

Alexander Fisher, Sir Christopher Wren and Merton College Chapel

By J. R. L. HIGHFIELD

ALEXANDER FISHER, Master of Arts and sometime senior fellow of Merton College died at his house in Halywell at 9 in the morning, M., 23 Oct. 1671 aet. 76; and was buried at the high altar at Merton College Church.¹ 'He left 1000 li. to pave our chapple with marble and set up a skreen; 38 li. per annum to the poor of Maidstone in Kent, where he was borne. A person fit to write a History especially Ecclesiastical, being very judicious that way; but timorous and love(d) to live in a whole skin; one that corrected and added to divers books which died with him and were scattered.' 'About half an year before he was taken suddenly with an appoplectical fit, but recovering, he set workmen on work to pave Mert. Coll. chapel with black and white marble at his owne charge.'² Thus Wood on Alexander Fisher. First elected a fellow in 1619 Fisher had lost his fellowship and the benefice of St. Peter's-in-the-East after the Laudian visitation of 1638.³ He returned to his fellowship, however, in 1641, and since then he had survived successfully the political changes of the Civil War, Protectorates and Restoration.⁴ He had held a wide variety of college offices. He had, for instance, been Bursar five times (1623, 1626, 1629, 1632, 1638), twice Dean (1625, 1628), once Chaplain's Chaplain (1630) and once Principal of the Postmasters (1631). But it was as Sub-Warden that he must have been chiefly known to his colleagues. For he held that office from 1633 to 1637, and again from 1645 to 1655.⁵ By 1651 he was senior fellow. In 1660 he was Sub-Warden for the last time. Five years later he took £20 instead of a year of grace on resigning his fellowship (3 April 1665).⁵

When he died in 1671 the College Register records of him that he was, 'Vir doctrina et prudentia singulari. Tam affectus erga Collegium quam pietatis in Deum, insigne argumentum est, quod mille ducentas libras ad

¹ Wood's *Life and Times*, ed. A. Clark (Oxford Hist. Soc.), II, 233-4.

² G. C. Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton College* (O.H.S.), p. 281. He was the son of Martin Fisher, Mayor of Maidstone (Will). Wood says of his origins, 'his father was a trader and sold drapery and mercery wares'. *Life and Times*, II, 234. For his arms and links with the families of Fryer and Warncourt of Faversham see *ibid.*, n. 2.

³ Brodrick, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

⁴ For his college offices see Register I: 3, *passim*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

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ecclesiam nostram ornandam testamento reliquit. Cui munificentiae accepta referimus Pavimentum chori in marmore tessilatum; eiusdem testitudinem restitutam et ornatam; nova utriusque sedilia; opus illud transversum, quod chorum a reliqua ecclesia disiungit, ornatum et ad regulam Corinthiacam exactum'.⁶ His will, dated 25 January 1671, reveals that the adorning of Merton College chapel was his principal desire. Firstly he asked that his body should be buried in the choir of the chapel. Secondly he directed that his copy of *Baronius' Annals* (12 volumes in folio) should be placed in the College library (the volumes are still there today).⁷ Then he gave the bulk of his fortune 'one thousand pounds of lawfull English money towards the adorning of the choir of the church'. This money was to be set to 'the new paveing the said quire throughout with black and white marble', 'in making of newe seats in and for the said quire and a new skreen also for the same if the money will reach and amount thereunto'. He required 'that such works of paveing and making the seats and skreen as aforesaid be done and fully furnished within three years after his decease'. He laid it upon his executors and on the Warden and scholars of the College to supervise the work. He gave to the Warden a ring worth 40s., to each fellow and chaplain a ring worth 20s., to each master and clerk one worth 10s., and finally to each college servant he gave 10s. in cash. There were in addition a number of legacies to personal friends⁸ and the grant of lands in Kent to the Mayor and Jurats of Maidstone. The rents from these lands were to be used for the relief of four poor widows and the apprenticing of three poor boys.⁹ The executors were Dr. Richard Lydall, fellow of Merton (from 1641), who later became Warden (1693) and died in 1704 aged 84, and Mr. Benjamin Cooper also a Mertonian and the Registrar of the University.¹⁰

As long ago as 8 March 1634 it had been resolved 'de superiore capellae nostrae parte usque ad imos gradus marmore albo nigroque concinnanda'. And in the following year (1 August 1635), 'Consensum est de novo pulvinari ad suggestus, novis item pulvillis ad sedilia in templo, aliasque res ad capellam nostram decentius adornandam. Et ut superior chore pars quae orientem

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁷ 91 HH 2-13 (Antwerp edn., 1610).

⁸ To 'my noble friend, Sir Charles Lee of Billsley, co. Warwick, my Mercator's Atlas', 'To my worthy friend, Dr. Robert Say, provost of Oriel 3 volumes of Mr. Fuller's works in fo. *Ecc' all History of Britain, Answer to Dr. Heylin, Worthies of England*'. He gave a mourning coat to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Spunt; a piece of plate worth 20s. to his godson, Richard Lydall (to be inscribed); 20s. each for rings to his godsons, Richard South and Alexander Meriell; £5 each to the four children of Benjamin Cooper; a Turkey carpet to Catherine Cooper; his white nag and a remission of debt of £40 to his 'loving friend', Mr. James Shephard, rector of Burton, co. Warwicks.; 20s. for a ring and all outstanding rents due from Mr. John Wilks of Maidstone; all his wearing apparel and £20 to Mr. Thomas.

⁹ See the will (Merton MS. E.3. 49).

¹⁰ Brodrick, *Memorials*, pp. 170 and 354. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, III, 952, I, 324.

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spectat et mensam dominicam marmore sterneretur'.¹¹ Was the sanctuary actually paved with marble in 1635? It is possible, but in light of what followed, unlikely. Perhaps the decision to implement what had been agreed was deferred and indefinitely postponed once the College had been swept into the Civil War. What is clear is that Fisher's new work began to be done in the first half of 1671 before the donor died.¹²

The architect employed by the executors and the College for the design of the new work was Sir Christopher Wren. This fact is not generally known. Attention was first drawn to it by Mr. H. W. Garrod who found the crucial entry in the Bursar's account for 1673. More recently Fisher's executors' accounts have been found tucked into his will in the safe of the Estates Bursary. It is these accounts which enable us to get very close indeed to the story of the 'new work'. When Wren undertook the design of the screen and stalls of Merton College Chapel he was already famous. It is true that—fame apart—there had been particular links which may have brought him into contact with Merton. Sir Charles Scarborough—later doctor to Charles II—had employed Wren as his demonstrator (?1646-1650) both at Oxford and in London; and Scarborough had been incorporated at Merton during the wardenship of his friend, William Harvey.¹³ Again, Wren himself since 5 February 1661 had been Savilian Professor of Astronomy,¹⁴ an appointment which may have brought him into contact with Savile's old college. But in fact by 1671 Wren's fame was quite enough to explain why he was chosen to design the work in hand.

At Oxford he had built already the Sheldonian (1664-9). All Souls (which had made him a fellow in 1653) and St. John's (where his father had been a student) had both obtained designs for chapel screens in 1664 and c. 1670 respectively. Trinity College had secured a Wren design for the north wing of their garden quadrangle in 1668. In 1671 Queen's College got him to design their Williamson building.

At Cambridge Wren had completed Pembroke College Chapel between May 1663 and 1665, and at Emmanuel College he had designed the chapel and gallery (built 1668-73).

In London he had been most busy, especially since he became royal surveyor-general in 1669. For in 1670 he began to build at least fourteen London churches. In the year he started work at Merton he also began the erection of the London Monument and at least five more London churches. In the second year of the erection of the new work at Merton Wren began

¹¹ Reg. 1: 3, pp. 315, 320.

¹² Wood, *Life and Times*, II, 233.

¹³ C. Wren, *Parentalia* (ed. E. J. Enthoven (1903)), p. 6 (letter from Wren to Scarborough, dated 15 November 1647) and cf. p. 8 and *D.N.B.*

¹⁴ *D.N.B.*

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building St. Stephen's Walbrook and the Drury Lane Theatre.¹⁵ In the year in which the new work was finished (1673), he submitted his 'Great Model' and design for St. Paul's Cathedral.¹⁶

The site of the screen raises an interesting point. What did the baroque new fittings replace? Nowhere does Fisher refer to the screen and stalls already in the chapel. They had been put there at considerable expense between 1486 and 1488 by Warden Fitzjames and his contemporaries.¹⁷ They seem to have been a casualty of the Civil War and the years which followed it. 'During the usurpation they were treated with the despoiling contempt of that sacrilegious period, and rendered incapable of subsequent restoration.'¹⁸ The Fitzjames Screen had run right across the full width of the choir one bay up from the crossing. Wood has recorded its precise position. Wren followed the line of the old rood. Between it and the pillars of the crossing he put two sets of horse-box pews on either side. The pair on the north accommodated the Warden and Wood's own family. Those on the south took the Warden's family and some of the college servants.¹⁹ The Fitzjames Stalls were not destroyed but put to line the transept walls. They were still to be seen there when Buckler drew them at the beginning of the nineteenth century,²⁰ who also recorded what was perhaps part of the rood screen which was by that time fitted up into the interior of the sacristy²¹ and survived until this part of the chapel was turned into a brewhouse in 1827.²²

All but one of the men, whom Wren employed seem to have been well-known contemporary Oxford craftsmen. Mr. John Ransford was responsible for the greater part of the woodwork—'ye screen and seates in ye quire, for mending the communion table rails and making new parish seats'. He had been already used by Wren as a joiner on the Sheldonian.²³ He is almost certainly the John Ransford, Rainsford or Raynesford, who is mentioned in the City records as a viewer of nuisances between 1666 and 1683.²⁴ The most important mason was 'Mr. Wood, the stone-cutter'. He constructed Fisher's funeral monument,²⁵ marbled and paved the choir and was entrusted with the responsible task of moving some of the brasses and monuments out

¹⁵ For all biographical details see H. M. Colvin. *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840*, p. 705. I am much indebted to Mr. Colvin for his advice on many points in this article.

¹⁶ W. R. Matthews and W. M. Atkins, *History of St. Paul's Cathedral* (1957), pp. 188-9.

¹⁷ *Registrum Annalium Coll. Mert.*, 1483-1521, ed. Salter (O.H.S.), p. xxxii.

¹⁸ R. Ackermann, *History of the Univ. of Oxford*, 1, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Life and Times*, 1, 450-1.

²⁰ B.M. Add. MS. 26, 276, no. 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, no. 17.

²² Reg. 1: 5, p. 53.

²³ Wren Soc., xix, 92.

²⁴ *Oxford Council Acts, 1665-1701*, ed. M. G. Hobson, pp. 1, 14, 24, etc.

²⁵ For the full inscription see Wood, *Antiquities* (1674), p. 89.

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of the choir. He must have been one of two famous Oxford stone-masons of the name of Wood who lived at Bird's in New College Lane.²⁶ Richard Wood occurs as a stone-cutter in the City records on 27 November, 1676. He lived to become freeman, bailiff and Mayor of Oxford (1694).²⁷ But it is Thomas Wood, who is much more likely to be our man. For he was a master-mason and laid the marble in St. Mary's in 1675-6. (He was also at work on the Old Ashmolean between 1679 and 1680. Indeed, he has been accredited with the design of the Old Ashmolean.)²⁸ The less important workmen can also be identified, almost to a man. The bill of Mr. Hawkins, the painter, who painted the roof of the choir, survives for the work he did at the Sheldonian. He painted there in cedar and in stone-colour.²⁹ He had also been employed on the screen at St. John's College.³⁰ There is a strong likelihood that the St. John's screen was also designed by Wren. An elevation for such a screen survives among the Wren drawings at All Souls.³¹ The design is highly reminiscent of the Merton screen. John White, the carpenter who made scaffolds for Hawkins and worked on the parish seats was employed by the City on several occasions between 1666 and 1668.³² Job Dew, the plasterer, who whitened the choir, had worked on the Sheldonian in 1664-9; at St. Mary's (1675-6) and on the Old Ashmolean (1679-80).³³ More interesting than Hawkins, White or Dew was Bernard Rawlins, the glazier. For he was an acquaintance of Anthony Wood who dined with him at the Crown tavern on at least one occasion. Wood tells the story of how Rawlins was taken in by a feigned patriarch who visited Oxford in 1659. Wood gives a vignette of the gullible glazier kneeling down for the charlatan's blessing.³⁴ Bromingham, who supplied the hinges for the seats, can be identified.³⁵ I cannot, however, place Davis. Otherwise the only craftsman whose name cannot be found in local records is Thomas Knight, mason. The name is common. The part which he played in the work does not seem to have been important. However, there was a Thomas Knight, citizen and freemason of London, who supplied Wren with Portland stone for St. Paul's. One of his

²⁶ *Wren Soc.*, xix, p. 94, n. 1 and cf. *Surveys and Tokens*, ed. Salter (O.H.S.), p. 296.

²⁷ *Oxford Council Acts, 1665-1701*, pp. 94, 183, 191, 202-3, 205, 223, 246, 296.

²⁸ *Life and Times*, iv, 78; *Royal Commission on Hist. Monuments* (City of Oxford), p. 13, Colvin, *Dictionary of English Architects*, pp. 693-4.

²⁹ *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*, iii, 763 and cf. *Wren Soc.*, ix, pl. 39, x, 129 and Wood, *Antiquities*, iv, 555. Hawkins was paid £90 for painting and £9 15s. for 'candlesticks for ye chapel'.

³⁰ *V.C.H.*, iii, 263 and n. 2.

³¹ *Wren soc.*, ix, pl. 39 (cf. vol. x, p. 129).

³² *Oxford Council Acts, 1665-1701*, pp. 34, 319-20.

³³ *Life and Times*, iv, 75-8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, i, 282-3; ii, 173-4, 177. He did all the reglazing of the Divinity School in 1668-9 and worked at the Old Ashmolean in 1679-80 (*Ibid.*, iv, 71, 78).

³⁵ *Oxford Council Acts, 1665-1701*, pp. 30, 108, 115, 153 (occurs 1669-83).

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contracts is extant for 24 February 1676.³⁶ It is just possible (if unlikely) that he is the Thomas Knight referred to in the accounts.

It is interesting to note that Wren's servant was paid for drawing 'the Modells for ye screen & seates'. Who was this man? Wren's servant, two years later, would have been Edward Woodroffe who helped him with the draughtsmanship of St. Paul's³⁷: it is possible that Woodroffe was already working for Wren in 1671. It is also worth observing that included among the fittings were two great brass candlesticks with cords brought down from London. These were without doubt the two fine candelabra which were still hanging in 1813 and can be seen in the Ackermann print of the interior of the chapel, made in that year.³⁸

While the work of reconstruction went forward the workmen in their digging made several important discoveries. Wood records that on 4 November 1671 they uncovered in front of the altar the stone coffin of a man whom he took to be Mr. Henry Abingdon (Warden 1422-1438). Three weeks later they found a heart enclosed in a triangle of lead in the middle of the first step of the high altar. This Wood suggested was the heart of Richard Fitzjames (Warden, 1483-1507).³⁹

The fellows in the meantime had been attending services elsewhere. 'While Merton coll. (church) was wainscoting and paving, the fellowes celebrated service in the hall and received the sacrament at St. Peter's-in-the-East, 1672, 1673.'⁴⁰ On 17 November 1673, founder's prayers were said again in the chapel. 'Habita est commemoratio ffundatoris sociis tunc primum in sacello convenientibus ad preces post sublata vetera novaque inibi extracta sedilia, deinde lecta sunt statuta et habitum scrutinium quod prorogatum est ad calendas Januarii.'⁴¹

In fact, it seems the work had been completed on 5 November and within the limit set by Fisher. (It had cost £1,130 19s. 2d., of which the screen and stalls cost £590.) On 5 November (or very soon afterwards) the College gave Wren a complimentary reception. During the building of the Sheldonian in 1663-4 the University had given Wren a piece of plate.⁴² Merton preferred the method of feasting him. 'Et in honorifica receptione Domini Christophori Wren Equitis Aurei cujus artificio designatum est novum sacelli nostri opus fabrile—£4—8s—5d.'⁴³

³⁶ *Wren Soc.*, xvi, 11-13.

³⁷ cf. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects*, p. 695. The description 'servant' is, however, a little difficult to reconcile with a man of Woodroffe's experience.

³⁸ Ackermann, *Oxford*, I, 9 (facing).

³⁹ *Life and Times*, II, 235.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁴¹ Reg. I: 3, p. 495.

⁴² *Life and Times*, IV, 72.

⁴³ Reg. 3: 3 and Liber Rationarius Bursariorum, 1652-77 (computus N. Wyght, 1673).

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Three more gifts between 1674 and 1702 put finishing touches to Wren's work. The first two were more satisfactory than the third. In 1674 Edward Reynolds 'olim alumnus, nuper Custos, semper ornamentum, nunc ecclesiae Norwicensis episcopus Collegio donavit centum libras in ornamentum sacelli expendendas'.⁴⁴ Four years later the senior fellow, Mr. Peter Nicols, gave a beautiful chalice, cover and two patens of silver gilt for the altar. This plate is still in the possession of the College.⁴⁵ It was unfortunate that Fisher's executor, Lydall, when he had himself become warden, finally put up Price's glass in the east window. 'W. Price pinxit. Expensis Mri. Alexand. Fisher hujus coll. quondam socii. Ao. Dni. MDCCII. Custode Ricardo Lydall.'⁴⁶ Such is the inscription placed in the window which contained in its eight compartments religious pictures and the arms of Fisher and Lydall displayed.

Throughout the eighteenth century the classical fittings seem to have remained undisturbed, save when in July 1752 'the open places in the screen "were" fitted with glass in the manner of sash-windows'.⁴⁷ This was no doubt to prevent the draught from the Tower reaching the stalls. But in the early nineteenth century another kind of wind began to blow.

As early as 1814 Ackermann had said of the style of the Wren design that it was 'altogether foreign to the character of the building, displaying a defective taste, with which so many of our ancient ecclesiastical buildings have been deformed'.⁴⁸ By 1840, moreover, Merton was undoubtedly being strongly affected by the Tractarianism which caused such a stir hard by at Oriel. The leading lights of the High Church party at Merton were, it seems, James Hope-Scott (Fellow, 1833-47, Q.C.) and J. Hungerford Pollen. Both eventually went over to Rome. Before he did so Hope-Scott had founded a school at Glenalmond.⁴⁹ Pollen directed the painting of Merton chapel roof himself; later Newman appointed him Professor of Fine Arts in the Catholic University of Dublin. In 1854 he attempted the impossible task of converting Thackeray to Roman Catholicism.⁵⁰ Hope-Scott was one of the leaders who sought for the restoration of the chapel. He was on the committee which was appointed on 17 May 1842 to enquire into the necessity of restoring and repairing the

⁴⁴ (16 April) Reg. 1: 3, p. 497.

⁴⁵ (Given, 23 March 1678) Reg. 1: 3, p. 523 and cf. E. A. Jones, *Catalogue of the Plate of Merton College, Oxford*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ It cost £140 os. 6d., cf. H. W. Garrod, *Ancient Painted Glass in Merton College Chapel* (1931), pp. 28-9. This sum was met out of the surplusage of Fisher's money after all charges had been met. The surplus had been £213 os. 8d.

⁴⁷ Reg. 1: 4, p. 162.

⁴⁸ Ackermann, *Oxford*, I, 11.

⁴⁹ D.N.B. and R. Ornsby, *Memoirs of J. Hope-Scott*, I, 279-84.

⁵⁰ Reg. 1: 5, *Who Was Who, 1897-1916*, p. 568. He was the author of *Ancient and Modern Furniture and Woodwork, Ancient and Modern Gold and Silversmiths' Work, Trajan's Column, etc.*, W. M. Thackeray, *The Newcomes* (1906), intro. by A. Ritchie, p. xxxiii.

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chapel. Late⁵¹ in the same year the order was given to take down 'the wood-work in the choir of the chapel above the stalls'.⁵² The first architect appointed was Edward Blore. But two years later in May 1844 he was found unsatisfactory and paid off. 'Further consideration of the improvement of the chapel (to) be postponed for the moment.' The College was in difficulties with its contractors, Messrs. Locke and Nesham. Direction was given that a certain 'additional charge of £31-9-1 was not to be paid'.⁵³ Had Blore overstepped his instructions?

Meanwhile the fate of the first piece of work to be removed had been settled. Pollen was as interested in the foundation of schools as Hope-Scott. He was just the man for Mr. Singleton and Mr. William Sewell who were busy founding Radley College in 1847. Sewell had himself been a postmaster of Merton.⁵⁴ He was a leading High Churchman and friend of Newman until the publication of Tract XC. Singleton was an Anglican hymn-writer, who was first warden of St. Columba's College, Rathfarnham, near Dublin, in 1843.⁵⁵ Shortly before the foundation of Radley the following entry occurs in the diary of Singleton. 'We (Singleton and Sewell) met Mr. Pollen of Merton Coll. in the street, who was delighted at the idea of the college, and mentioned that we had a good chance of the fittings up discarded in their chapel—for that the proposal had been sometime back to burn them, not liking them to fall into secular hands.'⁵⁶ On 1 May Singleton records further: 'Sewell and I dined with Mr. Pollen at Merton. He gave us an account of his travels in the East, and presented us with a piece of olive tree, which he had cut himself in the supposed site of the garden of Gethsemane. I think he will also give us some drawings of his own of sacred places visited by himself, which will be of great value in stimulating the interest of the boys in the Holy Narrative and feeding the faith in Divine Things.' On 13 May Pollen and two others went to Radley and 'returned highly pleased with it'.⁵⁷ On 27 May the College Register records: 'An application having been made by Mr. Sewell of Exeter to obtain the oaken panelling taken down from the chapel walls for the fitting up of a chapel attached to a school at Radley near Oxford, it was granted on the

⁵¹ Reg. 1: 5, p. 189. The committee consisted of the Warden (Bullock Marsham), and Messrs. Whish, Wortley and Hope-Scott.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 192. The stalls can be clearly seen in the picture of the interior of the chapel by William Turner for the Oxford Almanack of 1802 and also in Ackermann's print of the interior of the chapel (1814).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 205. The St. John's screen was demolished in 1843 (Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 705). Two of its corinthian pillars are incorporated into the staircase of Painswick House, Gloucestershire

⁵⁴ In 1822, Reg. 2: 2a, p. 42.

⁵⁵ *D.N.B.*

⁵⁶ Singleton's Diary in the possession of Radley College.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

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understanding that the said school should be under Patronage of the Diocesan as Visitor.⁵⁸ These conditions were fulfilled and the panelling is now to be found on the east wall of the Wilson Library at Radley.

What happened to the rest of the Wren fittings? On 26 October 1848 Butterfield was invited to advise on the restoration of the chapel. By 25 June 1849 his plans were ready. It was then resolved that the architect 'be authorized to carry into effect during the Long Vacation such parts of them as relate to the Roof of the Choir, the removal of the monuments from the east end into the antechapel, the Restoration of the masonry at the East End, and the Removal of the Brasses from the entrance of the Choir to that part of the Chapel'.⁵⁹ A year later the order was given for the preparation of the Butterfield stalls and a plan was submitted and approved for the paving of the remainder of the choir with slabs of marble and encaustic tiles.⁶⁰ By 1851 the Wren screen had been removed and its place had been taken by a screen of stone and marble, known to succeeding generations as the 'garden wall'.

Some of the stalls may have found their way to Wolvercote. For on 3 June 1852 it was resolved that 'Mr. Edwardes be allowed to appropriate so much of the old materials of the Chapel as may be useful for the purpose of refitting the chancel of Wolvercote Church.' Edwardes was a fellow and was nominated curate of the college living of Wolvercote on 22 November 1853.⁶¹

On 2 June 1868 it was resolved 'that the old stalls in the Ante-chapel be presented to the Warden for use in Caversfield church'.⁶² Were these some of the Wren stalls which had been put into the ante-chapel in the same way as the Fitzjames stalls had been put before them? It is impossible to say. For though it is certain that some stalls went to Caversfield a subsequent restoration of that church has swept any trace of them away.

By 1875 the altar-rails had gone, no one knows where. The fine candelabra of the Ackermann print had also vanished though they survived the Butterfield restoration for a time. There had, however, begun to be second thoughts about the screen itself. For on 30 October 1879 a motion was passed that 'Mr Jackson architect be consulted by the Senior Bursar as to the possibility of restoring the oak screen to its original place at the West End of the Inner Chapel'.⁶³ Jackson's report unfortunately does not survive. In 1886 parts of the screen were actually set up in the ante-chapel and carefully

⁵⁸ Reg. 1: 5, p. 231.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 260.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 320. Edwardes was fellow (1850), dean (1855-6), bursar (1860-84), subwarden (1859, 1867 and 1872) and vicar of Wolvercote, 1853-74 (Foster, *Alumni Oxon.*, 1715-1886, II, 413).

⁶² Reg. 1: 5, p. 463.

⁶³ Reg. 1: 6, p. 43.

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drawn⁶⁴ but nothing was done. In 1899 Mr. Henderson, the college historian wrote, however, of the 'regret that the old screens are gone, and the bare "garden-wall" flaunts itself in their place'.⁶⁵ This did not prevent the further *diaspora* of other parts. In the autumn of 1891 the vicar of All Saints' Church applied for 'parts of the old stalls'. And on 21 November of that year it was agreed 'that the pieces of old oak which were lately behind the heating apparatus in the chapel be presented to the Rev. J. O. Johnston for All Saints' church'.⁶⁶ However, in 1896 All Saints' church was largely refitted by T. G. Jackson for the use of the Mayor and Corporation. Now it seems impossible to identify which parts of the present woodwork, if any, came from Merton.

The movement to do something for the screen achieved a positive result in 1904 with the provision of the new Brodrick reading-room for undergraduates. This was made out of three rooms on the ground floor of the south side of Mob Quadrangle. Into it were fitted the central three arches of the screen, the two doors and some of the pilasters from the other parts of the screen. By the end of 1907, if not before, this scheme, which owed much to the librarian, Professor Goodrich, was complete.⁶⁷

There were still, however, parts of woodwork as yet lying loose in the attic of Fellows' Quadrangle (staircase III). The two great *cartouches* of arms found their way into two sets of fellows' rooms on the same staircase. Two of the *pots-au-feu* which stood along the top of the screen were made up into a fire guard for one of the fellows. Then another two were made into another fire-guard for the Senior Common Room.⁶⁸ Ejected eventually from the Senior Common Room they returned to join one more *pot-au-feu* in the attic at the top of staircase III. (This attic has recently been fitted up as a set of undergraduate rooms.) In 1923 what was left of the panelling was given by the bursar, Mr. Thring, to the church at Cuxham, one of the college's livings. It was adapted by a carpenter from Watlington to form a lining for the whole of the south side of Cuxham church.⁶⁹ In 1934 Price's glass was taken out of the

⁶⁴ See drawing by T. Axtell in the possession of the College (Estates Bursary), reproduced in A. Vallance, *Old Colleges of Oxford*, p. 19.

⁶⁵ B. Henderson, *Merton College*, p. 220.

⁶⁶ *Bursar's Reports*, II, 30, 40.

⁶⁷ Reg. I: 6, pp. 401, 408, 417, 421. The composition of the original library extension committee is not known. But, when it reported, a motion was passed that the 'College desired a more beautiful style of decoration and requests the committee to reconsider the schemes proposed for the openings between the New Reading Rooms'. A second committee was then formed consisting of Messrs. How, Dixon, Miles and Goodrich. It was this committee which must have taken the decision to fit parts of the old screen into the Brodrick Reading Room. It was asked on 7 December 1906 that the work should be completed by the end of the Easter vacation, 1907.

⁶⁸ It was still there in 1939 (*Royal Commission on Hist. Monuments; City of Oxford*), pl. 23, no. 16.

⁶⁹ See the notice from Cuxham parish magazine for 1923 in Cuxham Church.

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east window and stored in the chapel roof.⁷⁰ This glass was probably the least attractive of the classical fittings. It was also almost the last trace of Fisher's adornments to vanish; not quite the last, however, for in the chapel itself there is still one thing left—the dusty monument of the donor himself. It remains to record a generosity as a result of which the college chapel once possessed a screen and set of stalls designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

APPENDIX

An Accompt of all the Goods and Chattells of Mr Alexander Fisher of the Parish of Holywell Oxon: lately deceased made by Richard Lydall of the University of Oxford Doctor of Physick and Benjamin Cooper of the said University Register; Executors of the last Will & Testament of the said Alexander.

Charge.		
In ready Money and Bonds		884 8 0
Received of Mr Richard Davis for his Study		150 0 0
Of Mr Napier for the Lease of Hensington		450 0 0
For the House in Holywell		200 0 0
For the Goods in the House in Holywell as they were apprizd and Inventaried		036 14 6
A yeares Rent of the Tenant of Hensington		40 10 0
Halfe a yeares Rent of a close in Woodstock		1 0 0
Halfe a yeares Rent from Burmington		6 13 4
Interest Money		21 0 0
Summe		1790 5 10
(fo.2)	Discharge	
Funerall Expenses		£ s. d. 100 0 0
Legacys		
To Sir Thomas Clayton Warden of Merton College—		002 0 0
To 16 Fellows and 2 Chaplains of Mert. Coll.—		018 0 0
To 13 Postmasters (one place then vacant) & 2 Clerkes		007 10 0
To 9 servants of Mert. Coll: the Barbour & Sexton included.		004 10 0
To the Poor of Holywell Parish		010 0 0
To the Poor of St. Peters in the East		010 0 0
To the Poor of Wolvercott		005 0 0
To Mrs Backhouse formerly his servant		010 0 0

⁷⁰ *R. Cn. Hist. Mon.*, p. 80, Reg. 1: 7, pp. 316, 354.

MERTON COLLEGE CHAPEL

To Mr Merrall his God-Sonne	001	0	0
To Mr Souch his God-Sonne	001	0	0
To Mr James Shepheard of Binton	040	0	0
To his servant William Thomas	040	0	0
To Mr John Wilks of Maidston	001	0	0
To his sister 10L. if alive at his decease	000	0	0
To William Thomas his wearing apparell	015	0	0
To Dr Richard Lydall and his sonne	070	0	0
To Katherine Cooper a Turkey-Carpett	001	0	0

Summe of Legacys—	306	0	0
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Debts

The Apothecary's bill	02	3	8
To Mr Davis Booke-seller	01	2	0
To his servant William Thomas for Wages and extraordinary trouble in his sicknesse	03	0	0
To Widow Smith a Quarters Washing	00	12	6
To his Barbour for one Quarter	00	5	0
To his Mercer Mr Fifield for silk ffarendine	00	4	0
To Thom. Kimber for 5 Weekes grasse for his horse	00	12	6
To Mr Hopkins for charges in the Chancery occasioned by a suit commenced by one Yates against Mr Fisher	00	18	2

Summe	8	17	10
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(fo.2 r)

Probat of ye Will, and some occasionall Expenses

To Dr Master for Counsell about ye Probat of ye Will	1	0	0
To Dr Witt for proving of ye Will, Kings dues etc.	2	5	0
To Mr Davis and Mr Courlier for apprizing ye Inventory	5	0	0
Mr Napiers Entertainment upon selling ye Lease of Hensington and for Money Baggs	0	18	6
To Mr Hopkins for his paines and Charges in recovering 50 £ from Mr Wilks of Maidston	1	8	4
To Mr Mason for recovering halfe a yeares Rent of ye Tythes of Burmington	0	13	4
For perfecting Baronius' Wokes given by Mr Fisher to Merton Coll: Library ———	0	8	0

Summe	11	13	2
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College Rent for Hensington

Michaelmas Rent 1671. payd to Dr Alvey———	9	15	0
Lady day Rent. 1672. payd to Mr Whitehall———	10	0	0

Summe———	19	15	0
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Adorning Merton College Chappell.

To Mr Wood Stone-cutter for Mr Fisher's Monumt.—	30	0	0
To him also for marbling of the chappell———	360	0	0
To him also for 220 foot of Paving within ye seates———	8	5	0
To him also for a Marble Stepp by ye Vestry door———	1	13	4
To him also for placing Dr Bainbridge's Monumt. in ye Wall	00	18	0
To him also for cutting and laying ye great Marbles taken out of Quire, at ye ascent to ye Screen———	02	1	5
To John Ransford for ye Screen & Seates in ye Quire	590	0	0
To him also for mending the Raile at the Communion Table	00	15	0
To him allso for making new Parish Seates	11	8	0
To Mr Hawkins for painting ye Roofe of ye Quire	68	10	0
To John White Carpenter for making a Scaffold for ye Painter	18	14	0
To him also for Timber, Nailles and Workmanship about the Parish Seates	02	9	1
The Workmen's Bevers	00	16	0
To Mr Davis for his trouble in lending out the University materialls for scaffolding etc	00	10	0
(fo.2 r)	£	s.	d.
To Job Dew Plasterer for Whiting ye Quire	4	18	4
To Bernard Rawlins for glazing & leading	02	0	0
To Thomas Knight Mason for Worke in ye Chappell	00	14	0
To him also for 86 foot of paving stepps without ye Screen	03	0	0
For 2 great brasse candlesticks	20	12	0
For the Carriage of them from London	00	12	0
For 2 cords for ye Candlesticks	00	18	0
To Wm. Bromingham for 4 pairs of stringes for ye Parish seates	00	12	0
To Sir Christopher Wren's servant for drawing the Modells for ye Screen and seates	02	3	0

Summe———

The whole Charge amount to

1130 19 2
1790 5 10

The whole Discharge to ye Summe of
And consists of these particulars

1577 5 2

Funerall Expences

£ s. d.

Legacys

100 0 0

Debts

306 0 0

Probat of ye Will &tc

008 17 10

College Rent for Hensington

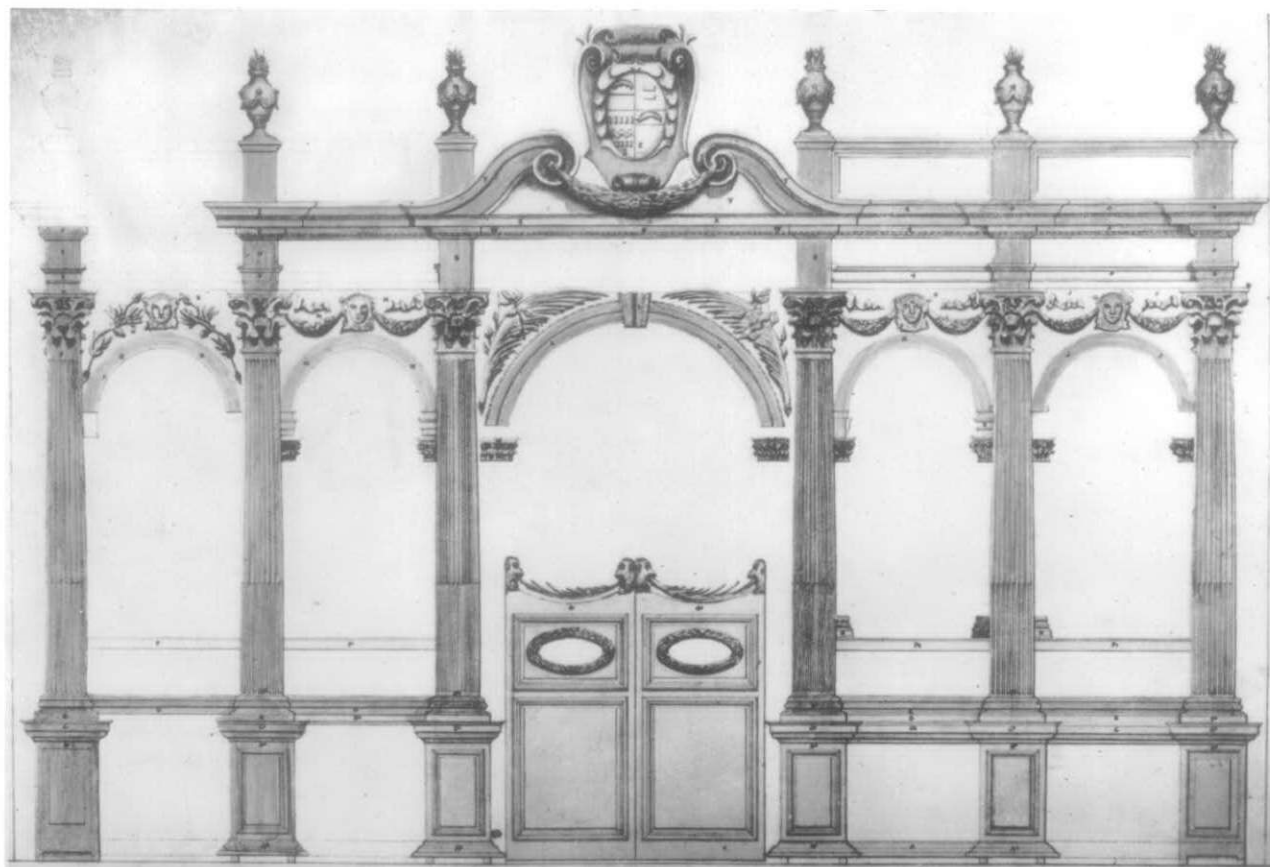
011 13 2

Adorning the Chappell

019 15 0

So there remaines in ye Executors hands for ye use of ye Chapell
which Summe (reposited in the Coll. Treasury
for the use aforesaid) together with ye Summe
of the Discharge, equals ye Summe of ye
whole Charge, and exonerateth ye Accomptants

1130 19 2
213 0 8



—MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD.—

ONE INCH SCALE ELEVATION OF REMAINING PORTIONS OF OAK SCREEN, WHICH WAS FORMERLY ERECTED IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL AT ENTRANCE TO CHOIR, OCT. 24, 1671 & WAS REMOVED IN JUNE 1861. THE REMAINING PORTION AS ABOVE DRAWING WAS TEMPORARILY FITTED UP IN THE NORTH TRANSEPT in 1888, EACH PIECE BEING LETTERED AS SHOWN. THE WHOLE IS NOW STORED IN ATTIC OF N^o 5 FELLOW'S QUAD.

DRAWING OF THE RECONSTRUCTED WREN SCREEN.
By Thomas Axtell, May, 1888.

PLATE IX



THE WREN STALLS, MERTON COLLEGE CHAPEL.
From Ackermann, *History of the University of Oxford* (1814).

Ph.: J. W. Thomas

PLATE X



WOOD'S MONUMENT TO ALEXANDER FISHER.
S. Wall of the S. Transept of Merton College Chapel.

Ph.: J. W. Thomas