

ART. XIX.—*Two recently demolished Carlisle churches.*
By C. G. BULMAN.

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TWO churches in the central area of Carlisle have recently been demolished. Although neither was of any antiquity, each had some particular point of interest for the student of ecclesiology and of local history. For the sake of posterity, therefore, they should be given a record in these *Transactions*.

I. CHRIST CHURCH, BOTCHERGATE.

This was the older of the two churches, and was the first to be demolished, in 1952. As a building it was one of a pair, the other being Holy Trinity, Caldewgate, which still survives, though it has recently lost its spire. Christ Church was originally a chapel of ease to St Cuthbert's, Carlisle; its foundation stone was laid on 28 September 1828, and it was completed in September 1830. It was 80 ft. long by 60 ft. wide, and had a spire 132 ft. high. It was built at rather a bad time architecturally, when the long-continuing Renaissance style, introduced into England in the early part of the 16th century, had shown signs of exhaustion, and a desire for a change had become manifest. As generally happens, all the arts were affected at the same time by new ideas, and in this case it was the so-called Romantic movement which influenced architecture. The way was being prepared for the revival of our medieval architecture and art, later to be known as the Gothic Revival of Victorian times; the influence was at first literary, and novels by Scott and by lesser authors, with medieval castles and abbeys as their background, had a wide vogue; the fashion then spread

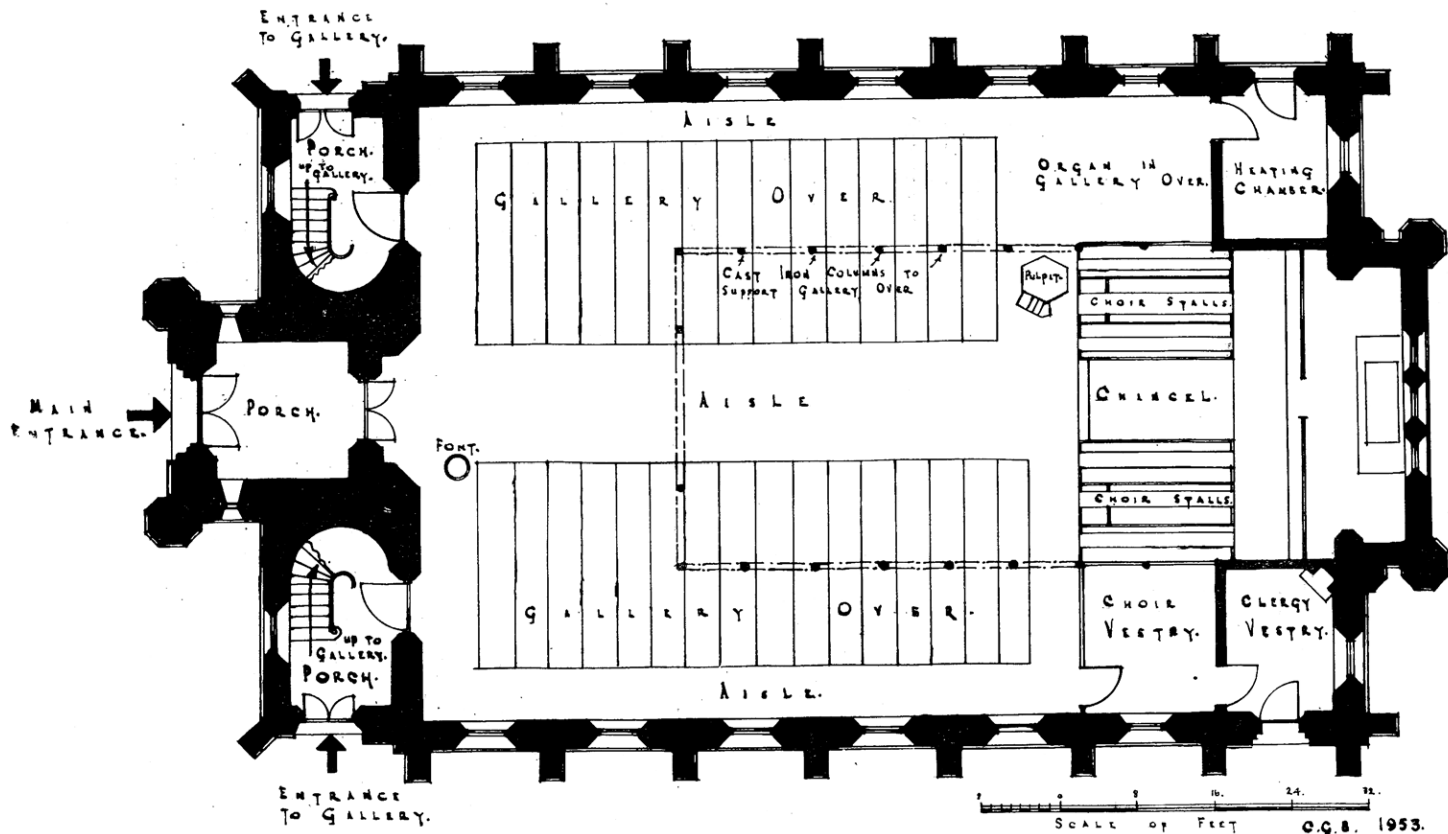


FIG. 1.—Plan of Christ Church, Botchergate, Carlisle.

Demolished 1952.
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to architecture and attempts were made, at first with little understanding, to build mock castles and abbeys for mansions and country houses. Lowther Castle, near Penrith, is the most notable of these latter in our area.

Just at that time there arrived on the architectural scene the somewhat remarkable figure of Thomas Rickman, a Quaker who, from obscure origins, became an architect of national reputation; and it was he who designed and built Christ Church. He was born at Maidenhead in 1776, and after a varied career, which included grocery and some medical training, he proceeded through insurance broking to architecture. He had early shown some taste for drawing, and began to sketch the ancient churches near Liverpool, where he lived for a time. He later wrote a series of lectures on architecture, and his famous book, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England*, appeared in 1817. This work had considerable influence in promoting the study of medieval architecture in England, and helped to lead the way to the fully developed Gothic Revival of the following decades. Rickman was the first to disentangle the various phases of our medieval architecture: the names which he invented for them, "Early English", "Decorated" and "Perpendicular", are still in use to-day, and will probably immortalise their inventor. Rickman designed many churches, and also furnished the designs for the "New Buildings" at St. John's College, Cambridge. He died in Birmingham in 1841, and is buried in St. George's churchyard there.

Christ Church as a building was by no means a piece of good architecture, for although it had a certain amount of picturesque value, there was (as might be expected from its date) little about it that was genuinely medieval in spirit. It was an attempt to design in the Early English style, but the attempt did not go beyond the external trimmings. Essentially the plan was not a medieval one at all, as a glance at the accompanying

illustration (fig. 1) will immediately show; it continued the current classical tradition of symmetry in design, and its Gothic features were no more than skin deep. In effect, the church was simply a version of the Georgian preaching-hall: a rectangular box, with galleries carried on cast-iron supports. At one end was a shallow recess, which passed for a chancel, and at the other a tower and spire. The plan in fact is that of a genuine Hanoverian church, like St. Cuthbert's, Carlisle, or St. Andrew's, Penrith, but completely lacking in the charm and dignity of its prototype. The Gothic detail with which its exterior was tricked out was deplorable; the buttresses were flimsy and obviously built for no constructional purpose, while the long lancets of the nave had a lean and poverty-stricken look, and were cut across internally by the galleries.

The proportions of the interior were not good, and the nave was simply covered over by a flat plaster ceiling, with no pretence to dignity or architectural character of any kind: see fig. 2, showing the interior, looking east. Externally, too, there was a most unpleasant "shoulder" between the top of the tower and the base of the spire, giving an awkward outline (fig. 3).

It is interesting to note, however, that the plan of the church represented the clerical ideal of planning in the early years of the 19th century. The Oxford Movement, with its revival of ceremonial in the Church of England, was yet to come, and the planning was no doubt very suitable for the type of service for which the church was designed. The sermon was the thing, and the church was intended to be an auditorium for preaching, little attention being given to anything else.

Thus Christ Church was an interesting example of a church built on the fringe of the Gothic Revival, when the medieval styles were imperfectly understood, and their details were applied to a non-medieval plan; it anticipated the full-blown Gothic revival, and it is for



FIG. 2.—Christ Church: Interior, looking East.

facing p. 314.



FIG. 3.—Christ Church: External view of Church during demolition.

Photo by Steel Bros. (Carlisle) Ltd., 60 English Street, Carlisle.

facing p. 315.

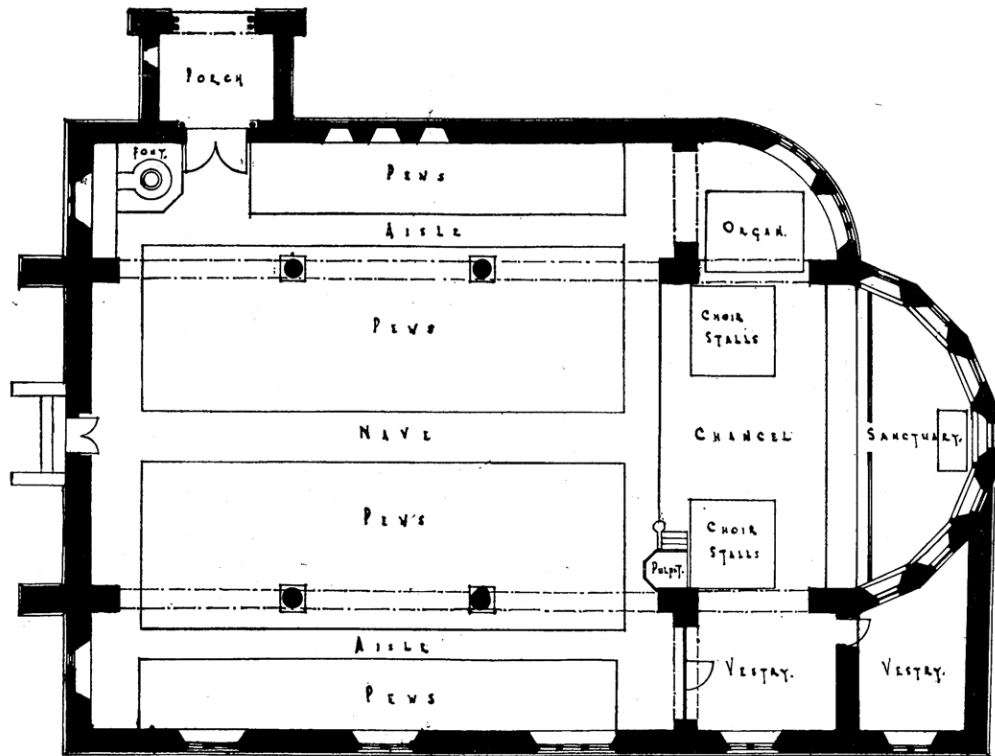
that reason that it and other early 19th century churches are worthy of a small but special place in our English architectural history.

II. ST. MARY'S.

St. Mary's, the second of our Carlisle churches to be demolished (in 1954), stood at the entrance to the cathedral grounds. Its claim to our interest lay not in the fabric, which dated only from 1870, but firstly in its congregation (which could claim continuity back to the earliest days of Norman rule in Carlisle, and possibly earlier still), and secondly in the old woodwork which it contained. This woodwork, dating from 1760/70, was Georgian "Gothick" in style—a somewhat *rara avis*—and had originally formed part of the choir fittings in the cathedral. It included a door with some exceedingly fine flamboyant panels of late 15th century date. All this woodwork is now dispersed into many churches in and around Carlisle, but the best of the screens and panelling, including the medieval woodwork, has been fitted up in St. Paul's church, Carlisle, which carries on the ancient tradition with its dedication to St. Mary and St. Paul.

This church, its woodwork, and the history of its congregation, are fully described in my article in CW2 xxxix 45-58; I now give a plan of it, together with illustrations of its interior and exterior (figs. 4-6). The student of ecclesiastical architecture may like to compare these with the illustrations of Christ Church, and to note the development of the Gothic Revival in the forty years between the erection of the two churches.

I am indebted to Mr Iain MacIvor for the photograph showing Christ Church partly demolished (fig. 3).



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 FIG. 4—Plan of St. Mary's Church, Carlisle.
 Erected 1870. Demolished 1945.

cop. 1955.



FIG. 5.—St. Mary's: Interior, looking East.

facing p. 316.

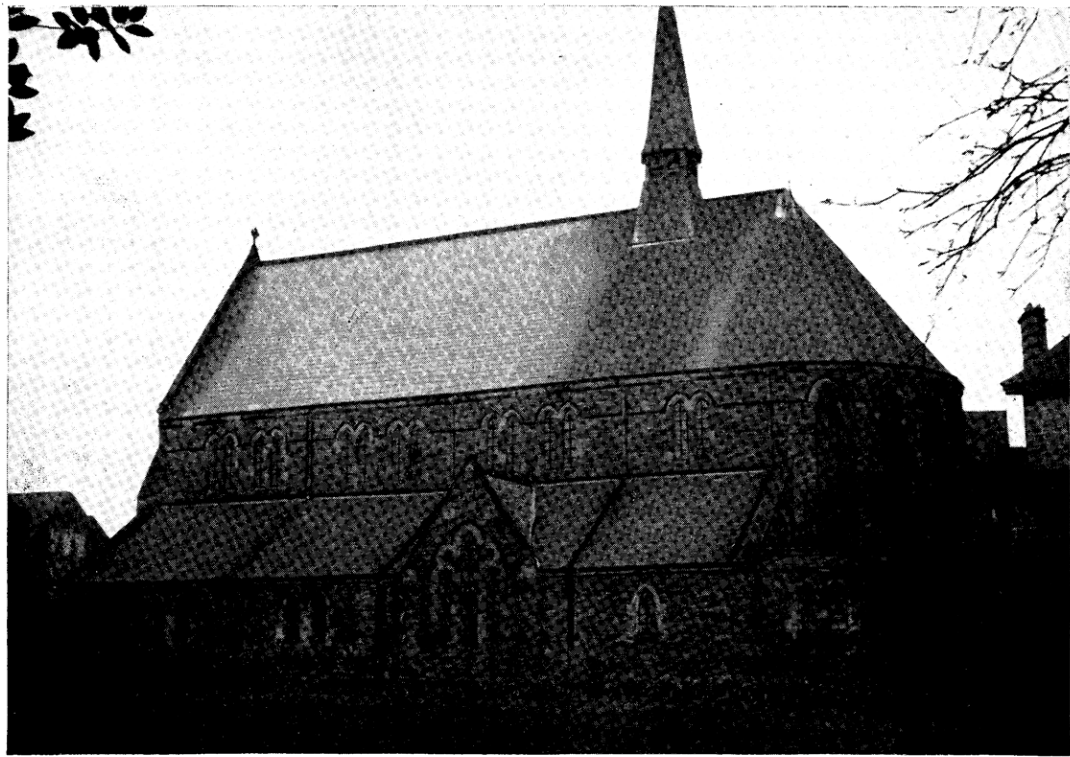


FIG. 6.—St. Mary's: External view from S.W.

facing p. 317.

Photograph by J. M. Carruthers.