



## X

# The Newcastle upon Tyne Architectural Practice of Hicks and Charlewood and their successors, 1882–1936

*Ian Curry*

## SUMMARY

*The practice of Hicks and Charlewood was a major force in ecclesiastical architecture in the north-east region during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. This paper sets out the history of two generations of influential partnerships.*

## INTRODUCTION

**W**ILLIAM SEARLE HICKS established an independent architectural practice in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1882, coinciding with the establishment of the newly formed Diocese of Newcastle in the same year, and specialising in the design of new churches, and the restoration of existing historic churches. In 1888 he took into partnership his brother-in-law Henry Clement Charlewood, and thus the Hicks and Charlewood practice came into existence; it continued until the death of W. S. Hicks in 1902. H. C. Charlewood continued the practice, assisted by his nephew Henry Leicester Hicks, and later by his son George Edward Charlewood, who had served in the First World War. When Henry Clement Charlewood eventually retired in about 1926, the second Hicks and Charlewood practice continued with H. L. Hicks and G. E. Charlewood until 1936; at this point the practice divided. George E. Charlewood was to return to the army during the Second World War, and then re-established his practice in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1946, Henry Leicester having died by this time.

Ian Curry joined the practice in 1958, and in 1960 became a partner, the name of the practice changing to G. E. Charlewood and Curry. George Charlewood died in 1962 and Ian Curry continued the practice, until he was joined by Harry H. Atkinson in 1970, when Harry Atkinson's previous partner Doreen Wilson had died, the practice again changing its name to Charlewood, Curry, Wilson and Atkinson. Harry Atkinson retired in 1985, and Ian Curry took into partnership their former Associate, Christopher J. Downs, the practice continuing as Charlewood, Curry and Partners, until the lease of the Newcastle office expired in 1993, and the office was closed. By this time Ian Curry was serving as Cathedral Architect for Durham Cathedral, and continued to practice from The College, Durham, as Ian Curry and Associates, while Christopher Downs continued to practice independently in Newcastle, eventually being appointed Cathedral Architect for Durham Cathedral in 1997, when Ian Curry retired from that post.



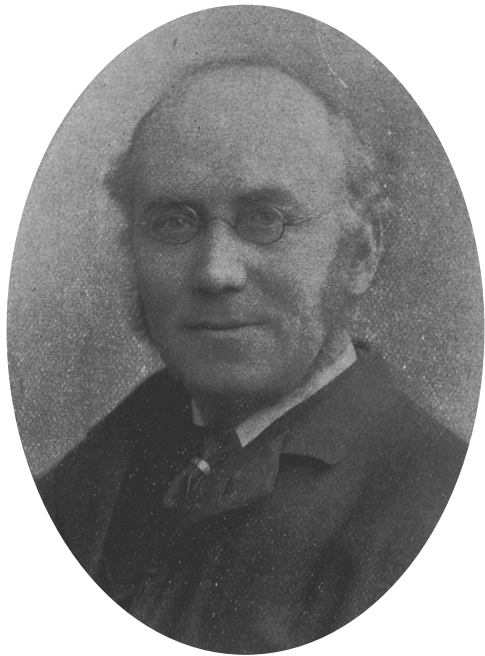


Fig. 1 William Searle Hicks, 1849–1902.



Fig. 2 Henry Clement Charlewood, 1857–1943.

### WILLIAM SEARLE HICKS: THE EARLY YEARS — AND THOMAS HARDY.

The first reference to the Hicks family was in the 13th century, when a John Hicks held the Manor of Manor of Nunnington in Yorkshire. Henry Hicks was mentioned in 1580, and a William Hicks in 1610. The main Hicks family tree begins in 1635 with an armigerous John Hicks, still of the Manor of Nunnington in Yorkshire, and continues with two more generations of John Hicks's, the first born in 1658, and the second in 1682; the latter John died in 1760 and was buried at Exeter.<sup>1</sup>

William Searle Hicks (fig. 1) was born on 6th March 1849, at Piddletrenthide in Dorset, and died at the relatively early age of 53 on 21st November 1902, at his home in Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne.<sup>2</sup> He was the eldest son of the Reverend James Hicks and Emma Barry, niece of Sir Charles Barry who is best known as the architect of the Houses of Parliament. The Revd. James Hicks BA. had been incumbent of Piddletrenthide since 1839, and was the son of the Revd. James Champion Hicks, of Rangeworthy in Gloucestershire, who in turn was son of Admiral Thomas Hicks, of Brixham, Devon. The Hicks came of a Devonshire naval family, and were said to be connected with some of the principal families of the county. W. S. Hicks was educated privately, possibly by his father.<sup>3</sup>

From his earliest boyhood William S Hicks had shown a remarkable facility in the use of his pencil, and long before he commenced his architectural career, he drew from nature with great delicacy and taste. He was also of a mechanical turn, and possessed a natural talent for handling tools of all sorts. He used to make models of ships of various patterns and, when

little more than ten years old, he made a fleet of eight or nine ships — yachts, cutters, schooners, brigs, and barques, all fully and properly rigged. He also made several electrical machines, and before he was sixteen he had finished a beautiful model of a power-loom. He was adept at turning, and used to make chucks of various sorts to add to the capabilities of his lathe. Some of his early sketches of the old church of his home at Piddletrenthide and of Sherborne Minster, he etched on copper and printed copies himself. One of his best etchings was a pen-and-ink sketch of the beautiful interior of Roslyn Chapel, showing with great accuracy the elaborate details of the far-famed 'apprentices pillar'. When quite young, he copied a fine old print of the Duke of Wellington, which had been damaged by fire, and with so much fidelity that nine people out of ten on seeing it would scarcely believe that the drawing was not itself a print, although there was more life in the face and more softness in the lines than any print could reproduce.

When he was twelve, it was his own father's wish that he should enter the Royal Navy, no doubt because his grandfather had been Rear Admiral of the Blue, and other forebears had been in the Royal Navy. His father took him to see an influential relative in London, and very nearly completed arrangements for his entry on board the *Britannia* but at the last moment the idea was abandoned.

His father's younger brother, John Hicks, had trained as an architect in Bristol, and was to establish his practice at Dorchester in Dorset, quite near Piddletrenthide. With his uncle as architect, and his mother's links to the family of Sir Charles Barry, it is not entirely surprising that the young W. S. Hicks should then have turned to architecture for his career. Probably by this time he had spent time in his uncle's Dorchester office,<sup>4</sup> where Thomas Hardy had become senior assistant. Hardy had spent some time in London in the office of A. A. Blomfield, and afterwards had returned to John Hicks in Dorchester.<sup>5</sup> For a while John seems to have been suffering from ill-health, and this may have contributed to W. S. Hicks deciding to leave Dorset.<sup>6</sup> John Hicks was to die in February 1869, leaving Hardy to see through to completion many of his works in the Dorchester area.

So in 1866, aged seventeen, William Searle Hicks came to the North to study the art of architecture in the office of what had been the Newcastle practice of John Dobson and Thomas Austin, and was being continued by Robert J. Johnson, as Austin and Johnson, Newcastle upon Tyne. Thomas Austin, who had been best known for his restoration of Brinkburn Priory in 1858, is said to have perished at sea in 1875 on his way to Australia. W. S. Hicks was articled to Robert J. Johnson (1832–1892), who at one time had been in the London office of Sir Gilbert Scott, and the Austin and Johnson office was considered the best in the Newcastle area. Johnson's best churches were Stannington St Mary (1871) and the first parts of Newcastle St Matthew (1877, fig. 3), major restorations at Monkwearmouth St Peter (1874), and secular works such as Armstrong College, Newcastle, now the core of Newcastle University. Thus there were the opportunities for an earnest pupil such as W. S. Hicks to see the best architectural work. Money, however, was scarce during the years he served his time as pupil architect, and he was so deeply engrossed in his various occupations that it is said that he was so careless and forgetful about his food that there was little doubt his health was to suffer in consequence.

In about 1872, when his pupillage in Newcastle had been completed, William Searle Hicks took charge of the Austin and Johnson branch office at Middlesbrough. Many churches in the Middlesbrough and Cleveland area are typical of Johnson, such as Skelton All Saints (1884) and Whitby St Hilda (1884–1886) — whose tower was completed in 1938 by George

Charlewood — but several, nominally designed by Johnson, must have been the responsibility of Hicks. In 1875 Hicks became a partner in the firm of Austin, Johnson and Hicks, which partnership continued for seven years, until he established his own independent practice. Also in 1875 he had married Anne Alice, eldest daughter of the Revd. E. H. Adamson, MA, Vicar of St Alban's, Windy Nook (Heworth). His spare evenings during his early days in Newcastle had been occupied in carving in wood or stone to some of his own designs, and the lectern in the church of St Alban's, Windy Nook, was reputed to be entirely his own handiwork; he also devoted several weeks to painting the reredos of Fatfield church, which he presented as a gift.

### THE FIRST HICKS AND CHARLEWOOD PRACTICE

It was in 1882 that William Searle Hicks set up his own practice, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, a date which coincided with the foundation of the new Diocese of Newcastle. In that year he commenced the rebuilding of Shilbottle St James, and as time went on he built the new churches of Lambley SS Mary and Patrick (1885) and Blyth St Cuthbert (1888, fig. 4), and also restored the church of St John Lee (1885), near Hexham — all within the new diocese.

In 1888 he was joined by his younger brother-in-law, Henry Clement Charlewood FRIBA, forming the firm known as Hicks and Charlewood, in Newcastle upon Tyne. Elswick St Aidan's church, Newcastle (1889), now redundant and demolished, and St Margaret's Church, Brotton-in-Cleveland, were commenced; soon afterwards Hicks was appointed Diocesan Surveyor for Newcastle Diocese, on the resignation of R. J. Johnson, and he continued to hold this appointment until c. 1900.

Hicks had joined the Northern Architectural Association in 1886 and was elected Vice-President in 1888–89, then President in the years 1890, 1891, and 1892. He was licensed as a Lay Reader in 1884 to the Parish of St Matthew's, Newcastle, and the licence was transferred to Gosforth Parish in 1890, where he was Churchwarden of the new All Saints Church, Gosforth, at the time of his death. When he died in 1902, he left three daughters and six sons, but of these only Henry Leicester Hicks became an architect.

Henry Clement Charlewood (fig. 2), was a son of the Rev. Thomas Charlewood, Vicar of Kinoulton; he was born at Kinoulton Vicarage, Nottinghamshire, on the 15th March 1857 and was educated at Marlborough College, and then studied architecture in London, passing the qualifying examination in 1888 for admittance as Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He had married on 29th May 1885, Louisa Mary Hicks, daughter of Rev. James Hicks, Vicar of Piddletrenthide, Dorset, and so became brother-in-law to W. S. Hicks. H. C. Charlewood had retired from the Newcastle practice in the mid 1920s, and was living in Beckenham with his daughter Katherine, and her husband Charles Barry Elliott, when he died in 1943.<sup>7</sup>

Within the Hicks and Charlewood practice, Hicks was always considered to be the artistic genius and designer of the partnership, whilst the office management and business acumen lay with his brother-in-law, Henry Clement Charlewood. The architectural style which Hicks adopted, had many similarities to what he would have been working on in the Johnson office, a style based on late medieval English Gothic (the Perpendicular style), but what is of interest is that, where possible, he made use of some of the local architectural features and peculiarities which he had encountered when growing up in Dorset, such as the crossing towers of Shilbottle church, or Blyth St Cuthbert, or the great west tower that he completed for





Fig. 3 Newcastle, St Matthew (west tower).



Fig. 4 Blyth, St Cuthbert.





Fig. 5 Hartlepool, St Oswald.



Fig. 6 Bensham (Gateshead), St Chad.



Johnson's Newcastle, St Matthew (fig. 3). But, as was common at the time, he could adapt his style to suit an existing church where necessary. He also designed several reredoses for existing churches such as the elaborate example at Bamburgh, St Aidan (1895).

His practice was responsible for some two hundred buildings in many parts of the country, ranging from Northumberland to Norfolk and Somerset, and varying from substantial parish churches, to mission churches and halls in mining communities, many restorations, and a large number of furnishings and refurnishing schemes. When Hicks died in 1902, at the age of 53, the published list of his works was very extensive, and Henry Charlewood must have had his hands very full, both helping Mrs Hicks with her children, nowhere near independence, while dealing with the whole of an extensive practice, as well as having to complete several of the churches of note, such as West Hartlepool St Oswald (1897–1904, fig. 5), with its big west tower, and Bensham St Chad in Gateshead (1900–1903, fig. 6), which with its octagonal crossing tower was the most elaborate of Hicks' designs.

Later churches by the Hicks and Charlewood practice, when Henry Clement Charlewood was principal, tended to be less ambitious on economic grounds, such as Newcastle St Barnabas in Goldspink Lane (1901–1904), now demolished, West Woodburn All Saints (1906–1907), Newcastle Jesmond St Hilda (1905–1919) and Newcastle Scotswood St Margaret (1915). Later a series of essentially brick churches were developed, starting with Newcastle Byker St Lawrence (1908) now also demolished.

#### THE SECOND HICKS AND CHARLEWOOD PRACTICE

In the early 1920s, the Hicks and Charlewood practice was still held together by the senior partner Henry Clement Charlewood, but when he retired in the middle of the decade, the practice devolved to the next generation — to Henry Leicester Hicks, and the slightly younger George Edward Charlewood (who had served in the army all through the First World War). The financial limitations and difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s did not augur well for the cousins of this second generation to continue the partnership. George seems to have been the artistic designer by nature, while the older Henry Leicester wanted to be the figurehead and leader of the practice. With Henry Clement Charlewood eventually retiring, matters did not improve, though the commission for the practice to undertake the major repair and restoration scheme for Newcastle Cathedral, 1930 to 1932, held the cousins together for a time. At about this time there was also an elaborate restoration of the clerestory and roofs of Berwick Parish Church (Holy Trinity), for which George Charlewood was largely responsible.

Henry Leicester Hicks (fig. 7), second son of William Searle Hicks, was born in 1883, and educated at St Bees School, Westmorland. He must have been articled in his father's and uncle's office in Newcastle upon Tyne, and became partner and principal in due course. He had been at home during the First World War, presumably as someone essential for the running of the Hicks and Charlewood practice. He served as President of the Northern Architectural Association for the session 1932–1933, having served on the Council of the Association, and in various other posts.<sup>8</sup>

His partner, George Edward Charlewood (fig. 8), was born 26th March 1890, and died 29th October 1962, aged 72 years.<sup>9</sup> George's father, Henry, had four sons, as well as his daughter Katherine Rosamond born in 1891: Clement James born in 1888, George Edward born in 1890, William Henry born 1893 and killed in action 1916, and Alfred born 1894 and killed in action 1918. Like his father, George Edward was educated at Marlborough College, and afterwards



Fig. 7 Henry Leicester Hicks, 1883–1947.



Fig. 8 George Edward Charlewood, 1890–1962.

was articled to an architectural practice in London. Before joining the family practice, however, he volunteered to serve in the First World War where, at the Battle of Passchendaele, he was the sole surviving officer of the 4th Northumberland Fusiliers, although he had been seriously wounded. Returning from the forces after the war he joined his father's practice of Hicks and Charlewood, where his older first cousin Henry Leicester Hicks was already established, as son of the late William Searle Hicks. Henry had had not served in the War, no doubt adding to the future friction between the cousins.

Eventually the partnership between H. L. Hicks and G. E. Charlewood was dissolved in 1936, with Henry L. Hicks continuing to practise from Jesmond Road, Newcastle, it seems mainly on church furnishing schemes in various parts of the North of England, though in his last years he seems to have been in poor health. He died in 1947. George Edward meanwhile continued his own practice on a small scale, extending his activities beyond church work into a variety of secular works, lecturing, and being active with the Northern Architectural Association. He had also continued his Territorial Army links with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, and when the Second World War came, foreseeing that architectural practice could be even more difficult, he re-joined the Army, but being rather too old for overseas service, happily spent his time as a Billeting Officer with Northern Command, visiting historic houses in Lincolnshire and the North of England, and ending his service with the rank of Captain.

In 1945/6 G. E. Charlewood re-established his practice in Newcastle at 14 Neville Street, absorbing what was left of Henry L. Hicks' practice, and in due course (c. 1957), that of Herbert L. Honeyman. Already into his 60s, George Charlewood had a first heart attack in



1952/53, after which he was no longer able to drive, but soon got back into practice; he also recovered from a second heart attack in 1959, but not from the third in 1962. Rosemary Hudson had become his Senior Assistant, succeeded in 1958 by Ian Curry, who became partner a year later, and succeeded to the practice on George Charlewood's death.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Hicks family tree, provided in 2001 by Peter John Hicks, grandson of W. S. Hicks, and researched c. 1990 by Peter Hicks's granddaughter.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the information about William Searle Hicks comes from the Preface to the Monograph booklet about William Searle Hicks privately printed in 1903 after his death. Other notes derive from the accounts in the Northern Architectural Association Year Book, and the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, reprinted in the Monograph.

<sup>3</sup> William Searle Hicks had a younger brother, born in 1858, the Revd Edward Barry Hicks MA, who became a clergyman in the newly formed Diocese of Newcastle (at Killingworth?). His son was the Revd William Barry Hicks (b. 1897, and in due course Vicar of Berwick, Alston and Warkworth), who was cousin and friend of G. E. C. A younger sister of W. S. Hicks, Sarah (1859–1891), had married Charles H. Elliot, and hence the future Margaret Elliot who would marry her distant relative, George Charlewood.

<sup>4</sup> See Florence Emily Hardy, *Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (Macmillan 1928), 96–7 and the apparent reference to the young Hicks in the novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* by Thomas Hardy.

There is no reference whatsoever either to John Hicks or to Thomas Hardy in the Monograph. Possibly the unknown author of the Monograph (H. C. Charlewood?), was unaware of the link when it was prepared, at the turn of the 19th/20th century. Thomas Hardy's writings were then held in very low regard nationally but at the time of his death in 1928, his reputation as writer and poet was very high: he was an Honorary FRIBA, was awarded an Order of Merit and buried in Westminster Abbey.

<sup>5</sup> Much of the information about Thomas Hardy comes from C. J. P. Beatty, *Thomas Hardy's Career in Architecture (1856–1872)*, Dorset Natural Hist. and Archaeol. Soc., Dorchester.

<sup>6</sup> As W. S. Hicks' father continued as vicar at Piddletrenthide in Dorset, so what caused William Searle to have moved from Dorset to the North East and being articulated in the office of R.J. Johnson? It may have been on the advice of his uncle John Hicks and his London friends, and possibly there were Hicks clergy relatives already in the North East, who are mentioned in Crockford. There already seems to have been some family link with Alnwick, Northumberland, where a number of family weddings did take place, whilst eventually W. S. Hicks's father, the Reverend James Hicks, was to retire to Alnwick.

<sup>7</sup> Information provided by Dr John E. Charlewood, grandson of Henry Clement Charlewood; also an entry in an unidentified publication on Northumberland c. 1911, giving a short biography and photograph of H. C. Charlewood. Further information provided by the Revd. Richard Hicks, son of the Revd. Will Hicks, cousin and friend of George Charlewood: Louise Mary Hicks (daughter of James Champion Hicks of Piddletrenthide), born 28.2.1855 (no death record), married 28.5.1885 at Alnwick Parish Church to Henry Clement Charlewood.

<sup>8</sup> G. E. Charlewood had drawn up a family tree, drafted in 1960, and commencing with Charles Benjamin Charlewood of Uxbridge in the 18th century (also provided by Dr John E. Charlewood). A first reference to the Charlewood Family had occurred in 1275 when Charlewood of Charlewood bought the Manor of Perrots at Epsom (the village of Charlewood is near Gatwick airport in Surrey). An Alexander Charlewood sold Perrots in 1515 ~ his first son John died in 1597, while his second son Richard, born 1545, lived at Leigh, Surrey. A Geoffrey Charlewood was followed by Richard Charlewood (there is a possibility that one of these Charlewoods had been one of Queen Elizabeth I's physicians), then a Thomas Charlewood, who married in 1647. Benjamin Charlewood had three sons and one daughter, the eldest son being another Benjamin Charlewood of Windlesham (born





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1690, died 1766), while his second son (born 1693, died 1718) was an Apothecary, and became a Sheriff of the City of London. Charles Benjamin Charlewood of Uxbridge was born in 1729, while the Reverend Charles Benjamin Charlewood (born 1770 died 1848) was Incumbent of the parish of Checkley, Staffordshire, and may have become a bishop (but not verified). He had married twice and had 11 children, and the ninth child was the Reverend Thomas Charlewood (born 1811 died 1877), who married Anne Rosamond Sneyd, became Vicar of Kinoulton in Nottinghamshire, and had two sons, George Sneyd Charlewood and the second being our Henry Clement Charlewood, 1857 to 1943, architect.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Leicester Hicks had a younger brother, John Searle Hicks (b. 1888) whose son is the sculptor Peter John Hicks (b. 1921), living in Devon, and extremely helpful in providing a copy of the Hicks family tree. The date of birth for George Charlewood is given as 1892 in the Hicks family tree.

<sup>10</sup> The subsequent sections in the paper, including those on G. E. Charlewood, are drawn from the recollections of the author of this paper.

