

Edward Augustus Freeman and the University Architectural Societies

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SUMMARY

*Freeman's views on the centrality of architecture to historical study are well illustrated by his role within the two leading university architectural societies, the Oxford Architectural Society and the Cambridge Camden Society. Freeman was influenced by the architecture of Oxford from his matriculation to Oxford University in 1841 and he was one of the OAS's most active members in its busiest years, being admitted to membership in 1842. During his years away from Oxford, he continued his interest as an active Corresponding Secretary. A key area of debate within the OAS related to church restoration and Freeman's influence within the Society is well illustrated by the example of the restoration of Dorchester Abbey Church. Freeman was also an active member of the Cambridge Camden Society, being elected to membership in 1846 and becoming a life member by 1864. His relationship with the Society was often stormy but it was through his contribution to their publication, the *Ecclesiologist*, that a widely used framework for characterising alternative approaches to restoration emerged.*

The historian, Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892), is best remembered today for his six volume political medieval epic, 'The Norman Conquest', published between 1867 and 1879¹ and historians, in particular, are more likely to refer to J. H. Round's criticism of his work than to his contribution to the study of history.² This contribution was significant, however. What has not been emphasised in any assessment of Freeman's work is the centrality of architecture to his historical studies. He viewed architecture as the physical manifestation of history, believing that it represented the spirit of the age and its cultural values. His interest in modern architecture reflected this belief. Furthermore, he saw historic remains as documents of history and he therefore believed that they should be preserved and restored with care and respect. This is well illustrated by his role within the two leading University Architectural Societies, the Oxford Architectural Society (OAS) and the Cambridge Camden Society (CCS). Although not one of the founders, Freeman was an early and very active member of the OAS, joining in 1842 as an 18 year old undergraduate of Trinity College, and remaining an active member until his death in 1892. His contribution to this, the first architectural society, was considerable and needs to be recognised. His contribution to the CCS, Oxford's sister society, was also well known to his contemporaries but has not been the subject of any detailed study.

¹ Freeman's conviction that 'history is past politics, and politics are present history' originated from Thomas Arnold's (1795-1842) belief that man's political being is the very essence of history: W. R. W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman*, 2 vols. I (1895) (hereafter Stephens), 108. See also John Rylands Library, Manchester University (hereafter JRL) FA1/7/10 and E.A. Freeman, 'A Review of my Opinions', *The Forum* (Apr. 1892), 154.

² See particularly J. H. Round, *Feudal England* (1895).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SOCIETIES

The early 19th century antiquaries focused mainly on local history, which incorporated elements of biographical, topographical, architectural and archaeological study.³ By the 1840s they were sharing their knowledge with other like-minded enthusiasts through the activities of recently formed local societies and, in 1886, there were forty-nine county and local societies in existence, an endorsement of how popular historical and geographical studies, in one form or another, had become for both amateurs and professionals. In a lecture to the Archaeological Institute in 1861 Freeman explained the importance of local societies by stating that:

One of the advantages which accrued from the meetings of such societies in various localities was doubtless this, that not only a great amount of information was communicated and diffused, but that a spirit of research into the antiquities of the neighbourhood was excited, and many objects of archaeological interest were discovered in places of which previously no one had knowledge.⁴

Philippa Levine, in her recent study on the professionalisation of history, highlighted the difference between historians and antiquarians in the 19th century. The former were, she argues, '... a separate and distinct group, less socially cohesive perhaps than the antiquarian camp'.⁵ Further, historians were mainly interested in political history and used written sources, forming, to some extent, their own 'community of historians'. She specifically mentions the 'Oxford School', which is traditionally deemed to have included William Stubbs, John Richard Green and Freeman.⁶ She concluded that the 'professional', and often university-based scholars, were relatively uninterested in the antiquarian pursuits enacted through the local societies.

Other historians, for example, A. Bowdoin Van Riper, disagreed with Levine's position, arguing against the view that antiquaries had been eclipsed by the emerging professional historians. He argued that, by the 1840s and 1850s, British archaeologists 'used both the traditional term *antiquaries* and the newer term *archaeologists* to refer to themselves'.⁷ Furthermore some historians have 'dismissed [the historical archaeologists] as unscientific at best and destructive nuisances at worst' and yet, he believed, they were acquiring a 'sense of common purpose and a shared clearly articulated body of methods and techniques'.⁸

Significantly, it was Freeman and his generation that first supported the notion of authoritative research as opposed to the purely antiquarian pursuit of collecting artefacts in isolation, with no concept of their connection with time or landscape.⁹ It was also recognised that the original sources must, whenever possible, be consulted, and objectivity in interpretation attempted. This new approach also encompassed the notion that comparisons were important in order to establish context, that truth was to be sought at all times and that

³ P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (1986), 51.

⁴ Proceedings at the Annual Meeting, 1861, held at Peterborough 23 July to 30 July, *Archaeol. Jnl.*, xviii (1861), 379.

⁵ Levine, *Amateur and Professional*, 23.

⁶ *Ibid.* 23-24.

⁷ A. Bowdoin Van Riper, *Men among the Mammoths: Victorian Science and the Discovery of Human Prehistory* (1993), 15, note 2.

⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

⁹ Levine, *Amateur and the Professional*.

legends and myths must be assessed critically. Moreover, they built the foundations of the professional study of history, the boundaries of which subsequent generations have been redefining ever since. Freeman himself was to write, during his Professorship at Oxford, 'We can at least make ready the way for those who are to supplant us, and we may even do somewhat towards the pious work of prolonging for some small space the posthumous lives of those who went before us.'¹⁰

As the 19th century progressed the archaeologists and the historians carved out a more professional niche for themselves within the universities. Freeman was frustrated, however, at the declining quality of the historical journals and was involved, from its earliest days, in the *English Historical Review*, founded in 1886, which sought to raise the standards of scholarship. Freeman, James Bryce and J. R. Green had been arguing for it as early as 1867.¹¹ Freeman told Count Ugo Balzani, when the Review finally appeared under the editorship of Mandell Creighton, 'I think the Historical Review will be a good thing ... The degradation of English periodical literature within ten years, twenty years, is something frightful.'¹² Freeman's withdrawal from the Archaeological Institute in 1846 is an indication of his irritation with what he perceived as a narrow view of history. He wrote to J. L. Patterson:

... the Institute is wrong in applying to higher matters the merely antiquarian tone which belongs to inferior ones. It examines examples of the highest arts, painting, sculpture, architecture, and of those arts devoted to the highest of ends, without recognizing either their aesthetical or their religious character. Their avowed principle is to consider them ... merely as facts, curiosities, antiquities ... An archaeological institute necessarily excludes both philosophical and religious views, an architectural society ought to involve the former and give scope for the latter, an ecclesiastical society involves the latter as its essence, and requires the former as an auxiliary.¹³

Yet the popular, less academic, history traced out in the antiquarian tracts and by Freeman's generation in their narrative sagas, was an effective way of disseminating historical knowledge to an increasingly literate society. The founding of the OAS and the CCS in 1839, and the publication of their Proceedings, encouraged the members of the Universities to develop their interest in the historical landscape and this interest often remained a lifelong pursuit as former members established or joined similar societies throughout the country. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the importance of structural remains, particularly ecclesiastical buildings, encouraged an interest in their preservation or restoration and the ideas and debates were played out within the pages of the OAS proceedings and the CCS's journal, *The Ecclesiologist*, first published in 1841.

¹⁰ E. A. Freeman, *The Methods of Historical Study* (1886), 267. This collection of lectures was directed at scholars, and his inaugural lecture emphasised that his role as a Professor was to guide others in historical research by sharing his own experiences. E. A. Freeman, *The Office of the Historical Professor: An Inaugural Lecture read in the Museum at Oxford, October, 15, 1884* (1884).

¹¹ L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, I (1904), 333; Freeman to Bryce, 6 May, 1867: Bodl. MS Bryce, 5, 153.

¹² Freeman to Ugo Balzani, 3 January 1886: Stephens: II: 341-2.

¹³ Freeman to J. L. Patterson, 7 September 1846: Stephens: I: 96-7.

FREEMAN'S EARLY INFLUENCES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF OXFORD

From his matriculation on 7 June 1841 to the last eight years of his life spent as Professor of Modern History, the historic town of Oxford had an immense influence on Freeman. Before graduating, Freeman had contemplated a career as an architect,¹⁴ but was to make his name writing more general political history, albeit often with a heavy bias towards the use of architectural evidence. His first substantial academic work, *A History of Architecture*, was published in 1849¹⁵ and he was to become extremely vocal in his views on both historical and modern architecture through his many lectures, articles, pamphlets and books.

In the early 1840s, when Freeman first went to Oxford, it was still a town contained within its medieval perimeters and bounded by countryside. However, by 1884, when he returned as a resident in his capacity of Professor, the modern town of Oxford was already emerging. By the end of the 19th century, Oxford could boast an extensive variety of Victorian Neo-Gothic and Neo-Classic architecture which represented the creative abilities of influential architects such as George Gilbert Scott, William Butterfield, William Burges and Thomas Graham Jackson. Freeman favoured what he termed as the 'English' Gothic style which, he believed, was the only appropriate style for an historic city steeped in English traditions such as Oxford.

He advised contemporary architects to shun what was deemed fashionable and start from the English architecture of the beginning of the 16th century and to 'work out its development'. Freeman maintained that, 'History was essential to a knowledge of Architecture, and being without it was like the study of a subject with no knowledge of its language'. He suggested that a study of the work of medieval architects such as Walter of Merton, William of Wykeham and William of Waynflete would provide the inspiration.¹⁶

Freeman's friend, the architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-78), also a confirmed Gothist, contributed many buildings to 19th century Oxford and, on the whole, Freeman approved of Scott's work. Scott's Martyrs' Memorial could, according to Freeman, '... be compared with some of the most glorious mediaeval work known' and he says of Scott's chapel at Exeter College '... I do not hesitate to say [it] is the most glorious in modern England. I only lament one thing, that some of the necessities of the college prevent the beautiful building from being seen to advantage.'¹⁷

On his return to Oxford in 1884, however, Freeman would have been horrified to discover that, from his back windows at 16, St. Giles, he had a view of the newly completed Keble College, one of William Butterfield's designs. The architectural historian Goodhart-Rendel was favourably impressed by the buildings and, in 1952, he wrote:

... the aesthetic element in the design of the college is of commanding importance: indeed, that design is one of the outstanding triumphs of English architecture. English is the derivation of its details, English perhaps in its uncomfortable morality, English in its conquest over difficulties.¹⁸

¹⁴ Stephens I: 61-62.

¹⁵ E. A. Freeman, *A History of Architecture* (1849), Stephens I: 132-4 and see *Builder* viii (16 Feb. 1850), 73-4; 'The examination into the artistic history of Gothic architecture is acute and philosophical; and this book, as a whole, is an important and interesting contribution to architectural literature.'

¹⁶ *Proc. OAS*, ns, v (1886-1893), 85.

¹⁷ *Proc. OAS* (1862), 168-7 and see Stephens I: 298 for Freeman's more critical view on Scott's Albert Memorial.

¹⁸ H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, 'Oxford Buildings Criticized' *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1954), 213.

To Freeman, however, Keble College was certainly not English in design and his distaste of it was relayed to his friend Edith Thompson on his return to Somerleaze, his main residence in Somerset, in July 1885. He wrote:

Truly glad was I to get home on Thursday and be again among my own fields ... I look out of the window ... and I do not see any part of the large private hall called Keble College. Merry that is somewhat.¹⁹

His objections were that the construction was of brick, which was in stark contrast to the grey stone traditionally used for building in Oxford. The use of colour; red, black and white bricks and light coloured stone in bands and chequered patterns, known as 'constructional polychromy', perhaps mellowed considerably today, would have been startling. Further, the extensive size of the site would have rendered it hard to ignore on the Oxford skyline. Keble College was the realisation of an ideological dream for the architect and, although shocking to Freeman and many other Victorians, it is now considered to be one of Oxford's architectural treasures.

Freeman also singled out Balliol College Chapel, built in 1856-7, for special condemnation in his *Contemporary Review* article of May 1887. Freeman objected to the architectural style of the new building and the fact that it had the temerity to be constructed near to his beloved Trinity College. Butterfield's design of horizontal stripes in buff and red stone was of the late 13th century, the tracery was geometrical, and there were definite elements of Italian influence. He wrote:

Balliol stands almost alone in any serious act of destruction. The new hall, which lifts itself up like a tall bully over the quiet and harmless, if not beautiful, inner quadrangle of Trinity, does not add to the fault of its existence the further fault of having supplanted anything much better. But the new chapel has come into being only by mutilating one of the most perfect pieces of design in the whole University, a chapel, library, and turret, modest enough, but the work, it was plain, of some consummate master of his art whose name has passed away.²⁰

Like many of his generation, Freeman sketched avidly on his visits to historic buildings. He possessed little artistic competency, but his sketches acted as a record of what he saw. They were illustrative note making, a pictorial memory bank to assist the accuracy of his writings. Over 6,000 original pen and ink drawings survive in the Freeman Archive at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester. One imaginative view is shown in Fig 1, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, drawn from the tower of Merton College Chapel.²¹ Fig. 2, the West Front of Kings College Chapel, Cambridge, is a fine example of the detail which Freeman's sketches often displayed.²²

FREEMAN AND THE OXFORD ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY

In a paper delivered during the centenary celebrations of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society in 1939, W.A. Pantin wrote 'It is impossible not to admire the vitality, flexibility and adaptability of the Society; there is the same institution, but with constantly

¹⁹ Freeman to Thompson, 5 July 1885: Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull: DX/9/143.

²⁰ E. A. Freeman, 'Oxford after Forty Years (Part I)', *Contemporary Review*, 51 (May, 1887), 609.

²¹ JRL: FA4/1/2390. See also Stephens: 1:52 and G.W. Cox's comment in Stephens I: 83.

²² JRL: FA4/1/141.



Fig. 1: The Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford

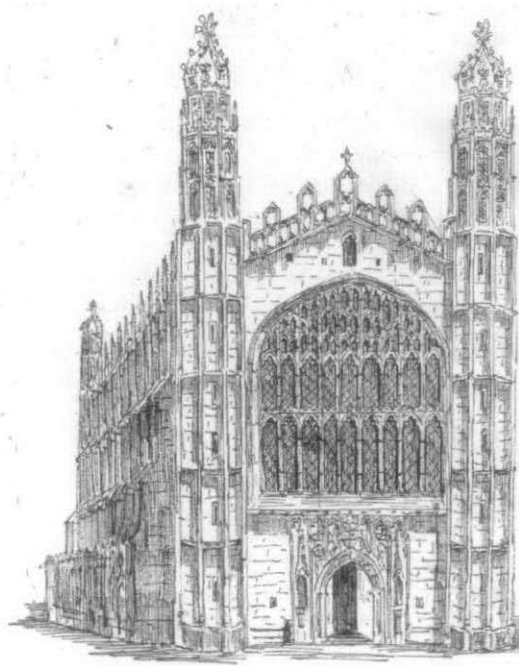


Fig. 2: Chapel of Kings College, Cambridge, West Front

developing and changing functions'. This sentiment was endorsed by the Society's President, in a speech at the celebrations, in 1989, of the Society's 150th anniversary.²³ The membership list for the early years included, apart from senior and junior members of the University, several bishops and the Society had the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury.²⁴

As David Prout highlighted in his 1989 article, non-architects were particularly influential when it came to policy on contemporary architectural style during the first twenty years of the Society's existence. He wrote: '... here we have a society almost entirely consisting of non-architects which set itself up as an arbiter of taste in ecclesiastical architecture.'²⁵ However, the Society was mainly concerned with Gothic architecture and, initially, primarily ecclesiastical buildings, a fact that did not go unnoticed by contemporary critics.²⁶

Freeman, one of the most active members in the Society's busiest years, was admitted as a new member on 2 March 1842.²⁷ The published Proceedings and extant archival material deposited in the Bodleian Library demonstrate just how active the Society was in its early years. He was elected as Secretary in January 1845 and December 1846, Librarian in December 1847 and was President from November 1886 to December 1891.²⁸ During his years away from Oxford, he continued his interest as a Life Member but, more importantly, as an active Corresponding Secretary.²⁹ It was through Corresponding Secretaries that the OAS's aims and interests were disseminated to all areas of Britain and this facilitated the creation of other Societies during the 1840s and 50s. The remit of the Corresponding Secretaries, an integral part of the Society by 1849, was to obtain new members and to monitor the erection of new churches and the restoration and alteration, or even the demolition, of existing ones. The Society's objectives were outlined in the instructions issued by the Committee to the Secretaries at their tenth annual meeting and included the statement that they never intended their activities to be 'limited by the bounds of a single city, county or diocese.'³⁰

Pantin acknowledged Freeman's extensive contribution to the OAS and the published Proceedings are littered with accounts of Freeman's lectures, many of which were later published as pamphlets and cited or reviewed in other learned journals of the time. Freeman's name is also linked to many of the annual excursions during which he was able to display his considerable local knowledge of the history of the medieval buildings that were visited. He rarely missed a meeting of the OAS when he was in Oxford and, as the Proceedings record, he usually had a comment or two to contribute on the various papers delivered at these sessions.

During Freeman's early years as a member of the OAS he, together with a small group of mainly Trinity scholars, had formed a Society which they called the *Brotherhood of St. Mary*. The purpose of the Society was to study '... ecclesiastical art upon true and Catholic

²³ W.A. Pantin, 'The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, 1839-1939', *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 174 and T. Hassall, 'The President's Speech', *Oxoniensia*, liv (1989), 2-5.

²⁴ Bodl. Dep.d.510: OAS Reports of General and Committee Meetings Feb 1 1839- Dec 4 1844: the first recorded meeting was 14 February 1839.

²⁵ D. Prout, 'The Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture' and 'The Oxford Architectural Society', 1839-1860', *Oxoniensia*, liv (1989), 379-91, 385.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 386.

²⁷ OAS Reports of General and Committee meetings 1 Feb 1839 to 4 Dec 1844, Bodl. Dep.d.510.

²⁸ Bodl. Dep.c.590 f. 621: Freeman to the Architectural Society, 8 Nov 1889 for Freeman's views on returning to the Society's committee.

²⁹ Bodl. Dep.c.593; Dep.d.515; Dep.d.518 and Dep.d.519.

³⁰ *Proc. OAS*: 10th Annual Meeting, 20 June 1849, 104.

principles'.³¹ They met in Freeman's rooms in college where they discussed all aspects of ecclesiastical architecture, exploring such themes as construction, coloured decoration, symbolism, monasticism and the internal arrangement of churches. However, it developed into a 'Guild for the regulation of religious life' and, as a result, Freeman disassociated himself from it and concentrated on his activities within the OAS, which more closely reflected his views.³²

The OAS had been created as a response to the growing interest in the architecture of the Middle Ages and was to be responsible for encouraging the building of archaeologically correct Gothic churches as part of the Gothic Revival. It was the Oxford Movement, however, begun after a powerful sermon on National Apostasy preached by John Keble (1792-1866) in St. Mary's on 14 July 1833, which was responsible for highlighting the dilapidated state of many of the medieval churches throughout England. The Movement arose from a religious revival, but it was also to prove influential on the architecture of church building in the 19th century.³³

'Tractarians' was the name given to those who supported the Oxford Movement after the *Tracts for the Times* was published between 1835 and 1841 and, an early Tractarian, Rev. Richard Hurrell Froude, Fellow of Oriel, who had a commanding knowledge of Gothic architecture, was influential in the forming of the Architectural Society. Ollard explores, in some detail, the connection between the Oxford movement and the Architectural Society in his article commemorating the Society's centenary.³⁴ However, James F. White, in his analysis of the Cambridge Movement, maintains that the Tractarian influence was not a substantial element within the Architectural Society and that 'unlike its Cambridge counterpart, the Oxford Society was mostly academic in its activities and did not promote gothic with the same fervour as the Cambridge Camden Society'.³⁵ A close examination of the minutes of the first committee of the Architectural Society, however, reveals that eleven of them were Tractarians which is surely proof of their influence in at least promoting an interest in Gothic ecclesiastical architecture.³⁶ There is, however, no suggestion that they used the OAS to further their views.³⁷

What is interesting is the number of Trinity College men who were both Tractarians and members of the Architectural Society. Two of the most influential founding members of the Society, W.J. Copeland and Isaac Williams, were both Trinity Fellows in 1839 and John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was himself originally a Trinity man, becoming an undergraduate there in 1817.³⁸

'The Oxford Movement was at base a moral movement', Ollard explained, and 'it kindled ... a desire to make the worship offered to God more worthy and beautiful. Therefore it quickened those arts which serve worship; architecture and music'.³⁹ Moreover this 'desire'

³¹ Stephens: I:58

³² Stephens: I:58

³³ C. Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (1999).

³⁴ S.L. Ollard, 'The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society and the Oxford Movement', *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 146-160.

³⁵ J. F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (1979), 24.

³⁶ Ollard, 'The OAS', 152. See S. O'Reilly, 'Roman versus Romantic: Classical Roots in the Origins of a Roman Catholic Ecclesiology', *Archit. History*, 40 (1997), 227 for an examination of Newman's interest in architecture and the links with Charles Borromeo.

³⁷ Ollard, 'The OAS', 137.

³⁸ See B. Martin, *John Henry Newman His Life and Work* (2000).

³⁹ Ollard, 'The OAS', 147.

manifested itself in the building of new churches and the restoration of old ones, focussed on a style of building which was both Catholic and Christian. White, however, found no evidence that the Tractarians were interested in the aesthetics of buildings.⁴⁰

The Tractarians provided the distinctive character of the Oxford that Freeman entered as an undergraduate and, according to Stephens, '... the atmosphere in which Freeman found himself at Trinity tended to confirm and deepen the religious temper of mind and habits of life which he brought with him from the country Rectory at Segrave.'⁴¹ However, Freeman's journals, now lost, but seen by Stephens, recorded little of his opinions on the Oxford Movement other than the questions they raised regarding the history, architecture and archaeology of the Church. The theological debates, as with the Brotherhood, were to become distasteful to him.⁴²

Freeman entered into the Society's proceedings with enthusiasm. During the early years of his membership Freeman donated books, brass rubbings and sketches to the Society's growing library collection and he also proved himself to be a more than competent speaker at its meetings.⁴³ On 22 March 1843, he delivered a paper entitled '*On the Progressive Development of the Several Styles of Architecture and the Connection of each with the Spirit of the Age in which it arose.*' A handwritten copy of this paper is the first of the essays in a small bound notebook to be found in the Freeman Archive, which almost certainly, when handwriting and contents are studied, dates to Freeman's undergraduate years at Oxford.⁴⁴ It is very much a draft copy with many amendments and a few comments in another hand. The initials WBJ appear at the end, quite possibly his friend and fellow undergraduate, William Basil Jones who helped Freeman to write a substantial history of St. David's Cathedral published in 1856.⁴⁵

In this early paper Freeman expressed the hope that, in his own time, revived Grecian art and literature would be forgotten and that this would put an end to the confusion of styles which could be observed, for example, at Brasenose Chapel 'where Corinthian pilasters act as buttresses between pointed windows.'⁴⁶ This paper is an important illustration of the early formation of the views that Freeman would expound repeatedly throughout his life.

On 29 November 1887, Freeman began his inaugural lecture as President of the OAS by explaining to his audience that, when he had left Oxford in the 1840s, the Taylor and Randolph building, which he described as the 'last despairing effort to establish Classic Architecture' in Oxford, had been in the course of construction. 'What', he asked 'did we see in its design but large, elaborate columns erected for what – to support pots placed on them?' He suggested that it was possible that the 'influence of Mr Ruskin had swept away all that was national; his influence sent men to Venice and Verona to study works which were thoroughly fitted for those places, but were thoroughly unfitted for our English climate.'⁴⁷

⁴⁰ White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 20.

⁴¹ Stephens: I:47.

⁴² Stephens: I:48.

⁴³ The OAS Proceedings recorded gifts. The Oxford Heraldic Society was incorporated into the OAS at the meeting of 9 June 1841 and their library was transferred to the OAS: Bodl. Dep.d.510.

⁴⁴ JRL: FA3/3/17.

⁴⁵ JRL: FA3/3/17 & *Proc. OAS* (1843), 11-14. W.B. Jones and E.A. Freeman, *The History and Antiquities of Saint David's* (1856).

⁴⁶ JRL: FA3/3/17, 3.

⁴⁷ Freeman's antipathy towards John Ruskin (1819-1900) was well known, although in no way personal. They had much in common especially their views on restoration and Gothic architecture. See C. Dade-Robertson, *Architecture as Past History and Present Politics: The Architectural Writings of Edward Augustus Freeman* (Lancaster Univ. unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 2005) and G. S. Chitty, *Ruskin and the historic environment: 'Filly sustained upon the earth'*, (Lancaster Univ. unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1997).

Even as a young man, Freeman thrived on debates and in Victorian intellectual life there were many. For example, on 10 May 1843, in a paper to the OAS on church towers, he challenged the work of John Louis Petit (1801-1868) which prompted a reply from the Society's secretary in defence of Petit's scholarship. Freeman also questioned A.W.N Pugin's (1812-52) theory that early English towers had all possessed spires. Freeman, during the course of this lecture, was able to illustrate that some did not have spires, drawing examples from Northamptonshire, a county he was very familiar with. He felt that the explanation of this was that some of the churches belonged to the monks and some belonged to secular clergy. This statement, together with a letter received from Pugin which categorically stated that all towers of this period had, or were intended to have, a spire, produced a lengthy debate amongst the members.⁴⁸

On 29 January 1845, by which time Freeman had been elected onto the committee and was therefore even more intimately involved with the running of the Society, he was appointed to the position of Secretary, together with William Trevor Parkins of Merton College. At that meeting there was no paper planned so a debate was opened up, led by Freeman, on *How far the Romanesque Style is suitable for modern Ecclesiastical buildings*. In the published Proceedings it is recorded that Freeman advocated that 'our own Norman style' should be used, but it may be improved with some elements of the German churches in this period. Parkins objected to its use because it was a foreign style. He argued that 'it was introduced from abroad and only flourished while the Saxon English could scarcely be said to exist as a nation, being under subjection to Norman conquerors.' This discussion highlights the differing views held by members of the Society, and the lively debates that this produced were mirrored over this period in the debates throughout the country in academic and antiquarian circles.

Three of the papers which Freeman presented to the OAS, between 1846 and 1848, were expanded and reproduced in four parts which, together, made up an octavo volume of almost three hundred pages entitled *Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England*. The secretary, George Frederick Boyle, recorded in the minutes of the meeting of 15 March 1848 that Freeman's paper was about to be published and therefore not too much space would be given to it in the Society's Proceedings.⁴⁹ This work included four hundred diagrams of window-heads engraved from Freeman's own sketches and they were used to illustrate the various stages of tracery from the Geometrical to the Perpendicular. The plates of this complex book are still extant in the Freeman archive, together with several of the original drawings, examples of which can be seen in Figs. 3 and 4.⁵⁰ This book, which served as a guide to travellers interested in ecclesiastical architecture, was reviewed in the first volume of *The Architectural Quarterly Review* in June 1851.

Freeman described his work as illustrating the 'aesthetical part of the subject', paying particular attention to the 'artistic principles of composition, and the classification and nomenclature of the various forms which tracery has assumed.'⁵¹

⁴⁸ Pugin's letter had been presented by the President of Trinity at the meeting of 24 May 1843 and read out in full on 27 June 1843 at the Society's 4th annual meeting.

⁴⁹ Bodl. Dep.d.511.

⁵⁰ JRL: FA2/2/5

⁵¹ E.A. Freeman *Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England* (1851), vi.

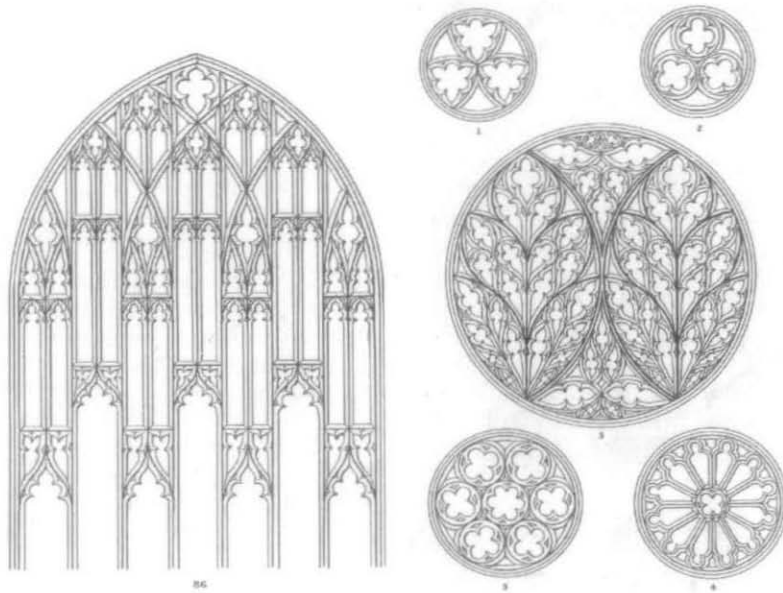


Fig. 3: Finished Drawings for *Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England*

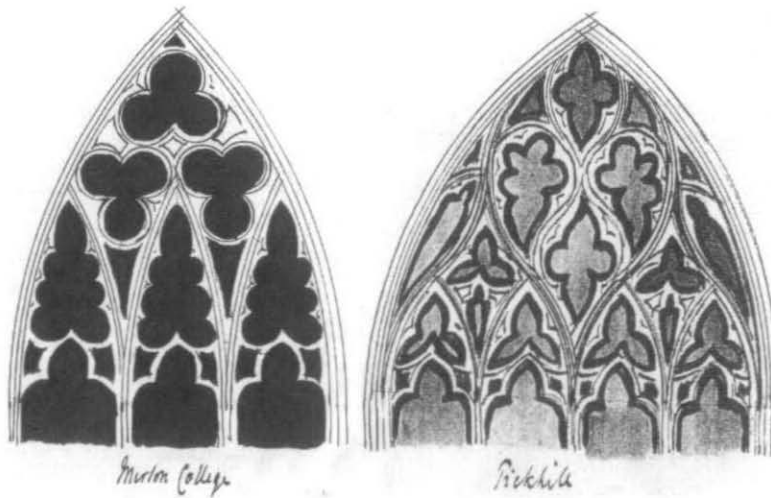


Fig. 4: Original Drawings for *Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England*

In 1978 the historian, John Harvey said, of Freeman's book:

His concern was to trace the intellectual succession of ideas in design as an ideal pattern rather than as strictly consecutive history. In the then state of knowledge his approach was the only one really feasible, and it is a measure of his mastery of the subject that no attempt to supersede his book has been made in 125 years.⁵²

Freeman acknowledged his use of the OAS's collection of drawings, including those of Thomas Rickman (1776-1841), architect and an honorary member in 1839. The Society had purchased Rickman's architectural drawings in 1842, and this provided them with a unique collection of over two thousand, mainly English, illustrations of Gothic architecture. It was stated at the meeting of 6 June 1842 that any members who were interested in the tracery of windows would find this vast collection invaluable. Freeman saw this opportunity and made good use of it.⁵³ Freeman believed that, in his words:

The window is a more strict unity, its tracery has greater physical independence than any other part, and its whole nature gives freer scope for the exercise of a luxuriant imagination than vault or column or doorway.⁵⁴

Freeman resigned as the OAS's Librarian at the meeting of 28 June 1848 in preparation for his departure from Oxford. It is recorded in the minutes of the meeting:

It is necessary to remind the Society of the zeal with which he has, on all occasions devoted himself to the duties of his office, and the Committee must congratulate the Society on the profitability of long retaining his Valuable Service, though absent from Oxford as a Corresponding Secretary ...⁵⁵

The Society turned its attention towards domestic architecture during the 1850s and promoted the use of Neo-Gothic styles for new constructions. Many within the Society considered that Gothic was correct for the modern style because of its national characteristics and this is evidenced in two papers. J.T. Jeffcock delivered a paper at the 1856-7 session entitled '*Gothic Architecture, A National Style*', which argued that all contemporary buildings could be built in this style and Charles Buckeridge delivered a paper on *The Universal Applicability of Gothic Architecture*, which dismissed all the negative aspects of Gothic that were often cited by opponents of the style. These opinions reflected those that Freeman would argue so vehemently during the debates on an appropriate style for the New Foreign Office a couple of years later, illustrating how attuned Freeman was to the views of the Oxford Society.⁵⁶

The minutes of the general meetings from November 1855 to March 1858 are studded with references to Freeman; Freeman giving a paper, Freeman arguing about a particular aspect of architectural theory and Freeman commenting on the papers that others had read. When, at the meeting of 10 June 1857, J. T. Jeffcock of Oriel College lectured on Gothic

⁵² J. Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style 1330-1485* (1978), 30.

⁵³ *Proc. OAS* : 3rd Annual Meeting, June 6th, 1842, 12.

⁵⁴ Freeman, *Window Tracery*, 2.

⁵⁵ Bodl. Dep.d.511.

⁵⁶ Freeman's involvement with Scott's controversial Foreign Office designs is explored in depth in Dade-Robertson, *Architecture as Past History and Present Politics*.

Architecture as a 'National Style', Freeman was there agreeing with the majority of Jeffcock's views. However, at this time, he was also involved in the heated debates over the new design for the Foreign Office and, at this meeting, he delivered a damning indictment of Ruskin and some of the designs submitted in the competition for the Government buildings. He admitted that the Gothic designs were superior in quality to the 'Palladian' designs but with reservations. He felt that all of them displayed 'a sort of wild attempt of combining incongruous forms in one design' which, in his opinion, had the effect of 'destroying the purity which is so remarkable a feature of English Gothic'. 'Ruskinism', he said, was responsible for introducing 'mistaken theories of architecture' which destroyed a purity that he felt had been introduced by William of Wykeham within the perpendicular style. Ruskin, he argued, in his 'unintelligible volumes had been principally their promoter'.⁵⁷

On Barry's and Pugin's design for Westminster, the minutes record that 'he [Freeman] spoke of the Houses of Parliament as so many walls created according to Palladian rules and on a Palladian plan, with pieces of Gothic stolen from Henry VII's chapel nailed on to them without any regard to principles or effect ...'⁵⁸

'The Oxford Society looked set to champion a style based on Old English precedents against the excesses of mid-Victorian eclecticism which were leading to the discrediting of the Gothic Revival', wrote Prout, likening this backlash against the importation of 'foreign' Gothic to a crusade.⁵⁹ However, Prout also identified a growing lack of enthusiasm for Domestic Gothic as the 1850s came to a close. Many of the members were clerical and were more interested in church architectural styles than in the suburban villa.⁶⁰ Further, the Society experienced financial difficulties and became homeless when, in 1860, the lease to their rooms in the Holywell Music Room came to an end. The only way they could survive, as the Gothic revival faltered, was to widen their interests in an effort to prop up their falling membership numbers.⁶¹

A proposal in 1860 for a change of name and direction to encompass general historical studies, as well as architectural concerns, prompted a letter from Freeman to John Henry Parker which endorsed the move. He said, in a reflection of his passion for both history and architecture:

... as a student at once of history and of architecture, I hail with very great pleasure the prospect of seeing my own two studies recognised as kindred pursuits of a society in my own University ... its [architecture's] true place, I have always held, is as a branch, and by no means an unimportant branch of history. Buildings are the most visibly permanent things which men leave behind them, and to know how men built at any given age is as natural a part of the history of that age as to know how they fought or legislated...the succession of styles in architecture cannot be understood in all its fullness, except by one who is really an historian.⁶²

⁵⁷ Bodl. Dep.d.513. Ruskin's interest in the architecture of Oxford is discussed at length in G. Chitty, John Ruskin, Oxford and the Architectural Society, 1837-1840', *Oxoniensia*, lxx (2000), 111-31.

⁵⁸ Bodl. Dep. d. 513.

⁵⁹ Prout, 'The Oxford Society', 390.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁶¹ Bodl. Dep.c.591.

⁶² Freeman to Parker, 12 June 1860, Bodl. Dep.c.590 f. 489.

After this, the tone of the Society became more academic and it focussed on the history of architecture and on archaeology, which included the history of the colleges.⁶³ The emphasis from the 1860s was no longer on the Gothic Revival and this would have disappointed Freeman, but during the second half of the 19th century, it did become involved in several preservation projects, including North Leigh Roman villa in 1871 and Hatford church in 1873.⁶⁴ Interest in recording condemned buildings and archaeological finds became an intrinsic part of the Society's work and a regular itinerary of 'Walks and Excursions', which continue today, encouraged fieldwork and brought members with diverse interests together.

DORCHESTER ABBEY CHURCH

As has been noted, one of the key areas of activity and debate within the OAS related to church restoration and Freeman's influence within the Society, as its ambitions grew, is well illustrated by the example of the restoration of Dorchester Abbey Church.

Dorchester Abbey Church stands on the site of two Saxon Cathedrals, which were replaced with the Norman foundation of 1070 under Bishop Remigius.⁶⁵ By the 19th century, Dorchester was showing signs of decay and neglect, despite extensive repairs carried out in the 18th century, and it became necessary for some restoration to be undertaken. As with all restorations, a by-product of remedial work was the revealing of detail which has enabled architectural historians to be more precise about the sequence of building dates. This was particularly important in Dorchester's case because the documentary evidence for the history of the Abbey is scarce.⁶⁶

Dorchester Abbey was to become the major focus of the OAS's theories on restoration and was chosen primarily because Dorchester was of local historical interest and the OAS was the local society for Oxfordshire. Whilst the OAS had previously advised on other church renovations, they went to extraordinary lengths to oversee the repair of Dorchester. It was at the General Committee Meeting of 22 February 1843 that it was decided to rescue the ancient church and, between 1845 and 1858; funds were raised, work overseen and reports on progress were recorded in the Proceedings. Dorchester represented a departure from the Society's earlier emphasis on the theory rather than the practice of restoration. It was an exercise devised to provide the members with 'a knowledge of practical details, as the work progresses under the guidance of some, the inspection of all.'⁶⁷ However, in the report of the Annual meeting a year earlier, it had been stressed that, although the restoration of Dorchester had been agreed in principle, 'the Committee must express their opinion that our duty, as a Society for Promoting the Study of Gothick Architecture, did not absolutely require our going beyond the development of principles, and the general promotion of Architectural knowledge'.⁶⁸

The Society was very influential throughout the restoration, not only advising, but also taking a more detailed interest and putting their theories into practice, until gradually the worst of the decay was rectified. Furthermore, many new features were added during this

⁶³ Pantin, 'The OAS', 188.

⁶⁴ Prout, 'The Oxford Society', 391.

⁶⁵ For the most recent history of the Abbey see Kate Tiller (ed.), *Dorchester Abbey Church and People 635-2005* (2005) and www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/history (accessed 6 April 2006).

⁶⁶ Details of further excavations can be found in C.J.K. Cunningham and J.W. Banks, 'Excavations at Dorchester Abbey, Oxon', *Oxonienia*, xxxvii (1972), 158-164.

⁶⁷ Proc. OASPSGA (1846), 7th Annual Meeting, 23 June, 16.

⁶⁸ Proc. OASPSGA (1845), 6th Annual Meeting, 3 June, 81.

period, including the rose window, the pulpit and lychgate (from 1846), all designed by Butterfield, and Scott's stone vault of the south choir aisle and the new tracery for the unblocked west window on the south aisle (1859-1874). The Victorian restorations were both sympathetic and conservative and were responsible for the survival of much of the medieval fabric which we see today. John Henry Parker, himself a member of the OAS, observed in his book on Dorchester written in 1882:

The church has not only been saved from further destruction or decay, but a considerable part of it has been restored, and this has been a real honest restoration (not a Victorian architect's project for *improving* it, as is too frequently the case).⁶⁹

The project at Dorchester Abbey was a challenge, not only because the OAS was such a fledgling society, but also because it was one which was now entering into previously uncharted waters, involving the responsibility for raising a great deal of money and making decisions regarding the extent of repair to a valuable and unique historic building.

Freeman entered into the restoration of Dorchester with genuine enthusiasm. Not only was he intimately involved in the actual restoration as a member of the sub-committee, but he was also learning all he could about the history of the abbey on his many visits there.

Freeman read a paper on the history and architecture of Dorchester Abbey Church to the Architectural Section of the Archaeological Institute at their 1851 meeting in Oxford. The meeting had included an excursion to Dorchester. This lecture was revised and published as a three part article by the Institute in 1852.⁷⁰ Geoffrey Tyack has recently outlined the extent of the Victorian restorations at the Abbey and the work which has been executed since, and he makes good use of Freeman's first hand account detailed in this paper which was also reprinted in Parker's book *The History of Dorchester, Oxfordshire* published at Oxford in 1882.⁷¹ Parker wrote that:

The architectural history of this magnificent church has been a battle-field of the Archaeologists for the last half-century ... Mr E.A. Freeman ... is now considered as perhaps the best English historian of our times, and he has no reason to be ashamed of the history of Dorchester Church, a work of his youth, written in 1851.⁷²

Although Freeman's paper mainly focussed on the history of the abbey, he also provided an account of the early restoration, which Parker felt was particularly significant in view of Freeman's first hand experience. Parker wrote:

Mr Freeman's Essay also contains an excellent account of the beginning of the *restoration* of this fine church by the Oxford Architectural Society, of which Mr Freeman himself was then the chief leader, and this is the only record of what was then done, and the difficulties they had to contend with; it ought to be preserved and handed on to our successors to encourage them not to be dismayed by any difficulties, for Dorchester certainly seemed a hopeless case at first.⁷³

⁶⁹ J. H. Parker, *The History of Dorchester, Oxfordshire and the Architectural History of the Church* (1882), xvii.

⁷⁰ E. A. Freeman, 'On the Architecture of the Abbey Church of Dorchester', *Archaeol. Jnl.* ix (1852), 158-69, 262-80, 329-35: (hereafter *Dorchester*).

⁷¹ Geoffrey Tyack, 'The Abbey Restored, c. 1800-1920' in Tiller, *Dorchester Abbey*.

⁷² Parker, *The History of Dorchester*, p. ix.

⁷³ *Ibid.* xxviii-xxiv.

Freeman's enthusiasm for the OAS's intervention and the work achieved is also recorded in the third part of his paper on Dorchester.⁷⁴ He endorsed the scale and form of restoration that was adopted:

The principle pursued throughout has been strictly conservative, a diligent repair of what remained, and careful adaptation of what was necessarily new.⁷⁵

The OAS committee meeting reports, written in Freeman's hand for the period 6 December 1844 to 21 April 1847, provide a brief outline of the administration involved in the restoration. They include details of the decision made at a meeting of 22 October 1845, to donate the profits of Addington's book to the restoration fund and the CCS's contribution made in February 1846, which we can take as representing approval of the restoration.⁷⁶

Unfortunately the renewed interest in restoration had produced many more churches to be rescued and Freeman was to be disappointed at the diminishing interest shown in Dorchester. The OAS had worked hard to raise funds for the project, but he concluded in his paper for the Archaeological Institute that:

... I think we may fairly say that what we have done we have done well; the execution everywhere reflects the greatest credit on the several contractors, and shows that in mere workmanship at least we are in nowise behind our ancestors.⁷⁷

A notebook preserved in the OAS archive, entitled '*Dorchester Church Subscriptions 1844-51*', provides an insight into Freeman's donations towards the restoration fund, and another notebook covering the years 1840 to 1853 records that Freeman was contributing to the fund every six months, often as much as £6 5s 0d. each time.⁷⁸ There is no doubt that Freeman was a generous benefactor when he believed passionately in the rightness of a cause.

FREEMAN AND THE CAMBRIDGE CAMDEN SOCIETY

The Cambridge Camden Society was founded in 1839 by, primarily, two Trinity College, Cambridge undergraduates John Mason Neale (1818-66) and Benjamin Webb (1819-85).⁷⁹ By 1846 it was stated that the Society's object was:

... to promote the study of Christian Art and Antiquities, more especially in whatever relates to the architecture, arrangement, and decoration, of churches; the recognition of correct principles and taste in the erection of new churches; and the restoration of ancient ecclesiastical remains.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Freeman, *Dorchester*, 330-1.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 331.

⁷⁶ Bodl. Dep.d.518.

⁷⁷ Freeman, *Dorchester*, 334.

⁷⁸ Bodl. Dep.d.540.

⁷⁹ The early years of the Society are summarised in G.K. Brandwood, "'Fond of Church Architecture" – the Establishment of the Society and a Short History of its Membership' in C. Webster and J. Elliott (eds.), *A Church as it should be*, *The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence* (2000), 45-61.

⁸⁰ *The Ecclesiologist* (hereafter *Ecc.*) v (1846), 256 and quoted in White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 228. White's work, written in the 1960s, was for a long time the only substantial work on the CCS, but it is a little dated and has, in some part, been superseded by the recently edited publication: C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*.

In his address at the twenty-second Anniversary Meeting held on June 13, 1861 in London, the President, Beresford Hope, told the audience that the Ecclesiological Society (late Cambridge Camden Society) 'existed for the cultivation of art in its sacred relations to religion; but, at the same time, it pursued art for its own sake, as well as in its relations to that which hallowed all art.'⁸¹

Initially, the ordinary membership consisted only of members of Cambridge University, an institution which in 1839 was both exclusively Anglican and dominated by the clergy, and the *Ecclesiologist* is littered with references to Gothic architecture as being a 'Christian' style. Webb and Neale both became clergymen and, although they were influenced by A. W. N. Pugin's views, his Catholicism was always a problem for them. The CCS was more sympathetic to Rickman's Quakerism than to Pugin's Catholicism and by 1846, the Catholic membership had been expelled.⁸² Amongst those who accused the CCS of Roman Catholic tendencies was Francis Close. He outlined his views in *The Restoration of Churches is the Restoration of Popery, proved and illustrated from the Authenticated Publications of the Cambridge Camden Society* which was a sermon published in 1844. Close stated that architecture was viewed 'analytically at Oxford' and 'artistically at Cambridge', and 'it is inculcated theoretically, in tracts, at one university, and it is sculptured, painted, and graven at the other'.⁸³ However this is not to say that the University Societies were rivals, but rather that their respective views were in harmony with each other.⁸⁴

The Camden Society's tenacity was sorely tried when, in its crisis year of 1845, being suspected of Romanising inclinations, there were calls for its dissolution.⁸⁵ It was the nature of the restoration of the 'round church', St. Sepulchre in Cambridge, which was the source of the suspicion that the CCS had Roman Catholic sympathies, especially when Neale wanted to include a stone altar and credence table.⁸⁶

Hope brought a distinctly political element to the Camdenian's principles.⁸⁷ As a Member of Parliament he '... constructed a position for himself as the principal spokesman of High Anglicanism in the Commons: the Camden Society was his most important base'.⁸⁸ Chris Brooks has placed Hope in the middle of the crisis of 1845 when, he argues, '... external political pressures and internal dissensions began to split the Society.' It was, he argues, a tactical move to disassociate the Society with those who were voicing dissent.⁸⁹ The meeting on 8 May 1845 ensured its survival. It moved from Cambridge to London, however, changing its name to the 'Ecclesiological late Cambridge Camden Society', but it continued to produce its journal *The Ecclesiologist*. The membership now excluded many Episcopal members and it drew in many more Oxford men, architects and ecclesiastical artists.⁹⁰

⁸¹ *Ecc.*, xxii (Aug. 1861), 237.

⁸² R. O'Donnell, ' "... blink him by silence"? The Cambridge Camden Society and A.W.N. Pugin' in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 98.

⁸³ Quoted from p. 4 of Close's pamphlet (1844) in M. Chandler, *The Life and Work of John Mason Neale* (1995), 28.

⁸⁴ C. Webster, 'Postscript', in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 353.

⁸⁵ *Ecc.*, iv (1845), 72.

⁸⁶ Chandler, *John Mason Neale*, 47 and see *The Builder* Sat. March 1, 1845, 100 'Dissolution of the Cambridge Camden Society' for the protests against its abandonment and pleas for an alternative society to take its place in order to continue its work.

⁸⁷ See H. W. and I. Law, *The Book of the Beresford Hopes* (1925).

⁸⁸ C. Brooks, 'The Stuff of a Heresiarch': William Butterfield, Beresford Hope, and the Ecclesiological Vanguard', in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 126.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 127 and *Ecc.*, iv (1845), 174.

⁹⁰ Brandwood, 'Fond of Church Architecture', 59. The definition of the CCS itself was that ecclesiology was the science of church architecture. See: White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 49.

However, until its eventual demise in 1868, it remained a staunch supporter of the Anglican Gothic Revival. Its advocacy of the 'pure and correct' arrangement of churches was to influence how we view 'traditional' churches today; their architecture, external and internal decoration, rituals and music. This ecclesiological theory can be summarised as stripping back medieval churches and discarding later work, particularly that executed after the Reformation, to the style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or the 'original' style. However, their views were flawed. As Clarke argued in his *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century*:

... the original style of many churches was Saxon; in the case of many others – probably the majority – it was Norman. But it was out of the question to restore them to a primitive, undeveloped and unsymbolic style.⁹¹

Chris Miele has questioned whether the CCS always advocated a return to the Middle Pointed or Decorated style, thus creating a 'pure' style. 'The Society was dogmatic, true, but more so in relation to the style of new churches, church furnishing, and the vexed question of church symbolism' he argued and 'In fact notices of church restorations published in *The Ecclesiologist* in the first half of the 1840s have very little to say about style at all...'⁹² The CCS's views also changed over time as they learned more about medieval architecture and were beginning to learn about continental architecture.⁹³ It is hard to complete the whole picture of the CCS's principles because their papers are now lost, but their journal, *The Ecclesiologist*, is remarkably detailed and diaries and letters can provide an insight into how the Society functioned.⁹⁴

Freeman was elected to the CCS in 1846 and was a life member by 1864.⁹⁵ He often contributed articles or letters to *The Ecclesiologist*, but his relationship with the Camdenians was frequently stormy. Against their beliefs, Freeman had recommended the early Perpendicular style for modern building, had disagreed with their nomenclature for the Gothic styles and had dared 'to criticize the symbolism of Durandus as one of 'merely arbitrary association''.⁹⁶ To the Ecclesiologists these were all heresies and ones which they immediately challenged in the pages of their Proceedings, made easier because their views were expounded anonymously. For example, in 1846, Freeman was criticised in the pages of *The Ecclesiologist* for his preference for what they called the Third Pointed, but the writer rather arrogantly hoped that 'further study may lead him to abandon these peculiar notions'.⁹⁷ Webb wrote to Freeman on 15th October 1846, when he returned a paper

⁹¹ B.F.L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (1938), 230.

⁹² C. Miele, 'Re-presenting the Church Militant: the Camden Society, Church Restoration, and the Gothic Sign', in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 276–7.

⁹³ Christopher Webster's summary of the evolution of CCS beliefs can be found in 'Postscript' in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 348–58.

⁹⁴ Gavin Stamp cites Benjamin Webb's diary (Bodleian Library MS.Eng.misc.e.406) in 'George Gilbert Scott and the CCS', in C. Webster, *A Church as it Should Be*, 175 and the diary of John Mason Neale, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3107 cited in Brandwood, 'Fond of Church Architecture', 45. See also JRL: A.J. Beresford Hope to Freeman: FA1/1/38-66, 1/3/53; John Mason Neale to Freeman: FA1/1/74-5; Benjamin Webb to Freeman: 1/1/192-201. The texts of eight pamphlets published by the CCS which proved to be very influential at the time, but are difficult to find now, have been made more accessible by C. Webster in *temples ... worthy of His presence: the early publications of the Cambridge Camden Society* (2003).

⁹⁵ G.K. Brandwood, 'Appendix: A Camdenian Roll-Call' in C. Webster, *A Church as it should be*, 393.

⁹⁶ White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 122.

⁹⁷ *Ecc.*, v (Feb. 1846), 53–5.

Freeman had submitted to *The Ecclesiologist*, asking him to moderate it somewhat. 'Controversy must elicit truth', he wrote, '... can you not write us something in which we may all agree? I think you are very good to allow us to refuse your papers.'⁹⁸ The radical agenda of the Ecclesiologists and the aggressiveness with which it was expounded, naturally stirred up controversy, but progress thrives on debates, especially those disseminated through publication.

In 1846 Freeman published a pamphlet setting out his early views on restoration and when this was reviewed by *The Ecclesiologist* in the spring of 1847, it provided the opportunity to open a much overdue debate on the principles of restoration. The reviewer reduced Freeman's complex theories to three 'approaches' to restoration: the Destructive, the Conservative, and the Eclectic.⁹⁹ Although Freeman felt that his views were in danger of being misrepresented,¹⁰⁰ this categorisation of approaches was used to structure many of the subsequent restoration debates. This review, as Miele has observed, 'prompted the first extended debates on church restoration in the Victorian period and would lead, without Freeman intending it, to the widespread adoption of terms which characterized the restoration debate for nearly two decades'¹⁰²

Freeman courted controversy and was not afraid to voice his views or disseminate his pamphlet to others in the hope that they would comment. He sent a copy to Petit who was Secretary of the Lichfield Architectural Society. Petit wrote a very complimentary letter to Freeman on 24 November 1846 stressing how important he felt Freeman's *Principles of Church Restoration* was as a welcome addition to the current literature which explored these themes. Petit's own views tended towards keeping the 'marks of time' which he considered to be 'proofs of strength and endurance'. The architects search for 'picturesqueness', he felt, should not be a priority. Using the analogy of a painting he wrote:

... you would not thank a picture-cleaner for repairing an old and valuable picture, on the ground that in some parts the colours have become faded or indistinct. You would rather have it as an authentic production with its accidental imperfections than the best copy or restoration.¹⁰³

Petit was himself the target of criticism from the Ecclesiologists during the 1840s, and despite the views expressed to Freeman in the above letter, they accused him of preferring 'aesthetical beauty' to 'the ritualism and symbolical tradition of the Catholic Church'.¹⁰⁴ One

⁹⁸ Webb to Freeman, JRL FA1/1/195.

⁹⁹ E. A. Freeman, *Principles of Church Restoration* (1846); *Ecc.* viii (May 1847), 161–8. For a detailed discussion of this review see particularly Dade-Robertson, *Edward Augustus Freeman*.

¹⁰⁰ E. A. Freeman, *The Preservation and Restoration of Ancient Monuments* (1852).

¹⁰¹ Miele, 'Re-presenting the Church Militant', 290. See also White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 166–71; Wim Denslagen, *Architectural restoration in Western Europe: controversy and continuity* (1994), 62–65. However Denslagen admits to not having seen Freeman's pamphlet of 1846 and obtains all his information on *The Ecclesiologist* from White; S. Tschedi-Madsen, *Restoration and Anti-Restoration: A Study of English Restoration Philosophy* (1976). This work needs to be treated with caution – Miele certainly had some reservations about it: *The Gothic Revival and Gothic Architecture* (New York Univ. unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1992). Tschedi-Madsen credits Freeman with introducing the terms 'Destructive, Conservative and Eclectic', rather than the reviewer, which suggests that he has not read the review correctly – see, 40.

¹⁰² Miele, *The Gothic revival and Gothic architecture*. Freeman regretted that his *Principles* had been the source of such controversy: Freeman, *Principles*, 54.

¹⁰³ Petit to Freeman, JRL: FA1/1/796.

¹⁰⁴ *Ecc.* vi (Oct 1846), 126 & see *Ecc.* vi (Aug 1846), 67–8.

reason for their antagonism, however, was that Petit advised church designers to consider several styles, including Perpendicular which 'allows the greatest latitude' and which, the Ecclesiologists considered, represented the Gothic style in its decayed phase.¹⁰⁵

Petit was advocating 'conservative restoration', a term which became common currency after Freeman's pamphlet had been reviewed by *The Ecclesiologist*.¹⁰⁶ The 'conservative' method of repairing or restoring a building was a way of creating a *facsimile* of the old building and removing post-Reformation work.

The opposite 'destructive' approach was identified by Freeman as belonging to the building methods of the medieval architects. Freeman defined this as follows: '... any new idea that presented itself is carried out to the utter oblivion of the original design' and he noted that new designs often took precedence over the completion of previous works.¹⁰⁷ This, Freeman argued, was not so when only repairs, rather than new buildings, were required. Taking Peterborough Cathedral as his example, Freeman describes how 'One aisle is fenced in by the massive pier and round arch that tells us of the struggles of St. Dunstan or St. Anselm, while its fellow arcade soars triumphant in all the grace of clustered shafts and foliated capital, of pointed vault, and shadowy architrave.'¹⁰⁸ The old styles were replaced by the new and modern styles of the day, with no thought for the work of previous generations.

The 'eclectic' method was the middle course of action, where some of the original work may be replaced with modern work and some may be copied exactly.

The merits of the three terms coined in the review were discussed at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the CCS held in London on 18 May 1847, where it was agreed to adopt the radical 'eclectic' approach. It is probable that Freeman was not present at this meeting and there is no mention of any comments made by him in the report. Furthermore, in an undated letter in the Freeman Archive from Hope, there is a reference to Freeman's absence at a meeting where 'the debate was carried on with spirit, [and] the Eclectics carried it ...'¹⁰⁹ Had Freeman attended, he would have championed the conservative approach and would most certainly have been vocal on the subject.

Benjamin Webb, at that time the editor of *The Ecclesiologist*, is likely to have been the reviewer, but there is no correspondence in the Freeman archive to provide evidence of this. It is unlikely to have been Hope, although he wrote to Freeman on 1 October 1846 thanking him for 'your pamphlet on Ch. Restoration', which he said he had read three times in manuscript form, and, although not agreeing with everything 'I liked many parts of it much ...'¹¹⁰ Hope had chaired the annual meeting of 1847 and, when he opened the debate on restoration, he had done so reluctantly because, he told the audience, 'he had hoped that some one more competent than himself would have done it.'¹¹¹ It is also unlikely to have been John Neale who, at the annual meeting, advocated the 'Destructive' method of restoration and 'announced his readiness to see Peterborough Cathedral pulled down, if it could have been replaced by a Middle-Pointed cathedral as good of its sort.'¹¹² The meeting was attended by

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in N. Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (1972), 97. Pevsner dismissed Petit's work for its lack of scholarship.

¹⁰⁶ *Ecc*, vii (May 1847), 161–8.

¹⁰⁷ Freeman, *Principles*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Freeman, *Principles*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ JRL: FA1/1/66.

¹¹⁰ Beresford-Hope to Freeman JRL: FA1/1/39.

¹¹¹ *Ecc*, vii (June 1847), 237.

¹¹² *Ecc*, vii (June 1847), 238.

many prominent members and architects.¹¹³ Some took up Neale's radical approach at the meeting, although with reservations, and a smaller number supported the 'Conservative' approach, but the 'Eclectic' line carried the day. Hope and Webb both declared themselves 'Eclectics', and the Dean of Chichester as Chairman '... wound up the discussion in favour of the Eclectic theory.'¹¹⁴ This was perhaps the least contentious of the three.¹¹⁵

The Ecclesiologist's reviewer had asked of his readers why the medieval architects were bold enough to rebuild their churches by destroying previous work whereas the modern architect was loath to do so. Modern architecture, he observed, is only reproducing the older style, not developing it. Agreeing with Freeman, the reviewer argued that the medieval builders did not see historic buildings as documents of the past; they felt no reverence for the links with their past heritage. For, *The Ecclesiologist* states '... as Mr Freeman very truly says, the builders of former days of all periods, from the earliest Romanesque to the most florid Third-Pointed, were employing a living art ...'¹¹⁶

Freeman believed that the medieval builders were intent on what they perceived as the 'superiority of their own style' and wanted to introduce all the 'most recent improvements in the art'.¹¹⁷ However, he argued, as time went on the very stones of antiquity encapsulated events of history. The modern architect, Freeman asserted, imitates rather than invents and '... he is to a certain degree like a writer composing in a dead language.'¹¹⁸ In order, therefore, to make a link with the past, the original fabric must survive. The difference between the medieval mason and the modern architect is explained, according to Freeman by, in the case of the former, the absence of a hankering after the past, and a willingness to move forward. It was the Romantic Movement which introduced the feeling for the past which evoked nostalgia and an understanding of the power of association through architecture and which had developed over the 19th century and influenced the modern architect.

In respect of the evolving styles of seven centuries of Gothic building, Freeman commented: '...the years that separate them are like a stream winding gradually away from its source, changing, developing, or corrupting, but all gently and gradually without any sudden perceptible break or jar'. But the three centuries that had passed since the end of the Gothic architectural era were a '... single yawning gulf' which separated them from the present and therefore '... the last of pure Perpendicular Churches is to us a monument of antiquity, a heirloom and relic of departed time, in a sense in which the old Saxon pile could hardly have been to those who reared the last temple of the medieval Church.'¹¹⁹ That 'gulf' was the historical awareness and a reverence for the past which the medieval masons had not possessed.

The Ecclesiologist, however, took the explanation for this difference in architectural methods a step further. Whereas the Middle Ages had an abundance of relics we now only have the stones. Freeman had emphasised the historic significance of architecture but *The Ecclesiologist* felt that the religious significance of church buildings was more important.

¹¹³ White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 168.

¹¹⁴ *Ecc*, vii (June 1847), 240.

¹¹⁵ In *The Gothic Revival* (1995), Kenneth Clark stated that at this meeting, only two systems were discussed, the 'Eclectic' and 'Destructive' and it was agreed that the latter was the best and if 'funds permitted it would be a worthy object of the Society to pull down Peterborough Cathedral', 181.

¹¹⁶ *Ecc*, vii (May, 1847), 161-8 and Freeman, *Principles*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Freeman, *Principles*, 5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

Furthermore, it argued, '... the yawning gulf ... does not, strictly speaking, exist ... the Church ... is the same Church as that of other days'.¹²⁰ *The Ecclesiologist* also disagreed with Freeman's view on conservative restoration, maintaining that a building should be stripped back to an agreed style and later additions, for example Tudor panelling, should be taken away. The only argument for the 'conservative' way, it argued, is that it is the safest way.

The reviewer concluded that there were no hard and fast rules, that there is a value judgement to be made in each individual case and that a decision had to be made as to which parts should be preserved and which not. He believed that it was wrong to preserve just for the sake of it.

A new historical awareness, a product of the Gothic Revival, had, according to Freeman, produced a new appreciation of medieval architecture. However, although a study of the existing fabric could further an understanding of how the medieval masons constructed their churches, it could never be truly understood and therefore not truly emulated. Whilst, in common with other writers of this period, Freeman believed that a copy of certain medieval features was acceptable, he warned that, '... as long as he is only or even chiefly an imitator, he can neither venture to diminish his stock of ancient models, nor to suppose that he has himself outstripped them, so that his own conceptions may be rightly substituted in their place'.¹²¹ Freeman abhorred the idea of substituting a 'preferred' style because, by doing so, the modern architect would '... destroy a page in the history of Architecture'.¹²²

When, in 1850, Freeman's strong views against the plans for Butterfield's St Matthias Church at Stoke Newington, which conflicted with those of *The Ecclesiologist*, were recorded in the journal the editors printed a reply championing the architect. This developed into a lengthy debate.¹²³ Freeman damned the design with the comment that 'Its entire want of architectural merit is rendered more conspicuous by its pretence, and its affectation of singularity'.¹²⁴ The editors believed that if Freeman, who was 'no mere pedantic archaeologist' accepted that if these new developments in modern architecture for modern needs were not approved, then the result would be '... the perpetuation of those small low structures, which make the cities of England so inferior to those of Belgium or France'.¹²⁵

Chris Brooks has studied this controversy and came to the conclusion that the dispute effectively ended Freeman's future contact with *The Ecclesiologist*.¹²⁶ However even a brief perusal of the pages of *The Ecclesiologist* throughout the 1850s demonstrates the continued close ties he had with the journal.¹²⁷ Shortly after the St Matthias episode, *The Ecclesiologist* reviewed Freeman's *Llandaff Cathedral* and, indicative of the respect they had for him, praised his work and reputation.¹²⁸

¹²⁰ *Ecc.* vii (May 1847), 166.

¹²¹ Freeman, *Principles*, 6.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²³ *Ecc.* xi (Aug. 1850), 142–3; (Oct. 1850), 208–11; (Dec. 1850), 233–6.

¹²⁴ *Ecc.* xi (Oct. 1850), 210.

¹²⁵ *Ecc.* xi (Dec. 1850), 234 & 236.

¹²⁶ C. Brooks, 'The Stuff of Heresiarch': William Butterfield, Beresford Hope, and the Ecclesiological Vanguard' in C. Webster, *A Church as it Should be*, 138.

¹²⁷ For example see *Ecc.* xii (Dec. 1851), 377–8 for a favourable review of Freeman's *A History of Architecture*; a transcript of a lecture delivered to the OAS by Freeman on 3 March 1852 entitled 'On the Architecture of Malmsbury Abbey Church' in *Ecc.* xiii (April, 1852), 154–66 and a communication entitled 'An Architectural Tour of East Anglia', *Ecc.* xv (Oct. 1854), 310–22.

¹²⁸ *Ecc.* xii (April, 1851), 106–10.

CONCLUSION

Today the Oxford Society seeks to 'advance education and promote research into the study of archaeology, architecture, and history, and kindred subjects' and, most importantly to Freeman, 'especially in their relation to one another'.¹²⁹ Freeman had long recognised that architectural study should be '... studied directly as a branch of history, with constant references to the creeds, the feelings, and the laws of the times and places where successive architectural styles arose'.¹³⁰ Furthermore, he believed that local historical research benefits from locating it within general history and that the findings of such research should be disseminated to a wide audience through the Proceedings of local societies and the papers resulting from their frequent meetings. The Oxford Architectural Society provided Freeman, alongside many others, with a vehicle to assist in his learning of architectural principles and theories and a platform to air his views. Freeman, as we have seen, also contributed extensively to *The Ecclesiologist* and his views helped to establish the journal as a dominant and influential voice in the style and arrangements of all contemporary ecclesiastical structures. Freeman could, however, be critical of the Ecclesiologists, arguing that their view was 'essentially religious' and therefore tended to ignore the wider issues relating to architectural remains, whilst also narrowing their studies to ecclesiastical buildings. However it is within the OAS that Freeman's work has proved to be enduring and influential and, whereas the CCS did not survive, the OAS still contributes to the important work of exploring and recording local history and Freeman's legacy should be remembered with appreciation.

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¹²⁹ www.oahs.org.uk/rules.htm (accessed 3rd February 2005).

¹³⁰ E. A. Freeman 'Address to the Historical Section at Cardiff', *The Archaeol. Jnl*, xxviii (1871), 178.