

THE RESTORATION OF GREAT LONGSTONE CHURCH

BY J. N. TARN

(Roscoe Professor of Architecture, University of Liverpool)

St. Giles Church, Great Longstone, is one of the finest small churches in Derbyshire, a building of considerable architectural character complete with a series of late-medieval timber roofs, which are quite rare in this part of the country. Its present condition owes a great deal to the tact with which it was restored in the 19th century, and the history of that restoration is an interesting vignette both in the life of the community and also in the career of a great national architect, Richard Norman Shaw, who worked on the church during the early 1870s when he was still a comparatively young man.

Victorian restorations tended on the whole to be disastrous affairs; carried out with good intentions but with little tact and with no real sympathy for the fabric of the church. There were at that time usually two motives. The first was the pressing need to stabilise the structure and repair stonework which had often been decaying, due to neglect, for generations. We should be glad that many churches were saved from total collapse by the industry of the Victorian restorers—that at least is to their credit. The second motive was often less worthy and was often motivated by current fashion. It was to re-order the church internally in accordance with the new catholic practices established by the Oxford movement in the 1830s. Restoration of this sort usually involved 'correcting' mistakes made by the original builder in a misguided belief that the original could be 'improved' through the greater academic knowledge of medieval practice, which was available to the studious and recondite scholars of the 19th century. Re-ordering involved opening the chancel to the nave and filling it with choir stalls, the re-arrangement of pews in the nave and the creation of a suitable vista to the altar, which was raised on steps so that it dominated the church. Little account was taken of the original medieval arrangement of the fabric and few restorers seem to have considered the scale and atmosphere of the particular building with which they were dealing. Sometimes, however, the result was a genuine improvement, and the removal of post-Reformation clutter must have been a relief—imagine what it would be like if all church interiors resembled that of St. Mary at Whitby, which today possesses distinct charm because of its curiosity. More often, Victorian superiority seems now to have been mere vandalism. It is useful, therefore, to examine the work of an architect who belonged to a new generation which was reacting to the mid-Victorian ethos quite violently, one which possesses more sensitive ideas about the way small-scale and intimate vernacular buildings should be restored. Shaw was—at least in his early career and at the time which concerns us—a member of a small but significant group of designers who, while still looking back to medieval sources for inspiration, also had a refreshing understanding that craft skills, and an understanding and a love for natural materials, were more important than an antiquarian capacity to recreate the formal idealised, and therefore very unreal, styles of the gothic world. They were the pioneer architectural reformers in Victorian England and they brought a delightfully simple and un pompous attitude to their work. Shaw himself was destined to have a very great and influential practice later in the century, one of the utmost significance for English architectural development. During his career he produced his own highly original versions of several different styles and if he had a fault it was that of over-sophistication. His final contribution was a long way from the early-medieval inspired work; he was the first true exponent of the Edwardian Baroque in his Piccadilly Hotel design. Before that, he had achieved success with several differing building types, the romantic country houses such as Cragside and the more formal classical houses such as Chesters, both in Northumberland, as well as his most famous public building, the New Scotland Yard, on the Thames Embankment in London.

Great Longstone church and that at Youlgreave, not many miles away, are his only works in this part of Derbyshire. A little later he worked on the church at Upper Langwith on the other side of the county and from 1869 to 1873 he was rebuilding the church at Meerbrook near Leek in Staffordshire. The Youlgreave restoration, which was also slightly earlier in date than that at Longstone, was altogether more ambitious and costly, culminating in the introduction of stained glass by Burne-Jones.

Shaw's connection with Longstone seems to have come through the Sleigh family of Leek. They seem to have been the main advocate of Shaw for the restoration work. John Sleigh lived at Thornbridge just outside Longstone, and his brother at Leek, where the family were silk manufacturers. The Sleighs first met Shaw apparently through their friend, the artist J. C. Horsley, who had built a house near Cranbrook in 1868, for which Shaw was the architect. Nearly all the Derbyshire and Staffordshire work seems to have been done on their recommendation, including the major rebuilding work, later on, at All Saints, Leek. They were certainly wise in their choice of architect in each case. It would seem from the formal resolutions passed by the Longstone Restoration Committee that it had been agreed in advance to invite Shaw, and his alacrity in accepting and acting upon their instructions supports this view. G. T. Wright, who was responsible for much of the execution of the restoration programme, records in his diary on the 14th November 1871:

'Made the acquaintance of Mr. Norman Shaw at dinner in Mr. Sleigh's house at Thornbridge. Mr. Paley, Mr. Openshaw and Mr. John Wright of Eyam were also present. Mr. Shaw previously spent 5 or 6 hours in examining Great Longstone Church, chiefly alone'.

Shaw was called in to Longstone in 1871 and, fortunately, the church does not seem to have been structurally restored before that date. In his report on the fabric he does refer to some late 18th century rebuilding to 'the wall forming part of the Nave arcade on the North side', but this would refer to the collapse of a wall which is mentioned in the churchwardens' accounts late in the 18th century and was therefore a repair due to structural necessity rather than to a general review of the condition of the fabric. There had been an earlier, internal, re-organisation of the church in the 1840s, at the time when the Cambridge Camden Society was actively publicising ideas about more ritualistic church plans. These, of course, were the practical outcome of the liturgical views propounded by the Oxford theologians. Several letters still exist addressed to Captain W. H. Wright, the owner of the Hall, who at that time was living in Devon. They are from the two churchwardens at Longstone, William Longsdon and Robert Thornhill—who was also the agent for the Longstone Hall Estate.

A considerable amount of other material also still exists about the work and from it we can gather something of the church which Shaw visited 30 years later. It is clear that the vicar and churchwardens were inspired by the 'wind of change' which was abroad in the church nationally and that they were interested in the internal re-organisation and not in the restoration of the fabric. The committee of village people also seem to have become gradually more enthusiastic for reform and eventually they wished to throw open all the pews—or 'benches' as the new low pews were called.

The idea of repewing the church took shape in 1838 and both the Duke of Devonshire and the Wright family were approached on behalf of the 'Committee acting for the repewing of Longstone Church'. Both agreed to the scheme, the Duke offering to supply the necessary oak which, from the specifications, seems to have been wanted for sleepers in the floor. The pews were to be grained and varnished in the fashionable way of the time. Some hint of the scale of the work can be gained from the various specifications and tenders. James Morton was awarded the contract and he agreed 'to take down all the old seats and the Pulpit. The old Pews to be used to cover the walls with. The Pulpit to be executed out of the old one. The Reading Desk and stairs to be new deal.'

The scheme, which included a small gallery, was to make all the pews of the same height and the aisle of regular width, and also 'The Clergyman is wishful for a front Pew in the Chancel'. Major Carleile, who was then the tenant of the Hall, obviously

felt that the large and perhaps ungainly Wright pew should remain the grand dominant feature that it was, a view apparently not shared by Captain Wright; Thornhill recommended the reduction in height of the pew, which occupied the north-east corner of the nave, although he did not seem to think that the adjoining servants' pew in the chancel should be moved. Thornhill subsequently reported that:

'the Major is very much hurt at the idea of the Family Pew being reduced to a level with the others, he says it will be a great injury to the House, and he is sure were you to see it, you would be of the same opinion'.

The pew was described as the finest in the church at that time:

'its present height above the others is about 24 inches, and the Rails on the top about 18 inches . . . the wood of the Pew is good old oak, and I think the soundest in the Church'.

There were further wrangles about the ownership of pews, and Longsdon was obliged at one point to write:

'for the purpose of stating a circumstance, which they (that is the committee for repewing) hope you will take into consideration—It is simply this—The funds for repewing have been diminished by four Sittings on the North side, being found to belong to you, which had been claimed by the Duke of Devonshire—in as much as the Duke in addition to a Donation of £31. 10s. 0. and all the oak wood required for Sleepers, pays all the other expenses attendant on repewing his own seats, consequently, unless you consent to favor the Church by adding to your subscription what the Duke would have paid on the four sittings named, about £4, our resources will be so much diminished'.

Money appears to have been very tight for the repewing and in the same letter Longsdon says of the project: 'there is even some doubt whether it can be accomplished at all'. The Duke was responsible for 45 sittings and Wright for 29 after the last exchange:

'The total number is 263 and the total expense estimated at about £380—or £1 9. 0. for each sitting. By the new arrangement one half the Gallery is gained and apportioned for free sittings, and there were none before'.

In a later letter Thornhill seems to have been fighting for pews which might belong to the family, perhaps on grounds of prestige, and in respect of one he says: 'unless the Duke's agent can establish a better claim at our next meeting on the 11th Inst. I shall consider it yours', a dubious honour at £1. 9s. 0d. a seat.

Later in 1841 more radical views seem to have prevailed and it was proposed to make all the pews free and to have them without doors. There were now to be only two sizes; one for five people and the other for three. Thornhill wrote to say that he thought the family should relinquish its claim to the majority of the pews, 'as I think a considerable majority will feel disposed to do'. As to the family pew, he was determined that it should remain because, as it

'is in a corner, I do not see that it will inconvenience anyone, or effect the uniformity much'.

It seems that many of the committee wanted to do away with all the private pews, and by November Thornhill was being overruled by the Committee about another pew he claimed for the Hall. It is not clear whether or not the Committee was successful in obtaining the servants' pew as a free pew, but they did not manage to divide up the family pew, as the clergyman particularly wanted to do. A contemporary view of the church shows it as a compromise between what must have been its 18th century and early 19th century arrangement and its final plan under Shaw's scheme. It certainly was not a radical Camdenian arrangement.

Perhaps this was in some measure due to W. H. Wright himself. On 1st July 1841 he informed the Committee, through Longsdon, that he would not give up his personal pew, and legal opinion was sought about the implication of this unexpected bombshell. The opinion was that one pew owner who objected to a system of free pews could successfully impede the granting of a Faculty. The latest radical plan was hastily re-arranged again so that the final layout probably more resembled the earlier arrangement agreed in March 1841 and approved by Wright. Shaw's survey of the church shows it with the family pew in what must have been its traditional position, with the regular arrangement of narrow pews starting to the west of it. The contracts were let

later in July to W. Wilson for repewing and J. Morton for repaving. The contract for pointing, plastering and whitewashing the walls followed later, and one for painting and graining was let in 1842. A new patent stove was installed below the tower, although this seems to have given immediate trouble because it would not draw—which was not surprising considering that it had a long flue beneath the floor of the church before it reached the chimney stack on the north side of the chancel. It appears that it was necessary to have a secondary pilot stove outside the church at one stage to warm the flue and thus help the church stove to draw properly. Shaw's survey also shows an internal stove in the centre of the nave, level with the porch.

This, then, was the church which Shaw came to inspect in 1871, and some of his comments confirm one suspicion that the 1841 alterations were carried out with the minimum expense. While discussing secondary works,

‘which it would be very desirable to do, as they would conduce both to the appearance and in some sense to the comfort of the Church, foremost amongst these is the reseating of Nave and Aisles with simple and solid oak seats in place of the inconvenient and unsightly deal pews now existing’.

The old oak Hall pew has, of course, now vanished completely, regrettably, and the only old woodwork now remaining is on the opposite side of the church screening the Hassop chapel.

Plans for the great restoration must have gathered momentum during 1871 and the records of the Vestry Meeting held on 4th November that year are still preserved, together with detailed accounts of how the money was raised. The Wrights were now back in residence at the Hall and G. T. Wright seems to have been the moving force behind the project. His family, too, seem to have provided much of the money and worked hard in the village to raise more. G. T. Wright and John Thornhill were the churchwardens, and the brief record of the meeting rather suggests that much of the business was a formality; the fourth, and last, resolution passed that day was to ask Mr. Norman Shaw to act as architect. Shaw arrived ten days later, on the 14th, to carry out an inspection of the church, and his report is dated 23rd November, a degree of dispatch which would do credit to many church architects today.

Shaw found that the church was structurally quite sound. There was evidence of settlement in the north aisle wall at the west end on either side of the tower, but it was all of ancient origin and he thought it need not cause alarm. He had the walls opened up in a number of places ‘and found them singularly compact and the mortar very hard, with the exception of the wall forming part of Nave arcade on North side’—the portion already mentioned which had been rebuilt in the 18th century. Some rebuilding work was obviously necessary, but how much depended upon removing the plaster from all the walls. Shaw wanted to rebuild the buttresses on the north side because they were ‘of rather an incongruous character; it would be desirable to take them down, and rebuild them with walling of the same character as the rest of the work’. The copings and gutters all required repair, or complete renewal, and he suggested that several modern windows in the aisle and clerestory should be replaced again ‘by others more in character with the old work’.

Probably these were Georgian windows added, when the church was galleried, to let in more light. Much of the stonework to the windows seems to have been decayed and the east window required replacement entirely. Shaw recommended that the tower arch into the nave ‘ought to be opened out, it will be found of good proportion, and the general effect of the Church would be much improved by seeing into the lower portion of the tower’.

The heating system still did not work in 1871 and Shaw gives considerable attention to its repair:

‘There is no plan, on the whole, so economical as warming partly by hot water and partly by hot air, as by that means every bit of good is got out of the fuel used. I should retain the existing flue and see that it is properly repaired, then add a boiler to the furnace and have the pipes kept as much as possible above the floor level and not in trenches, the smoke and heated air would continue to pass

from the furnace along the whole length of the church as theretofore, and their passage through the flue would give off every particle of heating power, it must not be lost sight of that one of the most desirable things to attain is an apparatus to consume the least possible quantity of fuel'.

The scheme was revised while the alterations were in progress, but only in the siting of the flue-stack, and it seems to have worked no better than its predecessor.

The other matter to which Shaw devoted considerable attention was the problem of the roofs, which were all original medieval work of great interest and quality. Of the nave roofs he had this to say:

'I should place a strong wrought iron flitch with angle irons at lower edges rivetted to flitch, this would be placed at the back of each beam exactly, some rising more than others, and this iron structure I should attach to the old beams by strong bolts, we should thus get a perfectly rigid roof which would last for centuries and preserve intact not merely the general design of the old roofs, but also every portion of the wood which has not actually perished'.

The chancel was in a better condition and Shaw decided that it would be sensible to repair the existing roof, particularly at the junction with the wall, where

'a new cornice is much wanted to cover the junction of rafters and wall, as the latter are very small it is almost a question whether it not be better to take them off altogether and refit them, but perhaps it would be safer to leave them as they are, and merely repair them filling up the gaps that exist between wall pieces and walls with new covering pieces of oak.'

The fabric repairs conclude with a scheme for re-draining the roofs and carrying the water away from the walls of the building. Shaw then turns to other items which he considers less essential, although still very desirable. He had, however, in the main report referred to the proposal to build a new vestry and organ chamber on the north side of the chancel. These other items, 'which it would be very desirable to do, as they would conduce both to the appearance and in some sense to the comfort of the Church', included first new pews and some choir stalls in the chancel:

'A new font, pulpit and reredos, would also be required though these works might safely be left to the last, as when all the rest has been carried out, there can be little doubt but that they would soon follow, and we should then have in the strictest sense a complete restoration, viz. one in which whilst all that is modern and worthless had been replaced by the best work of its kind, that we can do, we should at the same time have taken care sedulously to preserve every fragment of the old work, and thus make the Church as beautiful as possible without destroying its history'.

Shaw's estimate for all of this work was £1,545, which was made up of £1,040 for the main restoration and additions, and £505 for the furnishings.

An event such as the complete restoration of a county church by a great architect from London must inevitably have caused a great stir in the village. The 1841 restoration was very much a county affair, with local labour and no proper architect, and the ideas about how to modernise the arrangements internally were not very sophisticated. They caused enough problems, as we have seen. In 1872 there was at least one local storm which has been recorded and which adds a little colour to the otherwise factual documents which have survived. Evidently the former churchwarden, William Longsdon, and Wright had differing views about the level of churchmanship which was appropriate to Longstone, Wright leaning towards the high church party and Longsdon expressing more evangelical views. The vicar, who was anxious to see his church put into good order, preached a sermon in January 1872 exhorting his flock to press ahead with the work, and Longsdon seems to have taken exception to his words and indeed to have taken them personally. On 29th January he wrote a lengthy letter to G. T. Wright:

My dear Sir,

Mr. Sleigh informed me on Friday last, that Mr. Paley had called upon him and had shown to him a letter, which he Mr. Paley had received from the Duke of Devonshire, referring to the Improvements or Repairs required at Longstone Church, in which the Duke intimates that he may perhaps send his Clerk of the Works or some Agent to examine the Roof of the Church on his behalf, before announcing as an owner of Property in the Parish, what he will contribute towards those Repairs, and if I understand Mr. Sleigh correctly, Mr. Paley appeared disappointed about something connected with the Dukes letter, and then alluded to Mr. Longsdon as being the cause of it, saying at same time to Mr. Sleigh 'you may tell Mr. Longsdon so'. Now I do not relate this circumstances as in itself a matter of much importance, or as a cause of complaint, except in some absence of courtesy—but yesterday, Sunday, Mr. Paley preached a sermon in the Church

couched in very strong language and apparently complaining that somebody, or it might almost be assumed from the tenor of his remarks that almost everybody was opposing his efforts to have the Church put into a state suitable for Public Worship. and then illustrating the extent of Parish duty or responsibility in that respect, by explaining how the great Jewish Kings David and Solomon interested themselves one in preparing and one in building, what eventually became Jewish National Temple. Mr. Paley in his commentaries on parochial duty, next went into a series of severe remarks, meaning as I understood them, to show the General Parochial deficiency in such duty at the present time, and he spoke of people placing themselves in 'opposition' and of using 'underhand intrigues'. In these two last expressions, I am led to suppose Mr. Paley alluded to me, more than to other 'people' being forced to that conclusion by the tone and character of Mr. Paley's remark to Mr. Sleigh, as stated above. On the propriety of dealing out attacks from the Pulpit, which do not fall within professional duty, nor yet admit of reply or explanation at the time, I leave Mr. Paley and the Congregation to judge. If it be Mr. Paley's opinion that I am opposed to such repairs in the condition of the Church, as are necessary to meet or accommodate in a distinctly reverential way, those requirements which are connected with the Rites and Usages of our common belief, he is mistaken but I neither adopt nor agree in any idea which limits the Church of Christ, to those narrow boundaries which simply include the 'Church of England, as by law established' and I always regret to see ecclesiastical animosity among individuals whose duties as religious leaders, all upon them to teach and preach the Doctrines laid down by Christ himself in the 5th 6th and 7th Chapters of St. Matthew.

So far as I am parochially interested in the repair of our Church at Longstone, I think it is prudent as well as desirable to ascertain and *describe more minutely than has yet been done*, what is *needed* to put the Roof into a perfectly safe condition, preserving its Architecture intact. When the expense of doing that is satisfactorily established, the Churchwardens will know better than they do now, how to suit Contracts with their means. If Mr. Paley can see his way to provide funds for carrying out the whole of Mr. Shaw's plans and estimates, the Parish I have no doubt would be gratified, but if that cannot be done let the Parishioners be informed, and perhaps some other mode of proceeding may be adopted. To incur debts without seeing clearly how they can be paid, is a responsibility which I for me will not concur in.

The Chapelry contains I believe about 190 families and of those probably 170 live on the wages of labour.

I take the liberty of addressing you as being the acting Church Warden, and I hope you will excuse me for doing so. I have felt it necessary owing to Mr. Paley's remarks on Sunday last. You are quite at liberty to show this letter, and you will oblige me by also laying it before your sister Miss Wright, if she will take the trouble of reading it.

I remain

W. Longsdon.

G. T. Wright's firm but in a way conciliating reply came swiftly on 1st February:

My dear Sir,

There is no need of an apology for writing to me on the subject of the proposed restoration of Longstone Church, in which I am both personally and officially interested. Your letter seems to be somewhat of an appeal to me as Churchwarden against Mr. Paley's remarks on that subject from the pulpit and elsewhere; followed by a statement of your own views on Church matters, and of the Churchwardens duties at the present time.

I feel that I must be very plain-spoken in the few remarks I have to offer in reply, on a subject upon which you are aware we hold opposite views.

In the first place I am obliged to say that I do not sympathise with you, if you feel aggrieved at general remarks by Mr. Paley in the pulpit. That you thought them general and not personal is shown by your assertion that Mr. Paley appeared to complain 'that somebody, or it might almost be assumed from the tenor of his remarks, that almost everybody was opposing his efforts' to have the Church restored. Supported by the resolution of the Vestry Meeting and with other opportunities of learning the real feeling of the parish, Mr. Paley is, I know, very far from thinking the latter, and he certainly said nothing to that effect. With regard to Mr. Paley's remark to Mr. Sleigh, alluding to yourself 'as being the cause' of hindrance to the work which the Parish desire to carry out, I need only observe that you do not contradict the assertion. I may say however as a matter of fact that His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, to whom reference is made at this point in your letter, has written most kindly to Mr. Paley on the subject of the restoration, making careful enquiry into the details of the estimate of Mr. Norman Shaw, than whom His Grace says he knows no more reliable Architect. Still, there is no saying what His Grace may decide on doing, if what we consider erroneous views and opinions are stated to him as facts.

Next, with regard to your views of the Church and Church matters, I receive them with respect, as your conscientious opinion; but I may be allowed to say that they do not appear to me to come up to the standard and requirements of the Church of England, especially in these days of reaction and restoration. The glorious example of Kings David and Solomon might well be

brought forward by Mr. Paley as an incentive to do and give our very best for the structure of the Church. And his remark is unanswerable, when he says he could understand persons being lukewarm or declining to contribute, but that he could not understand them simply opposing a good work being done at the expense and anxious labour of other people—a work which if carried out in its entirety, it is admitted would give general satisfaction.

Then, with regard to Mr. Paley—and this applies very generally to the Clergy—he is but ‘a bird of passage’ in Longstone, he may sow the seed but neither he nor his family may be here to reap the harvest. Mr. Paley is willing to put his shoulder to the work, and surely we ought to seize the opportunity and reap the benefit of his experience and knowledge of business. His successor may be lukewarm or going and inexperienced, and so the opportunity for restoration be lost for generations, and those permanently interested in the Parish will think of the past with shame and regret.

In conclusion, I may assume you that if the money be not forthcoming, the work of restoration must remain in abeyance as there is no intention of entering into Contracts or incurring debts without the means of meeting them. At present, we have not commenced our canvass.

I must now in my turn apologise to you for stating my views so bluntly, but I could not well reply to your letter without frankly stating them.

I have shown your letter to Mr. Paley and to my sister in accordance with your suggestion.

I remain

My dear Sir

Yours faithfully,

G. T. Wright

As far as we know that was the end of this curious local storm.

The minute book, of course, does not record the detail of the committee’s reactions to points of this sort. It is clear, however, that Shaw’s report was accepted and he went on to produce a detailed specification and drawings. Joseph Brown and Company were the successful tenderers and a contract was signed on 6th July 1872. Meanwhile in the village the appeal for ‘The Longstone Church Restoration Fund’ seems to have begun early in 1872. It was decided to raise the money under several different heads, the most important of course being the main fabric fund. In addition an Organ Fund, a Pulpit Fund and a Clock Fund were set up. The money came in relatively quickly. The main restoration fund was launched by a handsome donation from the Duke of Devonshire of £400 and was well supported by the main families in Longstone itself, so that the first £1,000 was reached with little difficulty, mainly in quite generous contributions varying from £10 to £50. Then during the summer the contributions seem to come from the rest of the congregation in smaller sums; one of 2s. 0d. was described as ‘A Widow’s Mite’, another for the same sum from ‘A Poor Parishioner’. Several people came back with a second gift and while reading the subscription list you have the impression that the village gave what it could when there was money available—it was very much a local affair, with only the occasional mention of names further afield than Eyam, Ashford and Bakewell. The Devon connection of the Wrights seems to have brought contributions from friends in that part of the country and there was a donation from a relative of the vicar in Iowa, U.S.A. In September it is clear that the committee decided to press on towards their goal as they now had raised a little over £1,300. The Duke made a second donation of £250 and there were several other more substantial sums, including £25 from the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Building &c. of Churches. The Committee now had nearly £1,700, and with the addition of a few sums during 1873, notably £67. 4s. 3d. from C. S. Leslie of Hassop Hall for repairs to the Hassop Chantry, and with £86. 7s. 0½d. taken in the collection ‘with after gifts’ at the re-opening of the church on 22nd September 1873, the fund was officially closed at £1,840. 0s. 3d. Additional money was still necessary, however, and during the next few years the proceeds of various sales of work and bazaars, not to mention such things as the ‘Proceeds of Conjuring Entertainment at Longstone’ on 13th January 1876, were added to the Fund. A belated gift from the Lichfield Diocesan Church Extension Society was also reported. The last entries show the Fund standing at a little over £1,900.

The smaller and more specific funds, however, seem to have been more particularly built up by local events, sales of work and small collections. The largest contributions to the Organ Fund were a series of sales of work organised by Miss Wright, the first in April 1872 which raised £8; the second on 22nd September 1873, the day the church was re-opened, brought in the princely sum of £37. 6s. 6d. Her third effort on 27th December that same year raised £25. There were two donations of £10, a few of £5, and countless small sums, in shillings. The fund was closed in April 1874, when it stood at £262. 10s. 6d.

The Pulpit Fund, which was started in 1873, was similarly made up of a series of small subscriptions of three guineas or less; nearly £59 was collected in this way, with the exception of £15. 15s. 0d. which made up the offerory on 13th September 1874, the day the pulpit was 'opened'. So Shaw's view that the money for these lesser items would ultimately flow in was quite justified. Lastly, the Clock Fund, which was not strictly the concern of Shaw, although it was very much part of yet another village effort, launched in 1873. £32. 18s. 0d. was raised for the clock and a separate gift of £25 was made by three Longstone families for the quarter chimes.

Shaw's specification was divided into three parts. The first deals with the main fabric of the church. All the old plaster was to be removed from the walls and any cracks which were revealed were to be stopped up in cement. The walls were then to be replastered flush with the exposed stonework around the windows and for the arcades. The stonework itself was to be rubbed down and cleaned. The east window and three other two-light windows were to be replaced by new ones in stone, 'all most carefully wrot', obtained from Eyam Edge Quarry, two modern clerestory windows to be replaced and a blank space on the north clerestory to have a new window to match the rest.

'The parapets throughout including those of Tower and the pinnacles at the angles to be carefully taken down—and arranged in the church yard so that they may go back in their proper places. All defective stones to be rejected, and damaged ones to be resquared and wrought, any deficiency to be made good with new stone from Eyam Edge and the whole reset, as far as possible in the exact position each stone occupied before—to be carefully dowelled together where necessary with hard pebbles or slate dowels. All copings to be very carefully made good in every respect.

Shaw, in fact, subtly redesigned the top of the tower, developing the parapet so that it was a rather more satisfying crown to the tower itself. To achieve this he corbelled it out, increasing the depth of the crenellations and moulding their caps at the same time. This necessitated raising the pinnacles on new bases, although the pinnacles themselves are the original ones. The effect is good and very few would detect the alterations as Victorian work—which is a mark of Shaw's sensitivity to the spirit of a typical Derbyshire tower which never had been either large or ornamental. It is interesting, too, that this work of alteration and the addition of a new clerestory window would be frowned upon today, yet a century after it was done few would notice the alteration and fewer still condemn it.

A more typical Victorian decision perhaps was to raise the chancel floor and pave it with encaustic tiles, and probably during the course of the work it was decided to build a low screen wall in front of the chancel which would incorporate a reading desk. In the original specification the builder was required to refix the existing pulpit and reading desk: perhaps the pulpit alone was temporarily refixed while the new one was made, and its cost defrayed by parochial activity. The contractor was also to take out the old gallery, the wood partitions in the tower arch and all the old pews. He was to repair the floors and make a new set of pews for the whole of the body of the church with the exception of the Hassop Chapel, which was excluded in every way from the general repair work in the church.

Once again there is a long section describing the works on the roofs. They were to be stripped of lead and boarding, and in the nave the new iron trusses inserted to carry the weight of the new roof. After repairs to the trusses the roof was to be reconstructed in deal and releaded; proper gutters were formed to drain them and the old oak inner

boarding replaced and renewed where necessary. In the chancel the same procedure was followed except that the iron girders were not thought necessary; in the aisles the whole roof appears to have been removed, new wall plates inserted and the old timbers carefully put back and reboarded externally. Finally, cast-iron down-pipes were provided, connecting up to the new drainage system and taking water away from the foundations and the new parts of the walls.

The second specification deals with the reconstruction of the remaining windows, the replacement of defective stone and the re-leading of all the glass. The bulging portion of the north wall was to be taken down and rebuilt, and the whole of the church repointed. The third specification was for the new vestry and for breaking out the archway on the north side of the chancel. The organ itself, of course, was not part of this work.

If Brown signed the contract on 6th July 1872 and the church was re-opened on 22nd September 1873, work must have proceeded with some speed, and although there was little structurally wrong with the fabric the reroofing of the entire building was not either a small or an easy task to carry out. In addition there was a great deal of slow and intricate work in the restoration of stonework and the replacement of windows as well as in refitting the church internally. Drawings for the detailed part of the work seem to have passed between Shaw and Wright and back again, presumably for Wright's approval, at regular intervals during the early months of 1873, and then they were passed on to Brown. Not all the drawings survive by any means, but there were a full series of contact drawings followed by several details, the latest was for the reading desk, dated 2nd September, less than a month before the official opening. Admittedly there had been an inch-scale detail of the chancel screen late in June, but the later drawing shows signs of hasty preparation and would appear to be mostly in Shaw's own hand. The latest drawing is unnumbered but the chancel screen is number 23, so it would seem that there were probably about 25 drawings or so, which shows the degree of attention which Shaw paid to a small church in a very outlying spot by the standards of a London architect.

Much of the brunt of managing the affairs of the alterations fell to G. T. Wright. Brown was not a very efficient contractor and his firm eventually went bankrupt after his death, but before all the accounts were completed. Wright, in his report on the progress of the work, at one point complains about the inefficient management of the contract. One specific incident was his mistake in the height of the chancel screen wall, but there appear to have been others and Wright seems to have had more than his fair share of building problems. Unlike most modern building contracts, Brown was not responsible for the total management of the works, and of course there were a number of detail items which were not part of his work and probably would not have been so today. Wright administered all the detail of the accounts and seems to have been kept quite busy dealing with the typical minutiae of church alterations. In September 1872 George Eyre was appointed to 'Superintend the Work', and it would appear that he was a sort of Clerk of the Works who also undertook some of the work himself and employed others to carry out certain other works, all usually of a minor nature, and outside the main contract, presumably. Wright also dealt with the special items, like the clock, the lightning conductor and the weather vane. Late in 1876, when he had left the village, he was still dealing with a claim for payment from the man who gilded the cock:

The churchwardens of Longstone have referred your Account of 1873 for 'painting and gilding Vane of Longstone Ch.' 14/- to me. I beg to inform you that the Churchwardens are in no respect liable for the same, as they never employed you to do it. Their contract was with John F. Faulkner, 13 Great Ducie Street, Strangeways, Manchester, whose receipt I hold, and the gilding is especially mentioned and included. I trust that on appln. to Mr. Faulkner, you will receive the amount of your A/c. I am surprised at yr. allowing 3 years to pass before sending in the A/c.

Wright was a meticulous man; the accounts which do remain are neatly annotated on the back for filing and reference, and the value of retaining them is clear from the problems of gilding and also from his dealings with James Leaver, medieval metal worker

of Maidenhead, who made the communion rails and the decorative hinges and locks for the doors in 1873 and was paid for them promptly in October and November, although there was even then a minor altercation because Wright had deducted the cost of packaging from his final payment. Leaver then wrote:

I am not in the habit of giving discount and the packages cost me the money charged, this being deducted reduces my Bill $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. this at most should be only $2\frac{1}{2}$ which would have reduced the Bill 13/6 instead of £1 0 0. I send your receipt and shall feel grateful for 6/2 in stamps at your convenience.

Wright's reply is not recorded; doubtless he was guarding church finance with every care. However, in July 1878 Leaver sent another bill for a balance of payment amounting to £7. 14s. 0d. with a letter threatening legal action. The reply shows Wright at what must have been his most typical:

It is true, as you say, that you have applied to me more than once for the balance of an Account which as Churchwarden for Longstone Church I paid you in 1873. And I have to the best of my knowledge never failed to write to you to the same effect—altho' I closed the Church Accounts long since & have not resided at Longstone for several years. I have no wish to quarrel with you, as I have had reason to speak well of you and your work, but at the same time there is a limit to everyone's patience. What I chiefly complain of is not the original mistake—which may happen to everybody—but that you are perpetuating your own mistake & accuse me of not replying to your applications. You ignore my replies, and at the end of about two years you repeat yourself. I must ask you to acknowledge the receipt of this letter and also to inform me after hunting through your old cash books, whether I am not correct in saying that Mr. James Leaver himself acknowledged one cheque and Mr. Cornish the other. I think I recognise the latter as my present correspondent, & I hope he will not keep me more than a day or two without a reply, as I am going away for some time.

Two days later Leaver replied, admitting the mistake and making profuse apologies!

The accounts throw light on the progress of the work. We know, for example, that 'One Warming Apparatus' supplied by the Derwent Iron Foundry Co. costing £55 arrived in March 1873, indeed that two tons of it arrived at Hassop station on 4th March. The choir stalls were made by J. E. Knox, architectural woodcarvers, of Canterbury Place, London S.E., and as the bill says:

To preparing and carving Chancel seats in oak in best manner agreeable to designs and drawings by the Architect.

They cost £60. 0s. 0d. and these were probably the pews which George Eyre fetched from Hassop station when he collected also the 'Organ', charging in his accounts 3s. 6d. for the job.

Some of these pews, incidentally still retain their original hat supports. An account by Robert Thornhill, who remembers when there were more, is interesting here:

These consisted of pairs of steel rods with brass caps on the ends and which must have been very useful in days when top hats were regularly worn, they were spaced so that a hat could be hung between them with the brim resting on twin rods, the hat actually being stored part way under the seat in front.

There was one serious objection, if caught with ones shoe toe they acted like a tuning fork the sound being quite loud, and very disconcerting to one if it happened during the sermon.

Another little detail which still survives is the series of metal 'eyes' let into the stonework around the capitals to facilitate the arrangement of decorations at festivals.

Finally, in the remaining collection of bills, there is the Ashford Marble Works account for the pulpit:

To a new Pulpit, the upper portion of the body executed in Polished Alabaster (best quality) with rich Carved Cornice and book rest, supported by a polished Red Marble Colm., the lower portion of the body and steps of Mansfield, white stone, (best quality) to designs and dimen's supplied by R. Norman Shaw, R. A. Architect, completed & fixed upon a *concrete foundation* in St. Giles Church, Great Longston, as *agreed* for £65 0 0.

That was in September 1874, and Eyre's accounts show that he, too, was busy, 'assisting with roof Pulpit & Organ' for three days early that month. It would seem that the final touches to the restoration and the re-arrangements which were made for the pulpit in the nave and the alterations in the chancel were all finished that month, and

Eyre rendered his final account. Shaw seemed to have regarded the main contract as complete earlier that year. His fee account, for £123. 2s. 6d., less £25 paid in December 1872 after his initial report on the fabric, was dated 24th March 1874. For some reason he received a further £2. 0s. 0d. from Wright in July 1877. The church finally settled its affairs with the builder in July 1876, after a complex legal wrangle following Brown's bankruptcy.

That is the conclusion of the account of the restoration, so far as it can be interpreted from the remaining documents. But there is a postscript.

In 1907 it was decided to glaze the east window as a memorial to G. T. Wright, and his daughter, Florence, turned for advice to Shaw, who was, of course, by this time a very great man, his career then drawing to a close, although he was still at the top of his profession. The letters he wrote at this time show that he and Wright obviously had liked each other, and that the connection with the family was perhaps more than the strictly business one which one might assume from the early work at the church. No doubt the passage of years had lent enchantment and there must have been some nostalgia for those early days when, despite some of his most notable domestic commissions, he had been able to devote so much attention to a far-away Derbyshire church. Yet here, again, the ageing architect went to the greatest of pains to achieve what was desired. The letters which remain are worth quoting at length for the light they throw upon Shaw as a person. The first is dated 11th October 1907:

I am very truly sorry to hear of the death of your dear father. He was always kind, courteous & considerate to me—and he made the work at Longstone Church most agreeable—quite an ideal work for an Architect! Of course I should be very pleased to help you in any way in my power, but I have been what is called 'out of business' for many years—so am no longer in touch with people. Still as I said before—I shall be pleased to do my best, and if you will send me approximate sizes of windows—and *your views generally*, I shall see what can be done best. I have poor health and may not be able to do much—still I should *much* like to do what I can.

The next on 5th December:

I am sending you by registered parcel the small sketches for the stained glass windows. I think they *promise* well, and I believe they might be made to turn out even better than they promise. My only objection at present, is that the figures of St. Michael and St. Raphael are a little small, the actual figures are about 2' 9" high, and I think they might well be increased by 6" each. To me the lights look a shade empty—but I shall be glad to hear what you think.

The cost of executing and fixing the S.S. Michael and Raphael window will be £50 and the 'Annunciation' £35. These are reasonable prices, as the work is always very good.

Then, two days later:

I am very pleased to hear that you think the windows *may* do. It is the very outside of what one could expect. Of course you will remember that these drawings I sent you are the merest preliminary sketches—just to show the formal scheme—and colour, suggested. There are full sized cartoons to be made—in which the whole thing must be studied in great detail—and many alterations made—and when we come to it—should we ever do so—! I shall take care that your suggestions are attended to—and all others too. As to the carrying out of the work. I beg you will do *exactly* what you desire—and can do with the greatest ease to yourselves. If you postpone one of the windows, they will make a small charge for the design proposed—which will be your property—in other respects it will make no difference one way or another.

I daresay you will be amused to hear that I was offered a Baronetcy the other day—but I thought I could be quite happy (happier) without it, so after some consideration, declined. Of course it was a great honour offered to our Art—Architecture—and as far as I was concerned I was *proud* but the personal side did not interest me—at least not much.

I am sure your dear father would have been very pleased he was always so kind and considerate.

The next letter dated 20th December:

The drawings are to hand quite safely—Just at this time it is no use giving any one any instructions about anything—as most people seem to be intoxicated with a craving for buying toys and all sorts of useless things! that no one wants, but when Christmas is over I shall see these people and shall give them some views, on all the small points to which you allude.

When ready. I shall send you a full sized Coloured Cartoon of St. Michael—as he seems to be rather a stumbling block. We must do all we can to get it right.

I trust you may all have a very peaceful and quiet Christmas.

The letter dated 22nd February 1908:

I thought I might just as well touch up our stained glass friends to hear what they are about. The result is that they say the windows will be all done in 6 or 7 weeks—and they send back the original sketch of the larger window, and a full sized cartoon,—which I am sending on to you in registered parcels.

You will see there is a hopeless muddle about one of the figures, and I expect I am the muddler. I can't pretend to say how I originated this muddle, I thought it was S. Raphael that you thought looked weak and effeminate, and some one has I see written 'too effeminate' on the small sketch. All the time it was S. Gabriel that you objected to. So I have drawn out S. Raphael. I suppose we shall never get out of the muddle!!

I hope you will like this cartoon,—it strikes me as being very promising, and certainly very well done. They have evidently taken exceptional pains over it, and I trust you will all be pleased with it. When you let me have them back again, I shall explain to them the mistake I made and get them to strengthen up the St. Gabriel. I do trust it will all come right and to your mind, and that you will be pleased.

Then, on 28th February 1908:

The drawing and cartoon came safe to hand and I sent them on to H. B. & B (Heaton, Butler & Bayne) with an explanation. They write back that they understand that it is the S. Gabriel you desire to strengthen up a bit and that they 'can easily give effect to your clients wishes in carrying out the glass, as such faults are inseparable from small designs—which are simply intended as indications'—so I think we may safely leave it in their hands. I am sure they will do their best.

The letter of 27th May 1908:

I have been to H. B. & B. and have seen the windows. I must say I like them and think on the whole that they are quite satisfactory. Parts look a bit sooty, but then it is a very bad light down there, you see them with an outside window behind. They will look very different at Longstone, with the clear bright country light, not our dirty London light! One of the heads had been entirely repainted, and it looked very sooty, as it had not been refired. It will be much paler when it has been fired. I hope very much that you will like them, as they are really *very good* specimens as work goes. But the art is a terrible one, not as bad as Architecture, but getting on that way.

They are to be fixed in good time. They quite understand all about that, & the inscriptions (not yet done).

The final letter was written on 30th June 1908, like all the others, from his own house, which he had designed himself, in Ellerdale Road, Hampstead.

I was exceedingly pleased to have your letter, and to hear that the windows are approved. Stained glass is I am sure a particularly difficult art, and I am sure one *never* realises ones ideals, but I expect this may be said of all arts, so it is not a very original utterance!!

The great thing is, that your mother and all of you should like them, and if you do that, I am more than content. It has been a great pleasure to me to help with them. The memory of your dear father is a most agreeable memory to me,—and always will be. I wish I could have done more. With very kind regards.

I am yours sincerely,

R. Norman Shaw.

So G. T. Wright was commemorated in the church which he had so carefully helped to restore, both as the resident churchwarden while living in the Hall, and later in exile in the south.

At the time of the original restoration an exchange of letters exists between Miss Wright and Robert Thornhill, who had just placed a memorial window in the church next to earlier ones of the Wright family. Emma Wright wrote to say how much she liked the window and the links between the two families commemorated in the siting of the window itself. Thornhill's reply echoes the association, and we should remember the close support which the Thornhill family had given when the 1840 restoration was under way. The 1871 committee for restoration had included two Thornhills, John who was churchwarden and to whom the memorial window was installed by his son, and Robert, who was the same Robert who had been agent for the estate as a young man in the 1840s. Another member of the Committee was John Furness, and the last letter written from Preswylfa, Abbey Road, Llandudno, is from G. T. Wright's widow, a simple note reminding Mrs. Furness that the windows would be dedicated 'on Thursday afternoon next at 3.30'. So ends this account of a small close-knit community, respectful and respected, whose Victorian history is contained, as it should be, in the parish church

and whose connections with the world of great architecture throw an interesting and surprisingly human light upon a man usually discussed in quite different terms.

SOURCES

The material for this paper is drawn primarily from the papers of the Wright family at Great Longstone. This is a private collection of documents and I should like to thank Mr. Walter V. Wright for allowing me access to those relating to the church and G. T. Wright.

I have used the following documents for the paper:

R. N. Shaw's Report on the fabric of the Church;

R. N. Shaw's Specification and the extant drawings for the Contract;

The Minute Book of the Restoration Committee; and

Accounts, Bills and Correspondence between the architect, Mr. Wright, the Contractor, Sub-Contractors and Solicitor: these are fragmentary but enough to give an insight into what was taking place.

Additional material, particularly about the 1841 restoration, but also the exchange of letters between William Longsdon and G. T. Wright in 1872, is taken from the Longsdon papers at Little Longstone Manor. I am grateful to Mr. A. E. C. Longsdon for allowing me access to them. Again I should add that these are private papers.

The final connection between Shaw and Longstone, which troubled me for some time, was finally elucidated by Mr. Andrew Saint, who drew my attention to the connection between the Sleigh family at Thornbridge and Leek, where Shaw was working on Meerbrook Church. I am grateful for his help.

I have also had access to a number of transcriptions of village records made by Mr. Robert Thornhill and I have made particular use of the Minutes of the 1841 Pew Committee.