johnson's later churches readily betray his intense admiration for the work of his close friend G.F. Bodley, he could strike out on his own path, e.g. All Saints, Gosforth (q.v.), designed after Hicks had gone into independent practice. All Saints presents the squared-off proportions and simplified [6.29-30], almost abstracted detailing that Bodley was later to adopt in his churches at Cowley (Oxford, 1894-1902), Chapel Allerton (Leeds, 1897) and Ecclestone (Cheshire, 1899). Nor should one discount reciprocal influences between Johnson, Hicks and their other great northern contemporary, Hubert J. Austin (1841-1915), of the firm of Paley, Austin & Paley (Lancaster), whose work follows a similar trajectory, but who had perhaps greater opportunities than were ever presented to either of the Newcastle men.⁵²

Part of the problem confronting church architects in the North-East was that there were no suitable local models for town churches, and certainly not of the scale and sophistication of planning required for a modern Anglican liturgy. Many of the region's medieval churches were small-scale and crude by national standards, or where more elaborately treated, in relatively unsophisticated versions of the medieval styles [6.16-7]. Not a few of these were subjected to the hand of the 'restoring' architect in order to them bring up to the required levels of 'taste' and accommodation. Faulkner has argued that, particularly in the case of Hicks' smaller rural churches, there is perhaps a greater acknowledgement of the regional vernacular.⁵³ A building such as St. James, Shilbottle (Shilbottle), Northumberland (1884) [6.31-2] – low-lying and relatively unadorned, with a ruggedly massive tower straddling the crossing⁵⁴ – seems to breathe the same spirit as the ancient churches of Bolam, Kirkwhelpington and Stanington (before the latter was rebuilt by Johnson in 1869-70). However, one can read too much into this. Although the impression today is of a rural idyll, Shilbottle was a relatively prosperous colliery village. Hicks' new church, paid for by the colliery owners, was in fact a reduced version of his design for St. Cuthbert's, Blyth, Northumberland (1884-93), one of the major coal-exporting ports on the North-East coast, as well as a reworking of Johnson's design for St. Hilda's, Whitby [6.23].

Johnson's practice reveals a similar lack of attention to local precedent, or to any distinction between town and country. At All Saints, Eastgate, County Durham (1887), built for a remote lead-mining community in upper Weardale, he adapted the type of twin-celled late-medieval pilgrimage chapel often found in northern France, and particularly in Brittany, but

with the detailing fully Anglicised in 'English' Perpendicular. Perhaps its most distinctive feature is the elaborate bell-cote, carried on powerfully expressed buttresses dividing the aisleless nave from the chancel. The suburban church of St. Michael and All Angels, Westoe, South Shields (begun 1881-2, completed 1894), is of essentially the same type, despite the aisles (added later but envisaged from the start) and the spectacular hammer-beam roof (without clerestories). Designed for a prosperous neighbourhood of ship-owners and builders, and built of soft-red brick with stone dressings, St. Michael's simple lines belie its true scale. The format was developed by Messrs. Hicks & Charlewood (the Newcastle successors to W.S. Hicks' practice) in some of their smaller town churches, e.g. St. Hilda's, Jesmond (1900-5) and St. Margaret of Antioch, Scotswood, Newcastle (1916-7), as well as in rural churches such as All Saints, (East) Woodburn, Northumberland (1906). As such, the type became something of a 'northern' speciality, perfectly adapted (and adaptable) to the needs of modern Anglican worship in the region.

As with later nineteenth century notions of Englishness, the 'northern'-ness of Johnson's and Hicks' work was synthetic and illusory. Arguably, their churches were 'northern', not because they (infrequently) employed local vernacular features, or partook of some elusive regional traits – such as 'ruggedness' or 'massiveness' – but because they redefined the architectural vernacular of the North-East. In particular, the individual manner evolved by the staunchly Anglo-Catholic Hicks was continued well into the twentieth century by his brother-in-law Henry Clement Charlewood (1857-1943), and by their sons in turn.⁵⁵ As surveyors to the diocese of Newcastle, Johnson, Hicks and later the Hicks & Charlewood office, became in effect the default architectural face of the Established Church in Northumberland, irrespective of one's personal brand of churchmanship. Thus in 1906-7, the west end of Jesmond Parish Church was rebuilt to the designs of Hicks & Charlewood; the western gallery was removed and replaced by a low baptistery extension, whilst above, two new windows figured leaders of the northern Church in stained glass, including the familiar Northumbrian saints alongside Protestant divines and martyrs.⁵⁶ The latter was executed by Messrs. Bacon Bros. of London, stained glass artists and ecclesiastical decorators, a firm favoured by Anglo-Catholic patrons elsewhere and regularly employed by Hicks & Charlewood. From this, one might conclude that the Protestant fervour of Jesmond Parish Church was seriously waning. Except that the congregation, doubtless emboldened by the findings of the 1905-6 Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, openly sided with Bishop Norman Straton (1840-1918) – the fourth bishop of Newcastle (1907-15), and one of the few to break with the policy of ecclesial toleration – in his attempts to bring to heel several of the more 'extreme' Ritualist clergy in his diocese.⁵⁷

2.4-5 Conclusion: The Achievement

William Searle Hicks' late masterpiece, the church of St. Chad, Bensham, Gateshead (1900-3; completed by H.C. Charlewood) [6.33-4], presents perhaps the classic example of this synthetic 'northern' version of modern Gothic, the *beau ideal* of a triumphalist Anglo-Catholicism, at once highly wrought and emotionally charged.⁵⁸ On almost a cathedral scale, St. Chad's was built to serve a predominantly working class district on the western approaches to Gateshead, whose ranks of terraced housing it dominates in a manner more akin to the churches of France or Flanders than of northern England. However, aside from the unusual octagonal crossing tower, the external massing and detailing of St. Chad's is more reminiscent of the West Country – and especially of Sherborne Abbey, in Hicks' native Dorset – than of any northern church. Internally, there is a neat inversion of spatial effects between east and west. High slender arcades frame spacious aisles in the congregational nave; in the chancel, the compact light-filled ritual choir is wrapped around by a low, dimly mysterious ambulatory [6.34] under an ample clerestory. Beyond, the ambulatory admits to a small Morning (All Saints) Chapel directly behind the High altar. Behind the crocketed spires of the latter, there is a small singing loft, a unique feature for a Tyneside church. Thirty years on, the legacy of St. Agnes', Kennington, continues to be seen in the pair of full-height included transepts [6.34], throwing an ample light onto the pulpit and litany desk at the crossing, and mediating the contrast between the principal arms of the church. Only in the detailing of the chancel arcades (a double order of chamfered mouldings dying into the single chamfered order of the piers) is there a specifically local reference, re-presenting the late-medieval nave arcades of Gateshead's ancient mother church (St. Mary's).

The furnishing and fittings at St. Chad's present an equally seamless synthesis of the past and the present, of antiquarian scholarship and modern design [6.34]. The woodcarving by the Newcastle-based workshop of Ralph Hedley (1848-1915) makes perhaps the greatest impact on the interior, in respect of the richly carved roofs and rood beam, screens, stall fronts, desks and reredos. We shall have cause to meet Hedley again in the second part of this study. London-based Arts and Crafts specialists supplied many of the other fittings: Caroline Townshend (1878-1944) and Leonard Walker (1877-1964) for the stained glass; William Bainbridge-Reynolds (1855-1935) for the altar plate. James Eadie-Reid (1868-1928) was the artist for the chancel murals and panel paintings of the reredos (both since painted over), and the designer for many of the figurative panels in Hedley's woodwork. Perhaps the greatest interest attaches to the metalwork supplied by The (Newcastle) Handicrafts Company (established July 1899), e.g. the light fittings (now lost), reminiscent of Eastern Orthodox interiors, and the richly enamelled processional crosses. The Company was in fact a commercial outgrowth of the Art School at Newcastle's Armstrong College, taking advantage of the practice-based, Birmingham-inspired

Arts and Crafts teaching of the School's new principal, Richard George Hatton (1864-1926).⁵⁹ St. Chad's was amongst the very first commissions for the Handicrafts Company, and bespoke metalwork and embroidery for churches was to remain a staple of their business. The venture received financial backing from the Mitchells of Jesmond, as one of the spin-offs from their involvement with St. George's church.

St. Chad's Bensham serves to remind us, that from the very first, the most natural and happiest home of the Arts and Crafts was in the service of the Church, as John Dando Sedding had hoped [4.20, 6.8]. Even so, Sedding would probably have found the interior of St. Chad's wanting in its acknowledgement of contemporary life. Twenty years earlier, in a letter published in the *Church Times* as '*Inspired*' and '*Heavenly*' Architecture (1886), Sedding had trenchantly set forth his beliefs on the role of modern church art:

I do not see that the poor or the lower middle classes care one dump for our modern Gothic churches, or for the archaic rubbish we cast into them, and I want to see churches built which may be adorned with pictures and sculptures that appeal to modern taste and inspire modern devotion... I want a church built in a style where the ornament need not be contemptibly below the mark of Modern Academic Art, and within whose walls I need not dream that I live in any other than the year of our salvation 1886.⁶⁰

This would seem to be as good a manifesto as any for St. George's, Jesmond.

Notes to Chapter 2.4:

- ¹ 'In memoriam William Searle Hicks', in *Newcastle Diocesan Gazette*, Vol.VI. No.72 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Dec. 1902), p.186.
- ² Smith, J.: 'The Making of a Diocese 1851-1882', in Colls & Lancaster (eds.) (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.93-112.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp.111-2.
- ⁴ Faulkner, T.E.: 'Aspects of Late 19th Century Church Architecture', in *Northern Architect*, Fifth Series, Issue No.1 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1994-95), pp.27-9, remains the only published overview of the field. Faulkner, T.E.: *Architects and architecture of Newcastle upon Tyne and the North East, c.1760-1960*, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Northumbria at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2000), pp. 1-16 reviews the state of scholarship on the subject.
- ⁵ E.g. Faulkner, T.E. and Greg. A.: *John Dobson. Architect of the North East* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2001) – a recasting of the same authors *John Dobson. Newcastle Architect 1787-1865* (Tyne & Wear Museums, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1987).
- Dobson's 'canonisation' was already under way during the nineteenth century, e.g. Welford (1895) *Men of Mark ...Op.cit.*, Vol.2, pp.81-4 (81): 'Few provincial architects have attained a higher reputation in their profession than John Dobson'; see also Colls, R.: *Remembering George Stephenson*, in (eds.) Colls & Lancaster (2001), *Op.cit.* pp.267-92, for an illuminating account of the process applied to the famous railway engineer.
- ⁶ See Vol.I, Chap. 2.2-4.
- ⁷ Faulkner (2000), *Op.cit.*, p.18.
- ⁸ E.g. Johnson, R.J.: *Specimens of Early French Architecture, Selected chiefly from the Churches of the Ile de France* (London & Newcastle, 1864), *Preface*, specifically names Bodley, Stevenson and Robson, *et al.* as 'his fellow travellers, for their kindness in pointing out to him and assisting in the measurement of many of the examples'; also Faulkner, T.E.: 'Robert James Johnson, Architect and Antiquary', in *Durham University Journal*, Vol.LXXXVII, New Series Vol.LVI (Durham, Jan. 1995), pp.3-10.
- ⁹ Cf. Vol.I, Chap. 2.2-3.
- ¹⁰ Faulkner & Greg (1987), *Op.cit.*, p.53; Faulkner & Greg (2001), pp.79-80 & Pl.iv.
- ¹¹ Faulkner & Greg (1987), *Op.cit.*, pp.60-2; Faulkner & Greg (2001), pp.92-3. The four-light east window, with its unusual split cusps – a form otherwise unknown in Northumberland or Durham – copies a 14th century north aisle window from the ruined Whitby Abbey (Yorks.)
- ¹² Faulkner (1994-5), *Op.cit.*, p.27.
- ¹³ Faulkner & Greg (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.86-7.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* (2001), pp.84-6; Faulkner (1994-5), *Op.cit.*, pp.57-8; Munden (2006), *Op.cit.*, pp.42-52.
- ¹⁵ Munden (2006), *Op.cit.* pp.36-42.
- ¹⁶ Faulkner & Greg (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.137.
- ¹⁷ Faulkner (1995), *Op.cit.*, pp. 3.
- For Hicks, see (anon.) *William Searle Hicks, Architect with list of churches in which examples of his work exist* (London & Newcastle, 1903); also Curry. I.: 'The Newcastle upon Tyne Architectural Practice of Hicks and Charlewood and their successors, 1882-1936', in AA, Fifth Series, Vol. XXXVII (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009), pp.151-60 (152-7).
- ¹⁸ Brooks & Saint (eds.) (1995), *Op.cit.*, pp. 1-29 (6-10). Because the Church of England was an Established church, the number of required sittings was usually determined as a proportion of the gross population of a district, rather than of those expected to be in active communion with the C-of-E.
- ¹⁹ Atlay, J.B.: *The Life of the Reverend Ernest Roland Wilberforce* (London, 1912), pp.80-104; also Jagger, P.J.: 'The Formation of the Diocese of Newcastle' in Pickering, W.S.F. (ed.): *A Social History of the Diocese of Newcastle* (London, 1981), pp.24-52
- ²⁰ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, pp.86-88; also Jagger (1981), *Op.cit.*, pp.25-7. Moves to create a diocese of Newcastle had collapsed in 1554, following the death of king Edward VI.
- ²¹ For Cowen, see *DNB Supplementary Volume XXII* (1909), pp.497-8; also Hugman, J.: 'Print and Preach. The Entrepreneurial Spirit of Nineteenth-Century Newcastle' in Colls & Lancaster (eds.) (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp.113-32.
- ²² The committee sat twice, 31 July and 9 Aug., 1878; *Hansard*, Vol. CCXLII 3rd Series (1878), pp. 829-49 & 1642-86.
- ²³ *Hansard*, Vol. CCXLII 3rd Series, p.832 (31 July 1878).
- ²⁴ *Hansard*, Vol. CCXLII 3rd Series, p.2008 (14 Aug. 1878).

- ²⁵ Morrish, P.S.: *The Creation of the Anglican Diocese of Liverpool* in *Northern History*, Vol.XXXII (Leeds, 1996), pp.173-94 (186-7); cf. the diocese of Liverpool, which secured the necessary funds by February 1880.
- ²⁶ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, pp.82-3 & 107-8.
- ²⁷ *DNB* Vol.XXI (1909), pp. 204-8 (Samuel Wilberforce) and Supplementary Vol.III (1912), pp.664-5 (E.R. Wilberforce).
- ²⁸ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, p.108.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.108.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.111.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.111-3.
- ³² *NWC* (17 Feb. 1894), on the closing of the 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund'; also Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, 114-5; also Bass, M.: 'The Financial Foundations of the Diocese of Newcastle' in Pickering (ed.) (1981): *Op.cit.*, pp.160-69. Bass's total figure of £104, 092 is based on the published accounts of the fund committee, but is approx. £3,100 less than that quoted by Atlay and the local newspapers. The fund target of £100,000 was to be achieved within five years, but adverse economic conditions required an extension for a further five years. As to concrete achievements, Atlay (p.114) quotes 11 new churches, 19 mission chapels, 28 additional clergy and eleven new parishes formed, providing 9612 new sittings.
- ³³ Pickering, W.S.F.: 'The Upsurge of Building in the Early Days of the Diocese and the Position Today', in Pickering (ed.) (1981), *Op.cit.*, pp.170-8 (171-4)
- ³⁴ Pickering (ed.) (1981), *Op.cit.*
- ³⁵ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, pp.201-2.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.202-3.
- ³⁷ 'New Reredos in St. Cuthbert's Church, Newcastle' in *BN*, Vol.54 (27 Jan. 1888), p.169; also *NDJ* (18 Jan. 1890), p.8, *Opening of a Reredos at St. Cuthbert's, Newcastle*. I am grateful to Ian Curry FSA, FRIBA for sight of his photos of the interior prior to its demolition.
- ³⁸ *NWC* (18 June 1880), *St. Matthew's Church, Newcastle*, consecration of 'fragment'; also *BN* (17 Dec. 1880), p.702 + illus.; also *NWC* (8 July 1887), laying of foundation stone of tower; *NWC* (29 June 1888), completion of church, except for upper stages of tower and outer western portions of aisles; completion of the tower 1893-5 to a slightly revised design by W.S. Hicks; *BA* (9 Aug. & 16 Aug. 1895), re. reredos placed in memory of the architect, R. J. Johnson; also *Newcastle Diocesan Gazette*, Vol. V, no.5 (Ma7 1897), p.71, installation of same; *BA* (30 Sept. 1904), p.253, completion of outer western portions of aisles. See also Faulkner (1995), *Op.cit.*, p.7.
- ³⁹ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, pp.1116-8.
- ⁴⁰ *NWC* (20 April 1883), *The Restoration of St. Nicholas' Cathedral Church*; *NWC* (11 Nov. 1887), *The New Reredos* (and the completion of the east end).
- ⁴¹ *Hansard*, Vol. CCXLII 3rd Series, p. 830 (31 July 1878).
- ⁴² Yates (1999), *Op.cit.*, pp.280-1; listing the percentage of parishes by diocese adopting Ritualist practices in 1903. Newcastle is ranked seventh (behind Truro, London, Canterbury, Oxford, Winchester and Lichfield), Durham and York twentieth and twenty-second respectively; Carlisle second from last at thirty-eighth. The majority of those dioceses with a preponderance of Ritualist parishes were in the south of England, excepting Lichfield and Newcastle in the north.
- ⁴³ E.g. Smith (2001), *Op.cit.*, pp. 96-112, treats late-nineteenth century Anglicanism on Tyneside as a wholly monolithic institution.
- ⁴⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), *Evidence*, Vol.III, pp. 167-9 (13 April 1905).
- ⁴⁵ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, Chaps. XI & XII.
- ⁴⁶ *Newcastle Diocesan Gazette*, Vol.VI. No.72 (Dec. 1902), p.186.
- ⁴⁷ Atlay (1912), *Op.cit.*, pp.147-9.
- ⁴⁸ Faulkner (2000) *Op.cit.*, pp.22-3, notes the 'loyalty' of northern patrons towards the region's architects, at least until the Second World War.
- ⁴⁹ Faulkner (1994-5), *Op.cit.*, p. 29.
- ⁵⁰ *BN* (23 Oct. 1885), p.648 + illus.; also Faulkner (1995), *Op.cit.*, pp.8-9.
- ⁵¹ Cf. Vol.I, Chap.3.2-4.
- ⁵² Price, J.: *Sharpe, Paley and Austin. A Lancaster Architectural Practice 1836-1942* (Lancaster, 1998), p.30; also Price, J.: *Paley & Austin. Architects of Lancaster* (Lancaster, 1994), pp.7-8. H.J. Austin was a younger half-brother of R.J. Johnson's former partner, Tom Austin, with whom he began his career before moving in 1864 to the office of Sharpe & Paley in Lancaster.
- ⁵³ Faulkner (1994-5): *Op.cit.*, p.29.

⁵⁴ NRO DN/E/8/2/2/9 (24 May 1884) *St. James' church, Shilbottle*.

⁵⁵ For the Hicks & Charlewood practice, see Curry (2009), *Op.cit.*, pp.154-9.

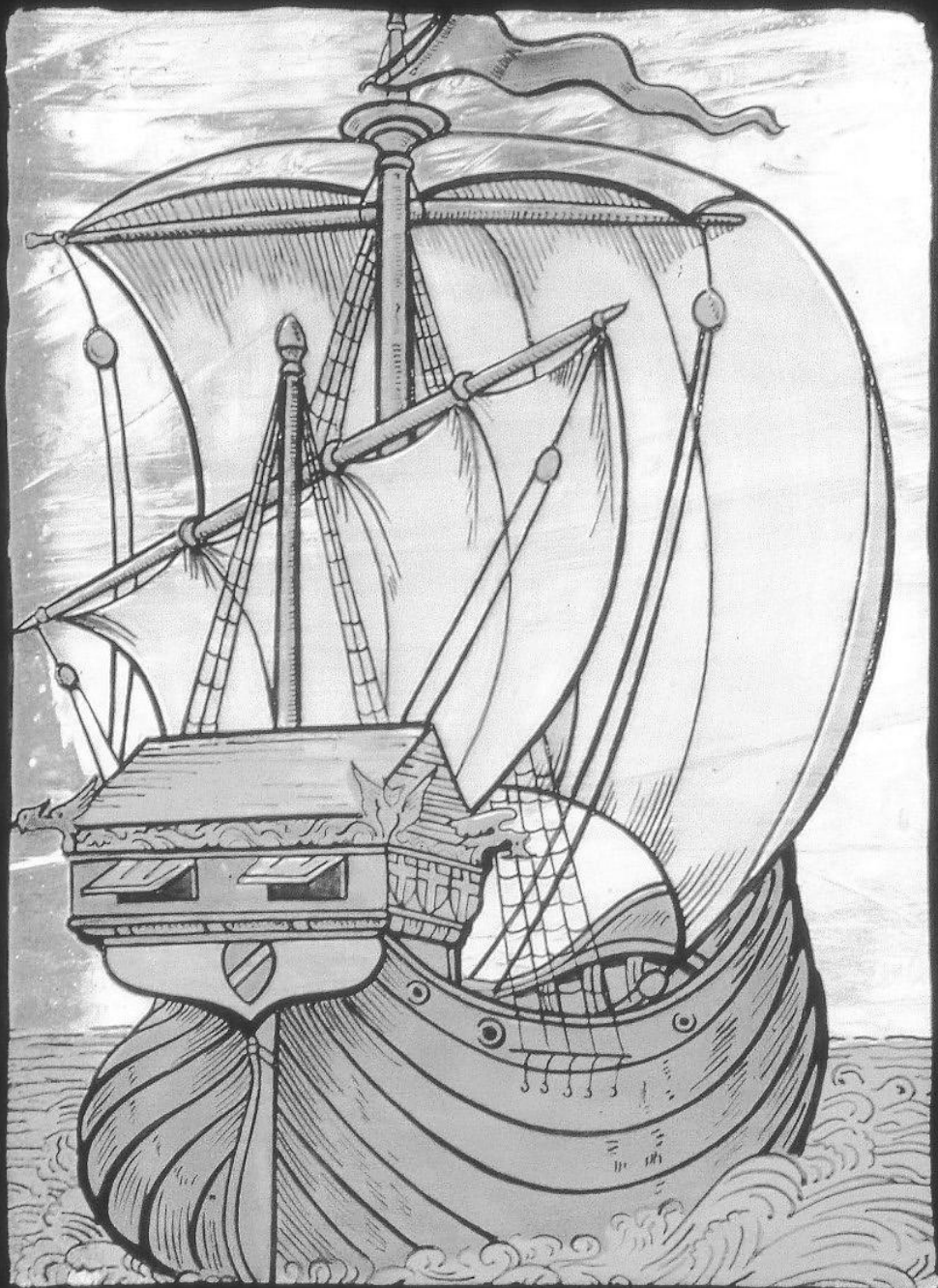
⁵⁶ Munden (2006), *Op.cit.*, p.127.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.134-9; also Nicholson, M.: 'The Diocese and its Bishops' in Pickering (ed.) (1918), *Op.cit.*, pp.53-65 (55-6).

⁵⁸ *NDJ* (29 Sept. 1903), *New Parish Church at Gateshead*; also Koch, A. (ed.): *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*, Vol.21 (1902), pp.9-10 illus.; also (anon.) *The Parish Church of St. Chad, Gateshead-on-Tyne*, commemorative booklet (Photocrome Co., London, c.1904), 16 pp.

⁵⁹ Peart & Moat (1993), *Op.cit.*, pp.13-22 (14).

⁶⁰ Sedding, J.D.: 'Inspired' and 'Heavenly' Architecture', in *Church Times*, Vol.24 (1886), p.653; also *BN*, Vol.51 (1886), p.378; quoted in Snell (2006), *Op.cit.*, p.187.



3. Building St. George's Church

3.1 Industry, Art and Craft:

The Works Organisation of St. George's Jesmond

3.1-1 Introduction:

In the second part of the study, we turn to an analysis of St. George's church itself, and particularly with reference to the issues raised in the preceding chapters. How might a contemporary churchgoer have 'read' and understood Mr. Mitchell's extraordinary church? In the general absence (to date) of first-hand contemporary accounts of the building, this may seem somewhat of a thankless task. Nevertheless, if we analyse St. George's against the background of normative and developing practice current at the time, both on Tyneside and in London, we may be able to discern something of Charles Mitchell's deeper motives in building the church. As much of the surviving documentation deals only with the progress and conduct of the works, rather than with matters of devotional or artistic intent, we shall begin, in this chapter, with the actual erection and fitting out of the church. Here, St. George's can offer some surprising insights into the relationship between theory and practice during the formative years of the Arts and Crafts movement. The following chapters will examine what the building itself has to tell us about the religious and artistic programmes embodied in its fabric.

3.1-2 The Contractors:

Evidence for the conduct of the building works at St. George's has been scarce until late, due largely to the private nature of Charles Mitchell's gift. In the absence of any personal journals or even of an extensive correspondence concerning the church, most commentators have had to rely on such information as is contained in contemporary press reports and reviews. At first sight, these would appear to suggest that Mitchell's church was little different from any other large building project of the time, i.e. the carcass was put up by a single general contractor, and the fitting out placed in the hands of specialists. However, an examination of the two surviving volumes of Mitchell's personal ledgers reveals some remarkably convoluted arrangements between the various contractors and artist-craftsmen working on site. Taken together with the 1886 *Bills of Quantities* and the architect's drawings, they suggest that the works organisation at St. George's was more than usually complex for its period. Nor was this a unique occurrence, as is shown by the same ledgers with respect to the earlier extensions (1883-5) at Jesmond Towers. However, at this stage, it is unclear whether we are dealing with practices peculiar to this particular patron or more typical of the building industry as a whole in late-Victorian Newcastle.

In the standard fashion for the period, the first press reports on the church listed the principal contractors towards the close of their copy, as below (Table 3.1-1). The seemingly straightforward apportioning of trades is of course a necessary journalistic simplification, but there are nevertheless hints of possible complications, the carved woodwork and stained glass being split between a number of contractors:

Table 3.1-1: St. George's church, Jesmond:

Named craftsmen and contractors, based on contemporary press reports ¹

- masonry, plumbers and slaters work, general timberwork;
Messrs. Amos Gray of Gosforth
- carved oak-work of pulpit; **Ralph Hedley** of Newcastle
- carved screens; **Ralph Hedley** and **Messrs. Robson & Sons** of Newcastle
- heating arrangements; **Messrs. H. Walker & Sons** of Newcastle
- wrought-iron, brass and copper work;
Alfred J. Shirley, Cable Street, London
- gas fittings; **R. Heron** (plumber) of Newcastle
- mosaic work; **Messrs. Rust & Co.** of Battersea Park Road [Lambeth], London
- marble work (pulpit, font, altar and reredos);
Messrs. Emley & Sons Ltd., of Newcastle
- east and west windows; **J.W. Brown** of London
- two aisle west windows; **Messrs. O'Neill Brothers** of London
- all other windows; **The Gateshead Stained Glass Company**
- communion plate and altar ornaments;
Messrs. Barkentin & Krall of London
- organ; **Messrs. T.C. Lewis & Co.** of London
- **W. Bocock**, foreman of the masons
- **John Dodds**, Clerk of the Works, assisted by **Mr. W. Pringle**

The list has some significant omissions, e.g. Robert Beall and Heywood Sumner, both of whom certainly worked on the church. Moreover, it glosses the work of those they do mention, e.g. Messrs. Hedley and Robson & Sons, who did demonstrably more than carve some screens and parts of the pulpit. By collating all the documentary evidence, the list of contractors working on the church can be substantially augmented, as follows (Table 3.1-2 below):

Table 3.1-2: St. George's church, Jesmond:

Additional list of named craftsmen and contractors, based on documentary evidence.²

- **Messrs. Amos Gray** of Gosforth (contractors for the boundaries and laying-out of the 'church field')

- **Messrs. J. & R. Lamb** of Gateshead (general contractor for the vicarage and the parochial hall)
- **Messrs. Alexander Pringle** of Gateshead (possibly the general contractor for the parochial hall extension)
- **J.J. Robson** (contractors for on-site road works)
- **Messrs. Edw. Beck & Sons** (slaters and slate merchants)
- **Messrs. W. Ferguson & Son**, ‘concrete flooring manufacturers and dealers in cement, plaster of Paris, lime, laths, hair, sanitary pipes, &c.’
- **Messrs. W.B. Wilkinson & Co.**, ‘concrete flooring works’
- **Messrs. H. Walker & Sons** (materials for fixing of mosaics, etc.)
- **Messrs. W.C. Duffy & Sons** of London (patent wood-block flooring)
- **Messrs. H. Watson & Sons**, ‘engineers, brass founders, coppersmiths, whitesmiths, electric & pneumatic bell fitters, sanitary engineers & plumbers; brass founders’
- **Messrs. Bainbridge & Crimson** of Gateshead, ‘iron-founders, smiths, bell hangers, plumbers, and hot water engineers’
- **Messrs. Walter Macfarlane & Co. Ltd.** of Glasgow, (iron-foundry men and contractors for the exterior lamp standards)
- **Messrs. Moore & Co.** of Thames Ditton (bronze-foundry men responsible for casting T.R. Spence’s statue of St. George)
- **Robert Beall**, ‘monumental and architectural granite merchant & sculptor’
- **Heywood Sumner**, artist of London (gilded gesso-work in choir)
- **George Wooliscroft Rhead**, artist of London (painting of church tiles)

This is by no means exhaustive, as Mitchell’s ledgers include a large number of names for which it is has not been possible (so far) to assign specific responsibilities. It will be noticed however that (excepting Messrs. Macfarlane & Co. of Glasgow) there is a fairly even split between Tyneside and London-based contractors. There is however a distinct bias towards the latter in terms of the bespoke ‘artistic’ fittings, e.g. A.J. Shirley’s metalwork, J.W. Brown’s stained glass and the mosaics by Messrs. Rust & Co, suggestive of a northern building with a veneer of metropolitan respectability. Whether from London or Newcastle, most of the contractors were paid in one or two instalments, more for the larger jobs, e.g. the building contract and the glazing scheme, with the balance paid on completion of the work. This was a practice familiar from the region’s shipyards, where ‘[the] ship-owners... generally financed the builders by part payments as various stages in the building of the ship were completed.’³ Extensions to contracts appear to have been common during the life of the project, contractors often transferring to another part of the building site, sometimes under new contracts. Exceptionally, a single professional fee of 16 guineas was paid to the artist Heywood Sumner (1853-1940), an Art Workers’ Guild colleague of the architect [8.14-15].⁴ Spence’s professional fees are a little more difficult to discern. Where they can be determined, these appear to have been close to the traditional five-per-cent of building costs charged by nineteenth century architects.⁵ Spence’s work at Jesmond Towers had been subject to contract [III.3], but it is

unclear whether a similar arrangement applied at St. George's. Quite possibly, Mitchell conceived his expenditure on the church as somewhat open ended, and especially with respect to its artistic fitting out.

A further peculiarity of the works organisation at St. George's concerns the letting of similar jobs concurrently to more than one contractor. Thus between 1887 and 1890 we find two or three building contractors at work simultaneously across the site, and it was often the case that comparable trades overlapped, sometimes on the same section of the works [III.6-7]. Some of this duplication is to be expected due to the way the commission developed, the administration of the site being divided into discreet sections – church, parochial hall, vicarage, etc. It is however far less understandable in the case of the church alone. The extensive scheme of stained glass offers perhaps the most extreme example, involving two artists (Spence and Brown) and two – possibly three – different glazing firms working in tandem. In addition, Mitchell appears to have hired a casual labour force – perhaps recruited from his shipyards – as and when the need arose, and independently of the general contractor's workforce.⁶ In a further instance, during the installation of the high-level mosaics in the chancel, Mitchell paid the wages of Messrs. Rust's workforce directly himself.⁷ Given the ever-tightening grip of trades demarcation in the Victorian building industry, this lack of contractual clarity is somewhat surprising, even for provincial Newcastle.⁸ The impression is given, if not of haste, then at the very least of working to a tight set of deadlines, and of a patron prepared to go to considerable lengths to see the project through. Mitchell had timed building operations to coincide with the Queen's Jubilee year (1887), whilst the September 1889 meetings of the British Association (for the Advancement of Science), to be held that year in Newcastle, offered a possible showcase for the completed church.⁹ The timing of the consecration ceremony was also clearly subject to the availability of the Bishop of Newcastle, and besides, there was the existential issue of Charles Mitchell's advancing years. Deadlines there clearly were.

3.1-3 A Pattern of Working:

Although the contractual arrangements for St. George's appear to be as varied as the workforce, it is possible nonetheless to discern something of a pattern in their application. The simplest was that with the general contractor. Although Mitchell had engaged the vastly experienced Newcastle building firm of Messrs. Walter Scott for the earlier extensions at Jesmond Towers, the contract for the church was awarded instead to the little known Amos Gray (c.1829-1892) – the spelling given in census returns – of North Gosforth (Newcastle).¹⁰ Whether Gray's price was the lowest is unclear, as we have no idea of the number or range of the tenders,¹¹ but his experience as R.J. Johnson's contractor for the important church of All

Saints Gosforth (1885-6) [6.28-30] – within sight of Jesmond over the Town Moor – may well have told in his favour.¹² Gray's career seems to have followed the traditional pattern, of a stonemason branching out as a builder (albeit late in life, around the year 1880), but the firm seems always to have been a small-scale and possibly *ad hoc* operation, responsible for only a few significant buildings in the region.¹³ It may be assumed that Gray also owned the quarry at Brunton (North Gosforth) from which the stone for the Jesmond and Gosforth churches was drawn.¹⁴ As a fairly recently established enterprise, Gray loosely fits the pattern of Mitchell's support for up-and-coming businesses and artists at St. George's. The church was certainly Gray's most prestigious job, and if the rumours are true, it nearly broke him.¹⁵ The high quality and precision of the masonry at St. George's says much about their general competence [1.5, 7.3-4], although the very same finish could also be seen at Jesmond Towers; evidently, 'polished' ashlar was much to Mitchell's taste.¹⁶ Nor should one read too much into Gray's failing to gain the contract for both the parochial hall and the vicarage whilst work on the church was still in progress, as the engagement of similar trades concurrently was a feature of the works.¹⁷ Perhaps in compensation, Gray's contract was extended to include the enclosure of the 'church field' (in front of the church) with low parapet walls and railings [1.4].¹⁸ In all, Gray's receipts for St. George's totalled around £11,500 or approximately 45 per cent of Mitchell's expenditure on the church to the close of 1889, and much less than the initial estimated costs for the church of around £20,000.¹⁹

Some indication of the nature of the general building contract can be gained from a very rare survival, a lithographed copy of the *Bills of Quantities*, drawn up by the quantity surveyor George Connell (in Newcastle).²⁰ The tenders were to be submitted to the architect (in London) by noon 24 May 1886. Although the existence of the document has been known for some time, its contents have remained unpublished, and its relationship to the standing fabric unexplored until now.²¹ Its survival may be due to two factors; (a) the exceptionality of the project, and (b) that its contents were almost immediately superseded. If, as seems likely, the present document was never submitted – it lacks a closing tender price – it was also rendered redundant almost from the start due to revisions to the design made soon after its publication. This rather suggests that it was Gray's flexibility, rather than his price, that won him the contract.

The *Bills* sixty-nine pages are set out in the traditional manner, with separate specifications for each of the trades, and every item individually costed. Perhaps the most visually striking aspect of the document is the large number of explanatory diagrams and sketches, evidently in Connell's own extempore hand, but presumably based on full-size detail drawings supplied by the architect [7.18-22]. At the time, this hybrid format, combining the

quantities with the specification, was beginning to fall out of favour with the London building trades – as inadequate for the more complex demands of a modern building specification – so one must presume that the document to some extent reflects continuing practice in Newcastle.²² However, the sheer quantity and variety of these sketches attests not only to Spence's phenomenal design effort, but also to the general absence of stock mouldings throughout the building. As an 'architect and building surveyor',²³ the Irish-born George Connell (b.1844) seems to have been something of an ecclesiastical specialist, his office – in Bank Buildings, 42 Mosley Street (Newcastle) – being ideally situated close to the architectural practices of Messrs. Austin & Johnson, Oliver & Leeson and W.S. Hicks, all active in church work. After 1888, Post Office directories list Connell at 42 Grainger Street (Newcastle), in the very same building as the Newcastle Church of England Institute and W.S. Hicks, who had recently moved his office there; one presumes that Connell would have been one of Hicks' preferred surveyors. However, there are indications at St. George's that Connell did far more than derive the quantities. Thus he is cited, together with Spence, as witnessing the planning application for the first phase of the parochial hall, and as advising the Jesmond Church Extension committee over the ensuing boundary dispute with Lord Armstrong's estate.²⁴

At the level of the architectural and ornamental carving, St. George's was wholly a northern building, the work being undertaken by just four firms based on Tyneside; Messrs. Robert Beall (stone carving), Ralph Hedley, Robson & Sons (both woodwork) and Emley & Sons (marble work). For the period for which we have reliable figures, their work, taken together, amounted to around 8.6 per cent of the total expenditure on the church, on a par with the mosaic and tile work (at 8.1 %) and the stained glass (4.9%).²⁵ The comparison roughly underscores the extent to which flat-pattern decoration predominated over relief sculpture at St. George's – statuary being noticeably absent, barring one conspicuous example executed in bronze [7.31].²⁶ In contrast to contemporary Anglo-Catholic church interiors by Bodley or Sedding, where statuary of a devotional type was increasingly favoured [6.6], Pennefather and Mitchell opted for something less stridently Catholic in sentiment, albeit decorated to the hilt. Beall's workshop set the tone for much of the ornamental carving at St. George's, being amongst the most highly paid of the teams of carvers (in total £407-7-10).²⁷ As the *Bills* makes clear, the block work and moulding profiles were to be cut by the contractor's masons, whilst the carving proper was reserved for the specialist carvers working *in situ*, a well-established method of working on Victorian building sites [7.24-5]. In spite of the astonishing virtuosity and comparatively high relief of this work [7.26], the impression is nevertheless one of decorated surfaces rather than of sculpture. There are echoes here of Ruskin's views on ornamental carving, as published in e.g. *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3), which did so much to influence the Arts and Crafts vogue for shallow surface carving after the Byzantine fashion.²⁸

Specific examples of the latter are to be seen on the reredos proper, reflecting the Byzantinism of the mosaic figures below [8.26]. The one great exception is the elaborate tabernacle-work ornamenting the interior of the western wall, which should perhaps be considered more as an architectural work of sculpture, rather than as architectural sculpture *per se* [1.7]. Yet even here the more insistently virtuoso passages of carving are strongly delimited. The first parts to be installed, i.e. the lower third beneath the window [7.2, 7.30-1], were certainly executed by Beall – Caen stone was one of the firm’s signature materials – and it is more than likely that they were responsible for the remainder, erected in the autumn of 1890 [7.28-9].²⁹ The manner in which the paler limestone is let-in to the spandrels of the baptistery arcade below (following conservation and cleaning in the Spring of 2011, an effect now happily revealed to view) [7.1], offers a particularly striking example of the co-ordinated visual effects demanded by the architect, and requiring the close collaboration of the two teams of masons.

Robert Beall (1837-1892) was an incomer, like so many late-nineteenth century Tynesiders, lured by the burgeoning business opportunities of the region. Born at Stamford (Lincolnshire), he established himself as a ‘monumental and architectural granite merchant & sculptor’ in Newcastle around 1860, with premises adjoining the Black Gate of the Castle [7.23], and rapidly assumed a leading position in the field, despite the region’s already enviable tradition of fine architectural mason craft.³⁰ Although memorials and headstones provided the bread-and-butter side of the business, of which there are innumerable examples scattered across the region’s graveyards and municipal cemeteries, Beall’s reputation as top class architectural sculptors was sealed by the sanctuary fittings executed for R.J. Johnson at St. Nicholas’ cathedral (1887-8) [8.2].³¹ Despite this celebrity, the identity of Beall’s workforce remains largely unknown, apart from his son, also Robert (b. circa 1861), who assisted his father in later years and continued the business well into the twentieth century.³² Given Charles Mitchell’s prestige and reputation as a connoisseur, one can surmise that the elder Beall would have been keen to direct his personal attention to the work at St. George’s.³³ However, beyond a certain propensity for intricate undercutting, and the ability to work often to a very fine and minute finish, there is little that is distinctively individual about Beall’s carving, either here or in their work elsewhere in the region. Clearly, it was Beall’s technical proficiency, and not their artistry, that was the more highly prized by their clients. This lack of a distinctive handling also prevents an easy attribution of the stone carving on the parochial hall [1.29f-i], or at Jesmond Towers, where Beall’s workshop may well have acted as sub-contractors – assuming that Spence and/or Mitchell would prefer to retain stonemasons familiar with their requirements.

This self-same issue affects any assessment of Messrs. Emley & Sons, ‘marble workers, importers and merchants, furnishing ironmongers, hardware merchants, gas-fitters, plumbers, sanitary & heating engineers’,³⁴ and as their advertisements state, perhaps ‘one of the most multifarious business concerns in the country’.³⁵ Established in Westgate Road, Newcastle, around 1856 as Messrs. Walker & Emley, the business was re-launched 1885-6 as Emley & Sons, two of Thomas Emley’s (1819-99) five sons being taken on as partners. Another son, the architect Frank Emley (1861-1938), was almost certainly engaged in the business for a while as a designer, before emigrating to South Africa c.1888 for health reasons.³⁶ Their nationwide ubiquity as marblers for church work was only matched by a reputation, gained rapidly from the 1880s onwards, as specialist outfitters to the shipbuilding industry, being regularly engaged by yards in the North-East and for luxury passenger steamships built by their Belfast and Clydeside competitors [5.10]. Their engagement at Jesmond was therefore as wholly to be expected, as it was a symptom of the increasingly dominant role shipbuilding had assumed in the regional economy. Thus at Newcastle’s Royal Jubilee exhibition, Mitchell ‘allowed’ the display of the new church’s altarpiece [8.27] and pulpit [8.23] on Emley & Sons’ stand, ahead of their installation at St. George’s, and alongside the Pompeian splendours of a marble-lined passenger saloon, representing ‘the style of Decoration carried out by this firm in many of the largest Ocean Steamships’.³⁷ No more clearer demonstration could be given of the perceived linkage between the region’s technological prowess and its cultural advancement. On stylistic grounds, the saloon would appear to have been designed by Frank Emley, making him one of that pioneering group of architects – along with T.R. Spence, J.J. Stevenson (1831-1908), T.E. Collcutt (1840-1924) and the Glaswegian J.M. Crawford (1854-1950) – beginning to specialise in the design of interiors for steamships. Whether he also had a hand in the work at Jesmond is unclear, although, as a former Oliver & Leeson pupil, he may well have been on friendly terms with Spence long before Emley & Sons’ engagement by Mitchell.³⁸ What is clear is that the detailing of Messrs. Emley’s work in the church is indistinguishable from the rest of Spence’s building [8.28-31]; like Messrs. Beall, they were technically astounding – if creatively anonymous – as craftsmen.

So far, the conduct of the works at St. George’s appears to depart little from standard expectations. However, if we return to a consideration of the *Bills*, we find that its visual layout is far from being the only surprising aspect of the document. Although one expects to see specified areas of stonework set aside for the attentions of a ‘Carver to be selected by the Architect’, the same procedure was applied to sections of the timber furnishings, e.g. the oak stalls and pews [8.10-12]. Rather than hand these over *en bloc* to a specialist contractor, Gray’s joiners were to make up the basic carcass and mouldings, to be ‘aestheticised’ by the attentions of a separately contracted carver, as in the poppy-heads and fronts of the choir stalls [8.5]. How

this was managed in actual practice can be seen in the workshop accounts of Ralph Hedley, ‘artistic and architectural carvers in wood and stone’, which present our only opportunity at St. George’s to follow single items through from design to final installation.³⁹

Of all the Newcastle-based craftsmen engaged on St. George’s, Ralph Hedley (1848-1913) was perhaps the most congenial to Mitchell’s and Spence’s artistic vision, straddling the divide between fine artist and artisan. Born at West Gilling near Richmond – in the same north Yorkshire village as T.R. Spence – Hedley grew up in Newcastle, being apprenticed to the virtuoso wood-carver Thomas Hall Tweedy (1816-92). In 1869 Hedley set up in business (and before completing his terms) jointly with his fellow apprentice James Wishart, only for his partner to die unexpectedly two years later. Hedley subsequently established his own workshop in New Bridge Street, Newcastle, rapidly gaining acclaim as a specialist in architectural woodcarving, whilst also making a name for himself as an easel artist – his vivid depictions of northern working class life, heavily influenced by Hague School and French Realist painting, remain extremely popular to this day.⁴⁰ Capitalising on an expanding middle-class demand for art fuelled by a booming regional economy, Hedley was certainly one of the more colourful characters amongst Newcastle’s new breed of artists. He regularly exhibited with the Newcastle Arts Association (1878-83) – where Joseph Crawhall II, T.R. Spence and Mitchell were members of the executive committee – and its artist-controlled successor body, the Bewick Club. Hedley’s workshop ledgers record work for Spence at an unidentified commercial property in Newcastle,⁴¹ as well as Jesmond Towers⁴² and St. George’s church. At the London Arts and Crafts shows, Spence and Hedley jointly exhibited items of furniture.⁴³ Indeed, by the turn of the century, Hedley had so absorbed a radical Arts and Crafts ethos, that he came to despise all machine-produced work, as he argued in the forward to the first exhibition catalogue (1901) of the Northumberland Handicrafts Guild: ‘...you might learn to plough a furrow or wield a flail, or throw a shuttle, or thatch a roof. “But the machine is doing this all that for us”. Then blow up the machine...’⁴⁴ Thereafter, he increasingly turned towards the production of paintings in series, illustrating the various stages of (now vanishing) traditional craft processes.

For St. George’s Jesmond, Mitchell’s ledgers record only two payments to Hedley, a first instalment of £100-0-0 (paid 25 June 1887), and £242-2-6 (22 October 1888) as the balance of the account, without in any way indicating the scope of the work.⁴⁵ Hedley’s first workshop ledger (covering the period 1880-97; Table 3.1-3 below) helps to fill in some of the detail, whilst incidentally corroborating the payments (‘by Cheque’) noted above – the final bill was sent to Charles William Mitchell to be paid by his father, immediately following the consecration of the church.⁴⁶

Table 3.1-3: Ralph Hedley's first workshop ledger (1880-97):

Work itemised for T.R. Spence at St. George's church, Jesmond.

Transcribed by the author.

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[left-hand column: costings for work]

1888	S. George's ch		
Sep. 29	To Oak Screens 18f 105 *	217 **	210-''-''
''	'' Altering Screen	''	1-''-''
	'' Pulpit 55 . 0 . 0	''	
	'' 24 bosses 2/6 3 . 0 . 0	''	
	'' Extra Carving [?] 5 . 10 . 0		63-10-''
'' 18	'' 8 P[opy].Heads 28/6	''	11-8-''
'' 29	'' 32 Panel Backs	''	
	2 . 1.6.0 2.12.0		
	4 . 1.3.6 4.14.0		
	12 . 1.0.0 12.0.0		
	14 . 17.6 12.5.0		
			31-11-''
Oct. 15	'' 30 ½ block dado	''	
	6 figures 1.10.0 9.0.0		
	12 Frames [?] 15/- 9.0.0		
	12 . 10/6 6.0.0		
	1/2 . 7.6		
			24-13-6
			[total] 342-2-6
[there follows this pencilled addition]			
	342 . 2 . 6		
	<u>100 . 0 . 0</u>		
	242 . 2 . 6 sent 19/10/88 <u>CWM</u>		

* That is, 18 feet @ £105-0-0, the distance being the east-west floor clearance of the morning chapel / organ chamber. As executed, the screens were inserted between the span of the piers, a distance of approximately 16 feet.

** These job nos. appear to refer to the relevant pages in the Workshop Daybooks or Cash Books.⁴⁷

[right-hand column: cash account]

1887	[in pencil] S. George's Ch		
June 27	By Cheque (Mr M)	322 **	100-''-''
88 Oct 23	'' do. (Mr M)	401 **	242-2-6
			
			[total] 342-2-6

A noticeable feature of the ledger is the preponderance of jobs for commercial and architectural clients over private individuals, e.g. work for T.R. Spence and F.W. Rich is noted respectively on behalf of their clients, Charles Mitchell and (Capt.) Andrew Noble, whilst ‘St. George’s ch’ is entered under separate accounts for T.R. Spence and Amos Gray.⁴⁸ At £210-0-0, the costliest items for the church were the pair of oak screens facing onto the choir [8.4], followed by the timber upper parts of the pulpit at £55-0-0 [8.23]. Hedley’s work was valued for its distinctive hand-carved finish, and the workshop was often allowed some considerable latitude in the treatment of details, even for bespoke architect-designed items. For Gothic work, Hedley’s detailing was invariably derived from the standard pattern books of the period, e.g. the Brandon’s (Raphael and Arthur) *An Analysis of Gothic Architecture* (1847-9).⁴⁹ This is so even for prestigious pieces such as the choir furniture at St. Nicholas’ cathedral [8.3] or the chancel furnishings at St. Barnabas’ church, Bournmoor (Co. Durham) [8.1], the latter – also designed by the Newcastle architect R.J. Johnson – part of a sumptuous Anglo-Catholic re-fitting of the church on behalf of the Earl of Durham. Here Hedley charged £115-10-0 and £102-0-0 respectively for the reredos and chancel screen in 1882.⁵⁰ There was no such latitude at Jesmond. Most of the component parts for the screens were designed individually, as is clear from the architect’s drawings [1.19], conspicuously avoiding stock mouldings and historicising details [8.13]. In some compensation for the extra effort, the screens were completely plain to the rear (where they were backed by curtains) rather than carved in the round.⁵¹ As a result, Hedley’s prices for these exceptional pieces do not seem much in excess of their usual rate.

The large numbers of smaller items listed in the Hedley ledger for St. George’s are a little more difficult to place. The eight poppy-heads and thirty-two ‘Panel Backs’ almost certainly refer to those for the front and rear pews of the nave [8.17-8, 8.19], and the Hedley collection helpfully includes a photo of three of the pew ends ranged together in the workshop [8.16], prior to the building contractor assembling them into the nave seating on-site.⁵² The entry referring to thirty-and-a-half feet of ‘block dado’ panelling is curious, as the length is not sufficient for even one aisle (at approximately 92 feet), but more of this later. The items for St. George’s listed in Hedley’s account with Amos Grey [sic] are dated between 13 and 15 October 1888. These appear to be small-scale work, costed at £30-1-4 in total, but also including £3-1-0 as carpenter’s expenses.⁵³ Mention of two ‘letter bands’ and four ‘linen panels’ seems to relate these to the fitting out of the south porch and internal draught lobby (the latter was a late amendment to Spence’s design), the doors here being the one place in the building where linen-fold panelling and text bands are seen together. By a process of elimination, the remainder of the woodcarving at St. George’s should be assigned to the rival workshop of Messrs. Robson & Sons, one of the leading firm of cabinet-makers in Victorian Newcastle (established c.1838), and highly experienced in the field of commercial outfitting.⁵⁴ Besides the pair of west facing

screens in the aisles noted in early press notices and the architect's drawings [1.18], Robson's were most likely responsible for the fronts [8.5] and pew-ends of the choir stalls [8.6-9], the sedilia backs in the sanctuary and the free-standing litany desk [8.21], the last an especially remarkable piece. On the whole, their standards of craftsmanship are quite as high as Hedley's, although their work has perhaps a less distinctively hand-carved finish.

Robson's also seem the most likely contractor for the majority of the dado panelling lining the aisles, which would account for the short lengths noted above in Hedley's ledger. Far from being a purely utilitarian feature, e.g. to prevent dust and dirt rubbing off on the clothes of passers-by, the wainscoting is here ornamented with thirty-one sculpted bosses [8.20]. The feature was yet another late revision of Spence's design – the panelling is not detailed in the 1886 *Bills* – whilst its 'artistic treatment' seems only to have arisen following the decision to concentrate the pews into two blocks, leaving a clear passage next to the outer walls. The bosses are arranged in no particular order, both for variety of effect and as a signifier of hand-work, but include, besides a range of emblematic and heraldic devices, six demi-figures of angels which are very likely the '6 figures' noted in Hedley's ledger (Table 3.1-3). The remaining items of furniture are less easily assigned to one or other contractor, e.g. the choir vestry presses [9.3], whose distinctive wrought-iron door furniture is likewise absent from the *Bills*. The even-handed manner in which the two specialist workshops, Hedley and Robson & Sons, were deployed is however somewhat surprising. Both of these specialists were more than capable of supplying complete suites of furnishings, as Hedley did for the church architects R.J. Johnson and W.S. Hicks. Nevertheless, the two carving teams were engaged to 'aestheticise' the productions of Amos Gray's team of joiners, and bring these into visual conformity with the bespoke items of furniture. As Hedley's ledgers reveal, piecework of this type was highly unusual in their church work, although they did supply the occasional batches of pew ends for W.S. Hicks. Beginning in 1886, Hedley's also supplied both bespoke and piecework fittings, *via* the building contractor Walter Scott, for the restoration and refitting of the ancient parish church of St. Andrew's, Hartburn (Northumberland), but this appears to have been something of a one-off arrangement.⁵⁵ Likewise, for All Saints Gosforth, Hedley's provided Amos Gray with large amounts of planking for panelling, materials one would have normally expected the building contractor to have supplied themselves (and perhaps a further indication of the small scale of the latter's operation).⁵⁶ Otherwise, the supply of piecework was almost wholly a feature of commercial contracts, e.g. in the outfitting of ships and business premises.

The division of labour between the three contractors at St. George's is nonetheless very curious. Pressure of time has already been mentioned, and there may be something in this.

Hedley may not have been able to commit fully to the project, as he had a number of other major jobs in hand; he was, for instance, being pressed to complete the choir furniture at St. Nicholas' cathedral [8.2].⁵⁷ There was also the not inconsiderable matter of Newcastle's Royal Jubilee exhibition, for which Hedley had contracted to provide not only decorative fittings and the Jesmond pulpit fronts for exhibition on Emley & Sons' stand, but also fittings for a number of the other exhibitors.⁵⁸ In short, Robson & Sons were probably engaged to take-up the slack on the church. In support of this, one may note that Hedley's work was given a degree of precedence at St. George's, although in terms of gross receipts, £495-9-9 as against Hedley's £342-2-6, Robson's workshop should have been the more prominent.⁵⁹ As with Robert Beall's carving, Hedley's work set the aesthetic tone for the joinery, from the moment one enters via the porch and takes one's pew, to the larger screens facing each other across the choir (Robson's screens being 'tucked' away in the side aisles) – the latter further highlighted by Heywood Sumner's inset roundels [8.13].

In addition, the rather 'conventionalised' handling of the frieze on the base of the pulpit would seem to imply some further collaboration between Emley & Sons and Hedley, with one of Hedley's team working the marble [8.24]. This is perhaps more comprehensible if it was the individual craftsman's services that were particularly sought after, with the workshops acting more in the nature of an agency, sharing a pool of itinerant labour and free-lancing talent rather than as permanent employers. Such a pattern of working would certainly have allowed Hedley's workshop considerable flexibility in the simultaneous handling of large commissions, without the need to maintain a substantial workforce when business was slack. Indeed, this seems to have been the case in the earlier fitting out at Jesmond Towers, where Hedley charged the unbelievably low figure of £58-11-0 for the entire job, comprising the entrance hall, central staircase (now destroyed), billiard room, library and picture gallery.⁶⁰ Here it seems likely that much of the joinery was supplied by the general contractors (Messrs. Walter Scott), and finished-off 'artistically' by a team of carvers supervised by Hedley. Some of this carving, and particularly that in the library and picture gallery, is of an astonishing virtuosity and was clearly an expensive job [4.12-3]. Hedley's price, however, seems to have excluded most of the carvers, Mitchell instead contracting two named individuals directly, one being paid very handsomely (at twice Hedley's rate). The latter may also have been responsible for some of the sandstone carving at the house, e.g. the exterior frieze of the library bay, whose handling matches some of the joinery in the church (e.g. the pulpit and poppy-heads) [8.25].⁶¹

The Towers job was perhaps in the nature of a 'dry run' for the church. It suggests that the architect, patron and contractors were familiar – and more than content – with a wide range of contractual arrangements that ensured maximum labour flexibility for a timely completion of

the project. Where needed, particular jobs might be broken down into a series of specialised tasks, and dealt out accordingly to the appropriate contractor, the parts to be re-assembled on-site. Such a division of labour could also facilitate unusual combinations or effects. The pulpit at St. George's is a particularly good instance of such a complex co-ordinated effort, involving five separate contractors in tandem [8.23]; Amos Gray, for the moulded sandstone base; Robert Beall, for the carving of the steps; Messrs. Hedley and Emley & Sons, collaborating on the marble base and carved-oak upper parts; and finally, Alfred Shirley for the hand-wrought brass rails and lectern (the lectern is now missing). Of course, the more traditional pattern, of a single contractor supplying bespoke items, was also to be seen at St. George's, and especially where it fully met the client's needs, as in the marble altarpiece, or the church organ. It was usual for Victorian architects (and their clients) to deal with, at most, a couple of contractors at any one time for single items, e.g. a stone base for a timber pulpit, or mosaic infill on a marble reredos. What is particularly striking about St. George's is the frequency with which this general 'rule-of-thumb' was broken, and in a manner more nearly reminiscent of the division of labour on an industrial production line than in the creation of a work of art.

3.1-4 A Modern Workshop Tradition?

Although Charles Mitchell's Low Walker yard was not the first of the Tyne yards to become involved in iron-shipbuilding – the palm goes to the neighbouring yard of John H.S. Coutts (1810-62),⁶² an Aberdonian with whom Mitchell served a four year term (1840-4) as a draughtsman (and where he met William Swan, whose daughter Ann he would marry in 1854) – Mitchell's was certainly amongst the first to specialise exclusively as iron-shipbuilders. However, the advent of new materials and technologies – e.g. steam engines, screw propellers, and later, steel – did not signal an immediate overhaul in the received methods of ship construction. Early photographs of the Low Walker yard reveal an extraordinarily ramshackle affair [5.1-2], apparently very little different from traditional boat-building yards, with the ships laid-up on stocks close to the waterfront. This was to prove the pattern for most of the Tyne shipyards until almost the close of the century, when covered berths and overhead gantry cranes gained more general acceptance, e.g. at Messrs. Swan & Hunter Ltd. (1895 and 1902).⁶³ Photographs of the *SMS Panther* (launched 1885; built for the Austro-Hungarian navy) [5.3-4] under construction by the shoreline at Elswick, continue to reveal a surprisingly *extempore* set-up, seemingly at odds with contemporary descriptions of these warships as the engineering marvels of their age [5.5]. For all that the industry was seen as the epitome of the region's technological advancement, iron-shipbuilding had in fact developed, not by the sudden overturning of traditional practices, but through a gradual, albeit rapid, process of assimilation and adaptation to new methods and materials. It was, in short, a sophisticated modern development from the more traditional skills of wooden shipwrights; indeed, many of the

region's smaller yards were able to switch from iron back to timber construction as and when the client demanded.

A strongly artisanal base would remain a feature of British shipyards, long after their Continental and American competitors had switched to more mechanised production methods requiring a less skilled workforce.⁶⁴ This is an important consideration, as cultural historians in the North-East have tended to treat the region's shipbuilding only as an aspect of its heavy industry. Historians of the industry itself, such as Norman Middlemiss (1993)⁶⁵ and Joseph Clarke (1997),⁶⁶ have likewise placed a strong emphasis on the major developments in the fields of naval architecture, marine engineering, and the labour organisation of the yards themselves. However, the region's social and economic historians, such as Norman McCord, are surely correct in stressing that diversification and integration across all sectors was one of the most striking aspects of the North-East's economic development in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ In terms of the shipbuilding industry, the cultural and economic implications extended well beyond matters of gross tonnage, engineering firsts and the numbers of men directly employed in the shipyards, and embraced the wider aspects of consumer culture.⁶⁸ As the industry expanded, and the engineering sophistication and degree of comfort demanded of modern ships increased, so did the role of the specialist suppliers and outfitters. Many were drawn from the existing building and furnishing trades, e.g. electricians, heating engineers, joiners, glaziers, cabinetmakers and decorators, etc. The shipbuilding sector became so deeply embedded in the regional economy that, by the time of the 1882 North-East Coast Exhibition, many of the exhibitors were as well versed in working for shipyards and ship-owners as for the wider building profession.⁶⁹ This had further advantages for the shipbuilders themselves, in that they could operate a flexible capacity with the maximum of market responsiveness and a minimum of capital.⁷⁰ The notable exceptions on the Tyne were Messrs. Palmer's Shipbuilding and Iron Co. Ltd. of Jarrow, and the armaments and warship divisions only of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., where most if not all aspects of production were incorporated on a single site (i.e. vertical organisation).⁷¹ Even so, as we saw earlier in Chapter 2.2-5, Armstrongs pursued a policy of commercial link-ups with related concerns across the Tyne basin. The effect of these wider integrative processes on the working practices of the region's outfitting trades has been little studied. Hedley's workshop ledgers suggest that there was a fair degree of collaboration between the outfitters themselves, e.g. Table 3.1-4 (below) details an instance where Hedley acted as a sub-contractor for 'shipwork', supplying piecework on behalf of Messrs. Walker & Emley (i.e. the predecessors of Emley & Sons).

Table 3.1-4: Ralph Hedley's first workshop ledger (1880-97):

Work itemised as 'shipwork' for Messrs. Walker & Emley (of Newcastle).

Transcribed by the author.

[page] **10**

[left-hand column: costings for work]

1881			
Sep. 22	To Model of Mble: Saloon	12**	7-10-'
Oct. 27	' Packing Box	16	'-2-6
	S.S. Shannon		
Nov. 26	Cornice Molding [sic]	19	15-2-9
Dec. 15	4 Side boards	20	96-''-'
'	2 Plate closets	'	42-''-'
'	2 Glass frames	'	8-''-'
'	1.£8 . 0 . 0	'	
'	1. 9 . 0 . 0		{ 9-''-'
' 20	2 Folding Doors	'	18-10-'
'	2 do:	'	17-10-'
'	4 Door Heads	'	12-''-'
'	2 Music Room Doors	'	13-''-'
'	Extras on Side boards	'	24-''-'
'	' ' Plate closets	'	8-''-'
'	Packing & Cases	'	4-15-'
			[total] 267-17-9

** These job nos. appear to refer to the relevant pages in the Workshop Daybooks or Cash Books.⁷²

[page] **11**

[left column]

1882			
July 29	To Shipwork	41	89-1-'
Aug. 19	To Shelf with Festoons	44	3-15-6
' 21	' Moldings	'	3-''-'
Sep. 23	To Shipwork	47	93-15-6
' 29	' Shelf with Festoons	'	3-15-6
			[total] 275-1-'
			[in pencil]
			306-11-'
			lock end of 1882

This example also serves to remind us that ‘shipwork’ might involve more than the actual fitting-out of ships, Hedley supplying a model (complete with presentation case) of one of Walker & Emley’s speciality marble-lined passenger saloons.⁷³ The ledgers also provide evidence that pieceworking and the multiple letting of contracts were no longer confined to the shipyards, even if such practices had originated there in order to meet tight construction deadlines.

By the turn of the century, the outfitting of the giant passenger liners was usually done *en bloc*, e.g. Messrs. Robson & Sons supplied the entire Second Class suite onboard the Clyde-built *Aquitania* (1913-14), much as one would an hotel [5.13-4].⁷⁴ However, this seems to have been much less the case a generation earlier. The majority of the Tyne yards were heavily reliant on the serial production of small-scale work-a-day vessels, such as colliers and tramp steamers, i.e. mass production was a characteristic of the industry in the region. The pursuit of efficiencies led to an ever-greater division of tasks between and within the trades, and these often became the occasion for fractious demarcation disputes. However, efficient and timely construction methods were equally necessary for the limited number of yards catering to more specialised markets, e.g. warships and the larger passenger steamers, built as one-offs or in limited series. At the quality level of production, brute engineering might overlap with hand-craftsmanship, technology with art, each ship tailored to the particular requirements of the client. Even so, Mitchell could hardly have built the first of a batch of three innovative telegraph cable-laying vessels (the 4,935t *CS. Hooper*, launched in 1873) in a record breaking one hundred working days, from the laying of the keel to the launch, without an efficient division of tasks and methods of assembly.⁷⁵ And the evidence would also seem to indicate that the outfitting concerns were subjected to much the same processes of rationalisation.

It would seem entirely logical that, in building his church, a shipbuilder like Mitchell, or his (shipyard) architect, would adapt contractual and working practices with which they were most familiar. Nor would anyone on Tyneside have thought them untoward in doing so. Such a pattern of working was far from inimical to the needs of art. As steamships in general grew ever more reliable and larger, so the standards of comfort expected of them by passengers and ship’s officers also increased. However, the vessels of the 1870s and 80s were not yet of a scale where the imperatives and peculiarities of the engineering could be ignored – that would come later, with the monster floating-palaces of the transatlantic liners.⁷⁶ On the passenger steamers in particular, a satiating sense of luxury was encouraged as some recompense for the lack of spaciousness, employing exotic woods and marble, much carving, stained glass and rich stuffs [5.8-9, 5.10]. The taste was driven primarily by American ship-owners on the transatlantic

route, who, lacking any significant shipbuilding capacity of their own in the wake of the Civil War,⁷⁷ availed themselves of British shipbuilders (at least until the close of the century), and especially yards on the Clyde and in the North-East.⁷⁸ Something of the character of these interiors can be gauged from plans and descriptions in contemporary building periodicals, e.g. W.M. Crawford's designs for Messrs. William Denny & Bros. (of Dumbarton) [5.7].⁷⁹ Photographs from this period are however much harder to come by, and especially for Tyne-built vessels [5.11-12]; turn-of-the-century vessels are much better represented in this respect. Their style was invariably 'Free Classic' or Aesthetic, as the better able to cope with the awkward proportions of the apartments and cabins. This was the style adopted by Spence on behalf of Mitchell at Jesmond [4.8-9], and very likely, for the saloons and cabins onboard Mitchell's ships (although the evidence for the latter is virtually non-existent). As a consciously modern, 'artistic' style, it was visibly associated with the most luxurious and modern form of transport, long before the Art Deco 'Liner Style' of the early twentieth century. Indeed, if one considers the early Art Nouveau interiors of say, Victor Horta (1861-1947), as a decorated form of revealed 'engineering', one might speculate on the wider influence exerted by these modern British ship interiors.

3.1-5 Art versus Craft:

The role that traditional workshop practices might have in the continued vitality of British arts was very much a live issue in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and especially so for the nation's architectural profession. And perhaps the most thought-provoking contributions to this debate were made by John Dando Sedding (1838-91), newly arrived in the capital from the West Country [2.20].⁸⁰ The move did not bring the immediate rewards that Sedding had perhaps hoped for. Although his extensive church restoration practice in the South-West continued much as before, new commissions in the capital were slow to come in, although the originality of his church work did gain the attention of the building press. Meanwhile, Sedding turned his hand to commercial design, e.g. in 1884, he would move his office to 447 Oxford Street, next to Morris & Co.'s London showroom, and over the premises of the metalworker, Henry Longden & Co., with whom Sedding already had a long-standing business association. He also began to promote his views on the current state of English architecture through journalism and on the lecture circuit. Like his close friend, Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912), Sedding, lamented the undisciplined eclecticism of the age, although he would differ from Shaw on whether-or-not the nineteenth century Gothic Revival had fulfilled its promise. Shaw thought not; Sedding believed it was still possible to breath life into the corpse. The root of the problem lay firstly, with the architects, and their disconnection as a profession from the craft trades on which they depended:

...whereas the architects were preposterously alarmed lest the workmen should become architects, it never struck them to try to become master-workmen, and to gain the respect of the workshops by their own eminence in the crafts, rather than by giving themselves airs because of their professional status and soft hands.⁸¹

Or, as John Ruskin had once advised Sedding, ‘if you would be a *real* architect, you must always have either pencil or chisel in your hand’.⁸² Secondly, the Gothic Revival itself, through its insistence on archaeologically correct details, had killed-off what remained of trade learning. Sedding hymned an age when the architect was ‘only the prime minister, while the workman represented the departments. He was only the president for the time being of a little republic of art... [where] the hundred-and-one odd details required for after-thoughts and emergencies might fall to the conduct of the workman, who, at all events, would be quite competent to carry them out if so required’.⁸³ This (supposedly) co-creative partnership between architect and artisan-workman had built the cathedrals of England and every one of its parish churches, from the humblest to the greatest. And it was only when architect and workman were once again ‘in perfect sympathy in matters of taste; the designer has a fellow-worker in the handicraftsman; one craft helps and overlaps the other, the executive and the theoretical go hand in hand as twin sisters; the structural and the ornamental proceed along the same lines,... [may] we have building which deserves the name of architecture’.⁸⁴

Such views, heavily influenced by the writings of Ruskin and of William Morris, would inform the developing theoretical stance of the Arts and Crafts movement, e.g. in the founding of the Art Workers’ Guild in 1884. As Art Workers together, artisan-craftsmen with an artistic bent, manufacturers seeking to raise the artistic quality of their wares, sculptors and architects, could meet as equals in the spirit of the Guild’s motto, ‘Art is Unity’. For its first Master, the sculptor George Simonds (1843-1929), the Guild was somewhat akin to an artist’s academy, in which ‘I find something of the spirit of the studio-life of Rome. That spirit has made life there so charming, and which for centuries past has drawn artists of all denominations and of all nations together in Rome’.⁸⁵ Sedding, as its second Master (1886-7), would go much further, recognising a means for achieving his ideal of a modern vernacular workshop practice:

The life of Old Art was both common and continuous... Art was essentially one; all the conjoint Arts branched off one living tree, each craft mutually dependent upon the other. Art was then at unity with itself.... But not now-a-days. English Art is purely individual, and based upon individual experiment... There is no link of common interest to bind man and man, and craft with craft... It is to meet this state of things, and in some measure to remedy these evils, that our Guild has been established... The unity of Art is the rock of truth upon which we are built – the brotherhood of the arts of design – the kinship of all handicrafts is the gospel we proclaim. In our ranks Painter and Goldsmith, Architect and Potter, Sculptor and Pattern Designer, Wood Engraver and Wood Carver meet on common ground – here.⁸⁶

All professional and trade demarcation would be abolished, in a radical ‘levelling down’. One can perhaps view the establishment in 1887 of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society – which Sedding and others in the AWG would also strongly support – as a more level-headed acknowledgement of the current social realities. The Society was formed expressly to counter the Royal Academy’s refusal of support for, in Walter Crane’s words, ‘a really representative National Exhibition of Art... on much broader and more comprehensive lines, including a better representation of architecture, sculpture, as well as decorative design and handicraft’ than had hitherto prevailed.⁸⁷ Parity of status would be achieved for all the arts, in a ‘levelling up’ exercise. The catch-all term ‘Arts and Crafts’ adopted as the Society’s title simply meant anything outside of the current Establishment criteria of art. Nevertheless, in seeking the validation of contemporary exhibition culture, any notion of a commonly held workshop tradition in the arts was brushed aside, as the sculptor George Frampton (1860-1928) recalled in *The Studio* (1897): ‘Their gospel may be summed up in one word as being that of individuality. ‘Let us’ they said, ‘be able to tell one another’s work when we see it, just as we are able to distinguish each other’s hand-writing’’.⁸⁸

In his review of the Fourth (1893) Arts and Crafts exhibition, Lewis F. Day (1845-1910) complained ‘that the mere craft has not been so well represented as it was hoped it might be: it has had to give way to the claims of work with more pretension to Art. This is very much to be regretted: but it was inevitable that in a popular exhibition the Arts should to a certain extent out the Craft’.⁸⁹ In 1896, he resigned from the Society’s selection committee, complaining that the Committee was overly concerned with the artistic effect of the galleries.⁹⁰ As the more public face of the Arts and Crafts, the Society certainly achieved great things in promoting the cause of the handicrafts, but it had nonetheless a pernicious effect on the Movement’s theoretical position. The results are plainly apparent at St. Andrew’s church, Roker Park, Sunderland (1905-8), regarded as one of the quintessential examples of an Arts & Crafts building. The fittings, although splendid in themselves, are scarcely more than an assemblage of set-piece effects: item, one tapestry reredos by Messrs. Morris & Co.; item, one altar frontal, embroidered by Louise Powell; item, one lectern by Ernest Gimson; item, stained glass by Henry Payne; item, one highly original church building, jointly the work of Edward Prior and Alan Randall Wells, architects. Any one of these bespoke pieces may be appreciated separately, as artworks in their own right. There is no commonality of style, materials or techniques. As Alan Crawford (2011) laments, ‘the furnishings were procured in the ordinary way, and there was no [more] ambitious talk about the Unity of Art’.⁹¹

For Sedding, the attempt to square ‘the brotherhood of the arts’ with an insistence on the creative individuality of all involved was an impossible balance to maintain. It worked well when dealing with the village mason or joiner, all working together in a shared idiom, as was the case with his restoration practice in the South-West. However, it was apt to lead to formal and stylistic incoherence when he engaged major artists, as was proposed at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, Chelsea (built 1888-90) [6.8];⁹² indeed Alan Crawford has gone so far as to suggest that, for all its celebrity as a temple of the Arts and Crafts, ‘Holy Trinity turned out a failure’.⁹³ And what of St. George’s Jesmond? That Charles William Mitchell and Thomas Ralph Spence both washed up at the AWG’s doors, just as work was about to begin on the Jesmond church, was clearly no coincidence. Its first Master, George Simonds, was already well-known in the North-East, Mitchell’s father being one of the sculptor’s most prominent patrons in the region [4.10, V.2].⁹⁴ The Guild also offered the newest forum wherein to recruit the brightest and best artist-craftsmen of the day. Moreover, the shipyard practices familiar both to Mitchell and Spence already enforced the sort of collaborative working advocated by the AWG. Consecrated seven months before the foundation stone was laid for Sedding’s church in Chelsea, St. George’s would appear to have been the first occasion where the aims of the AWG informed the comprehensive decoration of a large building, professional artists working alongside artisan-craftsmen on a more-or-less equal footing. And because this happened in a smart suburb of Newcastle, and not in London, the significance of St. George’s for the historical development of Arts and Crafts theory has gone largely unnoticed.

3.1-6 Stained Glass Work:

Spence nevertheless kept a tight rein on the design aspect of St. George’s. The ‘kinship of all handicrafts’ was certainly desirable, but unity of effect could not be achieved through an agglomeration of individual efforts. The stained glass and art-metalwork, as perhaps the most dominant artistic contributions to the interior, offered nevertheless entirely different approaches in their workshop practices. Unusually for such a large Victorian church, the stained glass was installed as a single unified programme, filling every one of the windows, but without dedicatory inscriptions or memorials – a self-consciously artistic gesture that precluded any further (disfiguring) interventions. The building and its glazing were thus well nigh indivisible, and it is perhaps significant that neither designs nor sample panels were shown at the London Arts and Crafts exhibitions. The art-metalwork was a very different matter, comprising individually crafted items that could stand alone as art-objects. Perhaps unsurprisingly, several of the latter did feature at the Arts and Crafts exhibitions, although they made equally little sense when seen out of context.

As an example of the works organisation at St. George's, the glazing programme is certainly an extreme case. Mitchell's ledgers suggest that the design and/or cartooning, painting, firing, assembly and installation of the stained glass were handled as more-or-less separate operations, and by more than one studio and/or artist working in tandem from different locations. Quite why this was done is hard to fathom, although the need for a speedy turn-round may well have been a factor. The first payments date from October 1887.⁹⁵ Especial care seems to have been taken over the east window [10.8], its costs being separately itemised in Mitchell's ledgers, perhaps an indication that it was viewed as a test bed for the entire scheme. The east window seems to have been in place by the beginning of 1888, when payments were made between January and March for carriage on the glass, and for the principal artist's balance of account.⁹⁶ Work continued thereafter on the remainder of the scheme [page 101], which was certainly ready for the consecration in October (and duly described in press reports of the church). However, in the summer of 1889, the west window was taken down and its design substantially altered, for reasons which will be explored in a later Section [10.23].⁹⁷ At a little over £1200, the entire glazing scheme amounted to only 4.9% of Mitchell's total expenditure on the church to the close of 1889, but it made a comparatively greater impact on the interior than all the other crafted items.⁹⁸ This is reflected to some extent in the fees paid the principal artist (J.W. Brown), which amounted to an astonishing 48% of the total cost, and 64.9% for the east window alone.

The Newcastle-born artist John William Brown (1842-1928) had trained under William Bell Scott (1811-90) at the local Government School of Art, becoming one of its assistant masters, before securing a placement as a glass-painter in the glazing department of Morris & Co. (London), apparently on Scott's recommendation.⁹⁹ In 1874 he joined the rival Messrs. James Powell & Sons (Whitefriars Glassworks) but soon transferred to their design studio, where he was much influenced by the Aesthetic Neoclassicism of Powell's principal artist, Henry Holiday (1839-1927), who enjoyed a considerable reputation as an easel painter, engraver and decorative artist as well as an artist in stained glass. Brown left Powell & Sons in 1886, but continued to work for them as a free-lance designer, and despite a three year stint in Australia (ostensibly for health reasons), he remained their preferred designer for prestigious commissions after Holiday severed all connection with Powell's in 1891. It seems likely that Brown was engaged for Jesmond as much for his skills in life-drawing, as for his talents as a glass-painter and ability to cartoon at the largest of scales; although an experienced designer of stained glass himself, the uncertain anatomy of Spence's figure designs would always remain a weakness of his art [4.2-5]. As a former artisan-trained glass-painter, Brown certainly harboured higher ambitions as an artist in his own right, which perhaps explains his shift to free-lance work coinciding with the inception of the Jesmond project. Thus a comparison between his most

recent work for Powells, e.g. the five-light east window at St. John the Baptist, Garboldisham, Norfolk (1887) [10.9-10], and the Jesmond windows [10.8, Pl.9] reveals not only a marked increase in scale – the principal figures in the latter are well over life-size – but also a far greater sense of design and dramatic ambition.

It was very likely on Brown's recommendation that the obscure O'Neill Bros. were secured as the executant studio for the east, west and aisle west windows [Pl.7, page 23]. Charles and Edward O'Neill are shadowy figures, who turn up in London trade directories between c.1879-1925 as 'artists in stained glass'. One of the brothers may have worked for Powell & Sons, and they seem to have made a speciality of making-up windows for other artists.¹⁰⁰ In this instance they appear to have provided Brown with studio facilities, Brown cartooning and painting the windows himself (which would explain the high level of his receipts), whilst the O'Neills handled the glass-cutting, firing and leading-up. However, Powell's account books for this period record consignments of glass delivered by Brown to the Whitefriars studio for firing, so quite possibly the O'Neills were only partly responsible for the firing of the glass at Jesmond.¹⁰¹ The design of the windows was the joint responsibility of Brown and T.R. Spence, the former drawing-up the figures, the latter contributing much of the floral and architectural ornament (and some minor figures) in his characteristic style.

The remainder of the scheme, for which Spence was also the principal designer, was handed over to The Gateshead Stained Glass Company (Sowerby & Co.) [Pl.6, 10.20-1, page 101]. Set up in 1879 by the artist and glassworker John George Sowerby (1850-1914) as an art department in the Ellison Glassworks (Sowerby & Co.) at Gateshead, the company provided a design forum for Sowerby's fellow artists in the Newcastle Arts Association, principally A.H. Marsh and T.R. Spence [4.2-5].¹⁰² Charles Mitchell was the company's principal financial backer, so it comes as no surprise that they also doubled as ship's outfitters¹⁰³ – for which it seems their 'patent' *interleaved* glass was especially devised¹⁰⁴ – or that they were responsible for all the 'artistic' glazing at Jesmond Towers (designed by Spence). Another speciality of the company was extremely fine work in silver-stain, of which there is a great deal at St. George's [10.11-12, Pl.8], and which lends to the interior a distinctively golden light.

At first, the execution of the windows seems to have been divided evenly between the two studios. Indications uncovered during a recent conservation exercise (1999) on the windows of the south aisle [10.13-14] suggests that the figured medallions (depicting patriarchs, prophets and kings) may have been made up separately by Brown – and very likely at the O'Neill Bros. studio – before incorporation into the completed windows at Gateshead.¹⁰⁵ However, the O'Neills had been ousted altogether by the time the west window was altered. Although the

revised design appears to be the work of the architect, Mitchell's ledgers indicate that Brown was retained as both cartoonist and glass-painter, the work executed wholly via the Gateshead studio [10.27, Pl.9].¹⁰⁶ In an advertisement of around 1890, the latter even claimed to have executed the entirety of the glazing at St. George's, and to have recently secured Brown's services as a designer. At this point Brown sailed for Australia, having been head-hunted by Messrs. Brooks, Robinson & Co. of Melbourne, which rather suggests that his recent association with the Gateshead company may not have been a happy one.¹⁰⁷

3.1-7 Art-Metalwork:

The blame for this confusing state of affairs may well lie with Mitchell, as one cannot see that either Spence or Brown would ideally have arranged it so. However, Spence seems to have had a much stronger hand with regard to the artistic metalwork at the church. Indeed, this was the aspect of Spence's *oeuvre* that F. Hamilton Jackson specifically chose to single out, in the first (1902) of his two retrospective articles on the artist, Spence having 'made a speciality of design for metalwork'.¹⁰⁸ Jackson even claimed that his subject's 'peculiarities of metal treatment have been so highly appreciated by manufacturers that they have shown the sincerity of their flattery by copying his designs as closely as they could'.¹⁰⁹ Although much of the ironmongery for St. George's was detailed in the 1886 *Bills* as the responsibility of the general contractor [9.2], it is uncertain whether a specialist was specifically contracted for the later items, e.g. the strapwork of the vestry presses or the door furniture of the parochial hall [9.3-4]. In the earlier pieces, Spence places particular stress on the ductility of the metal, as in the strapwork hinges on the vestry and north doors of the church [9.1-2], where the wirework forgings are successively hooped over the spindles, a mode of assembly possibly suggested by the layered wire-wound construction of Armstrong's guns. The designs are noticeably less revivalist than much late-Victorian church work, and can be related to similar door furniture in brass surviving at Jesmond Towers. The rather mannered attenuation, even playfulness, of the later ironmongery suggests the influence of The Century Guild of Artists (active 1882-c.1888), e.g. the exactly contemporary (1887) door furniture at Pownall Hall, near Wilmslow (Cheshire) [9.5], which Spence could well have known, as Sowerby & Co. had supplied stained glass there (a figure of *Ophelia*, designed by Spence's colleague, A.H. Marsh).¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, it was the art-metalwork at St. George's, as self-consciously virtuoso examples of handicraft, that most attracted the attention of visitors. As reported in the local newspapers, the boundary was entered through wrought-iron gates 'of a unique design' [I.29e], whilst the porch gates were similarly 'choice example[s] of the blacksmith's art' [1.6]. 'All the gas fittings are made of brass and copper' [1.9] and 'the font has a wrought-iron and copper cover, exquisite in design, and of workmanship, worthy of ranking with the best examples of

medieval Flemish work' [9.7].¹¹¹ Mitchell himself drew attention to the metalwork during the consecration celebrations:

Mr. Spence ...had also been very fortunate in having picked up in Newcastle, in London, and elsewhere art workmen of the highest capabilities. Those who had had the opportunity of examining, even casually, the exquisite workmanship in metal, more especially the font cover and lectern, would agree with what he said; and these had all been done by one man, Mr. Shirley of London, who fortunately also was a very young man, whose name would be heard of in the future (Applause).¹¹²

The 'exquisite workmanship in metal', executed by the London foundry of A.J. Shirley & Co., would eventually cost around £670, only a third less than the marble-work and a little more than half that expended on the entire scheme of glazing (the fitting out of the church itself – exclusive of the organ, heating, etc. – would amount to well over a quarter of the total expenditure).¹¹³ Unfortunately, a great deal of this metalwork has been lost, but it was once one of the dominant features of the church, both inside and out.

Hamilton Jackson's retrospective review (1902) noted that Spence had been in partnership with Alfred James Shirley (c.1848-1912) [2.12], 'for some years, having joined him about two years after coming to London'.¹¹⁴ This would make the St. George's ensemble one of their first large-scale collaborations together. It seems likely that they met during Spence's redecoration (1886-7) of St. George-in-the-East,¹¹⁵ as Shirley's Cable Street foundry was close by the church. Within the year, Shirley had added the title of 'Art Metal Worker' to his day-to-day business as a commercial foundry for both the domestic and ecclesiastical markets, T.R. Spence taking the office over the company's new showrooms at 45 Rathbone Place, just north of Oxford Street. Their business association seems to have lasted until Spence moved his office to Newman Street in 1899, although they probably remained on good terms, as Shirley was elected an Art Worker in April 1889, and subsequently served on the Guild's general committee (1901-03).¹¹⁶ Their work together, much of it published in contemporary art periodicals, was a notable feature of some of the early Arts and Crafts exhibitions, e.g. the wrought-iron shop-sign displayed at the Second (1889) Arts and Crafts Exhibition (and subsequently hung outside the Rathbone Place showroom) [4.14-5].¹¹⁷ The arrangement seems to have operated on much same lines as the partnership between J.D. Sedding and Henry Longden (d. 1920), around the corner in Oxford Street.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Shirley was not bound exclusively to Spence, working for John Belcher (1841-1913)¹¹⁹ and Ernest Newton (1856-1922)¹²⁰ amongst other notable architects.

A comparison of contemporary metalwork by the Sedding-Longden partnership – e.g. the porch gates (1885-9) at Holbeton parish church (Devon) [9.17], or the chancel gates and pulpit

rail (1889-90) at Holy Trinity church, Chelsea [9.15-6] – with similar work by Spence and Shirley, e.g. the porch gates at St. George's Jesmond [1.6, 9.8-9], reveals an evident kinship but also underscores the essentially un-English character of the latter. Thus the (lost) south lodge gates to Jesmond Towers (probably c.1890) [4.16] were playfully Rococo rather than English neo-Georgian, whilst much of the metalwork at the church appears to take its cue from German Baroque work of the seventeenth-to-eighteenth centuries. The lectern offers a particularly stunning example of the type, executed entirely in brass, its form evoking the profile of a Eucharistic chalice [9.10-12]. Hamilton Jackson's technical description of the piece cannot be bettered:

The lectern is of brass, with a good deal of beaten leaf work. The ends are cast with elaborate piercings, and the book-slope terminates with an embattled cresting which curls over the book. The base and stem are modelled somewhat upon the fine Renaissance lecterns still to be seen in some of our cathedrals and country churches, but more massive in proportion. The member beneath the book-shelf is capital shaped, the effect being obtained by volutes which curve outward to the ring upon which the book-rest turns, and by leaves of beaten work which follow the same curve. Below is a cresting and a knop wreathed with flowers and leaves. Here considerable variety of effect has been obtained by simple means. The piercings of the triangular ends without chasings, the spinning of the lower mouldings, the *repoussé* of the band of flowers, the detached leaves of the capital, and the curving over of the cresting all have their value, and contrast well one with the other.¹²¹

The lectern was shown at the Second (1889) Arts and Crafts (London) show,¹²² where it was reviewed rather sniffily by the *Builder's* correspondent:

...a very sumptuous specimen of brass furniture treated in the hammered-out manner which is regarded now by many as the orthodox artistic treatment of all metal; but it may be questioned whether this laminated treatment, specially suitable to work in precious metals (gold especially) on a small scale, may not be carried too far in metalwork on a large scale, and whether this bush, as one may call it, of bristly brass curls and leaves and tendrils, clustered under the desk of the lectern, is altogether what one desires to find in that position.¹²³

Such comments reflected not only the relative novelty of the modern 'artistic' approach to metalwork practiced by Arts and Crafts workers,¹²⁴ but also the decontextualising effects of the modern exhibition format. In its proper place, the Jesmond lectern does not appear in any way over-scaled or *outré*. Of the other pieces from St. George's shown at the 1889 Arts and Crafts, the extraordinary font cover (also lost) was passed over in the reviews [9.7], possibly because of both the unfamiliarity of its materials and birdcage-like form for such an item of liturgical furniture.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, there were historical precedents for this, e.g. in southern Germany and Spain, where virtuoso ironwork had long been an established feature of church interiors. However, in England there survived only a single example of a wrought-iron font-cover, executed in 1718 by the celebrated smith Robert Bakewell (1682-1752) for St.

Werburgh's church, Derby. Again, context was all, the form of the Jesmond piece being echoed in the design of the surrounding stained glass windows [Pl.6], which rise, flame-like, to reveal the gifts of the Holy Spirit conferred in baptism.

There is a curious coda to this tale of the handicrafts at Jesmond, and one which reveals just how fine was the line between art, craft and industry in Charles Mitchell's mind. Indeed, it says much for Mitchell's attitude towards his architect's 'one supreme effort', that he could contemplate introducing mass-produced catalogue fittings into the church. And yet, following a visit to the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition, Mitchell placed an order for cast-iron lamp standards with Messrs. Walter Macfarlane & Co. (Saracen Foundry) of Glasgow [9.19], in order to expedite work on the church grounds.¹²⁶ It seems doubtful that Spence was even consulted. The largest of these items (happily now lost) was a *retardataire* neo-Gothic lamp-and-pillar standing ten feet high, and placed next to the church porch [9.18, 9.20], where it vied with Spence and Shirley's hand-wrought gates.¹²⁷ Mitchell's decision is all the less comprehensible, given that he had previously commissioned a gas-light fitting (also lost) from Shirley to go over the entrance of the parochial hall.¹²⁸ He may well have believed that the Macfarlane lamp-post was stylistically of-a-piece with Shirley and Spence's metalwork, but they were nonetheless worlds apart in ethos.

Which perhaps begs the question, should St. George's be considered an Arts and Crafts building? Or to recast the question slightly, what kind of an Arts and Crafts building is St. George's Jesmond, if at all? The degree of collaboration seen here, with artisans working alongside professional artists on a shared footing, 'in perfect sympathy in matters of taste... the executive and the theoretical go[ing] hand in hand as twin sisters; the structural and ornamental proceed[ing] along the same lines', certainly accords with the foundational principles of the Art Workers' Guild. For Sedding, this made for a building deserving 'the name of architecture'.¹²⁹ However, and as Mitchell's lapse perhaps suggests, such a 'levelling down' could all too easily slip over into 'the Trade point of view...the Commercial spirit'.¹³⁰ This may well account for the sidelining of St. George's in accounts of the Movement, in that it represented a version of the Arts and Crafts considered tainted and no longer acceptable. Thus T.J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840-1922), retrospectively reviewing the progress of the Movement in 1905, dated its origins to the formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.¹³¹ He never once refers to the pioneering role of the Guilds, such as the AWG and Century Guild, nor does he ever mention the terms art-worker or art-workman. To be fair, Sanderson does write eloquently on the dangers of the exhibition system, as undermining the kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk* we see at Jesmond:

An exhibition... is but a small part of the Arts & Crafts movement... & there is a danger in the constant repetition of exhibitions... of public attention being diverted from the movement of ideas... to the mere production of exhibits. Moreover, of exhibits, very few things, relatively to the whole of life's possessions and productions, can be brought together usefully, or at all, under one roof.¹³²

His concern is nonetheless wholly with the individual craftsman as artist, and *vice versa*. Spence and likeminded designers would continue to make successful careers for themselves, but their approach was effectively sidelined and written-out of the 'official' histories of the Movement, the victim as much of a latent snobbery as of ethical objections. All of this rather suggests that St. George's is indeed an Arts and Crafts building, but not as we would later come to know the Movement.

Notes to Chapter 3.1:

- ¹ *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6 & 17 Oct. 1888, p.5; also *NDC* (13 Oct., 1888), p.5 & 17 Oct. 1888, p.6; also *NWC* (20 Oct. 1888); also *B* Vol. 57 (30 March 1889), p.243 + illus. & Vol. 59 (15 November 1890), p.386 + illus.
- ² Cross referencing press reports and local Trade Directories with M1-2, *BQ* and *JCE*.
- ³ Pollard, S.: 'British and World Shipbuilding 1890-1914', in *Journal of Economic History*, Vol.17, No.3 (Sept. 1957), pp.426-44 (441).
- ⁴ M2, *folio* 35 (18 April 1887), payment of £16-16-0 (16 gns.) to 'H. Sumner'. Sumner was responsible for the pair of gilded roundels in gesso relief, inset into the gables of the chancel choir screens. Although each is discreetly initialled by Sumner, the designs are nevertheless stylistically consonant with T.R. Spence's work.
- ⁵ For the enlargement of Jesmond Towers, M1 records five large non-itemised payments to Spence, concluding on 31 March 1885 with 'balance of contract', totalling £425, i.e. a little over 5% of the general contractor's costs (£7965-3-1).
In the case of St. George's church, there is mention neither of a contract nor of a closing payment 'on account' for T.R. Spence. Similarly, there is no closing balance for the church itself, whilst the general contractor's costs are mixed-up with work elsewhere on site. Nevertheless, there are three large non-itemised payments to Spence, two of £100 (28 May 1886 and 18 July 1887) and a final figure of £850 (31 Dec. 1888), which probably relate to the architect's fees. In addition, there are a number of smaller payments, in tens of pounds, sometimes itemised as for 'Tiles', for 'Mosaics', etc., clearly relating to Spence's designs for those elements of the decorative scheme. Taking together the larger payments, Spence's fees (£1050) would be 4.8% of Mitchell's total expenditure (£25,435-3-5) on the church up to 31 Dec. 1889 (i.e. to the close of the ledgers as we have them). Combining both sets of payments, Spence received £1405-0-0, i.e. approx. 5.5% of Mitchell's total expenditure.
- ⁶ M2 records the regular payment of 'wages' to a casual workforce from July 1888 onwards. One entry for 13 Oct. 1888 refers to 'Joiners Wages', two others, for 25 and 30 Aug. 1888 respectively, refer to 'Wages per T. Crawford', one of Mitchell's yard managers. Some of these payments may relate to the laying of the wood-block and mosaic floors. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. were also engaged for some unspecified engineering tasks, possibly connected with the installation of wrought-iron girder-work in the upper stages of the tower and/or the blowing plant for the organ.
- ⁷ M2 records payments (10 Aug. to close of December 1889) to *Rust & Co. for Wages* during the installation of the high-level mosaics in the chancel.
- ⁸ For the advancing organisation of the Victorian building trades, see Muthesius, S.: *The English Terraced House*, first published 1982 (New Haven and London, 1985), pp.27-30 and 250-5.
- ⁹ See Chap. 3.3-4.
- ¹⁰ Rennison, R.W.: 'The Mason Who Became a Baronet: The Work in North-East England of Sir Walter Scott (1826-1910), Contractor', in *AA*, Fifth series Vol.XXXVI (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2007), pp.341-62. Scott was regularly engaged for harbour and dock improvements on the Tyne and Wear rivers, and had been J.L. Pearson's contractor at St. George's church, Cullercoats (1882-4); see also *NDJ* (5 Aug. 1882), p.3.
- ¹¹ See note 5 above. Assuming Spence's fees of £1050 represented a standard 5% commission, the contract price for the church would be around £21,000, close to the figure quoted in the first press reports, e.g. *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ¹² *NDJ* (18 June 1886), p.7, *New Church at Gosforth*.
- ¹³ To date, Amos Gray is not traceable in Local Trades Directories. In the 1871 census he gave his profession as a stonemason (r. Gosforth Cottages, Gosforth), and from 1881 onwards he described himself as a builder (r. Blue Houses, Longbenton). His second child and eldest son – also Amos (b. circa 1854) – and fourth child, George (b. circa 1860), both followed their father as stonemasons.
Amos Gray junr. also become a builder, being so described in the 1881 census as residing at Wideopen Colliery. In 1893, Amos Gray 'of Wide Open' was engaged as contractor for a new mission church at nearby Burradon Colliery (near Killingworth, north-east of Newcastle), the architects being Messrs. Hicks & Charlewood of Newcastle; see *NWC* (21 Oct. 1893), *Laying of Foundation Stone of New Mission Church*. In 1894 he stood as a district councillor; see *NWC* (24 Nov. & 1 Dec. 1894), *The Local Government Act – Weetslade*.
- ¹⁴ The site of the Brunton quarry now underlies the present North Brunton-Hazlerigg interchange of the modern A1 and A1056, slightly west of the Gosforth Park estate (Newcastle Race Course).
- ¹⁵ In conversation with the author, some of Amos Gray's descendants claimed that the St. George's contract so ruined Gray financially that he emigrated to Canada. There had been a strike amongst the

workmen on the church, but Mitchell had refused to bow to their demands, affirming to Gray that a contract was a contract, and insisting that he would not pay one half-penny more. The strike was subsequently resolved, with Gray settling the difference himself.

- ¹⁶ Finely dressed freestone, and especially 'polished' ashlar, was something of a Newcastle speciality, fostered by the early-nineteenth century Greek Revival; see Faulkner & Greg (2001): *John Dobson*, Op.cit., p.145.
- ¹⁷ The contractors for both the hall and vicarage were Messrs. J. & R. Lamb of Newcastle; see *JCE* (31 May & 20 April 1887); also M2 folio 151, *St. George's Vicarage*.
- ¹⁸ That Gray's contract was extended to include the 'church field' can be inferred from *BQ*, which fails to mention this work, and payments to Amos Gray recorded in M2. Gray's receipts during initial work on the church (beginning August 1886) are of regular amounts (hundreds of pounds) and on a monthly or fortnightly basis. The draining of the field is first mentioned March 1888 (see note 19 below). Thereafter payments to Amos Gray are more-or-less weekly and of irregular amounts – as work on the church pressed forward to completion – but including items for *parapet*, *parapet for railing*, *west parapet* and *balance of parapet a/c*. The *final payt* [sic] to Gray was noted on 31 July 1889.
- ¹⁹ The total of 11,503-7-1 (£-s-d) includes all items specified as for Amos Gray in M2, including the reimbursement of the quantity surveyor's fees (£370-14-3), and a single *Allowance to Masons* (6 Nov. 1887), but excludes two payments (18 Feb. and 3 March 1888) made re. *draining church field*, as it is not certain whether this work was done by Gray, although Gray certainly built the enclosing parapet wall (see note 18 above). Due to such uncertainties, it is not possible to isolate the payments to Amos Gray for the church alone. However, Gray's fees were significantly less than the presumed contract price, see notes 11 above.
- ²⁰ See Vol.II, Cat.II.
- ²¹ The original document (in the possession of a local firm of builders) was included in the exhibition *Twelve Newcastle Churches - an Architectural Journey* (Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 10 July-31 August 1982).
- ²² E.g. Leaning, J. : *Building Specifications* (London, 1901), pp.3-4, which describes hybrids of the specifications and quantities as 'most frequently made by country architects of limited experience, who, with more extensive knowledge of various methods, would probably change their practice', whilst also implicitly acknowledging that the provision of sketches in such documents remained a widespread practice, even in London.
- ²³ In the 1881 census George Connell gave his profession as 'architect & building surveyor'.
- ²⁴ See Vol.II, Cat.I, **I.29**; also *JCE* (29 April 1887).
- ²⁵ Based on entries in M2. Ornamental carving in stone and wood, at £2198-0-0, includes all work itemised as by Messrs. R. Beall, R. Hedley, Robson & Sons and Emley & Sons (all of Newcastle), as a proportion of Mitchell's total expenditure (£25,435-3-5) up to 31 Dec. 1889; see note 5 above. The stained glass includes all work itemised as by the stained glass artist J.W. Brown (London), Messrs. O'Neill Bros. (also London), and The Gateshead Stained Glass Co., totalling £1237-10-8. The mosaic and tile work, includes all work itemised for the artist G.W. Rhead (London) for tiles, and Messrs. Rust & Co. (Battersea) for the mosaics, totalling £2061-17-4.
- ²⁶ Installed beneath the west window c. 1890, the bronze figure of St. George was designed and modelled by T.R. Spence, and cast by Messrs. Moore & Co. (Moore & Sons after 1897) of Thames Ditton, one of the most important of Victorian bronze-foundries; see *SGPM*, Vol.2 no.11 (Nov. 1890), p.123: *Further Church Improvements*; also A, No.23 (Sept.-Dec. 1898), pp.168 & 171; also James, D.: 'The Statue Foundry at Thames Ditton', in *Foundry Trade Journal* (7 Sept., 1972), pp.279-82 & 287-9.
- ²⁷ Paid in three instalments; M2 folio 24 (14 March 1888), *R. Beall on a/c Church Carving*, £70-0-0, folio 142 (1 Aug. 1888), *R. Beall balance*, £44-7-10, and folio 143 (11 Oct. 1888), *Beall*, £293-0-0. The final payment (not a round figure) to Beall suggests that more carving was done than was initially contracted for. At around £930, Emley & Sons (marblers) were the highest paid of the carving teams, but this substantially included the costs of materials.
- ²⁸ E.g. Ruskin, J.: *The Stones of Venice*, first published in 3 vols. 1851-3 (Universal Edn., London and New York, no date), Vol.I, Chap.XXVII, § XXXV-XL.
- ²⁹ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.I, **I.25**; also *SGPM*, Vol.2 no.11 (Nov. 1890), p.123, *Further Church Improvements*, for the installation of the remainder.
- ³⁰ Hall (2005), Op.cit., p.41. Hall gives Beall's year of birth as 1837, although in census returns it is given variously as 1835-6. Advertisements in 1888 claimed that the business had been established for 30 years, and in 1892, for 35 years.
- ³¹ *NWC* (11 Nov. 1887), *Newcastle Cathedral. New Reredos*; also *BN*, Vol. 54 (6 Jan. 1888), p.6, *Statues in Reredos, Newcastle Cathedral*. The Caen stone reredos and sanctuary wings were designed by the

- cathedral architect, R. J. Johnson (1832-1892), executed by Robert Beall, and installed by his brother, William Beall. The alabaster statuary was executed by J. Sherwood Westmacott (1823-1900), sculptor of London, and presumably a relation of the donor, Percy Westmacott, one of the Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. directors.
- ³² One other employee of Beall's is known by name, J. Rogers (c.1880-c.1950), see Hall (2005), *Op.cit.*, p. 291; also National Sculpture Database of the Public Monument and Sculpture Association <<http://pmsa.cch.kcl.ac.uk/NE/TWNEA14.htm>> [accessed July 2010]
- ³³ As Robert Beall resided at 13 Portland Terrace, Jesmond, i.e. close by Jesmond Parish Church, he may have had reason to supervise the work at St. George's.
- ³⁴ (Anon): *A Descriptive Account of Newcastle Illustrated* (Brighton, 1894-5), pp.79-81 (79).
- ³⁵ (Anon): *Tyneside Industries. Newcastle and District: An Epitome of Results and Manual of Commerce, etc.* (London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Edinburgh and Leeds, c.1890), p.105.
- ³⁶ For Frank Emley, and especially his South African career, see *Dictionary of Architects in South Africa* <<http://artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/archframes.php?archid=471>> [accessed May 2011]. After serving his articles with Messrs. Oliver & Leeson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), Emley acted as assistant to the northern church architects Charles Hodgson Fowler (1849-1910) and William Searle Hicks (1849-1902). Only one work is certainly attributed to Emley before he emigrated in 1888; the pretty, stone-faced Norman-Shavian town hall at Corbridge, Northumberland (1887).
- ³⁷ *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of, p.130 (cat. 290-2). The saloon and altarpiece are illustrated as exhibited in the firm's advertisement, *A Descriptive Account of Newcastle Illustrated* (Brighton, 1894-5), pp.79-80.
- ³⁸ M1 lists four payments to Messrs. Walker & Emley (latterly Emley & Sons), between June 1884 and Oct. 1885, for unspecified work at Jesmond Towers totalling £296-0-2.
- ³⁹ TWA DT.RH/1-25 *Ralph Hedley (Craftsmen) Ltd.*, includes ledgers, job inventories, photographs of completed work, etc. The collection is by no means a complete series, and other items remain with family members.
- ⁴⁰ The standard monograph on Hedley is Millard, J.: *Ralph Hedley. Tyneside Painter* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1990), which rather privileges Hedley's painting over the carving workshop; the latter still awaits a scholarly study. However, Millard, p.90, also refers to a set of Workshop Daybooks, TWA old accession nos. 142/1-2, but apparently withdrawn c.1974 by the depositor and not returned to Tyne & Wear Archives.
- ⁴¹ TWA DT.RH/8/1, p.142, *T.R. Spence*, 16 Aug. 1884, *To Bank Decorations*, totalling £30-18-0.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1885 onwards – the work is not indicated as for Jesmond Towers, but tallies with payments in M1.
- ⁴³ E.g. AC, First Exhibition (1888), cat. 291a (p.148), *Oak cabinet designed by T.R. Spence and executed by R. Hedley*.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Millard (1990), *Op.cit.*, pp.73-80.
- ⁴⁵ M2, *folios* 36 & 144.
- ⁴⁶ TWA DT.RH/8/1, p.142, 1888, *S George's ch.*
- ⁴⁷ See note 40 above.
- ⁴⁸ TWA DT.RH/8/1, p.107, *Amos Grey* [sic] & p.142, *T.R. Spence*. Millard (1990), *Op.cit.*, p. 92 (Chap. 5 note 8) quotes several entries for Jesmond Towers in Daybook I (see note 40 above) – pp.114, 118, 144 and (possibly) 164 respectively – and also for St. George's church, Daybook I – pp.205 and 217. However, Millard seems not to have cross-referenced his reading of the Daybooks against the workshop ledgers.
- ⁴⁹ Brandon, R. and Brandon, J.A.: *An Analysis of Gothic Architecture, etc.*, first published London, 1847 (London, 1849), 2 Vols.
- ⁵⁰ TWA DT.RH/8/1, p.2, *Austin, Johnson & Hicks*.
- ⁵¹ Vol.I, Cat.I, **I.18-9**.
- ⁵² TWA DT.RH/20/101.
- ⁵³ Cf. Note 48 above.
- ⁵⁴ Allwood, R.: 'Furniture Making in Newcastle. Three Victorian Firms' in *Victorian Society. North East Group Newsletter*, No.3, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Jan. 1987), pp.1-4 (30).
- ⁵⁵ TWA DT.RH/8/1, for *W. Scott & Son* and *Walter Scott*, pp. 76, 80 & 228-30.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.107 for *Amos Grey*, Feb.-June 1887, *All Saints Gosforth*, possibly relating to the pewing and wainscoting of the nave and aisles, i.e. in addition to the bespoke items already commissioned from Hedley by the architect.
- ⁵⁷ Millard (1990), *Op.cit.*, pp.49-51.
- ⁵⁸ TWA DT.RH/8/1, pp.13-6, *Emley & Sons*.

- ⁵⁹ Like Hedley, Robson & Sons were paid in two instalments, M2, *folios* 36 and 145, £150-0-0 (4 Nov. 1887), and £345-9-9 (19 Nov. 1888) as balance of account. There was further slight work, *Ibid.* *folios* 146 and 149, (12 Jan. & 12 Oct. 1889) totalling £15-13-4, but it is uncertain what this entailed.
- ⁶⁰ TWA old accession cat. 604/57 *Particulars and conditions of sale, Jesmond Towers* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sept. 1910), p.3: 'The carved oak woodwork in the Hall, Picture Gallery, Library, Billiard Room and Central Staircase is all by Ralph Hedley'; also M1, *folio* 80, 6 May 1885, *R. Hedley*, £58-11-0. The latter figure is confirmed in TWA DT.RH/8/1, p.142, *T.R. Spence, By Cash*, 7 May 1885. The work is itemised as an oak cupboard (£25-10-0), 38 tracery panels and fitting of *Old wk* (i.e. historic joinery recycled into the morning room). There is no mention of carving. Spence claimed £4-10-0 on commission, and an extra £1-0-0 was allowed for 'natural' polishing of the oak.
- ⁶¹ M1, *folios* 56 (15 Sept. and 24 Oct. 1884) and 58 (14 Nov. and 26 Nov. 1884). The two individuals are named as A.B. Wall 'carver' and H. Best 'carver' (possibly Wall's assistant). So far, neither have been traced in local Trades Directories. Best was paid only £3-0-0 but Wall received £126-10-0, in two instalments. The presumption is that they were woodcarvers, as the carved overdoors in the picture gallery had certainly been installed by the close of 1884, when the floor of the apartment was polished; ref. M1 *folio* 58 (26 Dec. 1884), *Elgey Polishing gallery floor*.
- ⁶² For Coutts, see Clarke (1997), *Op.cit.*, Part One, p.119; also McGuire (1988), *Op.cit.*, pp. 7-11 & 52-4.
- ⁶³ Middlemiss (1993), *Op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.15. Messrs. Swan & Hunter's first covered and glazed berths were built as part of a modernisation of their East Yard in 1895. Two further berths were added in 1902, 750 feet long, in anticipation of the order for the Cunard Transatlantic liner *Mauretania*.
- ⁶⁴ E.g. in the shift from riveted to welded construction; see Pollard (1957), *Op.cit.* pp.436-8.
- ⁶⁵ Middlemiss, N.L. (1993), *Op.cit.*
- ⁶⁶ Clarke (1997): *Op.cit.*
- ⁶⁷ E.g. McCord (1972), *Op.cit.*, pp.73-88; also McCord (1995), *Op.cit.*, pp.241-66.
- ⁶⁸ McCord (1979), *Op.cit.* pp. 128-38.
- ⁶⁹ See Chap. 2.2-5.
- ⁷⁰ Pollard (1957), *Op.cit.*, p.437.
- ⁷¹ See e.g. McCord (1979): *Op.cit.* pp.128-38; also Warren (1989), *Op.cit.*, pp.27-31.
- ⁷² See note 40 above.
- ⁷³ The model was very likely made to accompany Walker & Emley's exhibit at the 1882 *North-East Coast Exhibition*, for which they won a silver medal (highest award); see [North-East Coast] *Exhibition, etc.*, Official Catalogue of., pp.25 (cat. 16) and concluding *List of Awards*.
- ⁷⁴ See e.g. Bedford Lemere & Co. collection, National Maritime Museum (Greenwich). The supervising architects were Messrs. Mewès & Davis of London.
- ⁷⁵ Clarke (1997), *Op.cit.*, Pt. One, p.125; also [North-East Coast] *Exhibition etc.*, Official Catalogue of, p.27 (cat.17q): 'Half-model of Cable-Steamship 'Hooper'... This huge vessel was built and entirely completed in the unprecedentedly [sic] short time of seven months, having been only 90 working days on the stocks'.
- ⁷⁶ Greenhill, B. and Giffard, A.: *Travelling by Sea in the Nineteenth Century. Interior Design in Victorian Passenger Ships* (London, 1972), pp.49-59.
- ⁷⁷ Pollard (1957), *Op.cit.*, pp.429-30.
- ⁷⁸ E.g. 'The Steamship 'Mexican' in *BA* (16 Feb. 1883), p.82 + illus. The marble work was supplied by Messrs. Emley & Walker.
- ⁷⁹ E.g. *B*, (8 June 1888), pp.149-20 + illus.; also *BA* (19 Oct. 1888), p.275 + illus.
- ⁸⁰ A pupil of G.E. Street between 1858-63, Sedding joined his elder brother Edmund in practice at Penzance in 1865. On his brother's death in 1868, Sedding moved his office to Bristol, before finally moving to London (18 Charlotte Street) in 1874.
- ⁸¹ Sedding, J.D.: 'The Modern Architect and His Art' in *BA* (14 Nov. 1884), pp.232-6 (235).
- ⁸² Sedding, J.D.: 'Architecture: Old and New' in *BA* (17 June 1881, p.299.
- ⁸³ Sedding (14 Nov. 1884), *Op.cit.*, p.236
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ Simonds, G.: *Master's address* in AWG, Annual Report (4 Dec. 1885) pp.12-15 (14-15).
- ⁸⁶ Sedding, J.D.: *Master's address* in AWG Annual Report (3 Dec. 1886), pp. 9-14 (10-11).
- ⁸⁷ Crane, W.: *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London, 1907), p.286.
- ⁸⁸ Frampton, G.: 'The Art of Woodcarving (Part 1)' in *The Studio*, Vol.XII, No.55 (London, Oct. 1897), pp. 43-7 (44).
- ⁸⁹ *AJ* (Nov. 1893), pp.330-3 (332).
- ⁹⁰ Hansen (2007): *Lewis Foreman Day. 1845-1910*, p.289
- ⁹¹ Crawford, A.: *Arts and Crafts Churches* in Sladen & Saint (eds.) (2011), *Op.cit.*, pp. 62-79 (76).

- ⁹² ‘Architecture at the Royal Academy and at the Salon-I’ in *B*, Vol.56 (4 May 1889), pp.327-9 (328); ‘Bay of Nave Arcade. New Church, Sloane Street’ in *B*, Vol. 57 (12 Oct. 1889), p. 260 + illus.
- ⁹³ Crawford (2011), *Op.cit.*, p.77; see also Vol.I, Chap.2.3, note 70.
- ⁹⁴ I am grateful to the late H. Godwin Arnold for sharing his researches into George Simonds’ northern patrons.
- ⁹⁵ M2, *folio* 36 (8 Oct. 1887), *T.R. Spence for O’Neill Bros. on a/c*, £10-0-0; M2, *folio* 47 (20 Dec. 1887), *O’Neill Bros., Window*, £30-0-0.
- ⁹⁶ M2, *folio* 47 (21 Jan. 1888), *Carriage on glass* £1-2-6, and *folio* 24 (4 Feb. 1888), ditto, £1-2-1; also *folio* 24 (7 Mar. 1888), *Brown, balance of East window* (£109-0-0); ref. Vol.II, Cat.III, **III.6-7**.
- ⁹⁷ See Chap. 3.3-5.
- ⁹⁸ See note 25 above.
- ⁹⁹ Hadley, D.: ‘The Stained Glass of Liverpool cathedral: art or weatherproofing?’ in *JSG*, Vol.XXV (London, 2001), pp.60-78 (61); also Hall (2005), *Op.cit.*, p.64; also ‘John W. Brown, Artist’ in *MC*, Vol.5, No.56 (Oct. 1891), pp.463-4.
- ¹⁰⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Michael Kerney for sharing his researches into the O’Neill Bros.
- ¹⁰¹ I am grateful to Dr. Dennis Hadley for sharing his researches into Messrs. Powell & Sons’ cashbooks, held at the Archive of Art & Design, Victoria & Albert Museum (London).
- ¹⁰² Cottle, S.: *Sowerby: Gateshead Glass* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1986), pp.74-92; also (Anon) *Tyneside Industries, etc.* (c.1890), *Op.cit.*, p.171.
- ¹⁰³ E.g. ‘Trial Trip of the S.S. Montgomerieshire’ in *York Herald*, 14 Dec. 1880.
- ¹⁰⁴ J.G. Sowerby registered *interleaved glass* for patenting (6 Feb. 1880) No. 522, but protection was declined. Examples indicate that it was a thick mouth-blown cased sheet glass, with an irregular texture somewhat akin to the veining of marble; in addition, the outer casing was often opalescent.
- ¹⁰⁵ Conservation work undertaken Jan. 1999. I am grateful to the conservator, Chris Chesney (Iona Art Glass, Warkworth), for sharing his observations.
- ¹⁰⁶ M2 reveals a noticeable hiatus in payments regarding the glazing, between Nov. 1888 and April 1889, when J.W. Brown and the Gateshead Stained Glass Company were re-engaged. Ref. Chap. 3.3-5 for the alterations to the west window.
- ¹⁰⁷ (Anon) *Tyneside Industries, etc.* (c.1890), *Op.cit.*, p.171; also *MC*, Vol.5, No.56 (Oct. 1891), pp.463-4. I am grateful to Angela Goedicke and Dr. Dennis Hadley for information concerning J.W. Brown’s Australian sojourn.
- ¹⁰⁸ Jackson (1902), *Op.cit.*, p.366.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.370.
- ¹¹⁰ For Pownall Hall, see *AJ* (Nov. 1891), pp. 329-35 and *AJ* (Dec. 1891), pp. 353-7 (354 & 357); also *BA* (18 Dec. 1891), pp. 454, 488 + illus.; also Evans, S.: ‘The Century Guild connection’ in Archer, J.H.G. (ed.): *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 1985), pp.250-68; Evans, S.: ‘Century Guild Inventions’. The Century Guild of Artists at the International Inventions Exhibition, London 1885’, in *DAS*, No.21 (1997), pp.46-53; also Evans, S.: ‘Putting the Pieces Together. The Century Guild of Artists Room at the Royal Jubilee Exhibition, Manchester, 1887, and its work at Pownall Hall’, in *DAS*, No.31 (2007), pp.22-35.
- The Manchester-born Arthur Hardwick Marsh (1842-1909) was a close friend of the genre painter and illustrator, John Dawson Watson (1832-92), whose principal patron was the Manchester brewer Henry Boddington of Pownall Hall; see Hall (2005), *Op.cit.*, pp.226-7. Marsh’s design for *Ophelia* went through the Trade some years ago, mistakenly identified as by A. Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942), see *L’Art en Marge des Grands Movements*, L’Hôtel Drouot (Paris), Salle 12 (March 1974), p.10 (École Anglaise, cat. 2). My thanks to Peter Cormack for his assistance.
- ¹¹¹ *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6; *NDC* (13 Oct. 1888), p.5
- ¹¹² *NDJ* (17 Oct. 1888), p.5
- ¹¹³ M2, thirteen payments to Shirley & Co. (2 May 1887- (closing balance) 19 Nov. 1888) totalling £671-17-6. Particular items are also noted; thus (18 Jan. 1887) £24-2-0, ‘Altar Rail’; (28 Feb. 1888) £7-12-0, ‘Church Lamp’. Three further payments, 2 Jan. (£34-1-6), 18 Feb. (£9-7-6) and 4 Oct. (£8-5-0) were made during 1889, which possibly relate to the pulpit handrail and lectern, not installed at the time of the consecration. Other work undoubtedly followed in 1890-1, but the costs are so far unknown.
- ¹¹⁴ Jackson (1902), *Op.cit.*, p.366.
- ¹¹⁵ ‘St. George-in-the-East Re-Decoration’ in *BA* (4 Mar. 1887), p.172 + illus.
- ¹¹⁶ *AWG, Index of Guild Members details*. A.J. Shirley was elected a Guild member 5 April 1889.
- ¹¹⁷ *AC*, Second (1889) exhibition catalogue, p.263 (cat. 852); also *BA* (20 Dec. 1889), p.441 + illus.; also Jackson (1902), *Op.cit.*, p.370.

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- ¹¹⁸ Snell (2006), *Op.cit.*, pp.222-7. Henry Longden followed Sedding into the AWG, being elected in 1884, and became a stalwart of the Guild and the Arts and Crafts exhibitions.
- ¹¹⁹ *AC*, Second (1889) exhibition catalogue, p.262 (cat. 847 & 848a), electroliers designed by John Belcher and executed by Shirley & Co.
- ¹²⁰ *BA* (29 Jan.1892), p.81 and illus.; also *BA* (10 Oct. 1890), pp. 262-3 (263), light fittings for Buller's Wood, near Chislehurst (Kent). The large 'planetary' fitting, executed entirely in copper, was shown at the Third (1890) Arts and Crafts exhibition, where it formed a principal feature of the exhibition's central hall.
- ¹²¹ Jackson (1902), *Op.cit.*, p.367.
- ¹²² *AC*, Second (1889) exhibition catalogue, p.152 (cat. 226).
- ¹²³ *B*, Vol.47 (12 Oct. 1889), pp.253-5 (254).
- ¹²⁴ E.g. Gardner, J.S.: *Modern English Ironwork (1)*, in *Architecture*, Vol.1 (Feb.1896), pp.401-9: also Longden, H.: *Modern English Ironwork (2)*, in *Architecture*, Vol.1 (Feb.1896), pp.446-53.
- ¹²⁵ *AC*, Second (1889) exhibition catalogue, p.260 (cat. 837), described as 'executed by A.J. Shirley and 'pupil G. Neale'.
- ¹²⁶ The first entry (13 Oct. 1888) in M2, re. W. Macfarlane & Co., states simply 'Lamps from Glasgow', and is followed a week later (22 Oct. 1888) by 'Macfarlane Church Lamps'. There is a hiatus until July of the following year (i.e. during the landscaping of the 'church field'), when two lamp posts were purchased at £4-0-0 each (2 and 6 July 1889), and a final payment to 'W. Macfarlane' (23 Nov. 1889), totalling £43-0-6 overall.
- ¹²⁷ (Anon): *Macfarlane's Castings*, Illustrated catalogue, Walter Macfarlane & Co., Sixth edn. (Glasgow, 1882), p.456; lantern no. 206, lamp-pillar no. 93. I am grateful to Julie Barr (Archives Services, University of Glasgow) for her assistance.
- ¹²⁸ M2, folio 19, *Church Building Parish Hall a/c*, 7 Jan. 1888, A.J. Shirley (£8-3-0), the only payment to Shirley relating to the parochial hall; also *JCE* (20 April 1888), which refers to Mitchell having placed the lamp over the entrance to the hall.
- ¹²⁹ Ref. note 86 above.
- ¹³⁰ Vol.I, Chap.1-2.
- ¹³¹ Cobden-Sanderson, T.J.: *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London, 1905), pp.4-6. The 'artistic' bookbinder Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson joined the Art Workers' Guild in 1890, serving on its general committee, but resigned in 1908.
- ¹³² *Ibid.* pp.28-30.

3.2 ‘Many New Departures’:¹

The Religious and Artistic Programmes of St. George’s Jesmond

3.2-1 Introduction:

The consecration of St. George’s church by the Bishop of Newcastle, on Tuesday 16 October 1888, was naturally a cause for great celebration, and was followed by an octave of services at which prominent clerics – including the Archbishop and Dean of York, and Canon Gregory of St. Paul’s cathedral (London) – officiated as guest preachers. The pro-Establishment *Newcastle Daily Journal* ran a very full series of articles on the new church in advance of the ceremony and afterwards, and even its more radical sister paper, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* – less enamoured of the Established Church – could not fail to notice that this was a significant event in the cultural life of the region.² The guests were drawn from the directors and associates, political and financial, of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co, local clergy, neighbours and friends, including James Leathart (1820-95), the Pre-Raphaelite art collector and secretary of Newcastle’s School of Art. Interestingly, Lord Armstrong was himself absent, as had earlier been the case at the laying of the foundation stone. Whether this was because Armstrong disapproved, or was simply indifferent to the proceedings, it is difficult to tell, although he was certainly present in Newcastle on the day of the consecration.³

Nonetheless, the building which Bishop Wilberforce dedicated that October morning, and whose plans he had approved only some two years earlier,⁴ was not as we now see it [7.1-2, b8.26]. Above a certain height, the walls and ceilings were of bare plaster and oak, although the press reports gave little hint that the building was in any way unfinished. Indeed, the architectural linking of the high east window, reredos and marble altarpiece into a single towering composition, had perhaps a greater dramatic force than we see today, and as the *Newcastle Journal* commented:

... ornament is used with no niggard hand, but is concentrated and focussed in such parts that its value is not only preserved, but its effect considerably enhanced... The chancel, which is the full width of the nave, is a striking feature in a church which has many striking features. For wealth of rare material and fine workmanship this chancel far exceeds the chancels of other parish churches in the north of England.⁵

Moreover, Mr. Mitchell’s new church was found to be, not only admirably appointed, but also extraordinarily complete in all its requisite parts. Arguably, the later decorative additions amounted to an intensification, rather than a radical revision, of its salient features. Of its contemporaries, St. Augustine’s at Tynemouth (begun 1881), All Saints, Gosforth (begun 1885) [6.28-30] and St. Matthew’s (Summerhill), Newcastle (begun 1877) [6.25-7], would long

remain mere rumps of buildings, though all were consecrated ahead of St. George's Jesmond. Similarly, it would take several generations more for the Duke of Northumberland's recently completed church at Cullercoats (1882-4) [6.20-2] to be fitted-out to a commensurate standard.

It is perhaps a moot point whether Mitchell intended a direct challenge to the Duke's assumption of cultural leadership in the region. Not only do the Cullercoats and Jesmond buildings share the same dedication (and one that is relatively rare in the North-East), but they are of a similar scale, style and maximum seating capacity (850 sittings). Both churches were regarded as major contributions to the scheme of church extension on Tyneside, although they fell well outside the terms of the 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund',⁶ being built in advance of housing developments to serve relatively affluent middle-class districts.⁷ Erected to mark the inauguration of the new diocese, the Duke's church was estimated to have cost between twenty and twenty-one thousand pounds (exclusive of the site) at its consecration in December 1884.⁸ Mitchell's church was of much the same order, costing already 16,884-12-9 (£-s-d), but he was not done yet, the local press anticipating costs in excess of twenty thousand pounds.⁹ By the close of 1889, following the stencilling of the chancel ceilings, the installation of the high-level mosaics and alterations to the west window, the bill had risen to 25,435-3-5 (£-s-d), not counting work to the parochial hall [I.29], the erection of a vicarage [I.30], and the landscaping and enclosure of the 'church field'.¹⁰ Mitchell's expenditure to date was roughly equivalent to a single year's dividend income on his shareholdings.¹¹ Work on the church continued until the close of 1891, but the precise final costs were never publicly disclosed.¹² It was enough simply for Mitchell's largesse to be seen as on a par with aristocratic patronage.

The established social order in England was changing, and new men of relatively lowly birth were gaining the upper hand, men such as Armstrong and Mitchell, who could command a workforce of tens of thousands and the exchequers of nations. Considered purely in socio-political terms, Charles Mitchell's gift was a building of immense significance for the furtherance of the Established Church on Tyneside. As Bishop Wilberforce made clear at the reception that followed the service of consecration, 'Such a gift would tend to raise the whole scale of generosity in this northern part of England'.¹³ But it was more than this:

It was a magnificent building, and Mr. Mitchell must have seen the rising of that church with great interest and anxiety as to whether it would turn out to be as beautiful as the plans had indicated. He [the Bishop] ventured to think that the church had fulfilled the expectations of everyone who saw the original drawings (Applause). He could only say that his own expectations had been realised (Applause)...¹⁴

Although it was likely that a church of this scale and costliness would have been built in Jesmond, given the social standing of its leading residents, St. George's was nonetheless very different – both physically and stylistically – from any church yet seen or then building in the North-East. As was argued in the Introduction to this study,¹⁵ it is perhaps legitimate to inquire what, if anything, these differences were meant to convey in terms of specific meanings. What were the features that had so fulfilled Bishop Wilberforce's expectations, and did they have a contemporary relevance in the ecclesial context of Newcastle and the wider Church in England?

3.2-2 Architectural Form:

The plan-form and general character of Mitchell's church seems to have been set very early into the project, so that the surviving drawings record a constant process of refinement in the details, rather than any radical revision of the overall concept [**I.1-4, I.7-13**]. This observation raises the question as to how far T.R. Spence was the author of the general scheme. Mitchell was himself a trained draughtsman, and it seems that he was not above offering his own suggestions, as proved to be the case with the parochial hall.¹⁶ As was noted earlier in Chapter 2.2, scenographic considerations also required that the church be built as close to the boundary with Lord Armstrong's estate as the site would allow, so that the tower, planted at the south-eastern extremity of the church, could line up with the long straight approach of Osborne Road. Aside from these considerations, it seems reasonable to assume that Mitchell and/or Pennefather also had a number of models in mind for their new church.

Of the many possibilities, three churches appear to have been especially relevant as near to hand. One has already been mentioned – the 6th Duke of Northumberland's foundation on the coast at Cullercoats [**6.20-2**]. Although ostensibly commissioned as a memorial to the Duke's father, the new church was also intended to mark the creation of the diocese of Newcastle in 1878. However, delays in securing the necessary endowments meant that the new see was not formally inaugurated until 23 May 1882, so that plans for the church were put on hold, the foundation stone being ceremonially laid the day following Bishop Wilberforce's enthronement (3 August 1882) at Newcastle cathedral.¹⁷ In securing designs from the London-based (albeit Durham born) church specialist, John Loughborough Pearson, the Duke was very publicly insisting on his leading role as the principal aristocratic churchman and landowner in the region. Indeed, this was to be Pearson's only major mature work in his native North East, but for all that, it does not impress as a building especially responsive to regional concerns, the only concession to local sentiment being the engagement of the highly experienced firm of Messrs. Walter Scott & Co. (of Newcastle) as the general building contractor.¹⁸ St. George's Cullercoats is a masterly example of Pearson's highly individual version of Anglo-Norman thirteenth-century Gothic, eclectic in plan and composition [**6.20**], stone vaulted throughout, but otherwise strictly

archaeological in its detailing. Even so, such refinement of proportions and precision of execution was rarely, if ever, attained in the Middle Ages. As an exercise in the formal enclosure of space [6.22], it was peerless, but stylistically speaking, it was a dead end. Considered as a model church for the fledgling diocese, such an abstracted ideal was perhaps something of a false start.

There are obvious similarities of plan-form [6.20, 1.4], style and ambition between the Cullercoats and Jesmond churches, which does suggest that the one may have been built in emulation of the other. The differences are nevertheless equally telling, and not just in the contrast between a spire and an Italianate *campanile*. In dispensing with Pearson's high vaults, Spence's interior was enabled to rise to the full height of the open timber roof, whilst the more integrated plan fully exploited the building's rectangular footprint, with the subsidiary spaces disposed around the periphery, in a way that Pearson's sectionalised format at Cullercoats does not.¹⁹ Compared with the shadowy gloom of the vaulted aisles at Cullercoats [6.21], the wide-springing arcades at Jesmond (five bays compared to six) rise higher, and on more slender piers, enabling the aisles to read with the volume of the nave [7.1-2]. Spence's church undoubtedly lacks the complex architectural articulation of Pearson's masterpiece, but it makes up for this in the greater apparent scale and spaciousness of its interior, in a reversion to the mid-century ideal of the 'town church', enclosing a vast unencumbered space whose sublimity would conduce to worship.²⁰ Moreover, in terms of their respective architect's approach to the decorative arts, the two buildings could not be more unlike. Nothing is allowed to intrude on the classic balance of Cullercoats [6.22]; all must be subordinated to the architect's *paean* to the structural possibilities of stone. Pearson's church left little opportunity for further decorative enhancements, or for other artists to contribute in any meaningful way, whereas Jesmond's broad expanses of wall and ceiling cried out for decoration [7.2]. For the art-loving Mitchell, familiar with the frescoed churches of Italy and Russia, Cullercoats was perhaps not so appropriate a model for a modern church on Tyneside.

In this respect, a North Yorkshire church begun some twenty years earlier may have afforded a more constructive point of departure for Mitchell. St. Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough (1861-3) [6.1-2], was G.F. Bodley's only large church in the North-East of England, built for an uncompromisingly direct Anglo-Catholic patron to serve the rapidly expanding South Cliff district of Scarborough.²¹ Of perhaps greater significance from Mitchell's point of view, Scarborough was the first of Bodley's churches in which he attempted a unified decorative programme, designed and executed by his Pre-Raphaelite friends – William Morris, Philip Webb, Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown and Dante Gabriel Rossetti – including a comprehensive scheme of stained glass by Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner &

Co. As further enlarged by Bodley in 1879, St. Martin's is clearly much more of a cousin to Jesmond than Cullercoats. Both churches are provided with baptistery extensions opening off the west end through a low triple arcade, as well as three-light east windows set high in the chancel wall – closer to post-Tridentine Catholic principles than to English medieval precedent – below which an integral tripartite reredos negotiates the transition down onto the altarpiece and high altar [6.1, 8.26]. St Martin's was originally without a chancel screen of any kind, as has remained the case at Jesmond.²² Outwardly, they share a similar severity of architectural treatment; a stark, almost primitivist, rendition of massing and details culled from the Early and Middle-Pointed Gothic of northern France – what contemporary critics characterised as 'early French'.²³ Such severity had its advantages if one sought to engage modern artists in the service of the Church, as the architect J.J. Stevenson noted:

Dante Rossetti, when designing for a stained glass window in a church, once asked me if I thought the architect would be offended if he asked him to cut away the cusps, as he could make a better design for his picture if they were away. As Rossetti's picture was a more interesting work of art than the architect's regulation cusps, I said the architect would do well to remove them.²⁴

Spence is noticeably more severe in this respect than was Bodley at Scarborough, cusps appearing only in the tracery rose of the large west window at Jesmond, whose excessively wide lights presented ample opportunity for a dramatically pictorial work in stained glass [10.27]. Nor is this to suggest that the Jesmond church was in any way 'old-fashioned', a throw-back to a mid-Victorian mode long since repudiated by the leading church architects of the day, including Bodley himself. Rather, Mitchell and Spence learnt from buildings such as St. Martin's – or indeed from John Ruskin's description, in *The Stones of Venice* II (1852),²⁵ of the cathedral at Torcello – that absolute restraint in the architectural detailing could pay rich dividends in terms of art, through the husbanding of resources to more telling effect.

Writing in the *Ecclesiologist* in 1861, G. F. Bodley had urged architects to seek out the best modern painters for the decoration of their churches.²⁶ Nevertheless, he largely eschewed narrative mural cycles for his own buildings, preferring repetitive stencilled patterns modelled after those found in late-medieval textiles.²⁷ His subsequent abandonment of 'early French' muscularity, in favour of a revival of 'English' late-Gothic for modern Anglican church work, left even less room for individual expression on the part of Bodley's artists. Thus, whilst there are a large number of churches built in the North-East by Bodley's colleagues and disciples, many containing outstanding examples of craftsmanship, the cumulative effect is much the same from church to church, in the presentation of an ideal which effectively denies all but the architect a creative role. Examples of the more 'artistic' treatment of Gothic seen at Scarborough were comparatively rare in the region. One very likely known to Mitchell was the

large estate church begun c.1865-8 by the Liberal M.P. for Tynemouth (1863-85), Thomas Eustace Smith (1831-1903), on his Gosforth Park estate just north of Newcastle.

A second-generation Tyne shipbuilder and owner, Eustace Smith, and his wife Eustacia (née Martha Mary Dalrymple (1835-1919)),²⁸ made one of the more colourful couples on the London art-circuit of the late 1860s and 70s, and were patrons to a number of prominent Aesthetic Movement artists, including Frederic Leighton (1830-96), George Aitchison (1825-1910), Thomas Armstrong (1832-1911) and Walter Crane (1845-1915).²⁹ The architect of the Smiths' new church is not recorded, but may well have been R.J. Johnson of Newcastle.³⁰ Like his friend and colleague, G. F. Bodley, Johnson was intimate with the Morris circle at this time,³¹ and the Gosforth church was duly fitted-up with stained glass by the Morris 'Firm', their only large scheme in the region. The large three-light *Crucifixion* (1875) east window, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, is especially notable for its restrained 'Aesthetic' colour scheme – white against white, with highlights of ruby and blue – and decidedly Italianate manner (Botticelli and Michelangelo),³² although the church itself adopts the 'severe' style of Gothic fashionable in the late 1860s. However, the building was never completed or formally dedicated; much of the carving was merely blocked-in, whilst the projected spire remains a stump to this day. In 1885, the Smiths became disastrously embroiled in the political fall-out from the Dilke affair, Eustace Smith being pressured to resign his seat in order to safeguard the local Liberal Party Association. Smith and his family withdrew from public life for a time to self-imposed 'exile' in Spain.³³ Almost overnight, Charles Mitchell succeeded to the cultural leadership of the Tyne's shipbuilders.

Even so, the outward severity of Mitchell's new church must have seemed a little surprising in the Newcastle of the 1880s [1.4, 6.25, 6.28]. As we saw in Chapter 2.4-4, G.F. Bodley's brand of 'English' late-Gothic was eagerly adopted by Northern churchmen, keener to stress their membership of the national Church than celebrate their regional particularity. Thus the 'Perpendicular' Gothic work of architects such as R.J. Johnson and W.S. Hicks had begun to re-define the official image of the Established Church in the North-East, although, for purely historical reasons, thirteenth century 'Early English' better represented the region's medieval ecclesiastical monuments [6.16-7]. Johnson's three major church commissions of this period in Newcastle – St. Matthew's (Summerhill), All Saints (Gosforth), and the refitting of the choir of St. Nicholas' cathedral [8.2] – were all in 'English' late-Gothic, and either associated with, or financially supported by, close family friends of Swan and Mitchell, or their fellow managers and directors at Armstrong, Mitchell & Co.³⁴ However, for Somerset Pennefather, only just divesting himself of his formative Evangelicalism, 'English' late-Gothic may not have seemed the most natural of choices. The style was not yet the default position of Anglicanism. Much of

Johnson's and Hicks' work at this time was for congregations espousing a noticeably 'advanced' form of Anglo-Catholicism, as at St. Matthew's (Summerhill), and St. Cuthbert's, Melbourne Street (Newcastle).³⁵ Pennefather may well have been nervous of any taint of Ritualism. Thus, whilst St. George's is noticeably Anglo-Catholic in its planning – and is in this respect somewhat ahead of taste in the region – the 'manly' severity of its elevations signalled an absence of party affiliation, the perfect image of Anglican comprehensiveness.

The tower is a very different matter. From the very first, the dominating aspect of St. George's bell-tower provoked comment, as the *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, noted in August 1888: 'WHAT THE PEOPLE ARE SAYING... That St. George's, Jesmond, is going to be more tower than church'.³⁶ Commentators were also unanimous in noting its strikingly Italianate character [page iii]. Thus the *Newcastle Daily Journal* in January 1887: 'The architect in designing the tower has evidently been influenced by the style of the campaniles of North Italy; the lower part being treated in a simple manner, and the richer detail of shafts and mouldings concentrated in the deeply shadowed belfry windows, and in the double arcading of the crown' [7.6].³⁷ However, as the first set of presentation drawings makes clear [I.3-4], the initial inspiration – and one never wholly expunged in the final design – was more French than Italian, and particularly the parochial towers of Paris [6.13] and northern France [6.11-12], highly appropriate given the Mitchells' Francophile tastes in art. The same historical sources may also account for the general similarity of Spence's scheme to G.E. Street's designs for a colossal (but unexecuted) free-standing Record Tower attached to the Royal Courts of Justice (London). The latter was an especially admired feature of Street's 1866-7 competition proposals for the Law Courts, his last and greatest public building, the drawings for which were reproduced in the 1882 editions of the *Building News* (as a memorial tribute to the late architect).³⁸ However, by early 1886 and the second set of presentation drawings for St. George's, the concept of a plain 'shaft' topped by an open arcaded crown had been adopted [I.9-10]. In this Spence appears to have been following John Ruskin's strictures on towers in the first volume (Chap. XIX) of *The Stones of Venice* (1851), where Ruskin specifically cites the *campanile* of St. Mark's basilica as an exemplary model:

§ XIII. These two characters, then, are common to all noble towers, however otherwise different in purpose or feature – the first, that they rise from massive foundation to lighter summits, frowning with battlements perhaps, but yet evidently more pierced and thinner in wall than beneath, and in most ecclesiastical examples, divided into rich open work: the second, that whatever the form of the tower, it shall not appear to stand by help of buttresses.

§ XII. But, in all of them, this I believe to be a point of chief necessity – that they shall all seem to stand, and shall verily stand, in their own strength; not by help of buttresses nor artful balancings on this side and on that. Your noble tower must

need no help, must be sustained by no crutches, must give place to no suspicion of decrepitude.³⁹

Even so, the pencilled-in revisions on these drawings suggest that there was some indecision whether or not to retain some form of buttressing on the lower stage [I.9].⁴⁰ The final executed design is however Italianate only in terms of its silhouette and proportions, a matter of allusion rather than of direct quotation. Look beyond this, and its French origins are still apparent; the roof minimally hipped, the long lancet lights filled with Flamboyant tracery. As executed, the cap was built of stone, not the lead-covered timber roof of the contract drawings, and topped by a steel finial-cross sheathed in ornate copper work, some thirty feet tall (alas, not the cross we now see) [I.4].⁴¹

Which perhaps begs a question; why allude to Italian towers at all? The silhouette of the tower might be construed as signalling the connoisseurship of its patron, and the artistic character of the church; Renaissance Florence and Venice had long been regarded as paradigms of artistic achievement. However, the success of Armstrong, Mitchell & Co.'s recent Italian ventures suggests a more topical reference. As part of a more general re-armament of the nascent Italian navy, Armstrongs were contracted to build a branch armaments factory and naval shipyard at Pozzuoli (Naples) [III.6].⁴² The terms of the venture were highly controversial within the Italian political establishment, but it was nevertheless something of a pioneering over-seas experiment for Armstrongs, and is sometimes claimed as the harbinger of later twentieth century multi-national concerns. Construction work began at Pozzuoli in 1884, and the first launch took place in November 1888, although the factory site was not finally completed until 1892. The Pozzuoli project featured prominently on the company's display at Newcastle's Royal Jubilee exhibition (1887), where the Italian Royal Navy were the only representatives of a foreign power to be offered their own stand. As the *Newcastle Courant* reported:

Mr. H.F. Swan of Jesmond has been the means of the Italian Government sending for exhibition a very large number of models of ships, which are arranged in the north corridor, facing those of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. The collection embraces models of both old and modern work, and shows the wonderful advance which has been made in the ships of the Royal Navy of Italy in the past twenty years. Greater interest is given to the collection by the fact that it includes models of the principal small craft afloat at Venice in the 19th century; a Venetian bombarding vessel of the 17th century, Venetian galley of the 15th century; Venetian galleon of the 16th century, &c.⁴³

Moreover, the company had a previous connection with Venice itself, having installed in 1883-5 one of their largest hydraulic cranes (capable of lifting 160 ton armament) as part of the Italian Navy's modernisation of the *Arsenale*.⁴⁴ It is perhaps tempting to see the Venetian allusion at Jesmond as reflecting on the signal role of Armstrong's men in the restoration of

Italian naval power. And just as Venice had once been the greatest maritime power of the Mediterranean, so now Armstrongs would ensure Britain's pre-eminence as the naval power of the modern era. Whatever the precise intention behind the allusion, the eclectic cosmopolitanism of the Jesmond *campanile*, so different from anything else to be seen in the district, can have left few in any doubt as to the far-flung business and cultural interests of the men associated with Tyneside's largest industrial enterprise.

3.2-3 The Grammar of a Style:

In the introductory chapter of this study, it was observed that the decoration of T.R. Spence's church has generally been found to be more praiseworthy than the architectural setting. However, it is surely a fundamental mistake to consider the applied decoration at St. George's divorced from the building. As Charles Mitchell remarked to his guests after the consecration service:

As many of them [the audience] would observe, the elements in St. George's Church were treated considerably different [sic] to what was seen in everyday churches, and as he heard a good authority say, Mr. Spence had the courage of his convictions and had carried them out regardless of whatever opinions might be expressed (Applause). He thought Mr. Spence had succeeded in the artistic treatment of details...⁴⁵

At this stage in the project, the walls and ceilings were starkly bare, although the stained glass and most of the furnishings were in place. Even so, Mitchell seems to imply by the phrase 'the artistic treatment of details' that there was something more that he wished his guests to appreciate. John Ruskin had once argued that Venice's buildings could be read, 'as we would read Milton or Dante', finding 'the same kind of delight out of the stones as out of the stanzas... [and] that the merit of architectural, as of every other art, consists in its saying new and different things'.⁴⁶ Mitchell seems to have expected as much of his audience. Perhaps he flattered them. Specific points of interest in the church were certainly highlighted in local press reports, but their wider significance was often missed; sometimes the specific allusion was unfamiliar or peculiarly recondite. The significance of the so-called 'clog calendar' symbols in the windows of the south aisle seems to have escaped many in the congregation [10.18], although the means for their 'decoding' was readily to hand (section 3.2-6 below). In other cases, Pennefather's commitment to Anglican comprehensiveness – 'without the occurrence of anything to cause regret on either side' – seems to have required that a more 'traditional' High Church iconography be 'smuggled in', as it were, accessible only to those who cared to know. In this respect, the religious iconography of St. George's can seem peculiarly evasive.

Some details clearly had a topical significance. For example, the pairings of roses and thistles – or sometimes of thistles and oak – employed as a leitmotif in the applied decoration

[7.5, 7.15-7, I.29i], surely marked the building out as a thank-offering on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee. Other details seem to have reflected Mitchell's Scottish origins, e.g. the cap details of the chancel arch corbels [7.16-7], or the skew-puts to the gable extension (1889) on the parochial hall [I.29h]. The Scots Renaissance detailing on the exterior of the earlier picture gallery at Jesmond Towers is in much the same spirit. These allusions were unusually prescient and erudite, given that the Arts and Crafts revival of authentic Scots forms was only then in its infancy.⁴⁷ A more fundamental and evidently intentional feature of the building was noted by the *Newcastle Daily Journal*, in their report on the foundation laying ceremony: 'The general architectural character of the church will be Early Pointed, with developments in parts to the Geometric and Decorated periods, the latter applying more especially to the details of the woodwork and of the upper part of the tower'.⁴⁸ In other words, the detailing of St. George's evolves progressively, according to position and usage, contrary to the normal expectation that a building and its fittings should be designed together in a uniform style. The pattern of historical development seen in pre-modern buildings – in which the furnishings and ornamental additions are generally of a later period than the host building itself – is here raised to a formal principle in Spence's design. Thus the interior detailing of the church generally employs more 'refined' moulding profiles – in various combinations of wave mouldings and deep three-quarter hollows, framed by ogee rolls with fillets [7.8, 7.18-22] – than the severe First Pointed Gothic of the exterior might lead one to expect. Around the principal doors and windows, orders of mouldings are carried down the splays, without the interruption of capitals, to terminate at the floor or die into a base course [7.8a] – again, all signs of 'lateness' of style. Similarly, plain moulded capitals and bases (again with ogee profiles) are used throughout the church with few exceptions [7.9-15], but the sections are progressively developed in proportion to their location and scale, in a manner analogous to late-medieval systems of graduated orders.⁴⁹

Although Spence's detailing suggests a reliance on late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth century English models, the overall effect is nonetheless remarkably un-English. Rather, the tall drum piers of the principal arcades, with their high pedestal bases and flat soffits to the arches, seem to evoke the later-medieval churches of northern France and the Low Countries, an influence we have already noted in the design of the tower. A Franco-Flemish influence is particularly noticeable in the fittings, e.g. the altarpiece, pulpit and choir stalls, climaxing in the Renaissance-style figure work of the large terminal windows. Like some of the great Flamboyant churches on the Continent, e.g. the pilgrimage church of Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, Lorraine (1514-41) [6.14-5], there is at St. George's a nicely judged contrast between an outward severity of form and an inward complexity of style. Thus with respect to the contemporary discourse explored in chapter 2.3, Spence's church exhibits, at the level of the

detailing and furnishings, as great a degree of ‘refinement’ as any contemporary building by Bodley or Johnson.

St. George’s is however much more than an eclectic compendium of period details culled from England and Scotland, Belgium or France, as if the selection alone was a sufficient marker of novelty. Although the historical exemplars for many of the details are perfectly clear, e.g. in the design of the capitals,⁵⁰ Spence nevertheless strongly impresses his own artistic personality upon his models, in a process of creative reinterpretation, imparting a delicately nervy attenuation[7.12-3], and at times, a weirdly organic quality [7.15-7]. The spade-like heads of the windows lighting the ringing chamber of the tower are a case in point [7.7], being a modern ‘development’ of thirteenth-century lancets, and anticipating English ‘New Art’ designs of a decade or so later by e.g. C.F.A. Voysey (1857-1941) and W.J. Neatby (1860-1910). As such, the architectural setting prepares for the organic linearity of the (later) applied decoration [Pl.2], which reveals itself as the final de-materialisation (or spiritualisation?) of the building’s underlying Gothic style. In Spence’s hands, Gothic comes very much alive as a modern system of design capable of both the severest logic and the wildest fantasy – ‘development’ is here wedded to ‘refinement’. And this is surely what Charles Mitchell meant when he invited his guests to consider the ‘artistic treatment of details’ at St. George’s.

3.2-4 Towards a ‘Free-style’ Gothic:

The above suggests a comparison with the work of John Dando Sedding, and his approach to Gothic as a modern ‘living’ style, combining the twin concepts of ‘refinement’ with ‘development’.⁵¹ Spence was certainly known to Sedding by the latter half of 1882, when the Newcastle artist supplied tiles, designed and painted by himself, for the Children’s Sick Hospital, Finsbury (London), a job which Sedding had taken over from James Brooks (1825-1901).⁵² Quite what their relations were in the interim is uncertain, although the *British Architect* consistently praised the work of The Gateshead Stained Glass Company at much the same time as Sedding was contributing articles advocating a modern Gothic.⁵³ With Spence’s move to London late in 1885, he came fully within Sedding’s orbit, as their offices were only streets apart in the West End. A few months later, in January 1886, Spence was elected to the Art Workers’ Guild, during Sedding’s term as Master of the Guild, although one should not discount the good offices of Charles William Mitchell and the sculptor George Simonds (as first Master of the Guild).⁵⁴ If the Mitchells had encouraged Spence to look to Sedding as the most original church architect of his day, then their protégé learnt his lessons very quickly. The latter’s influence can be detected in what would appear to be the first scheme for the Jesmond church – that which includes the Flamboyant French Gothic tower – and particularly in the highly mannered composition of the eastern gable [I.4]. Drawn up somewhere around the close

of 1885, the design presents an ill-digested assortment of some of Sedding's favourite motifs, e.g. the split cusps ornamenting the gable, and the statuary niche perched precariously on the window tip below.⁵⁵ However, by the time of the fully worked-up proposals, perhaps only a few months later, the borrowed mannerisms had been banished altogether. Sedding's approach to Gothic, as a modern artist's creative engagement with a (potentially) still living tradition, had however sunk more deeply and more productively into the very bones of the design.

Given the scale and ambition of the commission, and that St. George's was its architect's first church, the speed with which Spence so successfully assimilated Sedding's thinking is quite astonishing. At times, the work of the two architects can appear remarkably close, as a comparison between Spence's fittings at Jesmond with those Sedding designed for the church of the Holy Trinity (Sloane Street) [Pl.7, 8.13, 6.7-8], Chelsea, London (designed 1887; built 1888-90), makes clear. Not only do we see the same stylistic freedom coupled with a novel 'organic' plasticity, but work by professional artists is similarly integrated with that of artisan-craftsmen.⁵⁶ In terms of the overall decorative scheme, St. George's seems to offer a glimpse of what might have been achieved at Holy Trinity, had its architect lived long enough.⁵⁷ Was Spence therefore merely a follower of Sedding, or was he also an originator of ideas that had a reciprocal influence on his older colleague? The question is perhaps best resolved by considering the ornamental frontispiece of the parochial hall at Jesmond [L.29i], a detail which Hamilton Jackson (1903) admired as 'treated in an original way'.⁵⁸ Spence's frontispiece offers – albeit in miniature form – a foretaste of developments in 'Free-style' Gothic that would culminate, at the close of the century, in the creation of an entirely original, modern 'school' of English Gothic architecture. During the later 1880s, both Norman Shaw and Dando Sedding had begun to articulate a new vision for the large suburban town church, one impressing more by lateral spaciousness rather than height, and lit, not by lofty clerestories, but with vast terminal windows enclosing extravagantly flowing traceries.⁵⁹ Shaw's All Saints, Leek, Staffordshire (1885-7),⁶⁰ and Sedding's Holy Trinity, Chelsea, were the first significant fruits of this new line of thinking. However, it was in Sedding's designs for his last significant church, St. Peter's, Ealing, London (1889-91) [6.10] that the future was to be most clearly mapped out.⁶¹ Here Sedding presented a lean and skeletal vision of Gothic, seemingly free of all historic precedents, and which in the hands of his turn-of-the-century imitators has been likened to Continental Art Nouveau.⁶² The huge, deeply recessed multi-light window set between pylons, with pairs of buttresses strutted out in front,⁶³ became an especially admired and much imitated feature.⁶⁴ Stranger perhaps was the line of piers breaking through the roof and bound together by a system of bridges or flattened flying buttresses (although this feature did have a severely practical function, as snow-catchers on the long cat-slide slope of the roof). The logic of this structural system is what we see in embryo on the Jesmond frontispiece, a detail set in place by

the close of 1887. Nevertheless, even if Spence had originated the idea – as the decoration of a ventilation grille – it was Sedding who would give it three-dimensional expression as solid architecture. That Spence and Sedding were exploring a similar set of motifs around the same time seems abundantly clear, but although St. George's Jesmond is certainly impressive as a work of architecture, at heart its architect was, and always would remain, an ornamentist.

3.2-5 The Anglican *via media*:

Why then, when Sir William Armstrong and Andrew Noble had employed the fashionable Norman Shaw for their houses, did not Charles Mitchell also engage Shaw's friend and colleague for his new church? Quite possibly, Mitchell wished to exercise a degree of control that an architect of more established reputation might well have resented. This had a great deal to do with Mitchell's corporate image, and the furtherance of a visual continuum – much of it the work of a single architect-designer – that embraced his business, art patronage and estate works. In this, Charles Mitchell was certainly conscious of creating something new. St. George's marked the culmination, the final consecration, of a style of decoration that had originated in the cabin interiors of Mitchell & Co. ships. The style had subsequently been employed on his mansion, in a process that mirrored exactly John Ruskin's precepts, in *The Stones of Venice*, on the progressive habituation of style change:

In this architecture let us henceforward build, alike the church, the palace, and the cottage, but chiefly let us use it for our civil and domestic buildings. These once ennobled, our ecclesiastical work will be exalted together with them: but churches are not the proper scenes for experiments in untried architecture, nor for exhibitions of unaccustomed beauty. It is certain that we must often fail before we can again build natural and noble Gothic: let not our temples be the scenes of our failures...⁶⁵

However, it was Sedding's ultramontane Anglo-Catholic views that almost certainly ruled him out of consideration, and no matter his standing as the most original ecclesiastical architect of his generation. Rather, Mitchell and Spence took from Sedding just what they needed, and no more. That the commission was hedged about with doctrinal sensitivities is clear from the form of the building and its iconography. And for those with eyes to see, the new church very pointedly signalled the Anglican orthodoxy of its congregation.

This was stridently proclaimed in the most prominent view of the church [I.27, 1.4]. So far as we can tell, the low baptistery extension at St. George's was a first for an Anglican church on Tyneside [1.5, 1.7]. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a fashion had arisen amongst Anglo-Catholic parishes for dedicated baptismal spaces, often taking the form of low single-storey extensions, as at St Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough (q.v.) and St. Hilda's, Whitby

(R.J. Johnson, 1884-5).⁶⁶ This fashion is perhaps in need of further investigation, if only to complement the extensive literature that exists on the liturgical ordering of chancels. The early Christian and more recent Italian (Roman Catholic) practice of detached or semi-detached baptisteries had no precedent in England's medieval or post-Reformation churches, the traditional Anglican setting for the font being near to the principal entrance (baptism signifying admission to the Body of Christ, i.e. the Church).⁶⁷ As late as 1897, the architect J.T. Micklethwaite – on the more antiquarian and Anglicising wing of the High Church movement – complained that 'the placing of [the font]... in a secluded corner called a baptistery is foreign and of very recent introduction amongst us'.⁶⁸ The development may well have been motivated by functional considerations: at the time, services of baptism in the Church of England were conducted apart from the principal acts of worship, so that a separately dedicated space made perfect sense. Some of the new Anglican type of baptisteries could be remarkably elaborate affairs, as at St. John the Evangelist, Bacup (Lancs.). Designed in 1882-3 by the Manchester practice of J.M. and H. Taylor, the large hexagonal baptistery – with its own high conical roof somewhat akin to a chapter house – is entered via processional doorways from a spacious narthex communicating directly with the main body of the church and the principal entrance.⁶⁹ Opinion in the Anglican Communion regarding the rite of baptism had also become seriously polarised: Evangelicals denied that the sacrament was wholly efficacious in itself, Tractarians regarded such teaching as tantamount to a denial of the Catholic nature of the Established Church. The split was highlighted in the Gorham Judgement of 1850, which was widely believed by Anglo-Catholics to have undermined the historically contrived understanding of the Church of England as both Reformed and Catholic.⁷⁰ Seen in this context, the dedicated provision and/or external expression of a baptistery was a deeply polemical gesture, affirming a belief in the Catholic doctrine of 'baptismal regeneration', and therefore of the Church of England as a fully-fledged member of the universal Church. In the ecclesial context of Jesmond, Mitchell and Pennefather had thrown down a gauntlet before the sectarian interests of Jesmond Parish Church.⁷¹

The baptistery was not the only liturgical innovation at St. George's. However, the attempt to establish a side altar in the Morning chapel would inadvertently set back similar developments in the diocese of Newcastle by almost a generation. The chapel, screened off from the choir on the north [I.12], became the subject of a Consistory Court, held at St. George's in May and June of 1889. The novelty of the proceedings, as one of the first court hearings to be held in the new diocese, ensured a wide degree of interest in the case.⁷² Neither of the churchwardens, nor Charles Mitchell (who was unwell), was able to attend the hearing, but it is clear from cuttings pasted into Mitchell's scrapbook that he had thoroughly briefed himself on recent precedents for what was proposed.⁷³ The application sought to provide a more

convenient space (than the chancel) for the small numbers of worshippers attending daily services and early celebration of Holy Communion on Sundays and other feast days, and to erect a side altar and reredos in the chapel, as Canon Pennefather explained, ‘in order to complete the original design of the Church’.⁷⁴ This is in itself an interesting statement, as the chapel was provided with its own external access on the estate (north) side of the church, which suggests that it was primarily intended for members of the patron’s families.

The existing plans show the chapel as laid out for Morning Prayer [1.12a], with a single pew along the north wall, and without any indication of an altar. Preparations for an additional altar appear nevertheless to have been well in hand before the hearing. A set of painted and gesso panels by T.R. Spence, now let into the wainscoting of the north aisle, would seem to derive from the altar table itself, whilst the western screen was also adapted, swapping a doorway on the south for a gate on the north [I.18].⁷⁵ This suggests that the altar was intended to be placed against the north wall of the chapel, thus allowing the celebrant to enter and leave without passing through the body of worshippers (the pew having been relocated). To Pennefather’s surprise, the Court judged that the application be refused on a technicality, on the grounds that the chapel was not structurally distinct from the body of the church, and Anglican Canon Law requiring therefore that there be only one Holy table in the building. The parish maintained that this was ‘at variance with those [rulings] given by Chancellors in other Dioceses, under exactly similar circumstances’, but acquiesced nonetheless.⁷⁶ The case should not be taken as implying anything other than the strictest Prayer Book observance (i.e. Tractarianism) by some (at least) of St. George’s congregation. However, had the application been allowed, the additional altar would certainly have been a first for a parish church in the diocese of Newcastle, at least outside of the cathedral.⁷⁷ As it was, this particular innovation was nipped in the bud, and it would not be until 1907 that a parochial side altar received a formal license in the diocese.⁷⁸

At this stage in his career, this was probably about as far as Pennefather himself would countenance the more recent innovations in Anglican ritual. His comprehensive strategy required nevertheless that he embrace his more stridently Anglo-Catholic parishioners, whilst not risking to offend those of less ‘advanced’ opinion. How this was accomplished is perhaps best seen in the design and layout of the sanctuary. The dazzling combination of mosaics, tiles, stencilling, marbles and stained glass would transform the chancel at St. George’s into one of the most sustainedly decorated spaces of all our northern churches, and one that has few peers elsewhere. As these decorative works will be considered later, the discussion will here concentrate on the east wall and sanctuary as they were usable at the time of the church’s consecration.

Whether an altarpiece was ever intended from the first is not at all clear. Neither of the sets of presentation drawings suggests anything more than a ‘Table’ [1.1-4, 1.7-10], although the linkage of the triplet east window with a blind arcade below is there from the start. In the second set of presentation drawings, the dado string-courses are carried unbroken across the east wall, implying the continuation of the tile frieze as a retable over the altar [1.10b]. Even so, a comparison of all the surviving drawings reveals a fair amount of indecision regarding the overall layout, e.g. the setting out of the sanctuary steps, the placing of the *sedilia* and credence, or whether or not there should be a *piscina* [1.14-15].⁷⁹ The largest of the contract drawings, dating probably to the last quarter of 1886, is our first and only indication of the advent of the altarpiece [1.20].⁸⁰ This sheet may have been drawn up for the use of the ornamental mason (Robert Beall) and/or the marblers (Messrs. Emley & Sons), as it lacks any reference to the decorative scheme or glazing, but includes a number of annotations for separate detail drawings (now lost) with respect to the altarpiece and reredos. Apart from some slight differences in the architectural detailing, the drawing is as executed; the east window, blind arcade (reredos) and altarpiece (retable, gradine and the altar proper) below are all now conceived together as one single vertiginous floor-to-ceiling composition [1.20b]. As early photographs reveal, the ensemble must have presented an extraordinarily dramatic sight, an effect somewhat weakened by the later mosaics [8.26].

Newcastle’s Royal Jubilee Exhibition opened on Wednesday 11 May 1887. Here, the public of Tyneside got their first intimation of the scale and artistic ambition of the new church rising over towards Jesmond. The altarpiece was shown alongside the pulpit on Messrs. Emley & Sons’ stand, and designs for the stained glass were included in the exhibition’s Fine Art section.⁸¹ In addition, Charles Mitchell had loaned the church organ (by Messrs. T.C. Lewis & Co. of London) for the concert arena, ahead of its installation in St. George’s. Interestingly, reviews of the exhibition passed over the more controversial aspects of the altarpiece [8.27], although the artistry of the workmanship in Pavonazza marble was widely praised:

The section of the East Court stand which will attract the most attention is that in which are fixed the altar, reredos, and a section of the steps and flooring of the sacrum [sic], all in beautiful marble, for St. George’s Church, Jesmond... The altar is executed in Pavonazza marble, which has been very carefully selected and its colours, by delicate gradations of yellow and rosy tones, melt into grey-blue markings.⁸²

Protestant tradition in the Anglican Communion had long favoured wooden communion tables. During the 1830s and 40s, a number of Tractarian clergymen had attempted a re-introduction of solid stone altars, on the early Christian or medieval pattern, but this had been thwarted by a judgement in the Court of Arches (1845), and subsequently confirmed by a ruling

in Privy Council (1857). Thereafter, as Geoffrey Brandwood (2000) has related, ‘stone altars got a bad press and their party associations meant they appeared but rarely and always in High Church circumstances’.⁸³ The two legal rulings were widely misunderstood as an outright ban on stone altars. However, it was not the material, but their fixity which had been declared contrary to the Anglican Canons.⁸⁴ Except for its ornamentation, both the scale (16 feet 11 inches by 9 feet 5 inches) and form of the Jesmond altarpiece followed Catholic Counter-Reformation (i.e. Italian Baroque) fashion.⁸⁵ If its size and materials alone ensured its immovability (the *mensa* alone is 119 inches long by 25 inches deep, 34 inches if the *gradine* is included), the altarpiece was also evidently designed to be fixed against a wall.⁸⁶ That Bishop Wilberforce appears not to have objected suggests either that he was assured of Pennefather’s orthodoxy and/or loyalty, or that he was mindful not to publicly antagonise – and so early in his episcopate – such a powerful group of churchmen as Charles Mitchell, Henry Swan or Andrew Noble.⁸⁷

The *Romanitas* of Spence’s altarpiece was perhaps less a matter of doctrine than of aesthetics, and of a kind with the Italianate *campanile* and mosaic floors. Pennefather was no Romanist, and as contemporary photographs show, the ornaments of the altar were consistent with moderately High Church Anglican practice [1.9] – a cross (not a crucifix), two candlesticks and a pair of flower vases; the altar itself was never vested with a frontal.⁸⁸ However, the altarpiece was clearly more than a ‘pretty thing, signifying nothing’, as one modern Ecclesiologist has suggested to the author.⁸⁹ It was also markedly different from the carved and painted wooden polyptychs of northern European derivation then coming into vogue with High Church architects and patrons [6.6, 6.34]. Instead of tiers of figure carving or painted scenes, the piece relies on an abstracted symbolism of geometrical traceries and foliate ornament [8.28-31], in a development of the Flamboyant Gothic employed for the other fittings, but organised somewhat after the fashion of early-medieval retables. A *vesica piscis* forms the centrepiece of the composition [8.31], framing an eight-lobed tracery rose inscribed within a square, denoting the perfection and divinity of Christ. The traditional sarcophagical (chest) form of the altar itself evokes His death and burial, whilst its very substance, *pavonazza* marble, is a token of Our Lord’s Resurrection – from the Italian *pavone* (peacock), the ancient emblem of immortality adopted by pagan Antiquity and the first Christians alike. The altarpiece is, moreover, a supremely functional liturgical object. Its footpace is sufficient on all sides (30 inches) to allow ‘north end’ celebration, as was still favoured by many Victorian Evangelicals,⁹⁰ whilst also enabling the highest developments in Anglo-Catholic ritual. Seen from the body of the church, its solitary whiteness highlighted the actions of the celebrant and his assistants; similarly, the face of the *gradine* was left starkly blank, the better to silhouette the vessels on the *mensa*. The formal arrangement of the altarpiece also lays particular stress on two key liturgical actions,

namely the consecration and the elevation of the Eucharistic elements [8.32]. The former action takes place on the *mensa*, at the very centre of the composition. When the elements are subsequently displayed aloft by the celebrant, they become visually overlaid before the altar cross standing on the *gradine*, and symbolically haloed by the *vesica piscis* of the retable behind. Finally, the physical linking of the altarpiece, reredos and east window implies a larger, over-riding narrative, in which the Passion, Nativity and Second Coming of Christ are continually manifested through the administration of the sacraments [8.26].

Considered altogether, the ensemble is remarkable both for its skilful presentation of alternative doctrinal positions, and for the use of a hidden symbolism, accessible only to the initiated. This double-edged quality may appear somewhat equivocal or even temporizing, but it surely speaks of a particular understanding of the Anglican *via media*: not as a narrow straight between competing parties, but as a broad accommodating stream. This was not only Pennefather's faith position, as is clear from his writings in the St. George's parish magazine, but, as we saw in chapter 2.4-3, it was also the declared policy of his diocesan.⁹¹ As such, St. George's presented, neither an old-fashioned Tractarianism, nor a watered-down version of contemporary Anglo-Catholic practice, but a re-imagining of the Anglican middle-ground, inclusive and tolerant, yet visually distinct, contemporary and vital – a fresh paradigm for church building and church art appropriate to a modern diocese.

3.2-6 Of Clog Calendars:

Understood in this light, some of the idiosyncrasies of the iconographic programme at St. George's make much more sense. This applies more particularly to the mosaic and stained glass cycles, which will receive a fuller consideration in the concluding chapter of this study. Here, it remains to discuss one of the more abstruse aspects of the programme, and one in which the patrons of St. George's made a potentially controversial claim.

In the windows of the south aisle are a series of so-called 'clog calendar' symbols, amongst the most enigmatic features of this church, unique to St. George's and indeed in the medium of stained glass [10.11-12, 10.18]. There are two questions to be addressed here; the source of the symbols, and their purpose in the context of St. George's. They were evidently meant to be noticed and understood, as the *Newcastle Daily Journal* duly recorded 'the calendar of the saints from the almanack preserved in the Bodleian [sic] Library' depicted in the 'painted glass' of the aisle windows.⁹² Despite this lead, it was to be another seventeen years before the connection with the Bodleian Library was chanced upon again, during a visit made to Oxford by Rev. Alfred Boot (1855-1937), Somerset Pennefather's successor as vicar of St. George's. Boot's account of his discovery, written up in the parish magazine, strongly implies that his

congregation had no more idea of the purpose of the calendar depicted in their church windows than had the *Journal's* correspondent in 1888.⁹³ However, Boot did make one crucial connection, although its significance eluded him. Not only did the symbols derive from a clog almanac preserved at the Bodleian, but the same clog almanac had been used as the basis for a well-known Tractarian publication, *The Calendar of the Prayer Book Illustrated*, by John Henry Parker (1806-84), first issued at Oxford in 1864 (and continuously in print until the outbreak of the First World War) [10.17].⁹⁴

The English folk tradition of clog almanacs was first described at length by Robert Plot (1640-96), in his *The Natural History of Stafford-Shire*, published at Oxford in 1686. Plot asserted that many of the surviving examples were North country in origin, and presumably introduced to this country by Norse or Danish invaders, by analogy with Scandinavian *Rimstocks* or *Primstaves*.⁹⁵ The 'clogs' usually took the form of a long square prism of wood, with a handle at one end from which they could be suspended for domestic use. Of those Plot described as still in use in Staffordshire, the larger examples were hung next the mantelpiece for the use of the whole family. A series of smaller and larger notches counted off the days and weeks of the year along the sharp edges, three months to each, with the immovable feasts and saints' days of the Church marked by mnemonic characters or devices. Plot illustrated an especially elaborate example held by the Ashmolean Museum,⁹⁶ but it was another Oxford example, then in the collections of the Bodleian, which formed the basis of the devotional calendar printed in Parker's 1864 volume [10.19].⁹⁷ Although Parker gave no very good reason for his fastening on the Bodleian piece, his general intent was clear:

It is a very curious fact... and one hitherto quite unnoticed, that these Saints' days, now often considered as badges of Romanism, continued to retain their stations in our popular Protestant English almanacks until the alteration of the style [of calendar] in 1752, when they were discontinued. Poor Robin's Almanack [c.1663-1775] affords much matter for consideration. He shews that the tradition respecting the appropriation of the days to particular Saints was considered by the common people as eminently *Protestant*, that is to say, as a part and parcel of the Church of England; and that an almanack without saints for every day was nought.⁹⁸

In other words, the almanacs were ammunition in the Tractarian campaign against the exclusively Protestant character of contemporary Anglicanism, and provided additional confirmation of the historical continuity of Catholic popular feeling in England.

The Jesmond 'calendar' certainly adds an interesting vernacular and (supposedly) northern touch to this most urbane of church buildings,⁹⁹ perhaps in tribute to Mitchell's local art patronage. As we have already noted, Mitchell was a patron of the artists Ralph Hedley and

Joseph Crawhall, former colleagues of Spence and both ardent folklorists. However, this cannot have been the primary purpose of its representation here. If the peculiarity of the ‘calendar’ were not enough, its setting out in the windows is also a little odd. The symbols were taken verbatim from Parker’s calendar, as adapted to Prayer Book usage, rather than from the actual Bodleian clog [10.18-19]. Even so, a certain familiarity with the round of the church year is required to decode its progress, as the particular feast days are identified only by a set of initials (omitted in Parker’s version) placed against each pictogram. Moreover, there is no day or week count, and the sequence terminates short of six symbols, i.e. just before the feasts of Advent. Taken together, this suggests that the ‘calendar’ is more notional than real, the ‘sign’ of a calendar, in which what is ‘signified’ has to be supplied by the onlooker.

This makes perfect sense within the overall context of this particular set of seven windows. Each follows the same basic design, loosely based on the medieval iconography of the ‘Jesse Tree’, twining stems of foliage enclosing single figures of patriarchs, prophets or kings, symbolising the prophetic and lineal ancestry of Christ [10.13-5]. Although the figures are mostly generic, Adam (as the gardener in Eden) [10.11] and Isaiah (cradling a lamb) [10.14] are clearly identifiable by their attributes. The latter seems especially significant, as the central figure of the sequence, and in view of the famous ‘suffering servant’ prophecy of Isaiah 53: ‘He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief: ... he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.’¹⁰⁰ The allusion is further reinforced by framing the figure of the prophet between a crowned cross and its Old Testament type, a serpent raised over the earth (i.e. the ‘brazen serpent’ of Leviticus 21.5-9). At the head of each of the windows is seen a diminutive depiction of the ‘Pelican in her Piety’, this last a familiar image of Christ-like sacrifice derived from the medieval bestiary [10.13]. Angels flank several of the other figures, bearing a text from Revelations 7.3 (and linking therefore with the scene of final Resurrection in the west window), ‘...Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees’; the viewer must supply the response from their own knowledge of the text: ‘till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads’. A plea, in other words, for the continuance of creation until the mission of the Church – to preach and baptise in the name of Christ – has been completed. The ‘calendar’ takes its place therefore within a rich tapestry of visual and textual allusion, emblematic of a wider discipline of devotional reading and prayer – appropriate to this, the Epistle (lectern) side of the church – and which has its end in Christ.

This was abstruse stuff, and as circumstances subsequently proved, altogether too subtle for most of the St. George’s congregation. As with the calendar, the design of the windows presents only a notional version of several traditional High Church iconographies combined in

new and unfamiliar ways, whilst leaving the onlooker to expand the visual and textual references for themselves. There is nothing here to which a person of more conventional or Evangelical sympathies might take exception; the figures are unnamed, the devotion to the saints implied by the calendar is understated, the ancient Marian implications of the 'Jesse Tree' iconography sidestepped. At the same time, there is much to which a High Churchman could respond. All this was wholly in line with Canon Pennefather's view of Anglican comprehensiveness. More importantly, the pointed reference to Parker's *Calendar of the Prayer Book* – at eye level, where it would be most easily noticed – laid particular stress on the moderate High Churchmanship and orthodoxy of St. George's, as representative of the mainstream tradition in the Church of England.

3.2-7 The *Traditio Legis*:

In its report on the foundation laying ceremony, the *Newcastle Daily Journal* noted that the spaces of the reredos were 'to be filled in with wall paintings of single life size figures'.¹⁰¹ Quite when the decision was taken to adopt mosaic instead is unclear. Three figures in Messrs. Rust & Co.'s patent 'vitreous' colours were installed in time for the consecration (Rust & Co. having already been engaged for the mosaic floors),¹⁰² when the *Newcastle Daily Journal* also reported that plans were in hand for the decoration of the upper walls of the chancel [10.1].¹⁰³ As with the figure-work in the stained glass, the mosaics were entrusted to a designer more experienced than Spence in life-drawing, in this case the patron's son, the artist Charles William Mitchell.¹⁰⁴ The younger Mitchell had already won his spurs at the 1885 Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, where his large *Hypatia* was received with considerable acclaim [2.7].¹⁰⁵ This was perhaps an unlikely debut for an artist shortly to be engaged on the decoration of his father's church. In what was otherwise a relatively lean year for the Grosvenor, the painting astonished onlookers as the first fully competent female nude in the French academic manner to be painted at the scale of life by a native English artist.¹⁰⁶ *Hypatia* was also a shocking picture.¹⁰⁷ Mitchell had chosen to depict the climactic scene of Charles Kingsley's (1819-75) historical novel *Hypatia; or Old Foes with New Faces* (1852-3), set in fifth century Alexandria: the Grosvenor's catalogue quoted the relevant excerpts for good measure.¹⁰⁸ The pagan philosopher and mathematician, Hypatia, stripped and beaten, is shown pleading for her life in front of the high altar of the great church in Alexandria. Soon the enraged Christian mob will tear her to pieces, witnessed by the novel's narrator, the young monk Philammon. Mitchell's choice of subject may well have reflected a contemporary Parisian literary craze for all things Byzantine,¹⁰⁹ although Kingsley's novel was itself immensely popular and continuously in print. A prominent Broad Churchman (and former Christian Socialist) concerned at the reintroduction of Catholic practices into the Anglican Church, Kingsley's particular re-telling of Hypatia's fate, based on an actual historical incident, was widely seen as an anti-Catholic polemic. Mitchell need not

have shared Kingsley's Broad Church opinions, but he similarly reminds us that faith without reason – or superstition as Catholicism was often construed – is potentially destructive of all civilised values.

The contemporary topicality of Mitchell's *Hypatia* has never been acknowledged.¹¹⁰ Although it was very likely painted in London, the choice of subject was peculiarly apt in the religious context of Jesmond, and just as his father was about to embark on the project for the new church. It is as if the son were admonishing the father – and perhaps his religious confidant Somerset Pennefather – not to stray too far from the straight and narrow. As his scrapbook shows, Charles was nonetheless inordinately proud of his son's artistic triumph. In turn, Charles William would put to good use his researches into the archaeological setting for *Hypatia*. Thus, the reredos figure of the risen Christ at St. George's derives from a number of early medieval mosaics to be found in Roman churches, e.g. those in the sanctuary apses of Santi Cosma e Damiano [10.3], Santa Cecilia in Trastevere and Santa Prassede [10.2]. In each of these, the figure of the Christ strikes the distinctive pose of the *traditio legis* – the right hand raised in the oratorical gesture of authority, whilst the left hand proffers the viewer their legal 'commission' in the form of a scroll. Deriving from a late Imperial Roman iconography, signifying the delegation of the central power through a consular official, the *traditio legis* formula was adapted by early Christian artists as an alternative to, or commentary on, the Sermon on the Mount, i.e. the reception of the New Law in Christ, as completing and superceding the old Mosaic Law. Some historians suggest that the imagery also strongly implied the divinity of the Christ.¹¹¹ The most famous Roman examples date from the sixth to the ninth centuries, where the particular disposition of the imagery makes plain the Papacy's claims to be both the legitimate heirs of the Imperial authority in the West, and the guarantors and defenders of Christian orthodoxy, against similar claims put forward by the Byzantine Patriarchate in the East. The formula fell gradually out of use from the tenth century onwards, as images that stressed the Passion of Christ came to be preferred in western European churches, e.g. representations of the Crucifixion, Resurrection or Second Coming. Despite its evident antiquity, depictions of the *traditio legis* Christ remained infrequent during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the strongly Papalist overtones that had attached to the formula obviously rendered it unsuitable for Protestant contexts. So far as the author is aware, the Jesmond version is its only appearance in a nineteenth century English church.

There was however one modern revival of the *traditio legis* formula of which Charles William Mitchell was doubtless aware, and again the context was one of a conservative appeal to Catholic orthodoxy. Begun in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, the decoration of the Panthéon, in its guise as the church of Sainte-Geneviève, was a State-promoted project where

religious, monarchist and nationalist sentiments freely mixed, often with surprisingly incongruous results, but to general public acclaim nonetheless.¹¹² In spite of the strongly Neoclassical lines of Jacques-Gabriel Soufflot's (1713-80) pre-Revolutionary building (1757-90), mosaic in the hieratic Byzantine style was chosen for the central apse, contrasting with the Academic realism of the mural decorations (executed in fresco or encaustic) by MM. Laurens, Baudry, Bonnat, Meissonnier and Puvis de Chavannes. Its design was assigned to Antoine-Auguste-Ernest Hébert (1817-1908), a former Director of the French Academy in Rome (1867-73), but not the most immediately obvious choice as an artist for such a work.¹¹³ Begun in 1879 but not completed until 1884, the *Christ Showing the Angel of France the Destiny of Her People* (*Angelum Galliae Custodem Christus Patriae Fata Docet*) [10.4], proved to be uncommonly successful and marked a turning point in the revival of monumental mosaic decoration in France. Flanked by the Virgin Mary, Joan of Arc and St. Geneviève (the patron saint of Paris), Hébert's figure of the Christ was openly modelled on the early sixth-century Roman mosaic at SS. Cosma e Damiano [10.3], and like its model, stressed the authority of the Church, in this case as the saviour of France.¹¹⁴

The Jesmond mosaic would seem therefore to operate on a variety of levels. At its simplest, it is a depiction of the Risen Christ, His divinity vouchsafed by the pair of archangelic attendants (Gabriel and Michael): an icon proffered to the communicant on looking up from the altar [10.1]. At another level, it references several outstanding examples of early Christian art. Moreover, the Byzantinism of the mosaic was an off-shoot of its artist's most recent and celebrated work, i.e. *Hypatia*, a work which had a certain topicality in the religious context of Jesmond. It was also a loving son's artistic contribution to his father's great work. At yet another level, the mosaic was a modern work of religious art, by a Francophile Englishman paying homage to an acclaimed French colleague. Finally, there is the *traditio legis* formula itself, imaging the authoritative handing over of the New Law, the guarantor of doctrinal orthodoxy. The younger Mitchell cannot have been unaware either of the historical, or the more recent (e.g. the Panthéon mosaic), religio-political associations attached to the formula. Its revival at Jesmond may well reflect the religious conservatism and/or political Toryism of his father, and perhaps even more so, of his mother's (and uncle's) family. If so, the Jesmond mosaic makes a bold, and some might say, an audaciously triumphalist claim: that here, in the visual splendour of this church in Jesmond, the authentic tradition of the universal Church is proclaimed through its modern representative, the Church of England, fully comprehensive, reformed yet Catholic.

Who would not then doubt that their salvation was assured?

Notes to Chapter 3.2:

- ¹ *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6, *The New Church at Jesmond...*, ‘Many new departures have been made in the internal decorations, the result being that the east and west ends of the church are most effective’.
- ² *Ibid.*; also *NDJ* (17 Oct. 1888), p.5; also *NDC* (13 Oct. 1888), p.5; also *NDC* (17 Oct. 1888), p.6; also *NWC* (20 Oct. 1888), *St. George’s Church, Jesmond. Consecration Service*.
- ³ As a former lawyer, Armstrong hosted a dinner reception later that evening at the Jesmond Dene Banqueting Hall, on behalf of the Annual Provincial Meeting of the Incorporated Law Society; see *NDC* (17 Oct. 1888), p.5.
- ⁴ See Vol.II, Cat.I, **I.1-4**.
- ⁵ *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ⁶ *NWC* (10 Feb. 1888), *Church Work in the North*; also *NWC* (Friday 16 Jan. 1885), *Church Work in the Diocese of Newcastle*. The Duke of Northumberland’s final instalment of approx. £8,000 towards the erection of the Cullercoats church was counted as a contribution to the Bishop’s Fund.
- ⁷ St. George’s Cullercoats was built on Percy land at the coast between Tynemouth and Cullercoats, to serve new dormitory housing for Newcastle; see ‘The Northumberland Village Homes, Whitley’ in *BA* (16 Mar. 1883), p.131.
- ⁸ *NDJ* (5 Aug. 1882), p.3, *New Church at Cullercoats*; also *NDJ* (16 Dec. 1884), p.8, *St. George’s Church, Cullercoats*.
- ⁹ E.g. *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ¹⁰ *M2, folios 143 and 150*, balance on *Church Building* at 17 Oct. 1888 and 31 Dec. 1889 respectively (latter includes a single transfer of £212-2-2 from the *Parish Hall a/c*).
- ¹¹ See Vol.I, Chapter 2.2-6.
- ¹² The London press was a little more forthcoming, e.g. ‘Jesmond, Newcastle’ in *BN*, Vol.57 (27 Dec. 1889), p.893: ‘The cost of the church, up to the present, has been at least £25,000’. Only at Mitchell’s death was the true cost of the church announced at ‘around £30,000’, e.g. *NDJ*, (27 Aug. 1895), p.6, *Dr. Mitchell’s Career. Interesting Details*; also *Times* (26 Aug. 1895), p.7, obit. *Mr. Charles Mitchell*.
- ¹³ *NDJ* (17 Oct. 1888), p.5.
- ¹⁴ *NDC* (17 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ¹⁵ See Vol.I, Chap. 1-4.
- ¹⁶ Vol.II, Cat. IV, *JCE* (23 Dec. 1886), noting the submission of alternative ground plans, by Spence and Mitchell, for the parochial hall. The latter included premises for a caretaker, which was ‘generally admired to be a very desirable addition’.
- ¹⁷ *NDJ* (3-4 Aug. 1882), on the Bishop’s enthronement; also *NDJ* (5 Aug. 1882), p.3, on the foundation-stone laying ceremony at Cullercoats the previous day; also ‘Cullercoats’ in *B*, vol.43 (26 Aug. 1882); also Quiney, A.: *John Loughborough Pearson* (New Haven and London, 1979), pp.153-55 & 249.
- ¹⁸ *NDJ* (5 Aug. 1882), p.3.
- ¹⁹ The Cullercoats church is slightly longer than its namesake at Jesmond (158 feet to 150 feet), although the internal width of the naves is broadly similar (56 to 57 feet). The height to the roof ridges is also broadly similar (64 to 65 feet 8 inches), although the crown of the nave vault at Cullercoats is set some twenty feet lower.
- ²⁰ Muthesius (1972), *Op.cit.*, pp. 139-49.
- ²¹ Crouch, D. *et al.*: *St. Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough: A Brief History and Guide* (Scarborough, 1992); also Hall (1993), *Op.cit.*, pp.103-5.
- ²² Bodley’s later alterations at Scarborough include a chancel screen (1894) and winged triptych altarpiece (1890), as well as the refitting and extension of the Lady Chapel (north aisle) eastwards as far as the east gable of the church (1902).
- ²³ Although often labelled by contemporaries as ‘early French’, Bodley’s early work nevertheless owed a great deal to the ‘English’ detailing of his slightly older colleague, William Butterfield (1814-1900); see Hall (1993), *Op.cit.*, pp.103-5.
- ²⁴ Quoted without reference in Harrison, M.: ‘Church Decoration and Stained Glass’ in Parry, L. (ed.): *William Morris* (V&A Museum, 1996), pp.106-135 (115).
- ²⁵ Ruskin: *The Stones of Venice* II, Chap. II, ‘Torcello’. Ruskin especially comments on the simplicity and illumination of the interior as a foil for the large-scale mosaics on the terminal axes.
- ²⁶ Hall (2000), *Op.cit.*, p.87.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.87-9.
- ²⁸ *ODNB* for Eustacia Smith (Timothy Wilcox, 2008). The shipbuilders and repairers Messrs. T. & W. Smith & Co. had been founded in 1810; see McCord (1979), *Op.cit.*, pp.48-9 & 131.

- ²⁹ Macleod & Vickers (1989): Op.cit., pp.27-8; also Stephens, F.G.: 'The Private Collections of England No.III : Gosforth House – Tynemouth' in *The Athenæum* (20 Sept. 1873), pp.372-5 (372-3).
- ³⁰ Author's correspondence with Dr. T.E. Faulkner; also Faulkner (1995), Op.cit., pp.3-10.
- ³¹ E.g. Johnson's refitting (1870-5) of the chapel at Castle Howard (Yorks.). Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s windows were commissioned in 1871, and installed 1872-4; see Ibid., p.6; also Hartley, E.: 'Morris & Co. in a Baroque Setting' in *William Morris Studies*, Vol.11, no.2 (Spring 1995), pp.5-9 (5-6).

Johnson also employed 'The Firm' for the east windows (1872) at Holy Cross church, Haltwhistle (Northumberland), where he was acting as architect for the restoration. However, as an ardent High Churchman, he would come to prefer the more conventional Messrs. C.E. Kempe & Co. as his glaziers of choice.
- ³² Sewter, A.C.: *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his circle*, (New Haven and London, 1975) Vol.2, pp.83-4.
- ³³ The Gosforth Park church was sold to the Roman Catholic community in 1912, and rededicated as the Church of the Sacred Heart, North Gosforth.
- ³⁴ E.g. the committee set up to further the refitting of the cathedral included the following Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. directors; Charles Mitchell, Capt. Andrew Noble, Wm. D. Cruddas and Percy Westmacott; see NWC (20 April 1883), *The Restoration of St. Nicholas Cathedral Church*; also NWC (11 Nov. 1887), *Newcastle Cathedral. The Reredos*.
- ³⁵ See Vol.I, Chap. 2.4-3.
- ³⁶ NWC (31 Aug. 1888), p.4.
- ³⁷ NDJ (10 Jan. 1887), p.7.
- ³⁸ Brownlee, D.B.: *The Law Courts: The Architecture of George Edmund Street* (New York, Cambridge, Mass. (U.S.A.) and London, 1984), pp.138-43.
- ³⁹ Ruskin: *The Stones of Venice* I, Chap. XIX, 'Superimposition', § XI-XV.
- ⁴⁰ Ref. Vol.II, Cat. I, **I.3-4, I.9 & I.27**. The perspective was published in *B* (30 March 1889), p.243, i.e. six months after the consecration, shows the 'shaft' of the tower clasped by the pilaster buttresses as was evidently envisaged in the earlier scheme.
- ⁴¹ See Vol.II, Cat. II, **II.10**. The original scheme was for a wrought-iron finial-cross around 26 feet tall; see *BQ* pp. 6c-7c (joiners work and ironmongery) & 3e (plumbers work). The more elaborate final version is described in NDJ (13 Oct. 1888), p.6. The copper-work was presumably executed by Alfred J. Shirley (c.1848-1912), responsible for much of the 'artistic' metalwork at St. George's. This version was taken down as unsafe in 1960, undermined by galvanic corrosion of the metals, and replaced in 1965 by a simplified replica formed in aluminium; ref. NRO DN/8/2/2143 (27 May 1960) and DN/E/8/2/2184 (11 April 1961); also the author, in conversation with Ian Curry FSA, FRIBA (formerly of Messrs. Charlewood & Curry, architects, Newcastle-upon-Tyne).
- ⁴² Dougan (1991), Op.cit., pp.151-2; Bastable (2004), Op.cit., pp.133-4. The creation of a quasi-independent works at Pozzuoli was very much a *quid-pro-quo* forced on Armstrong, Mitchell & Co. by the Italian government, although it ultimately proved to be a highly profitable concern for Armstrongs.
- ⁴³ NWC (13 May 1887), *The Royal Jubilee Exhibition. Ship Models*.
- ⁴⁴ The Venice Arsenale crane is the last surviving example of its type by the firm; see <<http://www.cranestodaymagazine.com/story.asp?storyCode=2041519§ioncode=66>> [accessed May 2010]; also <<http://veniceinperil.org/projects/restoration/armstrong-mitchell-crane>> [accessed May 2010]
- ⁴⁵ NDJ (17 Oct. 1888), p.5.
- ⁴⁶ Ruskin : *The Stones of Venice* II, Chap. VI 'The Nature of Gothic', § XXVIII.
- ⁴⁷ E.g. MacGibbon & Ross's monumental *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887-92) in 5 vols. (the equivalent volumes on Scotland's ecclesiastical architecture did not appear until 1896-7). At the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition, the architectural decorating firm Messrs. William Scott Morton & Co. included, as part of their stand, a recreation of a Bishop's parlour 'in the old Scotch style' (i.e. Scots Renaissance), which was regarded as something of a stylistic novelty; see *BA* (29 June 1888), p.465-73.
- ⁴⁸ NDJ (10 Jan. 1887), p.7.
- ⁴⁹ For a discussion of 'graduated orders' as employed by (French) Rayonnant and later Gothic designers, see Wilson, C., *The Gothic Cathedral* (London, 1990), pp.122-3. The notion of a nested system of orders was well established in mid-nineteenth century discussions on Gothic detailing, e.g. Sharpe, E.: *A Treatise on the Rise and Progress of Decorated Window tracery in England* (London, 1849); also

- Brandon & Brandon (1849), Op.cit. (2 vols.). Spence's system at Jesmond offers an analogous series of variations around a basic formal principle.
- ⁵⁰ E.g. Bolton Abbey, upper Wharfedale (West Yorks.), where the mid-thirteenth century west front exhibits capitals with prominent double-ogee scrolls. Spence may well have known these first-hand, but see Paley, F.A.: *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings, etc.* (London, 1845), Pl.X, nos. 23-6.
- ⁵¹ See Vol.I, Chap. 2.3-5.
- ⁵² *BN* (22 Dec. 1882), p.756 + illus; also *The Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review*, 1 Sept. 1880, p.572; the Finsbury Children's Sick Hospital was demolished c.1952.
- ⁵³ E.g. 'Art at the Manchester Industrial Exhibition-II' in *BA* (3 Nov. 1882), p.529-30 (530); 'Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition, Manchester -V' in *BA* (24 Nov. 1882), pp. 561-3 (562); 'The Gateshead Glass Works' in *BA* (23 Feb. 1883), p.95; 'Trade Notes' in *BA* (16 May 1884), p. 248; 'Coloured Glass Design' in *BA* (13 Aug. 1886), p.151.
- ⁵⁴ Ref. Vol.I, Chap. 3.1-5 and note 94; also Vol.II, Cat.V, **V2**.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. 'St. Paul's Church, Truro' in *BN* (25 Aug. 1882), p.228 + illus. (executed in part); also 'S. Saviour's Church, Sunbury-on-Thames' in *BN* (26 June 1885), p.1006 + illus. (unexecuted).
- ⁵⁶ Snell (2006), Op.cit., pp.212-221 (218) & pp.222-7 (226). Sedding employed his regular contractors, Messrs. Charles Trask & Sons for the woodwork, and Henry Longden & Co. for the metalwork, but incorporated bronze relief sculpture or panels designed and executed by his artist-colleague Frederick W. Pomeroy (1856-1924).
- ⁵⁷ Ref. Vol.I, Chap. 2.3 note 70.
- ⁵⁸ Jackson, F.H. (1903), Op.cit., p.81.
- ⁵⁹ Saint (1983), Op.cit., pp.289-90.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.304-9 & 429.
- ⁶¹ 'New Church of St. Peter, Ealing' in *B* (16 Nov. 1889), p.350 + illus.; also Cherry, B. & Pevsner, N.: *London 3. North-West* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p.167; also Service, A.: *Edwardian Architecture* (London, 1977), pp.46-7. The 1889 design was amended in 1890 and again in 1891, and finally built in 1892-3, i.e. after Sedding's death, to a revised scheme by his former assistant Henry Wilson (1864-1934).
- ⁶² As in the many commercial buildings by the London partnership of Henry John Treadwell (1861-1910) and Leonard Martin (1869-1935); see Grey, A.S.: *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary* (London, 1985), pp.17, 257 & 354-6; also Service (1977), Op.cit., p.104.
- ⁶³ The motif may derive from the strutted buttresses stiffening the great terminal windows at Gloucester cathedral, dating to the mid-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries.
- ⁶⁴ E.g. St. George's, St. George's Square, Worcester (1893-5) by Aston Webb (1849-1930); also St. David's, St. David's Hill, Exeter (1897-1900) by W.D. Caröe (1857-1938).
- ⁶⁵ Ruskin: *The Stones of Venice* III, Chap. IV, § XXXVI.
- ⁶⁶ The baptistery at St. George's Cullercoats (1882-4) was not expressed externally, but set between the western porches and beneath an internal vaulted gallery.
- ⁶⁷ Canon LXXXI of the *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical of the Church of England* (1604) simply required that the Font be of stone, 'the same to be set in the ancient usual places'. Some Protestant opinion was in favour of either (a) a portable font, or (b) a font at the east end, near the altar, to ensure a fuller participation of the congregation in the service; see Addleshaw, G.W.O. & Etchells, F.: *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship* (London, 1948), pp.64-8.
- ⁶⁸ Micklethwaite, J.T.: *Alcuin Club Tracts I: The Ornaments of the Rubric* (London, 1897), pp.46-7.
- ⁶⁹ Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS) file 08437, *Bacup* (St. John the Evangelist), Lancs. <<http://www.churchplansonline.org>> [accessed June 2011].
- ⁷⁰ See Nias, J.C.S.: *Gorham and the Bishop of Exeter* (London, 1951), p.172; the case was the 'only instance of a large-scale doctrinal clash on the subject of Baptism in the annals of the Church of England'.
- ⁷¹ Ironically, Jesmond Parish Church would itself succumb to the fashion for a defined baptistery space. In a temporary relaxation of its Evangelical scruples, the western gallery was taken down in 1906-7, and the gable rebuilt to a different form and with a low baptistery. The architects were the diocesan staples, Messrs. Hicks & Charlewood (of Newcastle); see Munden (2006), Op.cit., p.127.
- ⁷² E.g. *NWC* (11 May 1889), *St. Goerge's Church, Jesmond*. This court differed in a number of respects from later practice, e.g. it seems to have been called as a matter of course rather than to resolve a dispute between contending parties, a sign perhaps that the diocesan administration was still finding its feet. The Chancellor of the Diocese (Mr. A.B. Kemp Q.C.) took evidence in person, and afterwards inspected the church (9 May). The judgement was delivered in person by the diocesan registrar, sitting in the parochial hall (3 June).

- ⁷³ NCL L 623.8 – Cr. 957723A, *Charles Mitchell: newspaper cuttings scrapbook*.
- ⁷⁴ *SGPM*, Vol.1 no.6 (June 1889), p.66-7.
- ⁷⁵ Ref. Vol.II, Cat. **I.18** for the original elevation (3 Dec. 1886) of the western screen. See also Vol.I, Chap.3.1, Table 3.1-3, which notes a payment to Ralph Hedley of £1-0-0 (29 Sept. 1888) for ‘Altering Screen’, which may refer to the redesign of the chapel.
- ⁷⁶ *SGPM*, Vol.1 no. 7 (July 1889), p. 76. The chapel is now used for private prayer and the external access blocked.
- ⁷⁷ R.J. Johnson’s reordering of the interior of St. Nicholas’ Newcastle, begun in 1883, provided for an ambulatory and retrochoir, with space for at least three additional altars. Although raised to the dignity of a cathedral, St. Nicholas’ retained its legal status as a parish church, and was without either dean or chapter until well into the twentieth century.
- ⁷⁸ NRO DN/E/8/2/2/311 (21 Sept. 1907), St. Mary’s church, Wallsend. I am grateful to Mrs. B.J. Lowdon (Newcastle Diocesan Registrar), and Mr. N. Foxon (Secretary, Newcastle Diocesan Advisory Committee), for their assistance.
- ⁷⁹ St. George’s churchyard was not consecrated as a burial ground, so that the provision of a *piscina* was functionally unnecessary. The earliest plans show the *piscina* on the north side of the sanctuary, a solecism unpardonable by Ecclesiological standards, but also followed by G.F. Bodley at St. Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough (1861-3), see [6.2]. In the event, three *sedilia* niches were provided on the north and south sides of the sanctuary, the central one on the north fitted with a substantial credence of stone.
- ⁸⁰ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.I, **I.20**; the drawing is probably unfinished, overtaken by further revisions to the design.
- ⁸¹ See Vol.I, Chapter 2.2-6; also *Newcastle-upon-Tyne ... Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of, (Newcastle, 1887), p.130 (cat. 290); also *A Descriptive Account of Newcastle Illustrated* (1894-5), pp.79-81, which includes a photograph of the altarpiece as displayed on Messrs. Emley & Sons stand at the exhibition
- ⁸² *NWC* (13 May 1887), *The Royal Jubilee Exhibition. Some Exhibits*.
- ⁸³ Brandwood, G.: ‘Mummeries of a Popish Character: the Camdenians and early Victorian Worship’, in Webster, C. and Elliott, J. (eds.): ‘*A Church as it Should Be: The Cambridge Camden Society and its influence*’ (Donington, 2000), pp. 62-97 (81).
- ⁸⁴ Miele, C.: *Re-Presenting the Church Militant: the Camden Society, Church Restoration, and the Gothic Sign*, in Webster & Elliott, Op.cit., pp. 257-94.
- ⁸⁵ And very different from the substantial reredos screens stretching across the chancel of English late-medieval fashion. The high altars of Italian Baroque churches were required to be free-standing, and generally provided with a substantial framing surround commensurate with the scale of the building (in order to focus attention on the altar proper), e.g. the high altar (1773) of Monreale cathedral (Sicily), by the Parisian goldsmith, Louis (Luigi) Valladier (1726-85); see e.g. O’Reilly, Op.cit. (1997), pp.223-6, and Gallegos (2004), Op.cit [electronic resource]. The Jesmond altarpiece complies with the latter requirement only.
- ⁸⁶ The dimensions are close to those suggested in Purchas (1865), Op.cit., pp.3-7 (as the standard Anglo-Catholic manual of the period), although by modern standards the top of the *mensa* stands perhaps too high, at 44 inches above the footpace.
- ⁸⁷ See also the open debate, ‘The Limits with which Variations of Ritual may be Permitted’ in (ed.) Swaby (ed.) (1882), Op.cit., pp.101-30, which exudes a sense of exhausted toleration after the great Ritualist and Romanist controversies in the Church-of-England during the 1860s and 70s.
- ⁸⁸ Anglican High Church custom – whether ‘old school’ Laudian, Tractarian or ‘advanced’ Anglo-Catholic – usually required that a pall or embroidered (sometimes painted) frontal be provided to disguise the altar table itself, which was usually unadorned; see e.g. Purchas (1865), Op.cit., pp.6-7. The practice seems never to have been current at St. George’s, the carved front of the altar itself providing a suitable *antependium*, after the manner of Roman Catholic practice.
- ⁸⁹ Following a presentation by the author to the Ecclesiological Society (London), 30 May 2007.
- ⁹⁰ E.g. Anson (1965), Op.cit., pp.290-1. As late as 1910, the Evangelical Bishop, Francis J. Chavasse (1846-1928), refused to dedicate the altar of the Lady Chapel at Liverpool Cathedral because it did not admit of ‘north end’ celebration; see Thomas, J.: ‘The ‘Beginnings of a Noble Pile’: Liverpool Cathedral’s Lady Chapel (1904-10)’ in *AH*, Vol. 48 (2005), pp.257-290 (275).
- ⁹¹ See Vol.I, Chap. 2.4-3.
- ⁹² *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ⁹³ *SGPM*, Vol.17 no.6 (June 1905), p. 43; also *SGPM*, Vol.17, no.10 (Oct. 1905), p.76. The Bodleian Library example was donated in 1682 by one Richard Davis of Sandford, Oxfordshire. On loan to the

Museum of the History of Science, Broad Street, Oxford (museum inventory no. 62730) since 1952, it is currently in store. My thanks to Mr. J.D. Josephson (Bodleian Library).

⁹⁴ Parker, J.H.: *The Calendar of the Prayer Book Illustrated* (Oxford & London, 1864). An earlier version, *The Kalendar of the Anglican Church Illustrated* (Oxford & London, 1851), by the same author, was reviewed in typically acerbic fashion by *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol.XII (1851), pp.198-9.

⁹⁵ Plot, R.: *The Natural History of Stafford-Shire* (Oxford, 1686), pp.418-32.

⁹⁶ Plot (1686), *Op.cit.*, pp.420-1, add. page 420.

⁹⁷ Parker gave illustrations of both the Ashmolean clog almanac referenced by Plot, and the Bodleian Library example, used as the basis for his own calendar; see Parker (1864), *Op.cit.*, p.xiv.

⁹⁸ Parker (1864), *Op.cit.*, pp.viii-ix.

⁹⁹ Robert Plot's views on the Norse origins and northern provenance of clog almanacs were strongly challenged by the Icelandic scholar (and close friend of William Morris) Eiríkr Magnússon (1833-1913); see e.g. Magnússon, E.: 'Description of a Norwegian Calendar' in *Cambridge Antiquarian Society: Communications*, Vol. IV no.2 (Cambridge, 1879), pp. 128-75.

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 53.3 & 7.

¹⁰¹ *NDJ* (10 Jan. 1887), p.7.

¹⁰² Despite being one of the major British firms of mosaicists, very little has been published on Messrs. Rust & Co., but see Ensing, R.: 'Jesse Rust and His Son, Vitreous Mosaic Manufacturers of Battersea' in *Wandsworth Historian*, Issue 90 (London, Autumn 2010) and <http://www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk/historian/jesse_rust_full.doc> [accessed Nov. 2011]

Jesse Rust (d.1895) exhibited samples of mosaic and glass suitable 'for use in painted windows or opaque mural decoration', to a committee of the Ecclesiological Society in 1865; see *E*, Vol.XXVI (Dec. 1864-5), pp.185 (5 April 1865). Between 1861 and 1888, Jesse Rust successfully filed for eight patents relating to mosaic and glasswork, and was regularly engaged at the South Kensington Museum for flooring and mural work. The architect John Pollard Seddon (1827-1906) was a particular champion of their work, re. numerous articles in *BA*, and their distinctive 'clouded', 'seedy' and variegated glass colours were sold to other studios, e.g. Messrs. Belham & Co. (Buckingham Palace Road, London) – Seddon's regular glaziers of choice – and Messrs. G.E. Cook & Co. (Gower Street, London), and possibly The Gateshead Stained Glass Company. Amongst Rust & Co.'s last major mosaic commissions was for the apse of St. Aidan's church, Roundhay, Leeds (1913-16), designed by the artist Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956); see Douglas, J.: 'A Spectacle of Colour. Frank Brangwyn's Mosaic Legacy' in *Andamento*, Issue 1, Vol.1 (2007), pp. 28-33.

I am grateful to Prof. Andrew Saint and Dr. Michael Kerney for information, and to Martin Brandon for sharing his doctoral researches into Victorian mosaicists.

¹⁰³ *NDJ*, 13 Oct. 1888, p.6

¹⁰⁴ M2, folio 26 (6 July 1888), a single payment of £300-0-0 to C.W. Mitchell for unspecified work which may relate to his designs for the mosaics. The amount seems rather high for just the three reredos figures – T.R. Spence and the stained glass artist J.W. Brown were paid a lot less for designing much more than this – so presumably the decision had already been taken to augment the scheme.

¹⁰⁵ For a selection of favourable reviews, see e.g. 'The Grosvenor Exhibition' in *Athenæum*, No.3000 (25 April 1885), pp.540-1; Monkhouse, C.: 'The Grosvenor Gallery' in *The Academy*, No. 678 (2 May 1885), p.318; 'The Grosvenor Gallery' in *AJ* (1885), p.227; 'The Grosvenor Gallery' in *BN* (1 May 1885), p.674-5; *Times* (25 April, 1885), p.10, *The Grosvenor Gallery – I*.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, A.: *The Victorian Nude. Sexuality, morality and art* (Manchester and New York, 1996), p.191-2. Not everyone approved of the perceived French quality in Mitchell's painting. The *Magazine of Art* complained, 'The large 'Hypatia' of Mr. Mitchell may be described as good second-rate Cabanel: it is cleverly imagined, cleverly composed and cleverly painted; but it hardly deserves the place of honour into which it has been thrust'; see *MA* Vol. 8 (1885), p.351.

¹⁰⁷ *Hypatia* was not the only 'shocker' that year. *St. Eulalia* (Tate Gallery, London) by John William Waterhouse (1849-1917), was shown simultaneously at the Royal Academy, and presented a perhaps even more gruesome scene of female martyrdom in Antiquity, and at only two-thirds the scale of Mitchell's painting. On the important role these two paintings played in establishing a late-Victorian vogue for representations of female 'martyrdom', see Prettejohn, E.: 'Recreating Rome in Victorian Painting' in Liversedge, M. & Edwards, C. (eds.): *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1996), pp. 61-4.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Liversedge & Edwards (eds.) (1996), *Op.cit.*, pp.154-5 (cat.57).

¹⁰⁹ Bullen, J.B.: *Byzantium Rediscovered* (London and New York, 2003), pp.101-3.

¹¹⁰ Liversedge & Edwards (eds.) (1996), *Op.cit.*, pp.154-5 (cat.57); also Macleod & Vickers (1989): *Op.cit.*, p.92 (cat. 73)

¹¹¹ Spieser, J.-M.: 'The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches' in *Gesta*, Vol.37, No.1 (1998), pp.63-73 (67-9).

¹¹² 'The Decoration of the Panthéon' in *MA*, Vol.5 (Jan. 1882). p.21,; also Bullen (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.87-90.

¹¹³ Ménard, René: *Hébert* in *Portfolio*, Vol.6 (Jan. 1875), pp.50-3; also Cooke: *Ernest Hébert (1817-1908) and the Romantic Aftermath. From 'Poetic Realism' to Symbolism* in *Apollo*, Vol.146, Issue. 427 (London, Sept.1997), pp.32-7. Hébert served a further term as Director of the French Academy in Rome, 1885-90.

¹¹⁴ *MA*, Vol.8 (Jan. 1885), p.ii ; also Bullen (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.90-1

3.3 A Theatre for the Soul:

3.3-1 Introduction:

It is not enough that it [the work of art] be well imagined, it must task the beholder also to imagine well; and thus so imperatively, that if he does not choose to rouse himself to meet the work, he shall not taste it, nor enjoy it in any wise.

John Ruskin: *The Stones of Venice*, III (1853) ¹

The previous chapters analysed St. George's Jesmond as it was first presented to Newcastle's churchgoing public in October 1888. Although large parts of the decorative programme were already in place by then, there was much yet to be done, e.g. the decoration of the ceilings and the installation of the high-level mosaics in the chancel – the latter a significant project in its own right, and one that largely conditions our impression of the interior today. In addition, Mitchell and his architect took the opportunity to make alterations to already existing work. Although not detracting from the original programme of the church, these revisions nevertheless subtly redirected its theological implications. This chapter will therefore take the narrative up to the completion of the church in 1891, examining some of the deeper implications of the decorative programme along the way.

The previous chapter suggested a particular 'reading' of St. George's, as offering a 'model' modern church for a regionally resurgent Church of England, a temple to Anglican comprehensiveness and moderation. This is by no means the only possible reading. The synergy between Mitchell, Pennefather and Spence elicited a complex, multi-layered iconography in the church, one that addressed a number of differing constituencies simultaneously. The stained glass illustrates this aspect well. Some of the visual references appear to have been of the 'in-joke' kind, as in the many highly particularised depictions of the IXΘΥΣ sign (the ancient piscine emblem for Christ and Christians in general) [10.20-1], a tribute perhaps to Bishop Wilberforce in his pastoral role as a 'fisher of men' ² and as a keen angler ³ – the (ugly) angler fish and sticklebacks (small fry) perhaps suggesting that the fisherman must not discriminate.

Noticeably different from the rest of the scheme are the two windows closing the aisles [Pl.7]. Their format alludes to a medievalising iconography beloved of the High Church movement – i.e. that of the image or statue of a saint enshrined in tabernacle-work – except that Spence interprets this in terms of the latest Free-style Gothic. Any implication of an Anglo-Catholic type of devotional imagery is however subtly subverted through the illogicality (and therefore the inaccessibility) of the spaces 'within' the windows, in an adaptation of the Renaissance visual convention of the *quadri riportati*. Thus, the images of the two (named)

saints, Paul and Barnabas, are set within ‘picture’ frames, almost as separate works of art, whilst the spaces seen behind and through the tabernacle-work fail to marry up.⁴ The use of the *quadri riportati* formula here should perhaps be understood as a self-consciously artistic gesture.

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) had employed it to similar purpose in the chapel windows at Castle Howard (1872-4) [10.22],⁵ a set that may well have been known to one or other of the Jesmond artists. Symbolising the mission of St. George’s to the wider world, the window depicting St. Paul [page 23], the apostle to the Gentiles, was appropriately set next to the south door, where the congregation would see it on leaving the church. Paul’s companion, Barnabas, was placed on the north side, by the door facing Jesmond Towers. Depicting the Levite who, ‘Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet’,⁶ the window was that rarest of things at St. George’s, an unambiguous reference to Charles Mitchell’s gift of the church.

3.3-2 The ‘New Art’:

Perhaps the first thing that strikes many first-time visitors to St. George’s is the extraordinarily lithe organicism of T.R. Spence’s decorative scheme. One is inclined, as did Pevsner, to make immediate comparisons between this ‘Jesmond style’ and the decorative works of William Morris (1834-1896), Walter Crane (1845-1915) and Lewis F. Day (1845-1910), e.g. for wallpapers, printed fabrics, etc. However, Spence’s organicism is of a very different kind from the naturalism of his Arts and Crafts contemporaries. This is not the conventionalisation of nature typical of later nineteenth century English designers, in which the spirit and form of the original is still discernible, no matter how abstracted. Rather, it is the application of abstract principles of design derived from the organisation and growth of natural forms. This is apparent in the ironmongery of the principal doors, some of Spence’s earliest metalwork designs for the church, (dating to the Spring of 1886) [9.1],⁷ and reaches its apotheosis in the high mosaics of the chancel (installed in the latter half of 1889) [Pl.2-3] and the stencilled ceilings of the nave and baptistery (undertaken in the autumn of the following year) [Pl.4-5]. The connection previously noted with Pownall Hall, near Wilmslow (Cheshire), [Chap.3.1-7], suggests that one source for this mode of design may have been recent work by Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) and Herbert Percy Horne (1864-1916) for the Century Guild of Artists (active 1882-c.1888) [9.5 inset].⁸ Although we cannot place Spence directly at Pownall, whose interiors (c.1887) are justifiably renowned as the Guild’s only surviving scheme of furnishing and decoration, he was closely associated with artists active there. Moreover, the Guild’s work was well known (and admired) through exhibitions, trade fairs and reviews.⁹ And in Spence’s work at Jesmond, we see much the same penchant for astringently attenuated proportions and switchback patterns [4.8, Pl.2],¹⁰ e.g. the remarkable copper and brass

baptismal ewer, one of Charles Mitchell's last gifts to the church (presented in December 1891) [9.6].¹¹

The abstract organicism seen at St George's also suggests an awareness of recent work in France, and especially the 'modern' principles of rationalist design promulgated by e.g. Victor-Marie-Charles Ruprich-Robert (1820-87), a disciple of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-79), and his successor (1850-87) at the École gratuite de dessin de Paris (after 1877 the École nationale des Arts Décoratifs).¹² There were indications in the decoration at Jesmond Towers that Spence was already adapting aspects of the English Aesthetic movement in line with modern French precepts, e.g. in the overdoors of the picture gallery [4.13], thereby signifying the cosmopolitan taste of his patron. This process reached its fruition at St. George's church. In the idiosyncratic 'wriggles' and 'whips' of pieces such as the litany desk [8.21] and font cover [9.7], there are clear affinities with contemporary furniture and metalwork designs by e.g. Eugène Grasset (1845-1917).¹³ It seems unlikely that Spence could have known the suite designed c.1880-2 for Grasset's Parisian patron, Charles Gillot (1853-1903) [8.22, 9.13], and now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris). Grasset's work as an illustrator was perhaps more accessible, e.g. his illustrations, also commissioned by Gillot, for a *de-luxe* printed edition of the medieval *chansons de geste, l'Histoire des quatre fils Aymon* (1881-3).¹⁴ Although the grotesquerie of Grasset's work, incorporating out-sized animal and plant forms, has little counterpart in contemporary English furniture and graphic design, it is in his use of an abstracted organicism that we see the antecedents of '*le style qui naîtra à la fin de siècle*', and the clearest parallels with Spence's work [9.14].¹⁵

It is unclear whether modern French designers, such as Grasset, directly inspired Spence's 'Jesmond style'. The latter may well have been an independent and parallel development on the same shared theoretical basis. This would certainly be an area worth further investigation, as direct French influence on 'advanced' British design during the later nineteenth century is normally discounted – indeed the current of ideas is generally understood to have flowed the other way. Although the work of Viollet-le-Duc's disciples did much to advance principles of design that would find their fullest realisation at the close of the century, e.g. as *l'Art Nouveau*, it is debatable whether Mitchell or Spence ever thought they were creating a novel style appropriate to the coming century. St. George's was the grandest of Mitchell's projects to promote the arts on Tyneside, and he was concerned to incorporate only the best materials and the most up-to-date ideas available. As such, the church presented a synthesis of current trends in both British and Continental schools of design. Even so, it seems clear that St. George's was in the vanguard in terms of the large-scale exhibition of motifs later thought of as typical of Art Nouveau. Its influence on contemporary British designers was however virtually non-existent. In the years after 1900, the English art establishment hardened its heart against the

‘new art’, regarding the style as an aberrant and ill-disciplined off-shoot of home-grown developments. The comments (1905) of the Arts and Crafts stained glass artist, Christopher Whall (1849-1924), are entirely typical of what was seen as the ‘official’ line amongst English designers:

Shall we work in the style of the ‘New art’ then – ‘*l’art Nouveau*’? the style of the last new poster? The art-tree, the art-bird, the art-squirm, and the ace of spades form of ornament?

Heaven in mercy defend us and forbid it! ¹⁶

Whall was a fellow colleague of Spence’s at the Art Workers’ Guild, and its Master in 1912. But given sentiments like these, is it at all surprising that Spence dropped the more *outré* aspects of the ‘Jesmond style’ in his later projects. Instead, its characteristic features were relegated to the sidelines, a matter of incidental details and mannerisms, rather than as an overall principle of design [4.24, 4.26].

3.3-3 The ‘Greek Spirit’:

Spence’s ornamental designs generally take as their basis an acanthus-like leaf and tendrils, which curls and unfurls through the windows of the church, across the floors and over its walls [page 1, page 194]. In places, it bunches into tight bosses of foliage [10.13], like pearls on a string [Pl.8], recalling a striking passage in Ruskin’s second collection of Venetian essays, *St. Mark’s Rest* (1877-84). Ruskin describes the central portal of St. Mark’s basilica [10.16]:

...its ornaments, to the front, are of leafage closing out of spirals into balls interposed between the figures of eight Prophets (or Patriarchs?)... No one would believe at first it was thirteenth-century work, so delicate and rich as it looks; nor is there anything else like it that I know of, in Europe, of the date:– but pure thirteenth-century work it is, of rarest chiselling...

You see, in the first place, that the outer foliage is all of one kind – pure Greek Acanthus – not in the least transforming itself into ivy, or kale, or rose:... it is as nearly as possible the acanthus of early Corinth, only more flexible, and with the more incipient blending of the character of the vine which is used for the central boss...

It is under the power of the Queen of the Air; the power also that is over the Sea, and over the human mind. The first leaves I ever drew from St. Mark’s were those drifted under the breathing of it; these on its uppermost cornice, far lovelier, are the final perfection of the Ionic spiral, and of the thought in the temple of the Winds.

But perfected under a new influence. I said there was nothing like them (that I knew) in European architecture. But there is, in Eastern. They are only the amplification of the cornice over the arches of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.¹⁷

This is the later, ecumenical, syncretising Ruskin, who having escaped the narrow compass of the Protestant mind, interprets the historical progress of art as the unfolding of a universally valid mythological wisdom.¹⁸ Ruskin's citing of the 'thought in the Temple of the Winds', the Greek spirit informing all of Western civilisation, would doubtless have been music to the ears of T.R. Spence. One of the artist's earliest artistic collaborations was to provide the illustrations for a children's picture-book (with verse text by W.J. Gordon), *Perseus the Gorgon Slayer* (1883), an elegant little exercise in Aesthetic Neoclassicism after the manner of Walter Crane [4.6-7].¹⁹ Thereafter, Spence's regard for the lost glories of ancient Greece amounted almost to an obsession, and in his extended essays and lectures on the decorative arts he rarely failed to introduce some reference or other to Homer.²⁰ Likewise, the subjects for many of his later easel-paintings were drawn from ancient Greek history and legend, with copious amounts of marble painting after the manner of Lord Leighton (1830-96) and Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), the two contemporary artists he seems most to have admired [4.27-9].²¹ It comes as no surprise therefore that an Antique mythological reference also found its way into the decorative scheme at St. George's Jesmond, perhaps sanctioned by Ruskin's linking of the 'thought in the temple of the Winds' with the holiest site in all Christendom.

The western frontispiece of the baptistery at St. George's incorporates four tall shafts topped by stylised pinecones [7.27]. Although one could certainly cite medieval precedents for the detail, the allusion is more ancient than that.²² The *thyrsos* (thyrsus) of the ancient Dionysian and Bacchic rites consisted of a staff, often entwined with vine or ivy and a knot of ribbons, and topped by a pinecone (a pair can be seen on the title page of *Perseus the Gorgon Slayer*) [4.6]. Nor would the reference have been lost on Charles Mitchell, as George Simonds' (1843-1929) life-size marble group, representing Dionysos riding a panther and cradling a *thyrsos*, was one of the prize ornaments of the picture gallery at Jesmond Towers [4.11, V.2].²³ As a token of the renewal of life and immortality, the pagan symbol of the *thyrsos*-pinecone was carried over into early Christian art without any apparent incongruity. Thus a great bronze pinecone (*pigna*) once adorned the atrium fountain (*cantharus*) at the Constantinian basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. Provided for the ritual ablutions of pilgrims, the *cantharus* was itself likened to the rivers of Paradise.²⁴ Spence's use of the motif on the Jesmond baptistery thus stressed both the life-giving powers of baptism and the antiquity of the rite.

Within the church, the decorative programme picks-up on the *thyrsos* motif. Transformed into a staff of life, it buds and puts forth shoots, climbing the walls, snaking across floors, splitting into a Trinity of branches. It forms the stem of the lectern, 'this bush', as the *Builder* called it, 'of bristly brass curls and leaves and tendrils' [9.10].²⁵ As was noted in an

earlier chapter [Chap. 3.2-3], this powerful sense of growth and development was anticipated in the architectural detailing of the building itself. It speaks not of a Church in stasis, the perpetual guardians of a once-only revelation, but of a super-abundant life-transforming force continually renewing itself. In this sense, the ‘new art’ and the modern ‘Free-style’ development of Gothic were an entirely appropriate signification for a Christian church. The Russian novelist Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884-1937) seems to have instinctively responded to this aspect of the decorative scheme at St. George’s, recalling his impressions in his short story *The Fisher of Men* (1918).²⁶ Zamyatin had very likely visited St. George’s during his stay in Jesmond (the church was kept open for visitors), and although he planted his fictionalised version of the church in a London suburb, his description of the stained glass accords with the windows of the baptistery and south aisle [Pl.6, 10.11-12]:

... he reached the church. Windows – narrow abysses into the world. On the coloured panes... the glass was green below and above it was orange. The greenness crept along the floor in a soft, thick moss... Up in the choir Bailey the organist began to play. Silently, slyly the orange sun grew above the green moss. And now it shone violently above, directly overhead and you could only breathe through your mouth, as in the tropics. Weeds entangled wildly, shaggy stems rose up convulsively to the sun. The orange-black branches of the bass voices, with a gentle gruffness, reached deeper and deeper inside, and there was no escape. Women opened up like shells and God was flung into the heat by their prayers...²⁷

Spence may have also contrived to embody in the new church something of Somerset Pennefather’s tremendous organisational energy and *joie de vivre*, qualities that had so impressed Charles Mitchell on their first meeting.²⁸ Pennefather’s obituarists would remark on his personal charisma and *bonhomie*, ‘as gifted with a real sense of humour, great tact and breadth of view’,²⁹ and it is this that so transparently shines through the pages of the St. George’s parish magazine during his tenure as vicar. Catherine Pennefather’s memoir includes several short accounts of her late husband contributed by close friends and correspondents, which for all their hagiographic intent, nevertheless strike one as genuine responses to the force of his character:

Our acquaintance was speedy and inevitable, as it also proved to be delightful. As a dignitary of the Church he was a revelation to me, for as a body I had not been drawn to them. He was so far removed from the proud priest of dignity. I saw he was, in its true sense, a Churchman, and that he lived his religion, but did not think it necessary to be constantly talking about it. His personality seemed to fill the atmosphere of the room and his healthy, manly Christianity inspired his life.³⁰

3.3-4 Byzantium Restored:

In a short address given at the 1881 Church Congress, held in Newcastle in anticipation of the inauguration of the new diocese, the elder statesman of the Ecclesiological Society, A.J.

Beresford Hope (1820-87) M.P., had praised the ongoing restoration of St. Nicholas' church (as the cathedral 'in waiting'), adding [8.2]:

Above all, you must observe how wide are the spaces of plain walls inside, now happily relieved from the pollution of whitewash. These plain walls spaces are given to you to become the field for examples of the highest religious art. I do not recommend you cover them with frescoes, for frescoes will perish under the air of Newcastle, so charged with chemical elements. But they offer themselves for that most enduring, most effective process of religious art, the glass mosaic, with its brilliant well-contrasted colours standing out from the golden background; mosaics such as you find in the churches of Ravenna, of Rome, and of the Eternal Wisdom at Constantinople. If all which I suggest is done, the church of St. Nicholas, in spite of its size so moderate for its new destination, may become a beautiful, glorious, and remarkable cathedral, and one of which the citizens of Newcastle may well be proud.³¹

Hope was a tireless campaigner on behalf of schemes to decorate the interior of St. Paul's cathedral (London) – first with frescoes and then with mosaic – but had been endlessly frustrated in the attempt. After a series of concerted efforts during the 1870s and early 80s, the issue seemed to have been finally buried, only to regain fresh momentum after 1890.³² Meanwhile, Hope's ambitions for mosaic art in Newcastle would be realised, not at St. Nicholas' cathedral, but in St. George's Jesmond. After a hiatus following the consecration, Mitchell returned to the task of completing the church in the summer of 1889, beginning with the decoration of the high walls and ceilings of the chancel.³³ Messrs. Rust & Co. were again the mosaicists (previously responsible for the reredos and pavements), but the contractor for the ceiling is not recorded in Mitchell's ledgers, and may well have been a casual workforce directed by Spence himself.³⁴ All the wall surfaces above the tile frieze, including the window embrasures, were to be covered in mosaic after the Byzantine fashion [page 1, 1.8], although the ground colour was of blue rather than the more usual gold [PI.2]. The mosaic was fixed largely by the 'indirect method', the ornamental and figured sections being made-up off-site at Rust & Co.'s Lambeth workshop, using their patent vitreous colours, cut and shaped in a manner similar to *opus sectile*. However, the lustre, range and subtle variegation of Rust's colours was far superior to anything their rivals at Messrs. Powell & Sons or Salviati & Co. could produce at the time. Once again, Mitchell's son provided designs for some of the figures – ranged on either side is a life-sized procession of the Apostles, modelled somewhat after the manner of the famous sixth-century murals at S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Italy) – but the remainder of the design and its coordination were wholly in Spence's hands [PI.3]. It was a mammoth task, costing almost £12,000 and on an unprecedented scale for even so experienced a contractor as Rust & Co., covering well over two thousand square feet of wall.³⁵

Here things went awry. A rare letter of Mitchell's reveals that he had hoped to have the work ready for the Newcastle meeting of the British Association (for the Advancement of Science), scheduled for September.³⁶ Work started in July, but by the middle of August, Mitchell was complaining of delays to John Dillon, the honorary church secretary, laying the blame squarely at the door of Henry J. Rust (1856-1935), although Mitchell chose not to mention the contractor by name:

Regarding the re-opening of the chancel of St. Georges Church, it was quite my intention [that] the work should be finished before the visit of the British Association, and I so arranged dates with the maker of the mosaic, but either he does not understand his own work, or he has deceived me, because the time required for fixing this will be two or three times as long as that which he indicated.

There is therefore not the slightest hope of re-opening by the 15th of September and I shall be more than pleased now if we can see the work finished by the 15 th of October.

Of course, this is a very great disappointment to all concerned, but there is no help for it, and the only comfort is that the mosaic, and the other work now being done, promise to produce an extremely fine result.³⁷

The British Association sessions took place between 11-18 September, and were reported extensively in the regional press.³⁸ The visit was considered something of a coup on the part of Lord Armstrong (the Association had previously visited Newcastle in 1838 and again 1863, the last also at Armstrong's invitation), and besides the lectures and public debates, included a large number of excursions to local places of historic or technological interest (e.g. the Elswick works). St. George's Jesmond was however omitted from the Association's itinerary, and an opportunity to promote the building and the novelty of its decoration was thereby lost. In the event, the chancel at St. George's was not re-opened to public view until just after Christmas,³⁹ and despite promotion at the Second (1889) and Third (1890) Arts and Crafts exhibitions,⁴⁰ and a series of reviews in the *Builder* [I.27] and the *Building News*,⁴¹ the project failed to attract the notice it surely deserved. As a demonstration of their abilities, the Jesmond scheme could not have been of greater importance for Rust & Co.'s reputation. They had worked at St. Paul's cathedral before,⁴² and would have had every expectation to be considered when in 1890-1 proposals for completing the decoration of the interior were again revived. Instead, the contract was awarded to one of their rivals (Messrs. Powell & Sons). Spence seems to have received only one further commission for mosaic decoration on a scale comparable to St. George's, and that for the great hall of St. Paul's School, Hammersmith (1896-1905) [4.19], but this has unfortunately been demolished (although it is known from photographs).⁴³ He was nevertheless counted amongst the artists chiefly responsible for the modern revival of mosaic as a contemporary art-form in Britain.⁴⁴ Even so, the Jesmond church and its architect were

overlooked by Prof. Bullen (2003) and Teresa Sladen (2010) in their most recent surveys of the late-nineteenth century Byzantine revival.⁴⁵

The stylistic references of this new work at St. George's were not wholly Byzantine – the extravagantly scrolling foliage beneath the windows is perhaps more reminiscent of early Islamic art [PI.3], the gilded and panelled ceiling of the Italian Renaissance – but the impression of an early Christian sanctuary was strong nonetheless, reinforced originally by the flickering gas-light of four 'brass and copper' *flambeaux* suspended immediately overhead [page 1, 1.9].⁴⁶ As in some of the early churches of Rome and Ravenna, the blue ground to the mosaic signified the chancel as a heavenly or paradisiacal place.⁴⁷ This is a familiar trope of Christian art, but its presentation here differs markedly from most contemporary Anglican ensembles. The chancel is open, albeit guarded on either side by pairs of animated angels (designed by Spence) in the spandrels of the arches.⁴⁸ The threshold is inlaid with an image of a peacock, the lines of foliage drawing the eye towards the altar. The poses of the Apostles (unnamed, but identified by the instruments of their martyrdom), and the placing of their feet (as in their Ravennate prototypes), similarly implies a processional movement towards the sanctuary, whilst angels in the tile frieze below 'sing' the *Te Deum* [10.6-7]:

To Thee all Angels cry aloud: the heavens and all the powers therein...
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets: praise thee.
The noble army of the Martyrs: praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge thee...

Across the eastern wall, the frieze mingles emblems of Christ's Passion alongside various spring flowers known for their medicinal properties, e.g. gentian and yellow Star of Bethlehem [PI.1, I.26c]. In the mosaics above, Spence's branching ornament buds and climbs a further 39 feet to the crown of the roof, the switchback curves strikingly anticipating Art Nouveau designs of a decade or more later [PI.2]. The visual resonances of this sanctuary are multifarious indeed – early Christian, Byzantine, Arabic, medieval Gothic, Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Catholicism – half-remembered evocations, as in a dream or a Symbolist poem, collapsing all sense of historical time. Writing in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, only a year after work had ceased on the church, Spence would invoke this Symbolist aesthetic, so central to his art, and the role of memory as the well-spring of invention:

Memories of things beautiful are the seeds from which the best invention springs.
Before you invent, your mind must be a storehouse, containing, not clear memories, but broad impressions, and these, coming in the influence of those subtle and indescribable emotions that I hope influence us all and to which I can give no more definite name than dreams or visions, become recreated in newer garments...

He who has no dreams can have no invention of the higher ranges that shall win our worship.⁴⁹

At St. George's, in 'dreams or visions', our worship is directed towards Him who has won for us the promise of Eternal Life.

3.3-5 The Promise Fulfilled:

Turning to face west, our gaze is met by the large window over the baptistery. It was not until the latter half of 1890 that Spence and Mitchell returned to a consideration of the western elevation, the solution of its manifold issues having been left in abeyance since the consecration.⁵⁰ As early photographs of the interior show, the large statuary niche at the base of the window remained empty, and to either side of the window there were uncomfortably bald expanses of blank wall. [7.2] The lack of visual cohesion between this and the flanking walls of the nave was painful, but may have been deliberate, isolating the wall and baptistery as a theologically distinct unit in the design. Press reports suggest that the niche was to have been filled with a statuary group based on the text, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven' (Luke 18.16), thus thematically linking the baptistery and the depiction of the Second Coming in the window above.⁵¹ For whatever reasons, the group was not pursued; perhaps its banality deterred Mitchell. The subject was a commonplace of Victorian church art, although for High Churchmen it had obvious polemical overtones, as supporting the efficacy of infant baptism, a practice about which Protestant opinion was decidedly ambivalent.⁵²

In the autumn of 1889, the stained glass of the west window was taken down and its upper half completely redesigned.⁵³ The exercise could be viewed simply as an example of Mitchell's indulgence as a patron. However, in an address given before a meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1908, Spence outlined his philosophy of design, and the need to revise work already installed in the light of actual experience:

It seemed to him that the treatment of an interior was very much like the painting of a picture: one must have the whole thing set up, so as to put the colours on, and then accentuate or eliminate just as was felt consistent with the scheme of decoration.... The work should be carried out very much in the same way that Phil May worked on his drawings: he accentuated and eliminated until he got the drawing perfect in expression. But surely there was no scheme of decoration that could be laid down perfectly before the work was begun. One must have the actual spaces to work upon, so that one could strengthen, and add colour, and do all kinds of things, so as to get it to unite and come together.⁵⁴

This was in fact the case towards the close of 1891, when the marble revetment in the chancel was stripped as 'not harmonising with the mosaics [above]', and replaced by further

mosaic, also to Spence's design [I.26].⁵⁵ The work was contemporaneous with the start of William Blake-Richmond's (1842-1921) series of mosaics at St. Paul's cathedral,⁵⁶ and like them, was fixed by the ancient 'direct method', i.e. the *tesserae* were applied individually by the artist and his assistants working *in situ*. In this, Mitchell and Spence were clearly keeping abreast of the latest metropolitan developments. However, other considerations seem to have operated with regard to the west window.

Pennefather's bland statement to his congregation in September 1889 that 'The western window has been replaced in less glowing colours, and is more pleasing to the eye than before', glossed over the fact that its theological intent had been radically altered.⁵⁷ The Apocalyptic subject matter was traditional enough [10.23], although J.W. Brown's over life-size figures made particular reference to the works of Michelangelo (1475-1564), e.g. the Sistine *Last Judgement* (1536-41) and, for the *Dies Domini* in the tracery rose, *Giuliano de Medici, Dud de Nemours*, one of the Medici tombs at San Lorenzo, Florence (1520-34) [10.24]. These references were filtered through allusions to other works by modern British masters, e.g. Frederic Leighton's aborted designs (1881-4) for the dome of St. Paul's cathedral, and in particular, his monumental *And the Sea gave up the dead which were in it*, based on Revelations 20.13 [10.25].⁵⁸ Perhaps more blatant were the clear references to recent works in stained glass by Edward Burne-Jones, particularly the Apocalyptic trumpeting angels (1869) at St. Edward the Confessor, Cheddleton (Staffs.) and the *Last Judgement* east window (1874-6) at the church of St. Michael and St. Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead (Berks.) [10.26] – the coloured-up cartoons for the latter were an acclaimed part of Burne-Jones' contribution to the Grosvenor Gallery's 1881 winter exhibition.⁵⁹ This was not so much an act of plagiarism, as of homage, the artisan-trained Brown demonstrating his credentials as an artist in his own right, in the 'High Art' spirit of Sir Joshua Reynolds' twelfth (1784) and fifteenth (1790) *Discourses*.⁶⁰ And for Mitchell and Spence, it inscribed the 'artistic' character of their creation.

The revisions to the window – executed by the Gateshead Stained Glass Company, cartooned and painted by Brown, but it would seem, designed by Spence (see Chap. 3.1-6) – dispensed altogether with the *Dies Domini*, whilst the lively *contrapposto* of the angels was softened in favour of a static hieratic expression [10.27].⁶¹ The window was no less dramatic, but there was no Final Judgement, only Resurrection [PI.9]. It is perhaps tempting to ascribe this change to the uneasy conscience of an arms manufacturer, and Mitchell's gift of the church as balm for a troubled soul. Certainly, Bernard Shaw's chillingly 'humanitarian' creation, the armaments baron Andrew Undershaft, would have had it so:

I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in watertight compartments. All the spare money my trade rivals spend on hospitals, cathedrals, and other receptacles for conscience money, I devote to experiments and researches in improved methods of destroying life and property.... My morality – my religion – must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.⁶²

Undershaft – so reminiscent of Lord Armstrong and Sir Andrew Noble – was the central character of Shaw's 1905 play *Major Barbara*, and perhaps one of the fruits of his 1894 visit to Newcastle (see Chap. 1). There is, however, not a shred of evidence that Mitchell lost any sleep over his business dealings with Armstrong, or that he acted other than as a patriotic and loyal subject of the British Empire.

Nevertheless, the existence of Final Judgement did have some topicality in modern Jesmond. As the traditional doctrines of hell and eternal punishment were increasingly subject to challenge, even from within the Established Church, so Pennefather's predecessor as vicar of JPC, Rev. Berkeley Addison (1815-1882), had publicly entered the debate upholding the received view.⁶³ As the initial state of the window suggests [10.23], it is doubtful whether Pennefather would have dissented much from Addison's position, for all the very real doctrinal differences between the two congregations. However, for Mitchell and his brother-in-law, there may have been some very personal, and very human issues at stake. Both men had lost infant children early in their marriages, and this fact alone may explain the prominence and decorative elaboration accorded the baptistery at St. George's. Henry Frederick Swan had also lost his first wife, Mary Calvert Swan (née Routledge), in 1869 aged only 27 years. Ten years later, his elder brother Charles Sheriton Swan (1831-79) fell overboard from a paddle-steamer and drowned whilst crossing the English Channel; he and his wife were returning from a fortnight's stay in Russia. The first reports suggested suicide, but a witness was produced who confirmed that Swan's death was a tragic accident.⁶⁴ The burden of managing the Wallsend branch of the Mitchell-Swan business, C.S. Swan & Hunter Ltd., fell temporarily to Charles Sheriton's widow, Mary Kelly Swan (née Glover); in the 1881 census, she even styled herself as an 'iron shipbuilder'. Henry Swan had lost an elder brother, Charles Mitchell a brother-in-law, a trusted protégé and a highly effective company manager. Can we wonder if the reminder that their loved ones had yet to face their Maker, and even the possibility of Eternal Damnation, was simply too painful to behold?

The theological intent of the west window was now thrown back towards the sanctuary, and the promise of Eternal Life made through the sacrament. After the decoration of the high ceilings of the nave and aisles [PI.5], in the summer and autumn of 1890,⁶⁵ Mitchell and Spence embarked on the final structural additions to the church. In November, the Caen stone tabernacling beneath the western window was augmented on either side, somewhat after the

fashion of the late-medieval organ cases of Continental Europe [1.7].⁶⁶ As such, the work offers a curious reflection on the contemporary revival of interest in the organ case as a field for artistic display, and particularly amongst English church architects. Significant contributions had been made in this regard by G.F. Bodley (1827-1907) [6.3-4] and G.G. Scott junr. (1839-97),⁶⁷ whilst the first volume of Arthur George Hill's (1857-1923) Europe-wide survey of *The Organ-Cases and Organs of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (1883) was both a further symptom and a spur to the revival.⁶⁸ St. George's Jesmond is of a scale that would readily have admitted a large organ in the European fashion on its western wall. However, the actual T.C. Lewis & Co. instrument was installed *sans* case, in what had become the standard English fashion, hidden away behind a parclose screen off the south side of the chancel [8.4]. The new stonework thus 'stands in', as it were, for the lack of a proper organ case, and was provided with 'towers', fretted 'pipe shades' and carved panels of singing cherubs in its upper parts [7.28-9], as a visual metaphor for a real musical instrument. More sculpture than architecture, this is one of the most evanescent of Spence's creations in a Flamboyant 'Free-style' Gothic. And by unpacking and re-arranging the compositional format – image, picture frame, tabernacle, window opening – of the windows in the side aisles [Pl.7] and baptistery, Spence finally contrived a subtle and unifying counterpoint across the entire western wall of the church.

*Tuba mirum spargens sonum.*⁶⁹ The 'organ' thunders, the Apocalyptic angels sound their trumpets, the dead are seen to rise from their graves... a silent music stirs the deepest recesses of the believer's soul, a distant, soundless affirmation of the promise of Eternal Life made earlier in the sanctuary.

3.3-6 Conclusion: A Theatre for the Soul

In 2006, the author contributed a short essay to a celebratory volume on the churches of the diocese of Newcastle, in which St. George's Jesmond was singled out both for its singular qualities as a work of art and as a place of worship. In an attempt to encapsulate, for a lay audience, just what was so special about St. George's, I noted that its profusely decorated chancel was 'as much a theatre for the soul, as it is a liturgical or sacramental space'.⁷⁰ It is customary to speak of churches in theatrical terms, as liturgical theatre, the choreography of priests and assistants around the altar, the continual re-enactment of Our Lord's Last Supper before the faithful, the (earthly) performance of a timeless (heavenly) ritual. As the nineteenth century advanced into the twentieth, churches of the Anglo-Catholic tradition were increasingly designed as the vehicles for the collective performance of an ever more elaborate and ceremonial liturgy, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of architecture and painting, music and incense, colour and light. This was heady and emotional stuff. And there was once that quality of liturgical

theatre about St. George's; the flickering lights of the gasoliers – before they were replaced by electricity – animating the mosaic figures and marble of the chancel; an Antique vision straight out of the paintings of Alma-Tadema. There was however never a taint of Ritualism about the ceremonial at St. George's, although Charles Mitchell and Somerset Pennefather did accord a notably high place to music as an aid to worship.⁷¹

In a recent (2011) appraisal of late-Victorian church buildings, Andrew Saint has commented that, in an age when church attendance had ceased to be compulsory, and the institutions themselves were increasingly threatened, 'the role of the church building and its decoration loomed larger as a way of attracting and holding congregations or, more particularly, individuals'.⁷² Rather than the insistent corporatism of the mid-Victorian decades, later nineteenth century churches appeared to be aiming 'to instil a subjective mood of devotion', rather than of a shared faith, 'to appeal to individual feelings'.⁷³ This was the religious spirit of the post-Darwinian age, one of private judgement and interiority. In providing for a permanent caretaker, so that the new church could be available to all, at all times, Charles Mitchell and Somerset Pennefather were responding to the voluntarist spirit of the times.⁷⁴ But this was not what I meant to convey by the phrase, 'a theatre for the soul'. Rather it is the particular sense in which the interior of St. George's addresses the beholder as an immersive environment, in which one is oneself a player in a theatre of the heart and mind. Perhaps it was this sense of the theatrical that most attracted the young Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) when he visited St. George's, and which he attempted to communicate through his 1896 essay *On Gonging to Church*.⁷⁵

We closed the previous section with Spence's invocation, in and through the art of St. George's, of a silent, wholly interiorised music. In *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (1882), the critic Walter Hamilton (1844–99) wrote of this 'correlation of the arts' as a defining characteristic of modern (Aesthetic) art, i.e. the invoking of one medium through the means of another in order to extend the poetical associations of the artwork.⁷⁶ Walter Pater (1839-94), as one of the key arbiters of Aesthetic Movement theory, offered perhaps the most celebrated exposition of this notion, in his essay *The School of Giorgione* (1877):⁷⁷

But although each art has thus its own specific order of impressions, and an untranslatable charm, while a just apprehension of the ultimate differences of the arts is the beginning of aesthetic criticism; yet it is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art... [in] a partial alienation from its own limitations, by which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces...⁷⁸

This was not so much the pursuit of synaesthetic sensations, as the working out of an inherent tendency, as Pater insists: '*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.* For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it'.⁷⁹ Jesmond's 'silent music' thus raises an intriguing question. Were the eclectic transgressions of style, the (hidden) allusions and blurring of sensibilities seen at St. George's, intended as signifiers both of the building's modernity and of its status as a work of art?

Of recent scholars, Elizabeth Prettejohn has perhaps been the most searching in her re-examination of the theoretical bases of Aestheticism, offering by turns a revisionist exercise in the critical appreciation of late-Victorian painting,⁸⁰ whilst shedding considerable light on the historical roots of the Formalist-Modernist tradition of criticism.⁸¹ Of particular interest has been the close-knit group of artists associated with Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), Frederic Leighton (q.v.) and James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). It was amongst this group of London artists that Aestheticism was born, and where the term 'Art for Art's sake' took hold as a radical declaration on the autonomy of the artist and of the work of art. Prettejohn argues that the varied formal strategies they evolved were nonetheless in response to a shared set of theoretical concerns. These might be summarised as the Kantian problematic: if as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) asserted in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), any object that would elicit from us a 'free' (i.e. pure or aesthetic) judgement, cannot simultaneously admit of ethical, narrative or poetical associations, else our judgement is 'dependent' and in no way free. Thus paradoxically, even the concepts 'work of art' or 'beautiful' cannot attach to an art-object, if our judgement is to remain free (and therefore purely aesthetic).⁸² How then can we agree what might constitute a work of art, or even justify its practice in the modern world?

In this respect, a particularly vexed issue of Aesthetic Movement artworks is their habit of both overt and covert quotation in and between works, so much so that the specific point of the artwork appears to lie in its references to some other work(s) of art. Such a practice strikes at the very heart of our modern notions of artistic originality. In the sixth of the *Discourses* (1774), Joshua Reynolds had advocated the practice of imitation as a spur to invention, and as a demonstration of the artist's and/or the patron's taste and learning, 'so that the artist who can unite in himself the excellences of the various great painters, will approach nearer to perfection than any one of his masters'.⁸³ In this respect, the overtly reflexive nature ('copyism') of G.F. Bodley's church work should be understood as qualifying these buildings as works of art, and their architect as an artist. The elaborate studio procedures, modelled after Renaissance practice, of artists such as Frederic Leighton, Burne-Jones and Albert Moore (1841-93) – e.g. life-drawing from the nude and draped model; the building-up of complex compositions from

many individual studies done in the studio – was a more sophisticated development of Reynolds' theory. Such procedures signified their works as art in terms of a period defined *a priori* as the paradigm of artistic achievement. Burne-Jones and Henry Holiday (1839-1927) – and we may surmise, J.W. Brown at Jesmond – adopted similar studio procedures with respect to their designs for stained glass, likewise raising this branch of the 'industrial arts' to the level of high art.

In the essay, *Walter Pater and aesthetic painting* (1999),⁸⁴ Prettejohn argues for an understanding of the Aesthetic Movement practice of imitation that goes far beyond Reynolds' academic theory art. Thus the many shared visual and thematic cross-references between Aesthetic artworks defined these as both modern, and yet within the historical domain of art:

... the overt dependence in Aestheticism on artistic precedent, in the selection of subject-matter and often in the choice of visual motifs, has seemed suspect. We might, however, reconfigure Aestheticism as another kind of response to this [Kantian] problematic about the work of art. The Aesthetic work can lay claim to the status 'work of art' on the grounds that it resembles another work of art in some way. However, each resemblance of this kind is a singular relationship between two works. There is no single property that is shared by all the works. We do not, then, need to have a general concept of the work of art to identify a particular item as a work of art.⁸⁵

In the course of this study, we have seen many examples of this kind of reflexive practice in operation at St. George's. On a yet more sophisticated level, the 'narrative' content of a work might be suppressed entirely – thus stressing its timeless, formal properties – whilst the visual and/or textual references become the points of departure for a nested series of subjective associations, an indeterminate series of parallel works, created, as it were off-stage, in the mind of the beholder. In the essay *Leonardo da Vinci* (1869),⁸⁶ Pater employed many of these strategies in his famously subjective 'description' of the *Mona Lisa*. Pater barely refers to the formal aspects of the painting – thereby doubly suppressing its content and any 'narrative' in the text – counting rather on our knowledge of the work:

All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants...⁸⁷

Pater's *Mona Lisa* is thus a free response – one amongst many – to a work of art whose fame transcends its temporal bounds, and which has therefore become one with the modern condition:

modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly *Lady Lisa* might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.⁸⁸

Here we seem to touch on the Symbolist aspects of T.R. Spence's church, and the chains of associations thrown up by its many visual references. Whether it is permissible to speak of an architecture of Aestheticism is perhaps a moot point. The more popular manifestations of the Movement – panels of cut red-brick depicting birds or sunflowers in pots; carved woodwork and prettily turned railings painted white or 'artistic' green; stained glass damsels in Antique dress representing *Ceres*, *Flora* or *Pomona*; Morris wallpapers, Japanese pots, 'Queen Anne', 'Old English' and 'Free Classic', the 'artistic' bric-à-brac of a prosperous middle-class home – would not qualify a building as Aesthetic under the terms of the present discussion. Nor is Spence's work at Jesmond entirely free of these populist trappings. More radical manifestations of architectural Aestheticism are far rarer. One thinks of the Whistler and Miles houses (both 1878-8) in Tite Street, Chelsea (London), designed by E.W. Godwin (1833-86). There is however little about Godwin's Chelsea houses that strikes one as peculiarly poetical, and they have generally been admired more for their studiously abstract compositions and lack of 'stylism' than for their allusive qualities. Rather, it is Spence's application of the Paterian strategies outlined above that permits us to speak of St. George's as an Aesthetic work of architecture.

In the cultural context of its time, these marked out Charles Mitchell's church as both a sophisticated and a progressive work of art. Likewise, they imbued St. George's with a uniquely mysterious poetry appropriate to its role as a modern place of worship. Given the predominantly secular and hedonistic, even pagan, tendencies of the Movement, this is perhaps all the more remarkable; St. George's was commissioned after all by a politically conservative churchman, albeit one of progressive tastes and considerable business acumen. The typical Victorian church insists strongly on the matters of faith: what to believe, what doctrine to uphold, what text to cherish, wherein one's trust should be placed. Not here. We are presented, not so much with the articles of faith, as invited to explore, to inquire and to participate. St. George's tasks the beholder to imagine well, and we must rouse ourselves to meet the work in order to taste it or 'enjoy it in any wise'. Like the *Mona Lisa*, SHE does not lightly give up her secrets; this is made our responsibility; but they come nonetheless to the beholder, barely communicable in words, in the depths of one's soul.

Leave we awhile without the turmoil of the town;
Leave we the sullen gloom, the faces full of care:
Stay we awhile and dream, within this place of prayer,
Stay we, and pray, and dream: till our hearts die down
Thoughts of the world, unkind and weary: till Christ crown
Laborious day with love...

Lionel Johnson (1867-1902): *Our Lady of France* (1891) ⁸⁹

Notes to Chapter 3.3:

- ¹ Ruskin: *The Stones of Venice*, III, Chap. IV, § XXI.
- ² Mark 1.16-17, 'Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men'.
- ³ Atlay (1912): *Op.cit.*, pp.167-8. Wilberforce particularly enjoyed fishing trips to Norway with his neighbour, the Quaker banker and antiquary, John William Pease (1836-1901) of Pendower house (Westgate Road), Newcastle.
- ⁴ In the convention of *quadri riportati*, the mythological scenes are framed separately and therefore visually isolated from their surroundings. The best known examples are Michelangelo's Sistine chapel ceiling (1508-12), Vatican (Rome), and Annibale Caracci's *galleria* (1597-c.1608) in the Palazzo Farnese (Rome), where the *quadri riportati* are set within an illusionistic architectural space (*quadratura*).
- ⁵ Sewter (1975), *Op.cit.*, Vol.2, pp.47. Designed in 1872, the five large windows, executed by Morris & Co., were installed in 1874. This was the only occasion where Burne-Jones adopted the *quadri riportati* format for a scheme of stained glass, justified by the Renaissance-style setting of the chapel; but note Sewter attributes the setting out of the *quadratura* to the architect Philip Webb (1831-1915).
- ⁶ Acts 5. 33-37.
- ⁷ See Vol.I, Chap. 3.1-7.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, note 110.
- ⁹ Evans (1997), *Op.cit.*; also Evans (2007), *Op.cit.*
- ¹⁰ Cf. Overall, S.E. (ed.): *Catalogue of the A.H. Mackmurdo and the Century Guild Collection*, William Morris Gallery (London, 1967), p.19 (cat.G.17), folding screen, satinwood and embroidered silk, (1884); ditto p.19 (cat. G.36a-b) pair of dining chairs, mahogany, made by Messrs. Collinson & Lock London (c.1883).
- ¹¹ *SGPM* Vol.3, no. 12 (Dec. 1891), p.92: 'Mr. Mitchell... [has] also presented a very handsome font ewer'. The ewer was almost certainly executed by Alfred Shirley & Co.
- ¹² E.g. Ruprich-Robert, V.: *Flore ornamentale. Essai sur la composition de l'ornement. Eléments tirés de la nature et principes de leur application*, issued in 50 parts (Paris and London, 1866-76). The drawings for this volume are now in the Musée d'Orsay (Paris).
- ¹³ For Eugène Grasset (1841-1917), see Plantin, Y. and Blondel, F.: *Eugène Grasset Lausanne 1841 Sceaux 1917* (Paris, 1980); also Murray-Robertson, A.: *Grasset: pionnier de l'Art Nouveau* (Lausanne and Paris, 1981). Grasset taught at the *École Guérin* (Paris) between 1891 and 1917; his design-course lecture notes (numbering over 6,000 pages) are now in the collections of the Musée d'Orsay (Paris).
- ¹⁴ Villeneuve, Huon de (attrib.): *Histoire des quatre fils Aymon, très nobles et très vaillans chevaliers. De luxe* edition (200 copies), illustrated by E. Grasset (1841-1917); printed in colour photogravure by Charles Gillot (1853-1903); binding by Henri Noulhac (1866-1931); (Paris, 1883).
- ¹⁵ Plantin & Blondel (1980), *op.cit.*, p.9.
- ¹⁶ Whall (1920), *Op.cit.*, p. 245.
- ¹⁷ Ruskin: *St. Mark's Rest*, Chap. VIII, § 99-101.
- ¹⁸ Birch, D.: *Ruskin's Myths* (Oxford, 1980), pp.137-57 & 161-71.
- ¹⁹ Gordon, W.J.: *Perseus the Gorgon Slayer. Illustrated by T.R. Spence. The Tale told in English by W.J. Gordon* (London, 1883); reviewed *NWC* (14 Dec. 1883), *Art and Literature* (Christmas books).
- ²⁰ E.g. Spence, T.R.: 'Homer and Architecture, and the crafts', in *Architectural Association Notes*, Vol.XVII, No.190 (London, Dec. 1902), pp. 183-4; also Spence, T.R.: 'The Elements of Design in Internal Decoration', in *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, Third Series, Vol.XVI, No.4 (London, 1908), pp.113-37.
- ²¹ Spence (1908), *Op.cit.*, pp.114 & 116.
- ²² E.g. at Hexham Abbey (Northumberland), mid-thirteenth century. A solitary surviving pine-cone finial can still be seen on a buttress on the east face of the north transept
- ²³ Mitchell acquired Simonds' *Dionysos* from the sculptor for £1525-0-0 after its exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1880; see M1, *folio 31, Furniture and Moveable Property*, three instalments (6 Mar., 30 Aug. & 16 Oct. 1880) *To George Simonds, Art Works*, 2 @ £500 and 1 @ £525. The group (the sculptor's op.119, carved in Rome 1878-9) was subsequently sold at the dispersal of Jesmond Towers and its contents in 1926, and was presented to the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead-on-Tyne (Tyne & Wear Museums). I am grateful to the late H. Godwin Arnold for sharing his researches into George Simonds' northern patrons.

- ²⁴ Finch, C.: *The Cantharus and Pigna at Old St. Peter's*, in *Gesta*, Vol.30, No.1 (1991), pp.16-26. The bronze *pigna*, eleven feet tall, is now installed in the *Cortile della Pigna* of the Vatican Palace.
- ²⁵ *B* Vol.47 (12 Oct. 1889), pp.253-5 (254).
- ²⁶ See Vol. I, Chap.1-1.
- ²⁷ Zamyatin (1984): *Op.cit.*, p.81.
- ²⁸ Pennefather (1918), *Op.cit.*, pp.20-1.
- ²⁹ *Guardian* (7 Sept. 1917), *obit.* Somerset Edward Pennefather
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.37-8.
- ³¹ Swaby (ed.) (1882), *Op. cit.*, pp.343-5 (345).
- ³² On the protracted scheme for the decoration of St. Paul's cathedral, see Crook, J. Mordaunt: *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London, 1981), pp.154-69; also Reynolds, S.: *William Blake Richmond. An Artist's Life* (Norwich, 1995), pp.246-63; also Bullen (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.146-51.
- ³³ *SGPM*, Vol.1, no.8 (Aug. 1889), p.87, *S. George's Church*, noting the closure of the chancel early in July.
- ³⁴ M2, twenty-nine payments to Messrs. Rust & Co., between 24 June and 24 Dec. 1889, totalling £1189-13-1. Mitchell seems to have dealt only with Jesse Rust's son, Henry J. Rust (1856-1935), for the duration of this work.
- ³⁵ Martin Brandon has indicated that Rust & Co. habitually engaged a casual female workforce drawn from the locales of individual commissions, a practice which seems to accord with entries in M2 at this time, e.g. (10, 11 & 17 Aug. 1889) *Rust & Co. for wages*. I am grateful to Martin Brandon for sharing his doctoral research into Victorian mosaicists.
- ³⁶ *SGPM*, Vol.1 no.9 (Sept. 1889), p.89, which notes that the chancel is still screened off, but that work was expected to be completed within a few weeks.
- ³⁷ *JCE*, enclosing letter of 21 Aug. 1889, from Mitchell to John Dillon Esq. (29 Larkspur Terrace, Jesmond); see Vol.II, Cat. IV, p.279.
- ³⁸ E.g. *NDJ* (4-20 Sept. 1889). The newspaper ran a number of preliminary and follow-up articles, besides reporting the week-long event itself.
- ³⁹ *SGPM*, Vol.1, no.12 (Dec. 1889), p.13, *Re-Opening of the Chancel*, '... before Christmas Day, even if the whole of the mosaic work be not quite completed by that time'; also *NWC* (28 Dec. 1889), *St. George's Church, Newcastle*, reporting completion of the chancel mosaics.
- ⁴⁰ *AC*, Second exhibition (1889), p.262 (no.850); Third exhibition (1890), p.214 (no.440), p.254 (no.617).
- ⁴¹ 'Jesmond Newcastle' in *BN*, Vol.57 (27 Dec. 1889), p.893; also 'Decorations: St. George's Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne' in *B*, Vol. 59, 15 Nov. 1890, p.386 + illus.
- ⁴² [WHR]: 'Architectural Mosaic-IV' in *BN*, Vol.36 (11 April 1879), pp.375-7 (376), mentions a 'head of Daniel the prophet, intended for one of the spandrels of the dome at St. Paul's cathedral'. The spandrels were begun in 1864 under the superintendence of the Surveyor to the Fabric, F.C. Penrose (1817-1903). The artists were Alfred Stevens (1817-75) for the four greater prophets, and G.F. Watts (1817-1904) for the Evangelists. Only Steven's *Isaiah* and Watt's *Matthew* was ever installed. The remaining spandrels were filled from 1888 onwards by W.E.F. Britten (c.1850-1916), adapting the previous designs, the work executed by Messrs. Salviati & Co. (of London and Murano); see Britten, W.E.F.: 'The Mosaics in the Dome of St. Paul's Cathedral: from the originals by G.F. Watts, R.A., Alfred Stevens, and W.E.F. Britten', in *AR*, Vol.2 (June-Nov.1897), pp.261-69. I am grateful to Martin Brandon for sharing his doctoral research into late-Victorian mosaicists.
- ⁴³ I am grateful to Simon May, librarian at the present-day St. Paul's School (relocated to Barnes, London SW13) and to Anne Wheeldon, archivist, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, for information on Spence's mosaic decoration at the former school site.

Spence seems to have continued to supply commercial designs to Messrs. Rust & Co.; see their (undated) catalogue, Battersea Public Library (local history collection).
- ⁴⁴ Spence, T.R.: 'Marble and Mosaic', in *The Architect*, Vol.45 (27 Feb. 1891), pp.126-7; also Townsend, C.H.: 'Mosaic: its History and Practice- II' in *Journal of the Society of Arts* (London, 7 July 1891), pp.782-8 (785).
- ⁴⁵ Bullen (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp. 107-85; also Sladen (2011), *Op.cit.*, pp. 81-99.
- ⁴⁶ *NDC* (13 Oct. 1888), p5. The gas light-fittings (now lost) were designed by Spence and likely executed by Alfred J. Shirley, who undertook most of the artistic metalwork in the church. They were converted to electric light late in 1891, as the fumes were thought injurious to the stencilled ceilings; see *SGPM*, Vol.3 no.12 (Dec. 1891), p.92, *Further Improvements in the Church*.

- ⁴⁷ For Rome, e.g. S. Cecilia in Trastevere, SS. Cosma e Damiano, S. Prassede, and the 'restored' apse mosaic of S. Giovanni in Laterano; for Ravenna, e.g. the so-called mausoleum of Galla Placidia, and the dome of the Neonian (or 'Orthodox') baptistry.
- ⁴⁸ *NWC* (28 Dec. 1889), *St. George's Church, Jesmond*. On the south side, the angels carry respectively the sword and crown (of martyrdom), and the orb and cross (of universal dominion); on the north side, trumpet and hand-bells (for praise).
- ⁴⁹ Spence, T.R.: 'Invention and Memory. A Paper read before the Art Workers' Guild', in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, no.28 (Oct. 1892), pp.105-6 (105).
- ⁵⁰ *SGPM*, Vol.2, (Nov. 1890), p.123, *Further Church Improvements*.
- ⁵¹ *NDJ* (13 Oct. 1888), p.6.
- ⁵² Nias (1951), *Op.cit.*, pp.8-10.
- ⁵³ *SGPM* Vol.I, no. 9 (Sept. 1889), p.89, *S. George's Church*; also M2, three payments to J.W. Brown (18 April, 24 Aug. & 6 Sept. 1889), totalling £160-0-0, and four payments to The Gateshead Stained Glass Co. (7 March- 5 Nov. 1889), totalling £144-9-6.
- ⁵⁴ Spence (1908), *Op.cit.*, p.137.
- ⁵⁵ see Vol.II, Cat. I, **L26**.
- ⁵⁶ Reynolds (1995), *Op.cit.*, pp.246-63; also Bullen (2003), *Op.cit.*, pp.148-51.
- ⁵⁷ *SGPM* Vol.1 no. 9 (Sept. 1889), p.89.
- ⁵⁸ Ormond, R. *et al.* (eds.): *Frederic Lord Leighton* (London, 1996), pp.220-232 (cat.115-117); also Inglis, A.: 'A Victorian High renaissance scheme for the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral', in *Fabrications*, Vol.10 (Aug. 1999), pp.79-99. The mosaic scheme for the dome was instigated in 1878, Leighton and Edward J. Poynter (1836-1919) being the chosen artists. A *modello* was shown at the Royal Academy in 1882, and a full-size cartoon *in situ* in 1884, but the scheme was abandoned in December 1885. It was however very widely publicised; see Inglis (1999), *Op.cit.*, pp. 83-6.
- ⁵⁹ Sewter (1975), *Op.cit.*, pp. 66-7; also Wildman & Christian (eds.) (1998), *Op.cit.*, pp. 178-9 (cat.71).
- ⁶⁰ E.g. Reynolds: *Fifteen Discourses etc.*, Discourse XII (1784), pp.196-8, -'I know there are many artists of great fame, who appear never to have looked out of themselves, and who probably think it derogatory to their character to be supposed to borrow from any other painter... [but] The daily food and nourishment of the mind of an artist is found in the great works of his predecessors'.
- ⁶¹ See note 53 above. Photographs indicate that the figures in Brown's original design adopted a generic Renaissance flowing dress throughout. Spence's new angels are robed in priestly vestments, i.e. chasuble, dalmatics with stoles, and albs adorned with apparels.
- ⁶² Shaw, G.B.: *Major Barbara*, first staged 1905; first published London, 1907 (London, 2000), pp.70-1.
- ⁶³ Munden (2006), *Op.cit.*, pp.95-6.
- ⁶⁴ NCL L 623.8 – Cr. 957723A, *Charles Mitchell: newspaper cuttings scrapbook*; includes *NDJ* (28 April 1879), *Suicide off Dover*; also *NDC* (28 April 1879), *Sad Death of a Tyne Shipbuilder*; also *NDC* (1 May 1879), *The Late Mr. C.S. Swan*, report of funeral, and quoting the affidavit of James T. Harris, Lieut. Col. 33 rd. Bengal Native Infantry, to the effect that Swan had not jumped but had fallen overboard.
- ⁶⁵ *SGPM*, Vol.2, no.9 (Sept. 1890), p.98, *Decoration of the Church*, notes that ceilings were under way.
- ⁶⁶ *SGPM*, Vol.2 no.11 (Nov. 1890), p.123, *Further Church Improvements*: 'Our friends will already have noticed that scaffolding has been erected against the west wall of our Church, as Mr. Mitchell has generously offered to further beautify it by placing carved stonework on either side of the large west window up to the roof...' Canon Pennefather further notes that the work was scheduled to occupy the month.
- ⁶⁷ E.g. Stamp (2002), *Op.cit.*, pp.279-82.
- ⁶⁸ Hill, A.G.: *The Organ-Cases and Organs of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London, 1883). This was the first scholarly survey (in English) of historic organ cases across Europe; a second volume followed in 1891.
- ⁶⁹ From the medieval Latin hymn, *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath): 'Wondrous sound the trumpets flingeth' (1849 verse trans. by Josiah Irons (1812-83)).
- ⁷⁰ Moat, N.: 'Stained Glass and other Furnishings' in Purves, G. (ed.): *Churches of Newcastle and Northumberland. A Sense of Place* (Stroud (Glos.), 2006), pp.53-7 (57).
- ⁷¹ *Guardian* (7 Sept. 1917), obit. Somerset Edward Pennefather: 'His parish of St. George was widely known in the north as one with a beautiful church, well ordered services, and a large and devout congregation...' Charles Mitchell secured the services of the talented James Moody Preston (1860-1931), for St. George's, where he inaugurated a notable musical tradition; see 'Mr. J.M. Preston' in *Musical Herald*, 1 Nov. 1898, pp.323-5.
- ⁷² Saint, (2011), *Op.cit.*, pp.25.

⁷³ Ibid., p.24

⁷⁴ *JCE* (23 Dec. 1886 & 22 Oct. 1887).

⁷⁵ Shaw (1896), Op.cit.; see also Vol. I, Chap.1-1.

⁷⁶ Hamilton, W.: *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (third edn., 1882), p.vii.

⁷⁷ 'The School of Giorgione' in Pater, W.: *The Renaissance. Studies in Art and Poetry* (fifth edn., London, 1901), pp. 130-54. The first edition of *The Renaissance* published in 1873; Pater's essay, *The School of Giorgione*, published in *The Fortnightly Review* (London, October 1877), was added to the third edition of *The Renaissance* in 1888.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.133-4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.135.

⁸⁰ E.g. Prettejohn, E.: *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London, 2007).

⁸¹ E.g. Prettejohn, E.: *Beauty & Art 1750-2000* (Oxford, 2005).

⁸² Ibid., pp.50-4.

⁸³ Reynolds: *Fifteen Discourses etc.*, Discourse VI (1774), pp.87-9.

⁸⁴ Prettejohn, E.: 'Walter Pater and aesthetic painting', in Prettejohn, E. (ed.): *After the Pre-Raphaelites. Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* (Manchester, 1999), pp.36-58.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.53.

⁸⁶ 'Leonardo da Vinci' in Pater, (1901), Op.cit., pp.98-129. First published as *Notes on Leonardo* in *The Fortnightly Review* (London, Nov. 1869), and included in the first (1873) edition of *The Renaissance*.

⁸⁷ Pater (1901), Op.cit., pp.123-6 (125).

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.125-6.

⁸⁹ Fletcher, I. (ed.): *The Complete Poems of Lionel Johnson* (London, 1953), p.15.



4. Epilogue

4. Epilogue:

Redefining the significance of St. George's Jesmond

A man of sense ought not to say, nor will I be very confident, that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these...

Plato: *Phaedo* ¹

Would a late-Victorian visitor to St. George's Jesmond, or a member of its congregation, have recognised the picture painted in the previous chapters? Plato's classic statement of the agnostic position seems perhaps a fitting response. Has our understanding of Charles Mitchell's remarkable church been advanced greatly? Although its Grade-I listing certainly attests to its importance as a late-Victorian building in the North-East of England, its wider significance has for too long gone unrecognised. As I have attempted to show, St. George's is both a key document in the theoretical development of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the place where the 'new art' made its first magnificent landfall in England. It offered not only a fresh paradigm for Anglican church-building in the North-East of England, but in the process, re-imagined the iconography of mainstream opinion in the Church of England. Intended as a spur to churchmen of all opinions in the newly established diocese of Newcastle, the building's scale, and the extent and originality of its decorative scheme, embodied the religious and cultural aspirations of one of the fastest growing industrial conurbations in late-nineteenth century Britain. Here the latest artistic ideas from London and the Continent blended with the best of northern craftsmanship, proclaiming together the 'brotherhood of the arts of design' and the 'art of the times to be'. Thus on all fronts, this Newcastle church was 'new, complex and vital'.

Although St. George's was the outcome of a fortuitous set of circumstances, it was the creation principally of three men. For Charles Mitchell, the church was a public demonstration not only of his prestige, as one of the nation's leading industrialists, but also of his taste and commitment to the wider promotion of the arts in the region. For its first vicar, Somerset Pennefather, St. George's represented a turning point in his personal faith journey, and the embodiment of his peculiarly vital and inclusive interpretation of Christianity. For Thomas Ralph Spence, it was the commission of a lifetime, his 'one supreme effort', a summation of his talents as architect, artist and craftsman. The church is arguably much more than the sum of their individual contributions. I have attempted in these pages to unpick the many-layered complexity of its signification; much has had to be left unsaid; there is much yet to be told and

discovered. Although there were several large churches building at this time in and around Newcastle, none would achieve quite the sophistication or the artistic ambition of St. George's. When I first visited the church, it was perhaps its vanguardist elements that most impressed me. Thirty years on, and with the hindsight of the research undertaken for this study, it still strikes me as unlike any modern church I have ever known. In short, St. George's is unique, utterly absorbing, inexhaustible.

The singularity of Spence's church undoubtedly contributed to its comparative neglect. Too far from London to register with the capital's critics and arbiters of fashion, it failed (and still fails) to make the impression that was perhaps its due. Moreover, the increasingly Catholic drift of the diocese of Newcastle, and of the national Church as a whole, left the non-sectarian, comprehensive message of Spence and Pennefather's iconographic programme high-and-dry. Perhaps only now, with the Church of England marginalised and divided against itself, might the peculiarly theatrical quality of St. George's again work its magic. Only one church was ever raised in direct emulation of Mitchell's achievement, and that by another millionaire ship-owner who had made his fortune in the north. Sir James Knott (1855-1934) intended St. James and St. Basil, Fenham, Newcastle (1928-32) [6.36-7] as a memorial to two of his sons lost in the Great War, and like its Jesmond model, Sir James provided for a complex of church, parish hall, vicarage and landscaped public garden entirely at his own expense. Amongst the very last architectural works designed by George Washington Jack (1855-1931), and one of the last great Arts and Crafts churches in England, SS. James and Basil incorporates much fine craft-work by Jack's Art Workers' Guild associates Edward Woore (1880-1960), Graily Hewitt (1864-1952), Laurence A. Turner (1864-1957) and John Paul Cooper (1869-1933).²

Appropriately enough, these two churches – the one commissioned by a former parishioner of the other³ – book-ended the story of the Arts and Crafts in the North-East. However, the sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk* represented by St. George's had long ceased to be relevant to the Arts and Crafts, despite the movement's continuing advocacy of the collaborative ideal. Similarly, the hardening of British attitudes against *l'art Nouveau* ensured that T.R. Spence's innovations at Jesmond would pass unnoticed and without issue. St. George's offers a unique glimpse of what might have been, if the Arts and Crafts had not become so wedded to the pursuit of individual artistic expression, or the British not been so xenophobically dismissive of Continental developments. And notwithstanding Spence's key role in the development of a 'Free-style' Gothic, was there not also a lingering perception – or rather, a typically British prejudice – that the 'Jesmond style' was tainted; that its essential origins lay, not in 'real' architecture, but in the decoration of ships and marine engineering? Ironically, the tables would be turned after the Great War, with the widespread acceptance of

the Art Deco ‘Liner Style’. In the interim, although Spence would never quite disown his *magnum opus*, he did nevertheless adroitly drop its more fantastical elements from his later work.

Something of the peculiar qualities of Spence’s masterpiece, and of its patron’s character, was captured in the bronze tablet commissioned by Charles William Mitchell and erected to his father’s memory in the north aisle of the church [2.22].⁴ With his French training and Symbolist affiliations in Belgium, as well as his Arts and Crafts connections at home, George Frampton (1860-1928) was the ideal artist for this piece.⁵ Spence also had a hand in the commission, as one of Frampton’s close colleagues in the Art Workers’ Guild.⁶ The Mitchell tablet was to prove one of the sculptor’s most admired and influential works, and a key work of the New Sculpture movement, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1898.⁷ The memorial is unusual in Frampton’s *oeuvre* for its lack of a portrait representation of the deceased. Rather, its subject’s life and achievements are alluded to obliquely through symbols – even the coat of arms placed inconspicuously at the base seems more apologetic than declamatory. One either knows, or guesses, that the buildings cradled by the large ship-borne angels on either side are representations of St. George’s church and Marischall College, Aberdeen, i.e. Mitchell’s two principal benefactions.

Frampton himself claimed that Mitchell’s name, as ‘worthy to be written in letters of gold’, was placed on ‘a precious ground of *lapis-lazuli*, the colour blue signifying ‘Purity’’,⁸ but this hardly does justice to the allusive richness of the piece. *Lapis*, as the source of ultra-marine (*ultra mares*), the rarest of colours employed by an artist, might also signify Mitchell’s profession, his wealth and his taste for art. Apart from the depictions of Saints Andrew and George (alluding once again to Mitchell’s origins), the memorial is otherwise remarkably free of traditional Christian imagery – the ‘virtues’ represented in the *predellæ* are rather those of Energy, Art, Truth, Charity and Science [page 187, 2.24-5]. Most remarkable of all are the stylised fruiting trees,⁹ standing-in for architectural shafts and capitals [2.23], the logical extension of the organicism implicit in the architectural detailing of the church. Dispensing with the traditional language of the styles, it was a detail wholly of the moment. Thus it could be seen on the fireplace Frampton executed jointly with C. Harrison Townsend (1851-1928) for the *Linden Haus*, Düsseldorf (1895-6), and in the ‘White’ drawing room at Blackwell House (1898-1900) above Lake Windermere, designed by M.H. Baillie Scott (1865-1945), as well as on the front cover of the first issue of the Viennese Secessionist magazine *Ver Sacrum* (1898).

The memorial seems therefore entirely true to the man, and to the church Charles Mitchell brought into being. This study has reflected on the complex, multi-faceted manner in which a prestigious late-Victorian building, such as St. George's Jesmond, might engage with its many potential audiences. St. George's surely cannot be unique in this respect. Other buildings of the period, with equally rich documentary resources, may similarly benefit from a semiological and/or contextual study of the kind attempted in these pages. We have shown that the semiotic complexity of St. George's was quite deliberate, made in answer to a particular nexus of localised and national circumstances. The richly allusive character of the building itself signified that it was to be understood both as a modern church, and as a modern work of art. Perhaps the message embodied in St. George's was too subtle; perhaps too much was demanded of its various audiences? Certainly, it was misunderstood. In that sense, the church was not so much ahead of its time, as that the times failed it. Nevertheless, great works of art can and do transcend even the most adverse of circumstances...

And Nathanael said unto him.
Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?
Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Gospel of John 1.46

Notes to Chapter 4:

- ¹ 'Phaedo' in Jowett, B.: *The Dialogues of Plato with Analysis and Introduction by B. Jowett. M.A.*, in 5 vols. (third revised edn., Oxford, 1892), Vol.2, pp.157-266 (262).
- ² Gaimster, A.: *George Jack 1855-1931: architect and designer-craftsman* (William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, 2006); also Moat, N.: 'A Frankly Modern Building': The Church of St. James & St. Basil, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne' in *DAS*, No.21 (London, 1997), pp.67-76. The site architect was Eric Edward Lofting (c.1885-1950), then Deputy Surveyor of the Fabric at Westminster Abbey, and a former associate of Temple L. Moore (1856-1920). W.R. Lethaby (1857-1931) acted an unofficial consultant.
- ³ See Vol.II, Cat. I, **I.28**.
- ⁴ *SGPM* Vol.10, No.9 (Sept. 1898), p.67 and Vol.10 (Oct. 1898) p.76 + frontispiece illus.; also *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 2 Nov. 1898, *Memorial Tablet to the Late Dr. Mitchell*. This last states that the memorial cost £1000.
- ⁵ Jezzard, A.: *The Sculpture of Sir George Frampton* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1999), Vol.1, pp.6-10; also Stevens, M.A.: 'Symbolism – A French Monopoly?' in Wilton, A. & Upstone, R. (eds.): *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (London, 1997), pp.47-63.
- ⁶ NRO DN/E/8/2/2/108 (21 July 1898), *St. George's church, Newcastle* (erection of a memorial tablet to Charles Mitchell). The elevational drawing was drawn-up by T.R. Spence, but the typography is in Frampton's characteristic hand. The memorial was to be placed next to the north door of the church, but was installed nearer to where Mitchell and his family sat at worship.
- ⁷ Reviews: *Art Journal* (June 1898), pp.161-84 (184); also *Athenaeum*, No.3688 (July 1898), pp.41-2 (42); also *B*, Vol.LXXIV (25 June 1898), pp. 607-9 (609); also *AR*, Vol.4 (May 1898 supplement, illus.); also Koch, A. (ed.): *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*, Vol.14 (1898), p.68 also Jezzard (1999), *Op.cit.*, Vol.1, pp. 107-10, 258-9 (cat.88).
- ⁸ *SGPM*, Vol.10 (Oct. 1898) p.76.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* Frampton allots their symbolism as follows: orange for generosity; fig, for abundance; elm, dignity; walnut, intellect; magnolia, perseverance; pear, love and affection.
- ¹⁰ Frampton, G.: *The Art of Wood-Carving (Part I)* in *The Studio* Vol.XII, No.55 (London, Oct. 1897), pp.43-7 (45, & 46-7); also Beattie, S.: *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London, 1983), pp.75-79; also Jezzard (1999), *Op.cit.*, p.251 (cat. 57); also Haigh, D.: *Baillie Scott. The Artistic House*, (London, 1995), pp.22 & 28-31 & 90-3. The Düsseldorf fireplace was shown at the Fifth (1896) Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The first issue of the Viennese Secessionist magazine *Vers Sacrum* was published Jan. 1898, its cover designed by Alfred Roller (1864-1935).

Appendices:

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(1) Principal Manuscript and Documentary Sources	195
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(1) Principle Manuscript and Documentary Sources:

(a) Local Studies Collection, Newcastle Central Library (NCL),
Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

_____ L7265-5 – Cr. 961058A, *St. George's Church, Osborne Road, Jesmond (Newcastle-on-Tyne), Bills of Quantities, May 1886 (BQ)*. Xerox copy of original document in private collection.¹

_____ D0058397 (954529), *St. George's Parochial Monthly (SGPM)* (Vol.1 no.1 inaugurated January 1889).

_____ L726-5 – Cr. 72979, *St. George's Church, Jesmond (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)*, a bound volume of photographs (1888-90) by William Parry (of South Shields); cf. NRO EP142/53/1-2.²

_____ many loose images (c.1890 to the present) of Jesmond Towers, estate buildings and environs; St. George's church, parochial hall and vicarage, Jesmond; Walker Parish Church (Christ Church), Newcastle-upon-Tyne; *Messrs. Vickers-Armstrong Ltd.* archive (especially shipyard and launch photographs), etc.

_____ L623.8 – Cr. 957723A, *Charles Mitchell: newspaper cuttings scrapbook*.

_____ L0193 – Cr. 262692 & 952590A, *Sales catalogues for Jesmond Towers*, house and contents (Messrs. Anderson & Garland auctioneers, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sept. 1926) [i.e. the final disposal of the house and estate].

_____ L606.1 Cr. D1042 [North-East Coast] *Exhibition of Naval Architecture, Marine Engineering, Fisheries, etc.*, Official Catalogue of (Andrew Reid, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1882).

_____ L606.1 Cr. D1987 *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition, Jubilee Year 1887*, Official Catalogue of (R. Robinson & Co., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

_____ L606.1 Cr. D1987 *Report and Official List of Jurors Awards, with an analysis of the same, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition, Jubilee year, 1887* (R. Robinson & Co., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

_____ L606.1 Cr. D1974 *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition (International and Colonial), Illustrated Catalogue of the Pictures and Works of Art, etc.* (R. Robinson & Co., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

_____ L606.1 Cr. D1975 *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Jubilee Exhibition 1887 Illustrated catalogue of the Photographic Section* (R. Robinson & Co., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

_____ L606.1 Cr. D3108 *The Jubilee Chronicle of the Newcastle Exhibition, etc.* (Walter Scott, London & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

¹ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.II., *The Bills of Quantities (May 1886)*.

² Ref. Vol.II, Cat.V, *Three Albums of Photographs c.1888-90*.

_____ L942.82 N536J *Jubilee Album of Views of Newcastle* ([R. Robinson & Co.], Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1887).

(b) Northumberland (County) Record Office (NRO), Woodhorn Museum, Northumberland:

_____ NRO 497/A2, *Charles Mitchell Notebook 'No.1'* c.1870-90, but mostly covering the early 1880s. Includes an inventory and valuation c.1883-6 of Charles Mitchell's (1820-95) art collection at Jesmond Towers, probably compiled for insurance purposes during alterations to the house.

_____ NRO 497/A1, Omnibus folder of correspondence by Charles William Mitchell (1855-1903), c.1900-3; includes items relating to the rebuilding of Walker Parish Church, and Mitchell's repurchase of his own painting *Hypatia* (1885).

_____ NRO EP142/50, *Jesmond Church Extension scheme Minute Book* 1886-90 (JCE).³

_____ NRO EP142/52, *Printed Order of Service, for the consecration of St. George's church, Jesmond*, 16 October 1888.

_____ NRO EP142/54/1-25, *St. George's Church, Jesmond (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)*; (presentation and contract drawings, c.1885-91; also NRO EP142/55 *ground-plan and blue-print copy*, indicating runs for heating apparatus, 1888.⁴

_____ NRO EP142/53/1-2, *St. George's Church, Jesmond (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)*, two bound volumes of photographs (1888-90) by William Parry (of South Shields); cf. NCL Cat. L726-5 – Cr. 72979.⁵

_____ *Newcastle Diocesan Archives*; Faculty papers relating to St. George's church, Jesmond (Newcastle-upon-Tyne):

_____ DN/E/8/2/2/45 (July 1891) *alterations in the chancel*,

_____ DN/E/8/2/2/108 (9 July 1898) *Charles Mitchell memorial tablet*

_____ DN/E/8/2/2/535 (9 Oct. 1916) *C.W. Mitchell memorial tablet*

(c) Tyne & Wear Archives (TWA), Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

_____ Newcastle Building Control Records: ⁶

T186/3577 *West Jesmond House* (Jesmond Towers), stables (Aug. 1869).

– 3615 *West Jesmond House* (Jesmond Towers), enlargement (Sept. 1869).

– 3847 *Jesmond Towers*, north lodge (May 1870).

– 4854 *Jesmond Towers*, west lodge (May 1873).

– 9846 *Jesmond Towers*, south lodge (Aug. 1882-3).

– 10355 *Jesmond Towers*, extensions (Dec. 1883).

– V324 *Jesmond Towers estate*, laying out for building land (1902-52).

³ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.IV, *Jesmond Church Extension scheme: Minute Book 1886-1890*.

⁴ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.I, *The Drawings*.

⁵ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.V, *Three Albums of Photographs c.1888-90*.

⁶ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.I, *The Drawings*.

- 10882 *Eldon House*, detached villa for R. Burdon-Sanderson Esq. (Oct.-Dec. 1884).
- 12217 detached villa no.2 for R. Burdon-Sanderson Esq. (Sept. 1887).
- 12254 detached villa no.1 for R. Burdon-Sanderson Esq. (Sept. 1887).
- 13015 detached villa for Thos. Cairns Esq. on Burdon-Sanderson estate (Jan.-Feb. 1889).
- 10868 *Jesmond Towers / St. George's church, Jesmond*, temporary iron church (Jan.-Feb. 1885).
- 11501 *St. George's church, Jesmond* and parochial hall (May 1886, Feb.-Mar. 1887 and Aug. 1889).
- 13258 *St. George's vicarage, Jesmond* (June 1889).

_____ TWA 1172 /80-83 '*Domesday Books*', i.e. Newcastle Property valuations c.1910.

_____ old accession cat. 604/57 *Particulars and conditions of sale, Jesmond Towers* (Messrs. Atkinson & Garland auctioneers, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sept. 1910) [the sale proved abortive].

_____ DT.RH/1-25 *Ralph Hedley (Craftsmen) Ltd.*, ledgers, job inventories, etc.

_____ old accession cat. 696/5 *D.F. & A. Black* papers relating to shipbuilding (including album of photographs relating to Jesmond Towers, North Jesmond House, and various Tyne built ships and ship interiors).

_____ *Messrs. Vickers-Armstrong Ltd.* archive (ship plans, yard and launch photographs, etc.).

(d) St. George's Church, Jesmond (the Vicar, Wardens and Parochial Council):

_____ D.F. McGuire file-box, including correspondence and research notes relating to Donald McGuire's 1988 biography of Charles Mitchell.

_____ Pew rents plan c.1890.⁷

(e) Robinson Library (Special Collections), Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

_____ Crawhall collection, papers of and relating to the Newcastle artist Joseph Crawhall II (1821-96), especially coll. no. 28 *Chorographia*... (1883-4), and no. 35 *Chap-book Chaplets* (1883).

(f) Private collections:

_____ *Charles Mitchell Esq.* (Personal Financial) *Ledgers* (M1-2), 2 vols. plus parallel bound indexes (31 Dec. 1879 to 31 Dec. 1889), c/o Graham Smith Esq. (Graham Smith Antiques), Fern Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.⁸

⁷ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.I, *The Drawings*.

⁸ Ref. Vol.II, Cat.III, *Charles Mitchell Esq. Ledgers* (Nos. 1 & 2).

A Theatre for the Soul: Volume I

Note: Vol.1 details Mitchell's expenditure on the 1883-5 alterations to the Jesmond Towers house and estate.

_____ Vol.2 details Mitchell's expenditure on St. George's church, 1886-90.

_____ Ian Curry Esq., F.S.A, F.R.I.B.A. (formerly Messrs. Charlewood Curry architects, Newcastle-upon-Tyne), project photographs 1965-72.

_____ Neil Moat Esq., photographic record of St. George's church, Jesmond, principally 1984-2002.

(g) Art Workers' Guild (AWG), 6 Queen's Square, Bloomsbury (London), WC1:

_____ archival material, uncatalogued at 2007-8, as follows:

_____ *Guild Minute Book No.1*, titled *Guild Minutes - : Minutes of the Art Workers' Guild: 1884 : 1885* (but note volume continues to November 1886).

_____ *Index of Guild member's details* (leather bound volume initially compiled by H.J.L.J. Massé, in which entries continue up till 1967).

_____ *Member's Signature Book* (undated leather bound volume).

_____ *A Record of The First Art Worker's Guild Exhibition of Members Work Held in Decr. 1895* (large leather bound volume).

_____ *Volumes Illustrative of Guild members work* (a set of large folders, comprising cuttings and photographs, perhaps compiled by H.J.L.J. Massé).

_____ *Photograph albums of early Guild members* (Volume No.1 includes photographs of G.W. Rhead, A.J. Shirley and T.R. Spence, etc.).

_____ *A.W.G. List of Members 1884-1916* (a large folder collating several printed lists of Guild members in chronological order).

_____ Various loose photographs, including small mounted image inscribed on reverse, *Entertainment Committee of the A.W.G. - (minus the philosophie chaps) Shrove Tuesday MCMIII* (group includes G. Frampton, F. Marriott, Wm. Strang, C. Harrison Townsend, F.W. Troup and T.R. Spence).

_____ *A.W.G. Annual Reports* (first report 4 Dec. 1885).

(h) William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London Borough of Waltham Forest (London), E17:

Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (AC): First Exhibition catalogue (London 1888)

_____ *Second Exhibition catalogue* (London 1889)

_____ *Third Exhibition catalogue* (London 1890)

(i) Principal Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Periodicals
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Aberdeen (Weekly) Journal

Archæologia Æliana (AA) Journal of the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Architecture

Architectural Review (AR)

Monthly Chronicle of North Country Lore and Legend (MC)

Newcastle Daily Journal (NDJ)

Newcastle Daily Chronicle (NDC)

Newcastle (Weekly) Courant (NWC)

The Athenæum

The Artist (A)

The British Architect (BA)

The Builder (B)

The Building News and engineering journal (BN)

The Ecclesiologist (E) Journal of the Ecclesiological (late Cambridge Camden) Society

The Guardian

The Magazine of Art (MA)

The Northern Counties Magazine

The Shipbuilder

The Studio

The Times

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