

William Butterfield's Patrons and Clients in Oxford

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SUMMARY

This article examines how the Victorian architect William Butterfield developed his network of clients and patrons and explores the parts they played in his Oxford projects. A client is defined as someone who engages the services of a suitable architect for a single project, while a patron provides ongoing, long-term support to a particular architect. Two of Butterfield's four Oxford projects exemplify the client role: Merton's restoration of its medieval chapel (1848–56) and Balliol's new chapel (1854–60). Merton's college expansion project (1861–63) began with a potentially patronal relationship but in difficult circumstances the college reverted to the role of client. In contrast, the Keble College project (1866–83) is a study of the impact of powerful and effective patrons. Using evidence from Butterfield's letters to John Taylor Coleridge and his son John Duke Coleridge, the piece considers the way in which Butterfield's relations with his clients and patrons affected the success of his buildings, and whether the roles of client and patron were instrumental in shaping his contribution to Oxford's architectural heritage.

In 1866 William Butterfield, reflecting on a difficult Oxford project, bemoaned his critics' willingness to disparage his work without knowing the constraints imposed by his client. 'It was the architect's duty,' he said, 'to put a certain number of rooms upon a certain site, come what might of it, and not regard the noise of critics who do not wish or care to enquire whether he had any choice.'¹ This study of Butterfield's work in Oxford enquires whether the state of his relations with his clients and patrons had any impact on architectural success, and how the different roles of client and patron affected what he was able to achieve with his buildings. Butterfield's letters to his patron John Taylor Coleridge and his friend John Duke Coleridge, recently acquired by the British Library, proved invaluable for insight into his response to the challenges of Oxford. But inevitably the picture is patchy: surviving correspondence is usually one-sided, organizations vary in what they archive, and private papers are not always open for research.²

To facilitate comparison of the roles and relationships in the main stages of his projects, Butterfield's Oxford work is examined as three studies:

1. The client – Balliol's chapel
2. Client to patron to client – Merton's chapel and college expansion
3. Patrons and client – Keble's chapel and college

Although the terms 'patron' and 'client' have some semantic overlap there are significant differences between them. A client is someone who engages the services of a professional person for a specific requirement: a client with a building requirement looks in the open market for a suitable architect – a business-like process with no expectation of future projects

¹ BL, Add MS 86259, Coleridge family papers, vol. dcclxv, 'Letters to John Duke Coleridge from William Butterfield, 15 Aug. 1853–10 Feb. 1892'. Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 1 July 1866.

² Lord Wraxall has confirmed his family's decision to keep their collection of William Gibbs's papers closed.

or a longer relationship. Patronage, on the other hand, is a more personal relationship that goes beyond a single project and involves care for and promotion of the architect. Dictionary definitions of 'patron' make clear its derivation from Latin *pater* 'father'.³

A client employs the architect and pays the bill, and in this respect a patron may use his or her wealth to act as a client. But the support offered by a patron is not necessarily or exclusively financial: the wider influence, social connections and good advice of a patron may be as valuable to the architect as the provision of funds. Patronage also implies continuity: a patron may support one architect through multiple projects, or he or she may over time support multiple projects awarded to different architects.

Patronage of prestige architecture requires wealth, influence, education and the confidence to recognize and promote architectural talent. Over the centuries social, economic and political change has moved the sources of such patronage from the church, through royalty, government, aristocracy and plutocracy, to competition in the open market. Butterfield was born in 1814, during the Regency, when industrialization was bringing about a shift in patronage from the aristocracy to merchants and businessmen. The influence of the landed classes, however, continued long into the nineteenth century, Henry-Russell Hitchcock observing that 'a social and aesthetic élite still provided both critical esteem and the most desirable commissions for Victorian architects'.⁴

MAKING CONNECTIONS

William Butterfield – from a Nonconformist family, with a father who kept a pharmacy in the Strand, and apprenticed to a builder at sixteen – had no advantage of class, education, social standing or wealth for securing élite patrons or open-market clients. But he was a man with a vocation, in pursuit of which he took care to position himself in the orbit of those able to make him 'the protégé of Tory landowners and high-churchmen'.⁵

The opening years of Victoria's reign, when Butterfield was establishing his architectural practice, were a turbulent time of religious and architectural enthusiasms sparked by the theological tracts of the Oxford ('Tractarian') Movement and A.W.N. Pugin's medieval Gothic manifestos. In 1839 societies dedicated to promoting the virtues of Gothic for ecclesiastical buildings were founded, independently, in Oxford and in Cambridge. Butterfield, adjusting his denominational affiliation from Nonconformist to Anglican, engaged with both societies, forming, as he himself wrote, 'friendships of an intimate and enduring character which moulded his professional practice and eminently suited his own special temperament'.⁶ Benjamin Webb, a founder of the Cambridge Camden Society, was one such friend, and through him Butterfield was able to take responsibility for the Camdenians' scheme for the approval of designs for sacred vessels and other ecclesiastical furniture (1843–50). Through this scheme Butterfield became 'the arbiter of ecclesiastical taste in all church fittings'.⁷ In Oxford, under the direction of the Society for the Promotion of the Study of Gothic Architecture,⁸ he took on the restoration of Dorchester abbey (1846–53).

Another significant source of friendships and commissions was the Fraternity of St Barnabas, a private brotherhood of fourteen high church laymen founded in 1845 by Arthur

³ R. Burchfield et al. (eds.), *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II, P–Z (1971), p. 2100.

⁴ H.-R. Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 3rd edn (1968), p. 173.

⁵ J.M. Crook, *The Architect's Secret: Victorian Critics and the Image of Gravity* (2003), p. 69.

⁶ Anon., 'The Late William Butterfield, F.S.A', *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* (1900), p. 241. The quotation is from Butterfield's notes on his life which he wrote in the third person.

⁷ P. Thompson, *William Butterfield* (1971), p. 44.

⁸ For an account of the early days of the Oxford Society: P. Howell, 'The Founders of the Oxford Architectural Society', *Oxoniensia*, 75 (2010), pp. 61–6. The Society was renamed the Oxford Architectural Society in 1848 and became the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society in 1860. The Cambridge Camden Society moved to London in 1845 and renamed itself the Ecclesiologist Society. Its journal was *The Ecclesiologist*.

Acland, with John Keble as spiritual advisor. Butterfield was one of the fourteen. The fraternity was known as the Engagement, its members engaging to undertake charitable works and to follow regimes of church disciplines.⁹ Several members, William Gladstone, Roundell Palmer and Judge John Taylor Coleridge included, were Tractarian Oxonians. A few were 'gentlemen of position', while the fraternity's professionals numbered four MPs, three barristers, an army captain, a doctor (Robert Brett), and the young Butterfield.¹⁰

The fraternity's meeting place was Margaret Chapel, in Margaret Street, London, an unprepossessing venue but renowned for its Tractarian ministers, most notably Frederick Oakeley, a Balliol fellow.¹¹ Oakeley's passion for ceremonial and choral music attracted Tractarians and Camdenians to the congregation, including James Hope-Scott (a Merton fellow) and Alexander Beresford Hope (a leading figure in the Ecclesiological Society). Commissions in the 1840s that established Butterfield as a significant new talent came directly from his Margaret Chapel and Engagement contacts: St Augustine, Canterbury, via Brett and Beresford Hope; St Matthias, Stoke Newington, via Brett;¹² All Saints Margaret Street – the Ecclesiologists' model church – via Beresford Hope.¹³ Judge Coleridge engaged Butterfield for the restoration of Ottery St Mary's parish church. Finding him to be 'no mean authority' on architecture, Coleridge wrote to his friend John Keble: 'How I wish you could come and see our work – without exaggeration it is a great one for the architect and full of almost painful interest for us, who are the promoters.'¹⁴ John Taylor Coleridge became one of Butterfield's most valued patrons, introducing him to a wider circle of potential patrons, including Sir William Heathcote of Hursley – John Keble's 'pupil, squire and only patron.'¹⁵ Butterfield also became a Coleridge family friend. Ellis Yarnall, an American visiting London in 1855, told how John Duke Coleridge (John Taylor's son) took him to see All Saints Margaret Street, 'a church in which Coleridge took a great interest, because of his friendship for Butterfield, the architect, and his admiration for his genius.'¹⁶

By the 1850s, when a large part of England's élite was 'very church-minded and thoroughly Gothicized',¹⁷ Butterfield had succeeded in positioning himself as a leading exponent of high church Anglican architecture and was, as George Gilbert Scott dryly observed, 'chiefly employed by men of advanced views who placed no difficulties in [his] way'.¹⁸

In 1858 Butterfield took a further step in social standing when, supported by the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of Oxford, he was elected to the Athenaeum, a club which admitted men renowned for their literary or artistic achievement. In 1867 he was elected to the exclusive Club of Nobody's Friends, its maximum of fifty members divided equally between clergy and laity. The Friends saw themselves as 'cherishing and maintaining those sound religious and political principles, which . . . will continue to sustain the Altar and Throne of England for many generations.'¹⁹ Butterfield, 'honourable and high-minded', had taken his place in the country's social and cultural élite.²⁰ (Fig. 1).

⁹ J.E. Acland, *A Layman's Life in the Days of the Tractarian Movement*. In *Memoriam Arthur [Acland] Troyte* (1904), pp. 171–6.

¹⁰ H.C.G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, Evangelicism, and "The Engagement"', in J. Garnett and C. Matthew (eds.), *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh* (1993), pp. 123–5.

¹¹ P. Galloway, *A Passionate Humility: Frederick Oakeley and the Oxford Movement* (1999), p. 51. Oakeley was minister of Margaret Chapel 1839–45. In 1845 (the year the Engagement was founded and John Henry Newman was accepted into the Roman Catholic Church) Oakeley converted to Roman Catholicism.

¹² T.W. Belcher, *Robert Brett (of Stoke Newington): His Life and Work*, 2nd edn (1891), pp. 29–30, 53, 395.

¹³ Crook, *The Architect's Secret*, pp. 49–50. All Saints was built on the site of Margaret Chapel. Hope's full name was Alexander James Beresford Beresford Hope; he added the second Beresford in 1854.

¹⁴ KCA, AD1/137, John Taylor Coleridge to John Keble, 11 Sept. 1849.

¹⁵ C.S. Dessain and T. Gornall (eds.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. 29 (1976), p. 411.

¹⁶ E. Yarnall, *Wordsworth and the Coleridges: With Other Memories, Literary and Political* (1899), p. 146.

¹⁷ Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p. 173.

¹⁸ G.G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), pp. 112–13.

¹⁹ G.E. Cokayne, *The Club of Nobody's Friends: Biographical List of the Members Since its Foundation 21 June 1800 to 30 Sept 1885* (1938), pp. vii–viii, 190.

²⁰ W.R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and his Work* (1979), p. 67.



Fig. 1. Butterfield refused John Duke Coleridge's request that he sit for a portrait, but Lady Coleridge had more success – she evidently used these cartes-de-visite as source for her well-known drawing of him. Copyright The British Library Board, Add MS 86226.

BUTTERFIELD IN OXFORD

Butterfield had potential or actual work in Oxford for most of his professional life. Balliol selected him for their new-build chapel (1854–60). Merton commissioned him for two major projects: the restoration of their medieval chapel (1848–56) and the provision of additional student accommodation (1861–3). John Keble's friends selected Butterfield for a seventeen-year project – Keble College (1866–83). Oxford projects for which Butterfield was seriously considered but not selected are outside the scope of this article but for completeness are noted here. He was shortlisted twice (1847 and 1853) for the new chapel for Exeter College,²¹ and in 1871–2 the Oxford Union (the debating society) was negotiating with him in connection with the society's need for additional space.²² George Gilbert Scott was awarded the Exeter College commission (1853) and Alfred Waterhouse the new debating chamber for the Oxford Union (1878).

Balliol and Merton – two colleges which did select Butterfield – were both governed by the college head and fellows, constituted as a corporate body of equals. The college head (Balliol's 'Master', Merton's 'Warden') had a casting vote but no right of veto.²³ The move to secularize Oxford University was underway, but the colleges were still Anglican institutions, requiring their members to swear allegiance to the Church of England. In contrast, the new Keble College, which received its royal charter in 1870, began life with its governance vested in an external council.²⁴

SELECTING AN ARCHITECT

The depth of preparation for the vital decision of which architect to employ can vary considerably and many criteria can be brought into play – reputation, eminence, creative imagination, character, cost, religious affiliation, existing body of work, availability, proximity, recommendation, and so on. In Butterfield's time competitions were for the most part the accepted means of selecting architects for Oxford University projects, but individual colleges, as self-governing bodies, could select an architect in whatever way they wished.

The colleges necessarily exercised architectural patronage in that they had buildings to maintain and college reorganizations and expansions to manage. Typically, a college would set up a building committee of interested fellows to prepare the brief and oversee any major project. For the architect, college commissions meant the challenge of working with group clients, subject to their internal politics, disagreements, factions and changes of personnel and opinion. If the architect negotiated these difficulties successfully and gave his client a good service, he could expect to be retained as college architect, with first call on any new project.

Balliol

Colleges which engaged Butterfield were not looking for the comfort of a safe architect who could be relied on to provide safe architecture.²⁵ Rather, by choosing a man known for his bold, polychromatic designs, they were opting for challenge and, perhaps, an edge over rival colleges.

For its venture into the new Gothic, Balliol toyed with a succession of architects before arriving at Butterfield. In 1842 George Basevi's term as college architect ended when his designs

²¹ ECA, A.1.11, college order book, p. 256, 2 Mar. 1847 and ECA, EV5/3 college order book, 30 July 1853.

²² OUSA, 022/1/C/1, letters book, 1871–92. Two letters, dated 29 Nov. 1871 and 23 Feb. 1872, from the treasurer to Butterfield re their negotiations.

²³ Thompson, *William Butterfield*, p. 47.

²⁴ A. Cameron and I.W. Archer (eds.), *Keble Past and Present* (2008), pp. 16–19.

²⁵ S. Parissien, *The Comfort of the Past: Building in Oxford and Beyond 1815–2015* (2015), p. 25. For evidence to the contrary in nineteenth century Oxford see P. Howell, 'Oxford Architecture, 1800–1914', in M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 7, part 2 (2000), pp. 729–77.

for the Broad Street frontage were rejected by the fellows as 'inadequate'.²⁶ The following year, on the recommendation of Frederick Oakeley, the college invited A.W.N. Pugin to 'furnish a design for a new façade towards the Broad Street'. Pugin prepared copious Gothic designs, including a chapel, but the master, Richard Jenkyns, refused to commission a Roman Catholic and ensured that 'all of the name Jenkyns withdrew their promised subscriptions'. After a stormy college meeting in April 1843 the Broad Street project was shelved, and Jenkyns hired Anthony Salvin, a Gothic revivalist architect with an extensive practice in church restorations, new country houses and university work, for other, lower profile, building work.²⁷

In his thirty-five years as master, Jenkyns had led the transformation of Balliol into a progressive and academically distinguished college, adopting reforms such as admission by general examination.²⁸ The resulting growth in Balliol's student population meant that its small Tudor chapel no longer met college needs. When Jenkyns died in March 1854 the college promptly engaged Butterfield to 'enlarge and restore' the chapel as Jenkyns's memorial.²⁹

Why Butterfield? Perhaps Exeter's recent appointment of George Gilbert Scott for their new chapel prompted Balliol to select an architect of equal eminence. And despite his Tractarian connections, Butterfield had no taste for ritualistic liturgical practices and was not about to follow Pugin to Rome.³⁰ Robert Scott, the new master and resolute supporter of the established church, could be comfortable with this architect's credentials.

Merton

With its fine late thirteenth-century chapel (which until 1891 also functioned as the parish church), Merton had no need of a new Gothic chapel. What the chapel did need was the removal of Wren's baroque fittings, described by Rudolph Ackermann in 1814 as 'in a style of design altogether foreign to the character of the building, displaying a defective taste, with which so many of our ancient ecclesiastical buildings have been deformed'.³¹ By 1842 the college was ready to act, instructing its building committee to 'enquire into the necessity and means of restoring and repairing the Chapel'.³² The committee recommended taking down the woodwork above the stalls, and Edward Blore, the college architect, was engaged to do the work.³³ However, in 1844 he was paid off, the college resolving that 'further consideration of the improvement of the Chapel be postponed for the present'.³⁴

Merton revived the project in October 1848, inviting Butterfield to advise on the restoration of the chapel.³⁵ College records do not say why he was chosen, but recommendation by Merton's Tractarian fellows may have played a part. James Hope-Scott would have known Butterfield's 1847 refit of Margaret Chapel,³⁶ as would Berdmore Compton who in 1873 became vicar of All Saints Margaret Street. John Hungerford Pollen as an active member of the Oxford Architectural Society would have known Butterfield's admired restoration of Dorchester abbey.

Merton was the only college to award two major contracts to Butterfield, moving from the role of client for the chapel project to the role of patron (briefly) when the growing student intake meant that additional accommodation was needed. In 1861 the college went straight to Butterfield for his recommendations on how to achieve twenty sets of undergraduate rooms.³⁷

²⁶ H.M. Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983), p. 107.

²⁷ J. Jones, *Balliol College, A History*, 2nd edn (2005), pp. 194–5, 200.

²⁸ H. Casson, *Hugh Casson's Oxford: A College Companion* (1988), pp. 13–16.

²⁹ BCA, college meetings, 1794–1875, transcription, p. 209.

³⁰ Thompson, *William Butterfield*, pp. 30–1.

³¹ R. Ackermann, *A History of the University of Oxford: Its Colleges, Halls and Public Buildings*, 1 (1814), p. 11.

³² MCA, Reg. 1.5, May 1842, p. 189.

³³ *Ibid.* Oct. 1842, p. 192.

³⁴ *Ibid.* May 1844, p. 205.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Oct. 1848, pp. 249–50.

³⁶ Crook, *The Architect's Secret*, pp. 49–50.

³⁷ MCA, Reg. 1.5, March 1861, p. 403.

Keble

Butterfield's investment in his long-standing friends and patrons bore fruit with the Keble College commission. The idea of a new Oxford college had been under discussion for a year or more, but the death of John Keble, on 29 March 1866, prompted action.³⁸ After his funeral a group of his friends, including John Taylor Coleridge, Edward Pusey and Henry Liddon, gathered at Sir William Heathcote's Hursley home to make plans for a college as a fitting memorial to Keble. The project's inaugural meeting was held in May at Lambeth Palace, where the Keble Memorial Fund was launched to raise 'not less than £50,000 for the establishment of a College in which young men now debarred from university education may be trained in simple and religious habits, and in strict fidelity to the Church of England'. With three members of the Engagement (Sir John Taylor Coleridge, Sir William Heathcote and Sir Roundell Palmer) appointed to the Keble memorial committee and made trustees of the fund, it is no surprise that the inaugural meeting resolved that 'Mr William Butterfield be appointed the Architect'.³⁹ The committee (and from 1870 the council) functioned as Butterfield's client for all college work paid for by the subscription fund.

By June 1866 Butterfield had inspected and recommended a plot of land offered for sale by St John's College, across the road from the new University Museum. By February 1867 the land had been secured as the site for Keble College.⁴⁰

DESIGN AND BUILD

The role of a Victorian architect was focused on the preparation of designs and estimates and the management of contractors and trades. The impact of clients and patrons in the design and build stages depended on the aims and constraints they set out in the brief and the extent to which they were active in or controlling of the design – either for or against the architect's wishes. Ideal for Butterfield would be those who simply supported him in realising his design ideas.

Balliol

Balliol kept Butterfield's letters over the six years of his engagement, providing a detailed record of his working methods and the evolving relationship between client and architect. The letters show an active debate of the details of a design constrained by limited space and limited budget. Butterfield began in June 1854 with the following letter to the master, Robert Scott:

My dear Sir – I ought perhaps to have written to tell you so, but after having made you 2 plans which I now enclose you, I determined in my own mind that it would be really better to extend the Chapel Northwards rather than Westwards. And therefore I had given up the idea of sending you the two plans as there is no occasion for any discussion upon them. You can however make what use you like of them, and if you have any remarks to make I should be glad to hear them as soon as possible.⁴¹

Scott promptly suggested sacrificing the antechapel to achieve the desired length. Butterfield rejected this idea:

³⁸ M. Chandler, *The Life and Work of Henry Parry Liddon (1829–1890)* (2000), p. 30. For an account of discussions in Oxford on the need for a new college, the inception of Keble College and Edward Talbot's wardenship see G. Rowell, "'Training in Simple and Religious Habits': Keble and its First Warden", in Brock and Curthoys (eds.), *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 7, part 2 (2000), pp. 171–91.

³⁹ KC/FDN 1 A4, minute book of the Keble memorial standing committee.

⁴⁰ KCA, KC/FDN 1 E/1, Mr Butterfield's Report upon the Proposed 'St John's College' Site, 21 June 1866. The museum was designed and built (1854–60) by the Irish architects Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward, and won praise from John Ruskin.

⁴¹ BCA, D.10.17, Butterfield to Scott, 3 June 1854.

I should feel so much this departure from the received universal ground plan of a College Chapel that I should have seriously to consider whether I ought not to resign the work you have kindly entrusted to me if this arrangement were decided on by the College. I am not one who blindly respects precedents, I have a disregard for them as often as most persons, but I certainly am not disposed to go against universal custom in any thing unless there is no other reasonable way of attaining the desired end.⁴²

When, at their meeting on 16 June 1854, the fellows still failed to agree a brief, Scott wrote to Butterfield seeking 'the authority of [his] judgment as an architect' on the aesthetics of lengthening the chapel; Butterfield replied that the effect of the quadrangle would be much improved by losing one library window, to 'allow of making a perfect chapel'.⁴³ His letter was read at the college meeting on 23 June, but the fellows decided that he should be instructed 'to prepare plans for restoring the Chapel, rebuilding it so far as needful and widening it but without lengthening it' – as Butterfield himself had concluded.⁴⁴

Over the summer Butterfield made his first visit to Italy, and it was October before he sent 'some small plans' for the master and fellows 'to understand and consult over'.⁴⁵ In November he wrote to dispose of design points evidently raised by the fellows: the cramped look of the window next to the stairs turret, the layout of floor space, the height of the chapel roof and the style of buttresses were all best as he had designed them and he saw no reason to change them. He did offer to reconsider the tracery of the east window, but warned: 'I do not propose to alter it much. It is perhaps now rather too early in character.' Scott jotted down the college response on Butterfield's letter: 'Acquiesced in, though not quite approved'.⁴⁶

A year of inaction followed, with occasional reminder letters from Butterfield.⁴⁷ The go-ahead from the college came in October 1855. Letters throughout the build demonstrate Butterfield's attention to practical matters – hoardings, scaffolding, secure access to the building site, space for workshops, depth of the existing foundations, and so on.⁴⁸ Early in 1856 specifications were ready for bids from his selected builders (avoiding London builders because of their more dubious bidding practices).⁴⁹ In the event there was a difference of £1,332 between the highest and the lowest offer. Butterfield recommended accepting the lowest, which he thought was several hundred pounds below the real cost of the work. He therefore felt able to request £100 for additional work on the chapel:

In fear of exceeding the amount you had resolved to spend I have left several points with less of finish than I should otherwise have done, and now with the help of this low tender I find so large a margin remaining, I should be glad to use the opportunity this gives me.⁵⁰

Throughout the build Butterfield managed the contractors, keeping a close eye on quality, schedule and costs. He continued to consult the master and fellows on design matters. In January 1856 he encouraged Scott to call on him in London: 'There are some points in the drawings which I very much wish to have your opinion upon and I could show you the stone I propose using',⁵¹ and in September he wanted to set up some patternwork in the walls so that the fellows could 'form a judgment on it'.⁵² (Fig. 2).

⁴² Ibid. Butterfield to Scott, 12 June 1854.

⁴³ Ibid. Butterfield to Scott, 20 June 1854.

⁴⁴ BCA, college meeting minutes, 23 June 1854. The chapel was built on the same footprint as before except that the north wall was moved out two or three feet; and about eight inches were added at the east end.

⁴⁵ BCA, D.10.17, Butterfield to Scott, 18 Oct. 1854 and 21 Oct. 1854.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 7 Nov. 1854.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 27 June 1855 and 27 Oct. 1855.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 23 Oct. 1855.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 1 Mar. 1856.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 10 Mar. 1856.

⁵¹ Ibid. 10 Jan. 1856.

⁵² Ibid. 19 Sept. 1856.



Fig. 2. Balliol College chapel, interior c.1900. Little remains of Butterfield's pattern-worked interior after remodelling work by Sir Walter Tapper and his son Michael, 1925–37.

In the summer of 1856 concern must have been expressed about the red stonework above the chapel door. Butterfield responded:

You must not judge of that red doorway arch as it now stands. There is a great plain wall of white coming above it which would have looked badly unless there had been some strong colour below to give a strong and not toy-like look to that arch. I have little doubt about it when finished. I like however to hear your remarks from time to time.⁵³

He told Scott that he was trying out a new idea which 'requires rather frequent visits [to Balliol] as I have never tried anything of the kind before'.⁵⁴ And although the bands of white and red stone looked like an Italian motif (Fig. 3), his visit to Italy, he told John Duke Coleridge, had not unduly influenced him: 'You will think me odd of course but I am more than ever persuaded that an Architect gets but little by travel. I am only glad that I had made up my own mind about a hundred things in art before seeing Italy'.⁵⁵ By the end of 1856 a relationship of trust had developed on both sides. Behaving more like a patron than a client, the college was happy to leave many decisions to its architect. Requests from Butterfield were readily agreed to, from granting more money for internal patternwork to designing the garden and moving chimney stacks which were smoking the chapel stonework.⁵⁶ (Fig. 4). Scott persisted in offering Butterfield the hospitality of the master's lodgings for overnight visits and Butterfield habitually declined, preferring to 'go to the Star to sleep'.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid. 27 Aug. 1856.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 19 Sept. 1856.

⁵⁵ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 30 Sept. 1854.

⁵⁶ BCA, college meeting minutes, 19 Oct. 1856, 24 Jan. 1857.

⁵⁷ BCA, D.10.17, Butterfield to Scott, 21 Oct. 1856, 1 Nov. 1856, 8 April 1857, 30 May 1857, 13 Aug. 1857.



Fig. 3. Balliol's chapel from the front quad of Trinity College. The building to the left is by Alfred Waterhouse. Photograph by Geoff Brandwood, 2015.



Fig. 4. Balliol College chapel and library c.1900. Butterfield replaced the chimney stack that was smoking the chapel stonework with a chimney stack in the middle of the library's north wall. Butterfield's stack was removed in the 1960s.

Merton

With the news that Merton's chapel was to be restored, the Oxford Architectural Society recognized the significance of the enterprise: 'The restoration now to be commenced by the Warden and Scholars of [Merton College] commands our most earnest sympathy as Churchmen, as Englishmen and as Oxonians.'⁵⁸ The chapel restoration ran smoothly for Butterfield. No letters have surfaced, but the minutes of college meetings indicate a well ordered process whereby the architect made an annual presentation of his plans and the college, in response, issued approved packages of work. In 1849 the work packages were the redesign of the roof and the removal of monuments and brasses to the antechapel; in 1850 the instructions were for Mr Pollen to direct the painting of the new roof, and for Mr Butterfield to 'prepare new stall-work, pave the Choir in marble and encaustic tiles, and procure a tender for warming the Chapel.'⁵⁹ By 1851 Wren's stalls had been dispersed to local churches and his baroque screen had been stored away, to be replaced by Butterfield's low-level marble screen.⁶⁰

The success of this restoration confirmed Butterfield as college architect. In March 1861, when advice was needed on how best to accommodate more undergraduates, the College turned to Butterfield.⁶¹ The warden, Robert Bullock Marsham, was concerned about the poor condition of Mob Quadrangle's undergraduate rooms, and was not alarmed by Butterfield's proposed solution – to take down the south side of the quadrangle, which housed one leg of the 'L'-shaped medieval library, and rebuild it out to the west. The resulting space would allow the quadrangle to be extended to the southern line of the neighbouring Fellows' Quadrangle. Discussing this proposal at its May 1861 meeting, the college approved the resolution that was to provoke an uproar: 'That it being understood that the College is agreed to the entire demolition (if necessary) of Mob Quadrangle, Mr Butterfield be requested to furnish plans for the ultimate reconstruction of the buildings, but capable of partial adoption at the present time, for obtaining at least twenty additional sets of rooms.'⁶² They had agreed to more than Butterfield had recommended – to the possible demolition (and reconstruction) of the entire fourteenth-century quadrangle, the oldest in the university. Within three weeks a library-protection cadre had formed, led by fellows Brodrick and Currer, and had instructed the sub-warden to ask the next college meeting (in October) 'to reconsider the recent decision with respect to the College Library, with a view to the preservation of the Library intact under all circumstances.'⁶³

Up to this point, college procedures were being followed. It was the next step which put Butterfield in an invidious position with no support from the college – the controversy was taken outside the college. J.H. Parker, the Oxford publisher and archaeologist, first raised the issue at an Ecclesiological Society meeting held in London on 13 June 1861. In a debate on the destructive character of modern French restoration, Parker, evidently briefed by a Merton insider, announced that he had seen as much mischief in this country: 'At that moment it was proposed by Mr Butterfield to destroy a side of the ancient quadrangle of Merton College, Oxford; comprising one wing of the library, a building of the fourteenth century and one of the earliest of its kind. He did not think anything so outrageous had ever been done in France.'⁶⁴ Benjamin Webb spoke up for Butterfield, explaining that it was necessary for the

⁵⁸ Anon., 'Oxford Architectural Society', *The Ecclesiologist*, 9 (1849), p. 56.

⁵⁹ MCA, Reg. 1.5, 25 June 1849, p. 260 and 24 June 1850, p. 272.

⁶⁰ J.R.L. Highfield, 'Alexander Fisher, Sir Christopher Wren and Merton College Chapel', *Oxoniansia*, 24 (1959), pp. 70–82. Butterfield's screen was not liked and in 1960 the college removed it and reinstated Wren's screen.

⁶¹ MCA, Reg. 1.5, Mar. 1861, p. 403.

⁶² Ibid. May 1861, p. 403.

⁶³ Ibid. June 1861, p. 404.

⁶⁴ Anon., 'Twenty-Second Anniversary Meeting', *The Ecclesiologist*, 22 (1861), p. 252. Butterfield and Parker were near neighbours in their childhood – Parker was born and raised at 157 Strand, a few doors away from William Butterfield Senior's pharmacy at 173 Strand.

college's good, as a place of education, to enlarge it; and the only way in which that could be done was to take part of the library, which was in the shape of the letter 'L', and turn it the other way.⁶⁵

A week later the controversy was in the national press. G.C. Brodrick (the future warden of Merton and a friend of Jowett) was a feature writer for *The Times* and no doubt had a hand in this escalation. On 24 June, under the headline 'Vandals in Oxford', *The Times* published a letter from 'Archaeologos' which began: 'Sir – I am informed on good authority that the Warden and Fellows of Merton intend, under the advice and direction of Mr Butterfield, to destroy the ancient quadrangle of their College and to erect a new building upon the site.'⁶⁶ A letter from 'Mertonensis', published on 27 June, decried the planned destruction of 'the Treasury building and certain groined passages'.⁶⁷ Stung into action, Butterfield penned a reply, published on 28 June, insisting that their destruction 'had never been hinted at' and it was 'impossible the College should ever think of destroying them'.⁶⁸ 'Those who know me at all,' Butterfield continued, 'know how unlikely I should be to advise the destruction of any valuable old work, or even of any old work which could by any possibility be preserved.' Parker responded immediately, accusing Butterfield of deliberately misleading the public:

The letter of Mr Butterfield in *The Times* of this morning may be literally true and yet calculated entirely to mislead the public. The part of the old buildings of the College which it is proposed to destroy is not the Treasury or the groined passages, but the Library, which forms the other two sides of the same quadrangle.⁶⁹

In July Butterfield wrote, at some length, to John Duke Coleridge:

I have been thinking a good deal about the matter as one of general principle. The Merton fellows, who are a different class of men to the Balliol fellows, will listen to clamour. And I shall have to defend myself and have perhaps to resign. And so I must think about it and be sure that I am right for I have to meet them again in October. And I feel that I am right. The doctrine that a useless building is to stand till it falls, cost what it may, because it is old, is a doctrine new in our age . . . It is fashionable cant only . . . I am convinced by talking with people that if this Merton matter were well discussed my view would obtain.

In a postscript Butterfield explained why his letter to *The Times* had not disclosed his actual recommendations to the college; it seems Brodrick had challenged him on this point:

Mr Brodrick should remember how delicate his position is. As Architect to the College I was at liberty publicly to contradict such an entire falsehood as I contradicted in the "Times". But I had no right, I think, without the sanction of the College, to defend or explain that which I had recommended to them privately. The enemy went beyond the truth and I simply stopped them. I did not profess to do more.⁷⁰

The clamour continued over the summer. The Oxford Architectural Society petitioned the college,⁷¹ The August issue of *The Ecclesiologist* included an article by Beresford Hope which, while agreeing that the first reports were 'palpably exaggerated', came down in favour of retaining the Mob Quad because of its 'peculiar mixed architectural and historical value'.⁷² Butterfield was sure that Beresford Hope would not have got involved 'if Parker had not

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 261.

⁶⁶ Archaeologos, 'Vandals in Oxford', *The Times*, 24 June 1861.

⁶⁷ Mertonensis, *The Times*, 27 June 1861.

⁶⁸ W. Butterfield, *The Times*, 28 June 1861.

⁶⁹ J.H. Parker, *The Times*, 28 June 1861.

⁷⁰ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 28 July 1861.

⁷¹ Anon., 'The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society', *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, 11 (1861), p. 151.

⁷² [A.]B. Beresford Hope, 'Merton College and Mr Butterfield', *The Ecclesiologist*, 22 (1861), pp. 218–21.

implored him and if it had been Scott instead of myself', although he did admit that Beresford Hope's article was 'in the main true and sensible'.⁷³

On 10 August, under the dramatic headline 'Proposed Destruction of Merton College Oxford', *The Builder* published a letter from Beresford Hope in his role as chairman of the committee of the Architectural Museum, expressing the committee's concern about the threat to the character and appearance of the Mob Quadrangle and hoping, in the interest of art and history, that the college authorities 'may be induced to reconsider the plan'.⁷⁴ In his reply the warden clarified the college's position:

The Society contemplates the enlargement of its buildings with a view to the reception of a greater number of students; and it hopes to effect its purpose with due consideration for the ornament of the University, and the health and comfort of the youth entrusted to its care, but it has not yet adopted any plans. It is right I should add, on behalf of Mr Butterfield, that the idea of removing Mob Quadrangle was not of his suggestion and I am not sure that it meets with his approval.⁷⁵

So it was that the college belatedly offered support appropriate to its role as Butterfield's patron. Butterfield appreciated Marsham's intervention, telling John Duke Coleridge: 'The Warden of Merton in his published reply to Mr Hope is very kindly careful not to lay more on my shoulders than is fair. He seems even to relieve me of what I am ready to bear'.⁷⁶

By October, when he was due to present his case to the college, Butterfield admitted to being worn down:

I do not really care what they write. I know that they are working against me sedulously and that they are very powerful and I only wish they would let me alone. But if they won't I will try and go on till they stop me, and then I must go and see if they want me in some of the Colonies.⁷⁷

At its meeting on 31 October 1861 the college, bowing to the strength of public feeling, rescinded the controversial decision of the previous May. The meeting agreed that if Butterfield resigned, George Gilbert Scott should be called in.⁷⁸ Butterfield had evidently had his planned meeting with the college, failed to persuade them that he was right, and threatened resignation.

There the matter rested until the college meeting in March 1862 when Marsham tried again in favour of Butterfield's proposal:

Upon the question of College Extension it was proposed by motion of the Warden that the vote passed with respect to the non-removal of the Library on 31 October 1861 be rescinded and that a new building be erected for the accommodation of the undergraduates on the site of Mob Quadrangle, and the garden to the south of the Library.⁷⁹

His motion was 'negatived on a division'. As the college had not been able to obtain land from neighbouring St Alban Hall, the meeting agreed to 'communicate with Mr Butterfield with a view to erecting the required accommodation at the Western side of the College'. In the event of Mr Butterfield declining to offer his services to the college, Mr Deane was to be employed in preference to Mr Scott.⁸⁰

⁷³ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 15 Aug. 1861.

⁷⁴ [A.J.B. Beresford Hope,] 'Proposed Destruction of Merton College Oxford', *The Builder*, 19 (1861).

⁷⁵ [R.B. Marsham,] 'Proposed Destruction of Merton College Oxford', *The Builder*, 19 (1861).

⁷⁶ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 15 Aug. 1861.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 11 Oct. 1861.

⁷⁸ MCA, Reg.1.5, 31 Oct. 1861, p. 408.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 27 Mar. 1862, p. 409.

⁸⁰ MCA, Reg. 1.5, 27 Mar. 1862, p. 409. Fresh from the success of the University Museum, Deane was building a massive student accommodation block at nearby Christ Church. Benjamin Woodward had died in 1861.



Fig. 5. Grove Building (centre) c.1900. Butterfield acknowledged that it was the height of the building that attracted the most criticism.

Despite the clamour, sufficient goodwill remained for the college not to dispense with Butterfield's services and for Butterfield not to resign. Instead, he prepared plans for sixteen sets of rooms in the Grove area of Merton's gardens. The college meeting of June 1862 accepted his plans and authorized him to go ahead. By a small majority the college 'objected to the use of coloured bands of stone'.⁸¹ Doing what he could within the constraints of the site, Butterfield built Grove Building, faced with Bath stone and with coloured bands restricted to the two brick stairwells and the chimney stacks (Fig. 5). The resulting building provoked widespread dislike, both for its size, necessarily large to accommodate the required number of rooms, and its location, replacing a handsome grove of mature trees. Butterfield had met his client's brief but in so doing had fuelled his growing reputation of being unable to build in sympathy with Oxford's *genius loci*.

Keble

The controversy surrounding Merton's Grove Building was fresh in Oxford minds when fundraising started for the planned Keble College. In May 1867 the Keble memorial committee received an objection to Butterfield's appointment from Archdeacon Churton who wrote, 'I must say that in his buildings at Balliol and Merton [Butterfield] has shown himself so incapable of entering into the genius of the place, that I should have the greatest fear of entrusting the work to him'.⁸²

Walter Shirley, a memorial committee member, did not share Churton's fears. He urged Butterfield to break with Oxford college tradition by using brick, pointing out that 'all that new quarter of Oxford was built of brick'.⁸³ Despite Shirley's urgings, Butterfield's first plans,

⁸¹ Ibid. 10 June 1862, p. 411.

⁸² KC/FDN 1 D1/1/32, letter from Archdeacon Edward Churton, 16 May 1867.

⁸³ KCA, AD8, Beauchamp MSS KC correspondence, Butterfield to Earl Beauchamp, 15 Dec. 1877.

presented in December 1867, were for buildings faced with stone. For the specified 250 students, he told the committee, the cost would 'considerably exceed the balance available'.⁸⁴ His frankness evidently alarmed the fund trustees and prompted Peter Medd to propose a change of architect. Early in January 1868 Sir William Heathcote replied to a 'very important request' from Dr Pusey for his opinion of Medd's proposal:

My own first impression is against Medd's proposal . . . I doubt whether the Committee realize the great advantage they possess in having an architect who is not only more thoroughly versed in the details of building, but so very honest as Butterfield. I believe half the world would rather be told that a building will cost £20,000 and after all have to pay £60,000 than face the truth at first.⁸⁵

Noting that Butterfield had had 'an instruction to sacrifice beauty of material etc. to cheapness', Sir William concluded: 'I think we ought to ask him now to plan for 100 . . . in brick and in other ways to consider cheapness – but still, not to abandon one iota of the difference which distinguishes him from almost all other architects'.

With this letter Sir William, Butterfield's patron, saved his architect for the Keble project, and ensured a brick-built college. Butterfield was happy to use brick: 'I have a great liking for brick', he said. 'It is a most desirable material'.⁸⁶ By the end of January he had prepared plans of accommodation for 100 students which could be built for the sum available. Collegiate buildings, including hall, library and chapel, could be postponed.⁸⁷ His plans were approved by the memorial committee, and in March a building committee, manned by Beauchamp, Heathcote, Pusey, Medd, Bernard, Shaw-Stewart and Pellew, was appointed to 'carry out Mr Butterfield's plans with full authority to give such direction as they may deem requisite for any modification of the detail thereof'.⁸⁸ In 1868 the archbishop of Canterbury laid the foundation stone and building work began.

The building committee was, of necessity, careful with subscriber funds, which were proving slow to reach the target sum.⁸⁹ Irritating though this scrupulous economy was, Butterfield respected it. The architect Philip Webb visited the site in 1869 and wondered why Butterfield had used blue roofing slates, then answered his own question: 'You will most likely say that you had no money for grey Westmoreland slates'.⁹⁰ Butterfield concurred:

The Committee was bent on economy and was composed of persons who did not, I imagine, care for the question of colour in slates, and I had not the courage, with further works in prospect for which I knew there was not enough money, to ask them for any extras of an artistic kind. I hoped too that the gay walls would carry the eye somewhat away from the slating and I never allow my own eye to rest on the slating. But there it is for all that!⁹¹

By 1872 the question of the postponed collegiate buildings needed to be addressed. During his Balliol years Butterfield had seen the progress of Scott's chapel for Exeter College, built with a larger budget than Balliol's. With this in mind, in July 1872 he wrote to his patron, Sir John Taylor Coleridge, to admit to a dream he 'hardly dared hope would be accomplished in his lifetime':

⁸⁴ KC/FDN 1 D1/2/28, memorandum of a Keble memorial fund trustees' meeting, 9 Dec. 1867.

⁸⁵ PHA, PUS 52/34. Heathcote to Pusey, 7 Jan. 1868. The Revd Peter Medd was a canon of Christ Church and one-time secretary of the Oxford Architectural Society.

⁸⁶ BL, Add MS 86226, Coleridge family papers, vol. dcccxxii, 'Letters to John Taylor Coleridge from Sir William Boxall RA and William Butterfield'. Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 22 Dec. 1872.

⁸⁷ KC/FDN 1 A4, standing committee minutes, 29 Jan. 1868.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 13 Mar. 1868.

⁸⁹ KCA, Treasurer's Report 10 Mar. 1868.

⁹⁰ J. Brandon-Jones, 'Letters of Philip Webb and his Contemporaries', *Architectural History*, 8 (1965), pp. 53–4.

⁹¹ Ibid. pp. 54–5, Butterfield to Webb, 2 Dec. 1869.

I have always hoped that the [Keble] Chapel would be built by some one person and not out of a subscription. There is a lack of heart and feeling and deep interest in what is done by subscription and a Committee is apt to administer subscription money in a niggardly way. I have always said that I hoped it would not be built on a less scale and at less cost than the modern Chapels of Exeter College Oxford and St John's Cambridge, because Keble College specially protests for the religious tradition.⁹²

Within a week Sir John had secured William Gibbs of Tyntesfield – a wealthy merchant, philanthropist and established patron of Gothic architecture – to fund the chapel in full.⁹³ Sir John sent the news to Butterfield:

I enclose a letter which will give you, I am sure, real pleasure. The race of Merchant Princes (in Spirit) is not extinct with us. You will see I sent your letter to William Gibbs. I was careful to set him quite at ease to do or not to do, what – how much – nothing. And I gave him no advice. You will see the fruits. I am sure you will take this matter in hand – promptly and willingly – and God give you his blessing in the carrying out of this great work.⁹⁴

Butterfield needed Sir John for one more task – to counter the council's assumption that it would take ownership of the funds: 'This seems to me to be very unnecessary and very inadvisable,' Butterfield explained. 'You will readily see what a different thing it is for me to work for an individual or a committee, for one master or many. I am trusting that in this case I shall work for Mr Gibbs individually.'⁹⁵ Sir John obliged, William Gibbs agreed and Butterfield had his one master. The Keble College Council's status as Butterfield's client for the college was unchanged, but with William Gibbs, one of the richest men in England, as his client and patron Butterfield had been given all the freedom he could wish for the design and build of the chapel.

By December his chapel plans were ready. Reassuring Sir John that he had not 'indulged in anything extreme or Romanistic', he wrote:

I am very glad to be able to tell you, that Mr Gibbs is as much pleased with the plans of Keble College Chapel, as I could wish him to be. He called here this afternoon, and I sat with him in his carriage for 20 minutes talking about them. He is at this moment (5.15) engaged in shewing them to the Warden, who is calling upon him.⁹⁶

Gibbs played his part admirably, telling the warden (Edward Talbot): 'Having confided to [Butterfield] the execution of the work, it would be only right that I should leave it to him to carry it out architecturally in his own way.'⁹⁷ True to his word, Gibbs supported Butterfield in all controversial design decisions.⁹⁸ The most notable dispute, known as the Keble Controversy, went deep with Butterfield, to the extent that twenty years later, in 1893, he published the correspondence of the controversy, to set the record straight. The dispute was over the image of Christ in the mosaic above the altar (Fig. 6). Butterfield had carefully planned the sequence of mosaics round the chapel walls, culminating with Christ in Majesty above the altar. He was opposed by the theological might of Drs Pusey and Liddon, who wanted an image of Christ Crucified to encourage undergraduate devotions. In this matter Medd thought Pusey and

⁹² BL, Add MS 86226, Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 2 July 1872.

⁹³ J. Miller, *Fertile Fortune: The Story of Tyntesfield* (2003), p. 92.

⁹⁴ KC/FDN 1 D1/9/31, John Taylor Coleridge to Butterfield, 9 July 1872

⁹⁵ BL, Add MS 86226, Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 12 July 1872.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 4 Dec. 1872, 10 Dec. 1872.

⁹⁷ D.J. Hogg, *My Dear Uncle William: Tyntesfield Letters*, revised edn (2012), p. 409.

⁹⁸ For a detailed account of chief controversies that arose during the design and build of Keble College, including the Keble Controversy and the Light of the World controversy see P. Howell 'Our Very Quaint Old Architect': Some Letters of William Butterfield, *Architectural History*, 53 (2010), pp. 217–43.



Fig. 6. Butterfield's preliminary drawing for the mosaic of Christ in Majesty © The British Library Board, Add MS 86226. Butterfield gave this drawing to Sir John Taylor Coleridge to reassure him that irreverent undergraduates would not find the image of a sword issuing from Christ's mouth grotesque or ludicrous.

Liddon were 'quite wrong' and Butterfield was 'quite right'.⁹⁹ William Gibbs made clear his support for Butterfield but out of the very great reverence he felt for Dr Pusey said he would assent to Pusey's wishes. In turn, Pusey felt he must defer to so generous a benefactor and, in a kind letter to Butterfield, he withdrew his objection to Christ in Majesty.¹⁰⁰

Holman Hunt's painting 'The Light of the World' sparked another dispute. Mrs Martha Combe (whose husband collected Hunt's work) had donated it to the college with the express wish that it be placed in the chapel, to which Liddon had unilaterally agreed. Butterfield

⁹⁹ KC/FDN 1 D1/10/3, Medd to Shaw-Stewart, 27 Jan. 1873.

¹⁰⁰ KC/CHA 1 A/5, p. 33, Pusey to Butterfield, 22 Oct. 1873.

refused to give it chapel room; Gibbs made it clear that until he or his executors had made a formal gift of the chapel to the college he would not allow anything to be introduced into the chapel without Butterfield's approval.¹⁰¹ Liddon knew to give way when faced with architect and patron united: 'It is obviously better not to say anything more to Butterfield or to Mr Gibbs,' he said. 'They have made up their minds.'¹⁰² The painting was put on display in the Library.

OUTCOME

Acceptance of Butterfield's Oxford buildings lay with his clients, the commissioning colleges. But architecture is a public art, and a much wider audience is able to make its judgment of architectural success, including those who use the building, subscribers and benefactors who fund it, practitioners who criticize it, and – where the building affects the local environment – any interested passer-by.

Balliol

Balliol worked well in the role of client, and proved to be rather better than Merton at handling the tensions of collective decision-making.¹⁰³ Robert Scott was an exemplary intermediary between architect and fellows; fellows were consulted on design decisions; Butterfield's experiment with colour was facilitated, and to its credit the college did not lose its nerve in the face of negative comment. Butterfield's objective had been 'a simple, well-proportioned, striking Chapel',¹⁰⁴ and in cooperation with his client this was achieved. The building has a strong form made striking by innovative constructional polychromy, and is a fitting expression of Balliol's character as a confident and progressive college. Harry Inglis Richmond, a Balliol student of the time, remembered 'how great were the expressions of enthusiasm as to [the chapel's] simplicity and grace and how many "experts" . . . thought it superior to "Our Lady of Exeter" over the way, though not so ornate'.¹⁰⁵

Butterfield's chapel attracted widespread interest, provoking a private visit in December 1860 by Victoria and Albert to see it for themselves.¹⁰⁶ However, the Oxford Architectural Society was right in supposing that the red courses of masonry 'might not meet with unanimous approval'.¹⁰⁷ The building press for the most part favoured George Gilbert Scott's chapel for Exeter College. Charles Eastlake thought Butterfield's experiment in constructional colour was 'foreign to English Pointed work' and 'the more remarkable, because . . . Mr Butterfield's design as a rule is thoroughly national'.¹⁰⁸

One Balliol fellow who did not care for the 'foreignness' of the chapel was Benjamin Jowett. By 1866, when the college once again had funds for building work, Jowett was not alone in wanting to avoid 'eccentricity and un-English styles and fancies'. Balliol did not offer Butterfield the Broad Street project: instead Alfred Waterhouse was awarded his first Oxford commission.¹⁰⁹ Butterfield evidently blamed Jowett for the loss of his position as college architect: writing to John Duke Coleridge about his troubles at Merton, Butterfield added a brief postscript: 'Did they tell you in Oxford how Jowett has served me at Balliol?'¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Hogg, *My Dear Uncle William*, p. 415.

¹⁰² KC/FDN1 D1/11/2, Liddon to Shaw-Stewart, 3 April 1873.

¹⁰³ H.W. Carless Davis, *College Histories Oxford: Balliol College* (1899), pp. 213–14.

¹⁰⁴ BCA, D.10.17, Butterfield to Scott, 12 June 1854.

¹⁰⁵ BCA, D.10.16.B, letter from H.I. Richmond, 29 Nov. 1911. Richmond was a student at Balliol in the years 1868–71.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, *Balliol College*, p. 207, n. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Anon., 'Oxford Architectural Society', *The Ecclesiologist*, 17 (1856), p. 432.

¹⁰⁸ C.L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival in England* (1872), p. 261.

¹⁰⁹ G. Tyack, *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (1998), p. 228.

¹¹⁰ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 1 July 1866.

Merton

Reflecting the good relations Butterfield had with his Merton client on the chapel project, assessment of the completed restoration was favourable. *The Ecclesiologist* judged the interior to be ‘most beautiful and religious.’¹¹¹ Exeter College undergraduates William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, escaping the coarse behaviour of students in their own college, spent ‘many an afternoon’ in Merton’s restored chapel.¹¹² (Fig. 7).

By the time Butterfield was engaged for the college expansion project (1861) Merton’s Tractarian fellows had long since given up their fellowships and converted to Roman Catholicism – Hope-Scott in 1851 and Pollen in 1852. With the loss of men who would be inclined to be Butterfield’s allies, the disposition of the college changed. As this was Merton’s second project with Butterfield, the college could have assumed a more patronal role, but any such expectation ended when public opinion was invoked to overturn Butterfield’s professional recommendation and a college decision. His reputation was damaged and the opportunity of finding a solution by discussion was lost. ‘I ought to be a little trusted,’ he said. ‘I am not a wild headstrong youth.’¹¹³ The college failed to protect its architect and in return Butterfield counted Merton fellows among ‘the enemy.’¹¹⁴



Fig. 7. Merton chapel restored, Illustrated London News, 1864.

¹¹¹ Anon., ‘Ecclesiological Works at Oxford’, *The Ecclesiologist*, 14 (1853), p. 301.

¹¹² P. Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones* (2003), p. 14.

¹¹³ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 15 Aug. 1861.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 28 July 1861.



Fig. 8. Grove Building (left) from the meadow, *Illustrated London News*, 1864.

The expansion project was completed with the college as client and no expectation on either side of future projects. Butterfield built as instructed by his client, meeting the functional requirement with the traditional Oxford college plan of vertically stacked student rooms off staircases.¹¹⁵ His own judgement was that his Grove Building was admittedly tall (four storeys) but 'admirably substantial and well-arranged'.¹¹⁶ Public opinion was that it was too massive, too plain and in the wrong place: Butterfield, they said, had spoiled the most beautiful view in Oxford.¹¹⁷ (Fig. 8).

Keble

After the loss of Balliol and the difficulties of Merton, Butterfield must have been relieved to be working with long-standing patrons and friends on the Keble College project. This project exemplified architect-client-patron relationships at their best, allowing him to design and build on the grand scale.

In the face of Oxford's distaste for his polychrome brickwork (variously known as the 'holy zebra', 'streaky bacon' and 'Fairisle sweater' style) Butterfield could always rely on his patrons for encouragement and esteem. When William Gibbs visited the college in 1873, he said, much to Butterfield's delight, 'I have heard these buildings much abused; I like them'.¹¹⁸ Gibbs was confident that when finished the chapel would be 'universally acknowledged to be a most beautiful Temple, worthy of the Blessed Being in whose honour it is erected'.¹¹⁹ Gladstone for one was impressed: when Butterfield showed him the chapel in 1878, his admiration was 'unbounded'.¹²⁰

Gibbs died in April 1875, aged 85, a year before the chapel, in its 'quiet order, completeness and proportion', was finished.¹²¹ His wife Blanche took on his patronage, maintained the friendship with Butterfield, and became his patron in her own right when she commissioned

¹¹⁵ Crook, *The Architect's Secret*, p. 75.

¹¹⁶ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 1 July 1866.

¹¹⁷ G.H. Martin and J.R.L. Highfield, *A History of Merton College* (1997), p. 353.

¹¹⁸ BL, Add MS 86226, Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 28 April 1873.

¹¹⁹ Hogg, *My Dear Uncle William*, p. 416.

¹²⁰ Cameron and Archer, *Keble Past and Present*, p. 25.

¹²¹ KC/CHA 1 A/5, pp. 15–16, Butterfield to Talbot, 22 Jan. 1873.

him to build a hospital at Cheddar.¹²² Their sons Antony and Martin elected to fund Keble's hall and library, built in 1876–8, in memory of their father.¹²³ The warden's lodgings (1876–7) were largely funded with a loan from Talbot's mother,¹²⁴ and public subscriptions funded the remainder of the Pusey Quadrangle (1881–3).¹²⁵

'The Light of the World' remained in the library for nearly 20 years. In 1890, after Liddon's death, the idea of a small side chapel in his memory was mooted. The semi-retired Butterfield objected strongly, to no avail; the warden and council wanted the space for Hunt's painting. In 1894 the architect J.T. Micklethwaite produced the design, the organ was raised, the side chapel was built. It has housed Hunt's painting ever since.¹²⁶

CONCLUSION

The essence of the role of client is a business arrangement to deliver to client requirements by following client instructions. With group clients there is always the risk that disagreements within the group affect architect-client relations. The essence of the role of patron is to encourage, support and protect the architect. From this study of William Butterfield in Oxford it is evident that the state of his relations with his clients and patrons strongly affected the architectural success of his work, and the different roles of client and patron affected what he was able to achieve with his buildings. Awareness of the parts played by his clients and patrons brings a fresh understanding and appreciation of Butterfield's Oxford legacy.

The study of Balliol's chapel project has shown that client relations were good during the project but from the outset there was an underlying dissent from Benjamin Jowett which came to the fore as his influence within the college grew. In terms of architectural success, Butterfield's chapel divided opinion between those who, like Gerard Manley Hopkins, appreciated his constructional polychromy and those who actively disliked it.¹²⁷ Jowett, whose architectural taste favoured 'simplicity and proportion (not colour)', no doubt had a hand in ensuring that Butterfield was passed over in favour of Alfred Waterhouse for the Broad Street project.¹²⁸

Client relations were good in the Keble College project. The college was an architectural success in terms of meeting the requirement of simple, faithful living for its students, with small rooms along corridors encouraging communal meals in the large dining hall – all achieved within a tight budget. There were disputes but no breakdown of relations, and the tone in much of the college documentation is of affection for Butterfield.

Client relations facilitated architectural success for the first of Merton's projects, with the beauty of the medieval chapel restored. The second project was marred by a failure of relations when faced with disagreement within the college regarding Butterfield's Mob Quad proposal. By opening up this college business to the press, those concerned may have saved the quadrangle and its medieval library but it was a betrayal of trust in the architect-patron relationship. The resulting Grove Building served the purpose of undergraduate accommodation well; the problem with its acceptance lay in the aesthetics of a tall building in a confined space, which inevitably dominated its surroundings and was interpreted by some as the architect's self-aggrandizement. 'I never intended to stand on stilts,' said Butterfield, 'but only to do my duty in the matter of the much abused Merton Building'.¹²⁹

¹²² BL, Add MS 86226, Butterfield to John Taylor Coleridge, 10 Oct. 1875.

¹²³ Cameron and Archer, *Keble Past and Present*, p. 30.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 32.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 25.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 42–3.

¹²⁷ Thompson, *William Butterfield*, p. 305.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 98.

¹²⁹ BL, Add MS 86259, Butterfield to John Duke Coleridge, 1 July 1866.



Fig. 9. Keble College chapel interior, Photograph by Geoff Brandwood, 2015.

The Keble College project was a marked contrast to the client projects of Balliol and Merton, and the outcome has been called 'one of the outstanding triumphs of English architecture'.¹³⁰ Butterfield's remarkable achievement was the result of successful collaboration between architect, client and – crucially – patrons. Throughout the project Butterfield enjoyed the protection of several of his long-term patrons, while the arrival of a new patron, William Gibbs, gave him freedom to design and build the chapel as he wished – the product of his single mind. The common cause of architect and patrons created a powerful force not available to Butterfield in the Merton debacle. These patrons knew Butterfield well, and provided him with encouragement and esteem as well as protecting him from threats to his position and his architectural vision. At the outset Sir William Heathcote ensured Butterfield survived as the project's architect. Sir John Taylor Coleridge was a friend with whom Butterfield debated aesthetic decisions, confided his troubles and sought advice he could trust. In William Gibbs Sir John secured a wealthy, experienced and smart patron who knew how to safeguard Butterfield's architectural integrity. The squire, the judge and the merchant prince were the epitome of fatherly patronage, protecting their architect, clearing any obstacles in his way and using their considerable influence to advance the interests of his art. The result, for Oxford, was an extraordinary chapel in the context of a remarkable college, made possible by Butterfield's patrons (Figs. 9, 10), and summed up by his lifelong friend Benjamin Webb:

In the Chapel of Keble College, a single learned and inventive mind has had its full play, and the result is a work of great beauty and lofty instruction . . . Mr Butterfield has made his own style, and done it gallantly, and with beautiful result.¹³¹



Fig. 10. Keble College Liddon Quad and chapel, Photograph by Jennifer Harrison, 2015.

¹³⁰ H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, 'Oxford Buildings Criticized', *Oxoniensia*, 17/18 (1952–3), p. 213.

¹³¹ Crook, *The Architect's Secret*, p. 81.

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