

# Sampling the Gothic: An Enquiry into the Cast Collection made by the Oxford Architectural Society between 1839 and 1850

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## SUMMARY

*This article examines the cast collection made by the Oxford Society for the Promotion of the Study of Gothic Architecture which was founded in Oxford in 1839. The moulding of architectural casts became fashionable amongst leading architects in the late Georgian period, but the Society was first to focus their attention exclusively on casts of English medieval church architecture. Two hundred and fifty-four casts belonging to the Society, including samples taken from several Oxford and Oxfordshire churches and canonical buildings including Westminster Abbey and Lincoln Cathedral, are currently kept in storage by the Oxfordshire Museum Service. The present research discovers that all the casts made by the society were created between 1839 and 1846. Through several case studies, and a process of analysis based on the Society's administrative records, contemporaneous library and collection of prints and drawings, this essay seeks to find out how, why and when the casts were made. As such, it establishes new information about the activities of the Society and connects the casts with the narratives of church restoration, the Society's other collections and published monographs on local church architecture.*

The practice of collecting plaster casts which had assumed popularity amongst antiquaries during the eighteenth century, reached a zenith in the first decades of the nineteenth century. As three-dimensional replicas at 1:1 scale, casts were valued as accurate reproductions of form in exact correspondence with the original. Moreover, through the multiplicity of like-for-like copies, comprehensive and canonical collections could be amassed. Such collections reflecting Greek and Roman antiquity were foundational in the establishment of many public museums in Europe, and growing interest in Gothic architecture in the early nineteenth century also led to the inclusion of casts from medieval ecclesiastical buildings in the collections belonging to architects such as Sir John Soane and Lewis N. Cottingham, who used them as teaching and drawing aids. Indeed, casts used for this purpose were lauded over the original artefact owing to their lack of distracting colouration. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the very ubiquity of casts led to their rejection as inauthentic artefacts and many collections were sold off or destroyed during the twentieth century, but, reinvigorated by technological developments in computerised 3D modelling and the refurbishment of the spectacular cast galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), there has been something of a resurgence of interest in cast collections.<sup>1</sup> It is against this backdrop that the 254 plaster casts comprising architectural details in Gothic style belonging to the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (OAHS) can be addressed.

Founded in 1839, the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society originated as The

<sup>1</sup> A.H. Borbein, *On the History of the Appraisal and Use of Plaster Casts of Ancient Sculpture*, trans B. Frischer, <http://www.digitalsculpture.org/casts/borbein/> (accessed Aug. 2018). See also *Plaster & Plaster Casts: Materiality and Practice – Victoria & Albert Museum Conference Report, 12–13 March 2010*, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk).

Oxford Society for the Promotion of the Study of Gothic Architecture (OAS). The Society is well known amongst historians interested in nineteenth century Gothic revival architecture, with several published histories of what might otherwise appear to be a rather esoteric society. These have been mainly concerned with the personalities who led the development of the Society in its early years, their links within the university and with the Oxford Movement.<sup>2</sup> The Society is however, also notable for the huge collection of books, prints, drawings, casts, and brass rubbings amassed in an endeavour to capture and understand the architectural principles believed to be inherent in Gothic architecture. To that effect, the Society commissioned and purchased a collection of casts taken from local Oxfordshire churches, and also received gifts of casts from canonical medieval church sites such as Westminster Abbey, St Albans Abbey and Lincoln Cathedral. Little research has been conducted into the Society's collections, none specifically that of the cast collection. This essay seeks further understanding as to who made the casts, why they were commissioned, and how they related to the work of the Society and its other collections.

The cast collection, at present kept in storage by the Oxfordshire Museum Service, has been visited and pieces relating to Oxfordshire churches photographed and measured (Fig. 1). Visits have also been made to local churches to locate those architectural details which had been cast. Drawings and prints originating from the Society's collection and now in the Bodleian Library have also been consulted, together with the Society's extensive library which is currently kept in the Sackler Library. These resources provide insight into the scope, range and quality of the Society's aspirations in gathering a host of materials representing individual churches and their architectural details. The whereabouts of other items gifted to the Society between 1840 and 1860, including the large number of brass rubbings, a collection of seals, miscellaneous architectural fragments, and samples of medieval tiles, glass, altar cloths, and so on, is unknown. The twenty-four architectural models recorded in an inventory of casts and models 'made over to the University' in 1896 have apparently been dispersed and later destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

Looking for, and at, other cast collections past and present has also informed the present paper. Correspondence with diocesan and other provincial architectural societies established through the 1840s including Exeter, Worcester and Yorkshire suggests that the OAS cast collection, together with its library and collections of prints and drawings is a rare survival of the intellectual resources of a society set up for the purposes of promoting a scholarly interest in architecture prior to the formalisation of architectural education and the establishment of the Royal Architectural Museum in 1851.

## FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIETY

The Oxford Society for the Promotion of the Study of Gothic Architecture was founded on 1 February 1839 by senior academics of Trinity College, Oxford. From 1848 the Society was generally referred to as The Oxford Architectural Society and although the name was never formalised. For convenience I shall refer here to The Society or OAS.<sup>4</sup>

The Society's interest in Gothic architecture stemmed from a tempest of activity concerned with the nature of Christian worship in England, which centred around the so-called

<sup>2</sup> W.A. Pantin, 'The Architectural and Historical Society 1839–1939', *Oxoniensia*, 4 (1939), pp. 174–94; D. Prout, 'The Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture and The Oxford Architectural Society, 1839–1860', *Oxoniensia*, 54 (1989), pp. 379–91; P. Howell, 'The Founders of the Oxford Architectural Society', *Oxoniensia*, 75 (2010), pp. 61–6.

<sup>3</sup> Search of the Society's archives (see Appendix) suggests that the number of models may have been larger, but by 1896 the transfer of OAS property to the university lists twenty-four models only. These appear to have been dispersed by the Ashmolean and subsequently destroyed: Bodl. OAHs Archives & Collections, Miscellaneous Papers, Dep. d. 544, f. b.; personal communications from Prof. B. Smith and P. Howell.

<sup>4</sup> Bodl. OAHs Archives and Collections, Committee Minutes 1847–50, Dep. d. 519.



Fig. 1. OAS cast collection in storage at the Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre.

Oxford Movement (or ‘Tractarians’) who advocated the return to an Anglo-Catholic style of worship. As such, the evolving intellectual and spiritual position of the proponents of Gothic architecture negotiated a fine ideological and iconographical divide between the Anglican and Roman Church in which the slippage between Gothic as an inherently English style of architecture, and Gothic as a Catholic style was of significant intellectual concern.<sup>5</sup> In this, the ambitions of the OAS and those of the Cambridge Camden Society (CCS), which had been formed with ostensibly similar aims a few months after the OAS, to an extent intersected with the Tractarians.<sup>6</sup> But whereas the OAS took an antiquarian approach directed at the scholarly appreciation of medieval church architecture, the CCS became vigorous champions for the re-Gothicization of the Church of England, believing that Gothic architecture was uniquely suited to the articulation of theological meaning.<sup>7</sup> Importantly though, whilst the founding members of the OAS were for the most part also leading Tractarians, the Society took the study and documentation of ecclesiastical architecture as their principal concern, rather than the rhetoric of the Church per se. The opening statement in the Society’s prospectus sets out its case thus:

<sup>5</sup> S.L. Ollard, ‘The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society and the Oxford Movement’, *Oxoniensia*, 5 (1940), pp. 146–60; W. Whyte, *Unlocking the Church: The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space* (2017), pp. 6–10; C. Brooks, ‘Introduction’, in C. Brooks and A. Saint (eds.), *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (1995), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> S.L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (1963), p. 156; G. 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), p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, ‘Introduction’, p. 7; Whyte, *Unlocking the Church*, p. 51.

Gothic Architecture is a subject which has of late years excited a considerable degree of public interest, and the labours of many eminent individuals have been directed to the recovery of its Principles. From the scarcity of records, existing monuments are the safest guides in this research; but as they are widely separated, the labour of examination and comparison is so great, that, without some more systematic plan of operation than has hitherto been adopted, we can scarcely expect that the task will be satisfactorily accomplished.<sup>8</sup>

Interest in Gothic architecture had assumed an eclectic appeal as a counterpoint to classicism in the second half of the eighteenth century. Initially this manifested itself in the design of fanciful buildings for gardens and it was not until the first half of the nineteenth century that it became of wider concern.<sup>9</sup> Through the same period, rural churches and much of the building stock of England had fallen into significant disrepair.<sup>10</sup> In addition, there was a growing demand for new buildings of all types, including churches to serve the rapid increase in urban population. Oxford did not experience the scale of population growth associated with industrialisation as did the Midlands and northern counties, nevertheless, between 1801 and 1851 the population of Oxford rose from 12,000 to 28,000, giving rise to a significant building programme.<sup>11</sup> In the same period, the decayed state of many of the city's buildings was highlighted in drawings made by John Ruskin in 1837 and 1838.<sup>12</sup> The poor quality of local Headington stone used in construction, necessitated the large scale renewal of stonework at several of the colleges, including Lincoln in 1824, Exeter 1833–5 and Merton 1836–8.<sup>13</sup> Thus a focus on buildings in Oxford, and especially college buildings, was very much 'in the air'.

If the fabric of the built environment was changing, so was the balance of political power. Following the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 and the Great Reform Act of 1832, the Whigs, who were supported by Roman Catholic dissenters, took power, and in the same year, John Keble, fellow of Oriel College, delivered a sermon at the University Church on 14 July, thereby launching the Oxford Movement. Keble's sermon (or tract) was immediately published by local bookseller John Henry Parker, who was to become an important player in the story of the OAS.<sup>14</sup> The rising sense of liberalism and belief in rational intelligence and education was seen as deeply threatening to the tradition of reverence, awe and mysticism which had previously characterised church ministry, and as a result, the Oxford Movement sought to re-mystify the nature of religious practice.<sup>15</sup> To this extent, the Oxford Movement assumed a purely moral position, but in promoting an Anglo-Catholic liturgy their ideas coalesced around the same architectural interests in Gothic Revivalism. Indeed, the Revd Richard Hurrell Froude, a fellow of Oriel and leading Tractarian, had spent three days taking measurements and sketches of St Giles' church, Oxford, which he presented at a meeting of the Oxford Ashmolean Society in April 1831.<sup>16</sup> Though Froude died before the foundation of the OAS, the systematic recording of architectural features of churches was wholeheartedly embraced by the OAS, and many of leading architects whose work embraced the Gothic style and who were for the most part also devoted Tractarians.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Rules and Proceedings of the Society for the Promotion of the Study of Gothic Architecture* (1839).

<sup>9</sup> M. McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (1987), p. 2, also pp. 27–62.

<sup>10</sup> Ollard, *A Short History*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> G. Chitty, 'John Ruskin, Oxford and the Architectural Society 1837 to 1840', *Oxoniansia*, 65 (2000), p. 116.

<sup>12</sup> Chitty, 'John Ruskin', pp. 117–19.

<sup>13</sup> G. Tyack, *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (1998), pp. 194–5.

<sup>14</sup> Ollard, *A Short History*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 22–4.

<sup>16</sup> Howell, 'The Founders of the Oxford Architectural Society', p. 61; Ollard, 'The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society', pp. 148–9.

<sup>17</sup> Ollard, *A Short History*, pp. 156–8.

Rather than the piecemeal application of lancet windows and crenellations that had caricatured the Gothic in garden buildings of the eighteenth century, the need for a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of Gothic architecture based on medieval sources was recognised. The architect Thomas Rickman in his 1817 *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture* had begun to tackle this by identifying a developmental sequence of architectural style based on the innumerable sketches he had drawn of medieval buildings and their details. And the OAS was the first of several diocesan and architectural societies founded with the purpose of securing an appropriate level of architectural scholarship at a time when neither British history, nor architecture formed part of the university's curriculum. The Society saw itself as being especially well placed for this purpose, writing in its founding prospectus:

The number of Churches now rising in every part of the Country, renders it of the highest importance to provide for the cultivation of correct Architectural Taste; the circumstances of this place seem to point it out as peculiarly well suited for the purpose; because many of its residents are, or soon will be, Clergymen, the constituted guardians of our Ecclesiastical Edifices, while the city itself, and its neighbourhood, abound in specimens of every period of the Art.<sup>18</sup>

How this was to be achieved was essentially antiquarian and narrowly focused. In addition to a commitment to hold regular meetings during term time at which papers on the topic of Gothic Architecture would be read; Rule II of the Society's constitution noted 'the objects of this Society be the collection of 'Books, Prints, and Drawings; Models of the forms of Arches, Vaults etc; Casts of Mouldings and Details; and such other Architectural Specimens as the Funds of the Society will admit.' These were to be kept in the custody of the Society's secretary for the use of Members; whilst casts and models were to be deposited in the Society's room.<sup>19</sup>

The Society was unusual for its time in bringing together both senior academics and undergraduates, and although membership was open to non-university men, by far the majority were active members of the university. For example, of the 158 members listed in 1840, 123 (79 per cent) were members of the university or alumni, with the colleges of Exeter, Christ Church and Oriel being especially well represented. Only twenty ordinary members were from outside the university, including local architects J.M. Derick, J. Plowman and H.J. Underwood; and architects with national influence including E. Blore, B. Ferrey, R.C. Hussey, T. Rickman and A. Salvin were enlisted as honorary members in the same year. In addition to the usual committee positions appointed at the inaugural meeting, John Henry Parker (bookseller and publisher) and Thomas Combe (university printer) were appointed as secretaries.<sup>20</sup> In accordance with the Society's commitment to 'publish any paper worthy of being printed at the expense of the Society', under Rule XIII, the Society also engaged Orlando Jewitt as engraver; and the commitment to collect casts and models was to be delivered by Thomas Grimsley who was appointed as 'modeller'.<sup>21</sup> From 1839 to 1846, the Society met frequently, either at Wyatt's Rooms on the High Street, or at the back of the Maidenhead Inn in Turl Street where the Society's cast collection was displayed. In 1846, the Society moved its activities, including its collection of casts to the Holywell Music Room, but in 1860, with falling financial resources, the Society left its Holywell rooms and the casts were moved into storage in the Clarendon Building.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1839).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Rule XIV.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Bodl. OAHS Archives and Collections, Report of General & Committee Meetings, Dep. d. 510, pp. 5, 12; J. Munby, 'A Rare Collection: Oxford Museums Past and Present', in H. Wiegel and M. Vickers (eds.), *Excalibur: Essays on Antiquity and the History of Collecting in Honour of Arthur MacGregor* (2013), p. 75.

## THE OAS COLLECTIONS

Between 1840 and 1860, the Society published occasional catalogues of its library, casts and models, prints and drawings, and brass rubbings in its annual *Proceedings*. Details of these collections were not provided each year, and in some years only the additions to earlier listings were published. Complete listings of casts and models are available for 1839, 1840, 1841 and 1842. Additions to the Society's library and details of other gifts were regularly listed at the outset of the accounts of meetings as published in the Society's *Proceedings*. At the Annual General Meeting held 3 June 1845, the Chairman drew attention to the many valuable presents given to the Society in the past year.<sup>23</sup> These included a collection of monumental brasses given by Dr White of Magdalen College, a collection of seals from the principal of Brasenose College, and specimens of building stones (unworked) from Mr Millard also of Magdalen College. Such was the scope of material that entered unsolicited into the Society's collection. Yet the chairman offered his regret 'that the accommodation at present afforded by the Society's room is so totally insufficient for displaying them as they deserve.' He further noted that the Society's room at the Maidenhead Inn, which was only accessible via a ladder, had long been the subject of complaint amongst members. It was nonetheless hoped that:

the relocation of the library to the Society's room [from the office of J.H. Parker] has been found advantageous to forward the study of Christian Art amongst individual Members, having been calculated to bring this together with the large collection of drawings and models of ancient buildings and details... these monuments, so valuable as specimens of the taste of our Forefathers, and as models for Ecclesiastical design, cannot fail to excite at least as much interest as collections of the relicks of mere Pagan [classical] Antiquity.<sup>24</sup>

## COLLECTING THE 'BODY PARTS' OF BUILDINGS

If the origins of the Society lie in the politics and religious fervour of the nineteenth century, then their mode of operation derived its premise from the eighteenth century. The Grand Tour had established a market in architectural (and sculptural) fragments obtained as souvenirs, and as early as the sixteenth century, a trade in plaster cast replicas based on well-established techniques central to the craft of sculptors had become established in Italy.<sup>25</sup> These were moulded directly from the original object using cheaply available gypsum plaster (plaster of Paris) providing three-dimensional likenesses at 1:1 scale which included details of the surface textures and imperfections. As such, casts were valued for a level of authenticity and tangibility which could not be generated in a drawing.<sup>26</sup> Above all, casts were simultaneously both authentic replicas and severed specimens whose portability, and potential multiplicity made it entirely possible for individuals to create comprehensive collections of casts. In isolation from their original purpose and setting, casts were thereby also amenable to close focused comparison with pieces from entirely different locations and as such casts played an important role in consolidating the canon of ancient sculpture.<sup>27</sup>

By the close of the eighteenth century, architectural casts could be acquired through Italian

<sup>23</sup> *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings*, Sixth Annual Meeting, 3 June (1845), pp. 80–1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Borbein, *Appraisal and Use of Plaster Casts*, p. 30. On influence of Grand Tour and the market in casts: C. Schreier 'Moulded from the Best Originals in Rome – Eighteenth-Century Production and Trade of Plaster Casts', in R. Frederiksen and E. Marchand (eds.), *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (2010); M. Lending, *Plaster Monuments: Architecture and the Power of Reproduction* (2017), pp. 121–42. On trade between architect-collectors: H. Dorey, 'Sir John Soane's Casts as Part of his Academy of Architecture at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields', in Rune and Marchand (eds.), *Plaster Casts*, pp. 606–9.

<sup>26</sup> *A Short History of Plaster Casts*, <https://antiquities.library.cornell.edu/casts/a-short-history> (accessed Aug. 2018).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

makers established in London and were also traded between dealers and collectors. These collections were entirely focused on classical material – Sir John Soane was amongst the first to include pieces in Gothic style when he created in his *faux* medieval ‘Monks parlour’ in 1823–4.<sup>28</sup> Following Soane, the architect Lewis N. Cottingham formed an enormous collection of original artefacts and casts, of which a large number were obtained from Westminster Abbey, Rochester Cathedral and other important ecclesiastical buildings where he carried out restoration work.<sup>29</sup> Most notable in terms of the likely influence on the OAS was his restoration of Magdalen College Chapel in 1829–34, during which it is known that Cottingham took a number of casts.<sup>30</sup> In November 1851, the contents of Cottingham’s architectural museum were sold at auction and the sale catalogue has been located (uncatalogued) in the Society’s library.<sup>31</sup> There is no evidence that the Society purchased casts at the auction, nonetheless both collections contain items from Henry VII’s chapel in Westminster Abbey and from Lincoln Cathedral, which may have come into the OAS collection as gifts from members although no audit trail has been identified. What is irrefutable however, is that the technical arena for cast making and a marketplace in which they were commissioned, speculatively produced, and traded between collectors had become well established by the time of the Society’s foundation in 1839. Furthermore, an earlier generation of artists and architect collectors had not only established an aesthetic sensibility which valued the appearance of casts as items of interior decoration, but had also recognised their classificatory and didactic value.

Another important influence which took its lead from the Grand Tour and the early Gothic Revival was the detailing of Gothic details in pattern-books.<sup>32</sup> Books such as Batty Langley’s *Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved* (1742) included detailed illustrations and measurements of isolated parts of buildings aimed at legitimating Gothic architecture according to the same premises that Vitruvius had applied to classical form. Further, the practice of illustrating ‘disembodied’ architectural details inspired by the fragmentary nature of antiquity, became an established means of depiction exemplified in the work of Piranesi and other eighteenth-century artists. This capacity to sever and isolate the decorative elements of building was a prevalent mode of architectural illustration by the mid nineteenth century. Works such as A.C. Pugin’s *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* (1823) (Fig. 2), T. Rickman’s *Attempt to Discriminate Styles of Architecture* (1835–81); F.A. Paley’s *Gothic Mouldings* (1845); R. and J.A. Brandon’s *Analysis of Gothic Architecture* (1847) all bear the characteristics of so-called pattern-books with carefully measured and illustrated architectural details designed to assist in the correct identification of period style, and to instruct their practical execution by craftsmen. It is worth noting that not only were these and many other volumes of similar type early additions to the OAS library, but Pugin’s *Specimens*, Rickman’s *Attempt to Discriminate* and Simpson’s *Fonts* were purchased in the week following the Society’s inaugural meeting.<sup>33</sup> It can indeed be suggested that the acquisition of such books, and the acquisition of casts were prioritised from the outset for similar purposes – to provide visual materials to assist in the identification and classification of Gothic buildings on the basis of their ornamented details.

The representation of architectural details was a key consideration for the Society, who throughout the 1840s produced several illustrated publications, accounts and working

<sup>28</sup> T. Knox, *Sir John Soane’s Museum London* (2009), pp. 75–8.

<sup>29</sup> J. Myles, ‘L.N. Cottingham’s Museum of Medieval Art: Herald of the Gothic Revival’, *Visual Resources*, 17:3 (2001), pp. 253–8.

<sup>30</sup> Tyack, *Architectural Guide*, p. 198. For detailed account of Cottingham’s restoration: J. Myles, *L.N. Cottingham, 1787–1847: Architect of the Gothic Revival* (1996).

<sup>31</sup> *Catalogue of Sale by Messrs. Foster and Son, Monday 3 November 1851*. The sale included casts and original fittings taken from Magdalen College chapel during Cottingham’s restoration.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, *Origins of Gothic Revival*, pp. 4–11.

<sup>33</sup> Bodl. OAS General Meetings 1839–1969, Dep. d. 510.

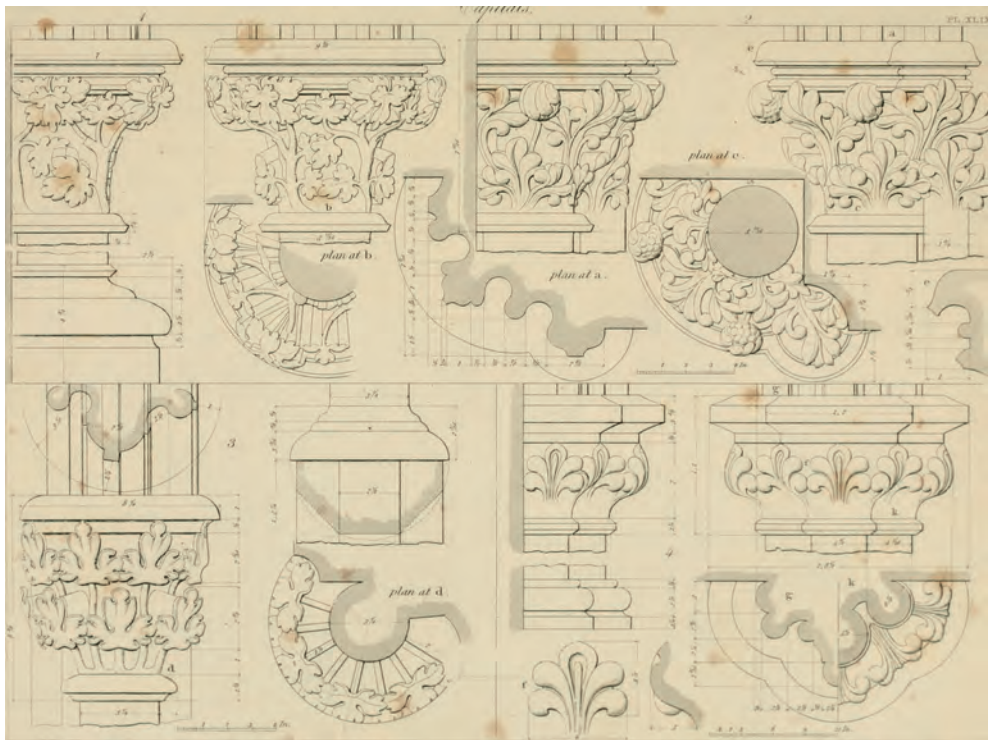


Fig. 2. A.C. Pugin's *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* selected from various Ancient Edifices in England (1823), plate XLIX. Copy in OAHs library.

drawings of churches in Oxford and the surrounding area.<sup>34</sup> When in 1842, the widow of Thomas Rickman, offered the opportunity to purchase his portfolio of drawings and sketches, the Society leapt at the opportunity, paying £25.<sup>35</sup> To these were added a large collection of engravings presented to the Society by J.C. Buckler; a collection of 152 drawings by the Revd W. Grey of Magdalen Hall; and 'sets' of drawings relating to specific churches gifted by various members. In the Society's *Proceedings* of 1846, these were listed as being in portfolios in the Society's room. These were labelled 'Norman', 'Early English', 'Decorated', and 'Perpendicular' and subdivided into specific features such as doors, windows, mouldings, fonts, and so on. A separate portfolio of ecclesiastical furniture with sections on church plate, pulpits, stall-ends, rood-screens, tiles, monuments, and embroidery were also included.<sup>36</sup> The nomenclature and methodology reflect the influence of Rickman and impressed the sense of a systematic approach on the Society's data-gathering. But other than commissions for the Society's own publications, its collections reflected the ad hoc generosity of its members rather than a strategic collections policy per se.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, T.H. Weare, *Some Remarks upon the Church of Great Haseley, Oxfordshire* (1840); J. Underwood, *Working Drawings of Littlemore Church, Oxfordshire* (1840); C. Buckler, *Views, Elevations and Sections of Wilcote Church, Oxfordshire* (1844).

<sup>35</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510 p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings*, List of Drawings and Engravings (1846).

<sup>37</sup> Based on analysis of Committee Minutes and Accounts 1839–1860 in Bodl. Dep. d. 510 (1839–44); d. 518 (1844–47); d. 519 (1847–50); also Statement of Accounts, *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846).



## THE CAST COLLECTION

At its inaugural meeting on 1 February 1839, the Society appointed Thomas Grimsley as modeller, and in the same year their accounts show that £45 14s. 2d. was spent on casts and models. This was more than a quarter of the entire expenditure for that year. In the same period Mr Grimsley appears to have received £14 12s., with a further £2 12s. 10d. paid to a Mr Bossom for casts.

Nine years prior to Grimsley's engagement by OAS, he is described in an insurance policy as a scagliola manufacturer working in Paddington, London.<sup>38</sup> This would have given him a good knowledge of working with plaster, although his move to Oxford in 1835 predates the establishment in London of well-known Italian modellers Domenico Brucciani and Giovanni Franchi whose businesses supplied many architectural casts to the Victoria and Albert Museum. There was no doubt in Grimsley's ability as a sculptor however – in 1829 he had made six bell-shaped vases for the balustrade of Buckingham Palace (still extant) and in 1830 he exhibited a bust of George IV at the Royal Academy.<sup>39</sup> From such illustrious artistic heights, Grimsley, who had been born in Oxfordshire, set up business as a terracotta modeller and mason/sculptor working from various workshops around St Giles' in central Oxford.

It has not been possible to directly link Grimsley as the maker of specific casts in the Society's collection, although those taken from Iffley church were certainly amongst the first made and the quality of the plaster differs in colour and texture to others in the collection. There is also some evidence that he may have worked using clay rather than plaster moulding techniques, which is of relevance since Grimsley is known today as the largest producer of cast clay (terracotta) tombstones in southern England.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, other modellers were also paid for casts. In 1840 for example, the society paid £20 19s. 6d. to 'Mr White for Casts and models' – a record apparently omitted from the audited accounts which listed only £4 8s. 7d. spent on casts in the same year.<sup>41</sup> In probability this refers to John White and Sons, of Maudlin Lane Bristol who sold architectural models of churches and fonts. An advert selling their casts appeared in the *Bristol & West of England Archaeological Magazine* of 1843 and included a mention of a model of the north porch of Redcliffe church which was purchased by the Society in 1844 for 2 guineas.<sup>42</sup>

Despite obvious commitment to the collect casts, the committee minutes and *Proceedings* are largely silent regarding what casts were commissioned and very few of the surviving collection have recorded provenance details. See the Appendix for details of archival notes and accounts. After 1844, the numbers of casts entering the Society's collection dwindled, with almost the entire extant collection having been acquired between 1839 and 1844. Many casts entered the collection as gifts including material from Lincoln, Beverley Minster and the abbeys of Westminster and St Albans. Other than the names of donors, details of the source and manufacture of these is unknown, but it is probable that they were obtained directly from cathedral workshops or bought from other collections. The description of two decorated spandrels from Beverley Minster (REPRO.A 1916-2725 & 2726) originally from the Royal Architectural Museum and transferred to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1916; together with the cast of a shield taken from John Wheathampstead's chapel, St Albans (REPRO.A.1916-2499) may be duplicates of similar casts in the OAS collection. Also, of interest amongst the casts originating from the Royal Architectural Museum are fifteen from

<sup>38</sup> 'Thomas Grimsley and St Sepulchre's Cemetery, Oxford', [www.stsepulchres.org.uk](http://www.stsepulchres.org.uk) (accessed Aug. 2018)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> 'SS Mary and John Churchyard: Grimsley', [www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk](http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk) (accessed Aug. 2018)

<sup>41</sup> Bodl., OAHs Archives & Collections, General & Committee Meetings 1840, Dep. d. 510, p. 17; also *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1840).

<sup>42</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 74.

Adel Church in Yorkshire.<sup>43</sup> Seven casts from Adel also appear in the OAS collection and are identified in the OAHs inventory as a gift from the Revd G. Lewthwaite. The V&A catalogue provides no details of when these casts were made, but Adel church underwent restoration by R.D. Chantrell of Leeds between 1841 and 1843 during which time, George Lewthwaite was rector.<sup>44</sup> In 1841, G. Lewthwaite, of University College, Oxford, is listed for the first time as an ordinary member of OAS, and in the following year he is indicated as a life member. It is known that the rector of Adel's eldest son was also named George and took holy orders and it is probable that the casts entered the OAS collection around 1842 having been produced during the restoration under Chantrell.<sup>45</sup> It is not known whether these are duplicates of the V&A material or whether the production of casts was split between the two collections.

There is little scholarship on the technical aspects of cast production, but as early as 1850 concerns were raised that Lincoln Cathedral attracted many parties who 'were allowed to make casts of the figures and foliage without understanding the business' thereby causing great damage.<sup>46</sup> Consultation with a professional mould-maker casting architectural subjects has provided some indication of the processes involved. Today, casts of intricately carved masonry would be created using flexible silicone or latex moulds to allow their removal from pieces with significant undercutting. Neither of these materials were available at the time that the Society's casts were made and it is probable that these were made from multi-piece plaster moulds formed by layering thick plaster directly onto the surface of the architectural detail which had been prepared with a releasing agent such as liquid soap. Once dry, these pieces would then be taken down, reassembled and fixed within an encasing 'mother-mould', before being soaped and poured with liquid plaster to create a positive cast. Heavily undercut details may have been reworked in the construction of the final mould or after casting (Fig. 3).<sup>47</sup> Alternatively, moulds could be made using clay rather than plaster. These presented less risk of damage to the object being cast, but provided poorer definition than plaster, and only one or two casts could be taken from them. Nonetheless, this latter method tallies with the description of cast makers for Sir John Soane, who in 1823 referred to 'squeezes in clay' when making casts at Westminster.<sup>48</sup>

There is evidence that both methods were used in the collection. A damaged cast from Lincoln OAS-E16/OMS-1975.238.43 (Fig. 4) indicates its construction in several parts from a plaster mould; whereas a cast from St Giles' OAS-E10/OMS-1975.238.37 (Fig. 5) is almost certainly the result of a clay mould. However, casts such as OAS-T9/OMS-1975.238.26 (Fig. 6) taken from Great Haseley church indicate poor definition may also be due to the poor condition of the original stonework and are best recognised when viewed in conjunction with the original. Intriguingly, across the collection, there is little evidence of casting seams as would be expected in piece-mould production. These lines of plaster 'wastage' are easily cleaned away, but Felice observes that this was generally avoided to limit the loss of fidelity.<sup>49</sup> Whatever the case, all these considerations relate to the processes involved in casting an accessible piece, yet many of the casts in the collection are of details which are far off the ground, necessitating the erection of scaffolding and the construction of supports at high level. As such it is most likely that casting coincided with restoration.

<sup>43</sup> As with Iffley, Adel was also an early Norman church in Romanesque style. It was the subject of the first paper at the founding meeting of the Cambridge Camden Society on 9 Nov. 1839 (Brandwood, 'Fond of Church Architecture', p. 50).

<sup>44</sup> W. Draper, *Adel and its Norman Church: A History of the Parish* (1909), pp. 158–65.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, 8/11, p. 189.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication from S. Cole, Articolle Ltd.

<sup>48</sup> A. Felice, *Fidelity and Technique of Plaster Casts*, trans B. Frischer, [www.digitalsculpture.org/casts/felice/](http://www.digitalsculpture.org/casts/felice/) (accessed Sep. 2018); Dorey, 'Sir John Soane's Casts', p. 602.

<sup>49</sup> Felice, *Fidelity and Technique*, p. 2.

## SAMPLING OXFORDSHIRE CHURCHES

The surviving collection contains eighty casts identified as having been taken from Oxfordshire churches. No dates of manufacture are readily available, but some can be deduced from the Society's accounts and published *Proceedings*. The earliest records include casts from the city church of St Michael's at the Northgate and Merton College chapel, both of which were made in 1839. In the same year, one cast was also taken from Christ Church Cathedral and several more from St Mary Magdalen and St Aldate's. A set of four casts from Iffley church, then a rural parish close to Oxford, also date from 1839. It states the obvious to note that the Society began close to home, doubtless because these buildings were best known and close-at-hand for members to specify and oversee the manufacture. This is an important factor since it reiterates that the Society's initial focus was in recording churches in



Fig. 4. Cast of capital (Early English) from Lincoln Presbytery with crisp detail from a plaster piece-mould, the damage to abacus showing cast in two or more lifts (OAS-E16/OMS-1975.238.43).



Fig. 3. Cast of bracket (?Early English) from St Cross, Winchester showing heavy undercutting (OAS-E57/OMS-1975.238.84).

the locality rather than in the collecting of architectural casts per se. The only recorded purchase of casts from outside of Oxfordshire occurred in November 1842 when the Society paid £20 for 'a set of casts' from Lincoln.<sup>50</sup>

No information is available as to why or how these sites were selected for casting, however the chosen churches spanned the period repertoire established by Thomas Rickman, and in 1839 included: Norman (Iffley, four casts); Transitional (Christ Church, one cast); Early English (Christ Church, four, possibly not all in the same year); Decorated or 'middle-pointed' (Merton, St Aldate's, and St Mary Magdalen, a total of twenty-nine casts); and Perpendicular (St Michael's, two casts), placing its weight of evidence on samples from the middle-pointed period whose style was explicitly favoured by the Camdenians. Should this appear as a systematic collection of style data for comparative analysis, this was not the case.

The Iffley casts were taken from the exterior doorways whereas at Christ Church

<sup>50</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 59.



*Fig. 5. Cast of capital (Early English) from window jamb in north aisle of St Giles' church, Oxford, showing low definition almost certainly from use of a clay mould (OAS-E10/OMS-1975.238.37).*



*Fig. 6. Cast of capital (Transitional) from jamb of west door of Great Haseley church, with poor definition, possibly as a result of stone erosion (OAS-T9/OMS-1975.238.26).*



Fig. 7. Section of moulding with beakhead decoration taken from west door of Iffley church. Note porous casting, possibly using clay mould. Almost certainly work of T. Grimsley (OMS-N2/OMS-1975.238.2).

a cast of the rib of a vault and specimens of capitals and shaft mouldings from the interior of the church was taken. A similar range of internal capitals, window jambs and mouldings were taken from Mary Magdalen, but at Merton, where four casts were made, the choice of subject matter included a capital, window tracery, the piscina canopy and a figurative dripstone representing the head of Edward I. Indeed, nine out of the ten pieces taken from St Aldate's were of heads, including that of Edward II; and the two pieces from St Michael's were of Richard II and his queen, suggesting that antiquarian interest in these as portraits may have outshone any architectural relevance in their selection. Save for the heads, the range of subject matter and the small numbers of casts suggest that the casts were selected as exemplars of each style rather than comparison of common details across the range.

Between 1840 and 1845 more casts were obtained from Oxfordshire churches, including Great Haseley (1840–1); Stanton Harcourt (1842); Cuddesdon (1845) and St Giles' church, Oxford (c.1842). These shift the balance of casts away from the Decorated style, towards earlier Transitional and Early English period churches. To learn more about how and why the casts were made, a more detailed study has been carried out in relation to the casts taken from Iffley, St Giles' and Cuddesdon. These casts have been measured and photographed at the Oxfordshire Museum Service (OMS) storage facility and the location of details relating to specific casts have been identified in the relevant churches.

#### *St. Mary, Iffley*

Mouldings and ornaments from the doorways of Iffley church appear in the list of casts of 1839 and are assumed to be the work of Thomas Grimsley.<sup>51</sup> The extant collection comprises a length of beak-head decoration from the arch of the west door (OAHS-N1/OMS-1975.238.2) (Fig. 7); a sample of pellet and chevron moulding from the outer order of the north door (OAHS-N2/OMS-1975.238.2); and two capitals from the jambs of the south door, one of which has carvings of a Sagittarius figure, the other possibly showing a lion attacking a horse

<sup>51</sup> *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1839).



Fig. 8. Cast of capital (Norman) from jamb of south doorway of Iffley church with carving of a ?lion killing a horse (OAS-N1/OMS-uncatalogued).



Fig. 9. The same capital and jamb, 2018.

(Figs. 8 and 9). The latter two have been incorrectly described in the OAHs/OMS catalogues and in the 1896 inventory as 'Part of the Arch of the south Doorway of Iffley Church Oxon of three orders, the inner continuous and richly ornamented with vegetable and animal figures, the two-outer enriched with the chevron moulding and springing from shafts with rich capitals. c.1150.' This does not suggest that the cast in question is of a capital, yet the list of casts published in 1839 describes 'Part of the Arch of the south doorway of Iffley Church, Oxon. Shewing two Capitals, part of the suite of Mouldings with their section, and various Ornaments', clearly identifying that there are two capitals, and also implying that these formed part of a suite of mouldings of the south door which are no longer extant.

Further casts were commissioned at a cost of £5 5s. to be sent as models for the new cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand.<sup>52</sup> It is not known whether these arrived or indeed what details were sent, and contact with the Canterbury Museum and the Diocesan archivist in New Zealand has revealed no trace.<sup>53</sup> Whatever the case, we can now consider why casts of Iffley church were amongst the first to be made.

Iffley's rural setting in proximity to Oxford meant it was well known to intellectual seekers of the Picturesque. It had been included in a book of drawings of Saxon churches published in 1751 by Charles Lyttleton; and the west door was illustrated in Ducarel's *Anglo-Norman Antiquities* of 1767, establishing it within the canon of important English Romanesque buildings.<sup>54</sup> This interest extended into the nineteenth century and despite being

<sup>52</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 43; *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1841), statement of accounts.

<sup>53</sup> Personal communications from J. Haley, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand and the Revd Michael Hughes, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand (July 2018).

<sup>54</sup> G. Tyack, 'The Restoration of Iffley Parish Church', *Oxoniensia*, 68 (2003), pp. 115–16.



Fig. 10. West doorway of Iffley church illustrated by A.C. Pugin and F. Mackenzie, *Specimens of Gothic Architecture ... selected from Ancient Buildings at Oxford &c.* (1816), Copy in OAHs library.

in Romanesque rather than Gothic style, an engraving of the west door was included amongst the 61 plates in F. Mackenzie and A. Pugin's 1816 *Specimens of Gothic Architecture: Selected Buildings at Oxford etc* (Fig. 10.); and the south door appears in the volume two of A.C. Pugin's *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* of 1823. Both were acquired for the OAS library in 1839.

Tyack's careful unpicking of the history of Iffley's restoration highlights the frequency and extent of change to the church's structure. The changes were typical of what was happening in churches all over England at this time, indeed, *The Ecclesiologist* estimated that about a quarter of all English churches were restored between 1834 and 1854.<sup>55</sup> The most usual aspects of nineteenth-century restoration were repairs to roofs, and the removal of plaster ceilings, box pews, galleries and other furnishings. This emphasis on the timber elements highlights a significant point – although entirely possible to create, casts of timber fittings do not feature amongst any of the surviving casts, thereby suggesting that casts were not regarded as a means of conserving details under threat of loss.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, whilst there had been various attempts at restoration between 1808 and 1823 during which the medieval roodscreen and some box pews were removed, it was not until 1842, three years after the date of the first casts, that the OAS became involved in raising funds for a more substantial restoration.<sup>57</sup> If the supposition that the OAS casts were made in association with restoration work, then Iffley is not a convincing example. Far more probable that the Society was simply keen to secure an example from what was one the best-known churches in the county. Unlike other churches however, only external details were cast at Iffley, despite the church also having an ornately carved interior,

<sup>55</sup> Tyack, 'Restoration of Iffley', p. 129; J.M. Crook, *The Architects Secret* (2003), p. 46.

<sup>56</sup> One exception is noted in the *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1844), referring to a cast of a bench-end from Steeple Ashton church kept in the Society's rooms and apparently used as a template during the demonstration of a wood-carving machine.

<sup>57</sup> Tyack, 'Restoration of Iffley', pp. 123–6.



Fig. 11. Casts of mouldings taken from St Giles' church, Oxford (excepting cast at top right which is from Great Haseley).

moreover none were taken from details high off the ground – they did not require special access arrangements.

Both 'trophy' and 'exemplar of style', the casts from Iffley have a dramatic quality. The section of arch moulding with beak-head design (OAS-N2; OMS-1975:238.2) made in a greyish, unpainted plaster, records much of the granular texture and clarity of figuration now dulled by the application of a protective layer of coloured limewash at the church itself. As for the choice of Romanesque details from Iffley as a model for church building in New Zealand? The Camdenians, who were involved in sending plans for the project, in their offensive rhetorical style considered it:

natural to teach them [the native Maori] first that style [of early churches] which first prevailed in our own country [extolling Christianity in the face of uneducated pagans]; while its rudeness and massiveness, and the grotesque character of its sculpture, will probably render it easier to be understood and appreciated by them.<sup>58</sup>

#### *St Giles', Oxford*

The casts taken from St Giles' represent a rich sampling of Early English mouldings (Fig. 11). There are also sections from the aisle capitals and 'in-the-round' casts of capitals taken from the unusual clustered jamb-shafts of the windows in the north aisle. In addition, there are two casts of corbels supporting the nave roof with carved heads of a king and a bishop; also, a smaller corbel with the head of a woman. The mouldings and sections from the aisle capitals

<sup>58</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1841), p. 4.



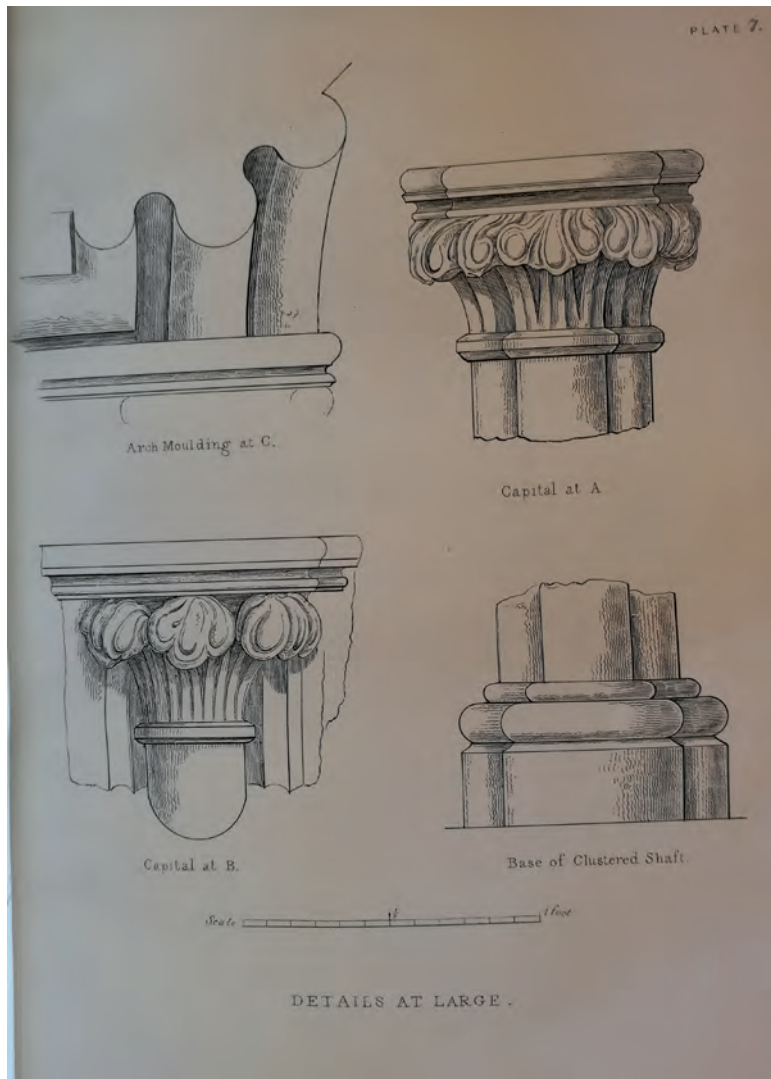


Fig. 12. J.P. Harrison's Views and Details of Saint Giles' Church, Oxford (1842), plate 7, showing illustrations drawn from casts Fig. 14 and Fig. 16, below.

are more difficult to interpret, and unlike most of the casts in the OAS collection, they are not intrinsically attractive. It is probable that they were made or specified by someone with a technical interest in the building. There is no record of their production, but the brief analysis below brings together some indication of their date and purpose.

St Giles' church was the subject of a paper read at a meeting of the Society on 2 October 1841 by M.H. Estcourt of Exeter College.<sup>59</sup> The talk, with measured drawings by J.P. Harrison of Christ Church, was published by J.H. Parker for the Society in 1842.<sup>60</sup> Several of Harrison's drawings appear to directly relate to the casts that were made (Figs. 12 and 13). His plate 7, for example, includes drawings of arch mouldings relating to the cast OAS-E27/OMS-1975.238.54

<sup>59</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> J.P. Harrison, *Views and Details of Saint Giles' Church Oxford* (1842).

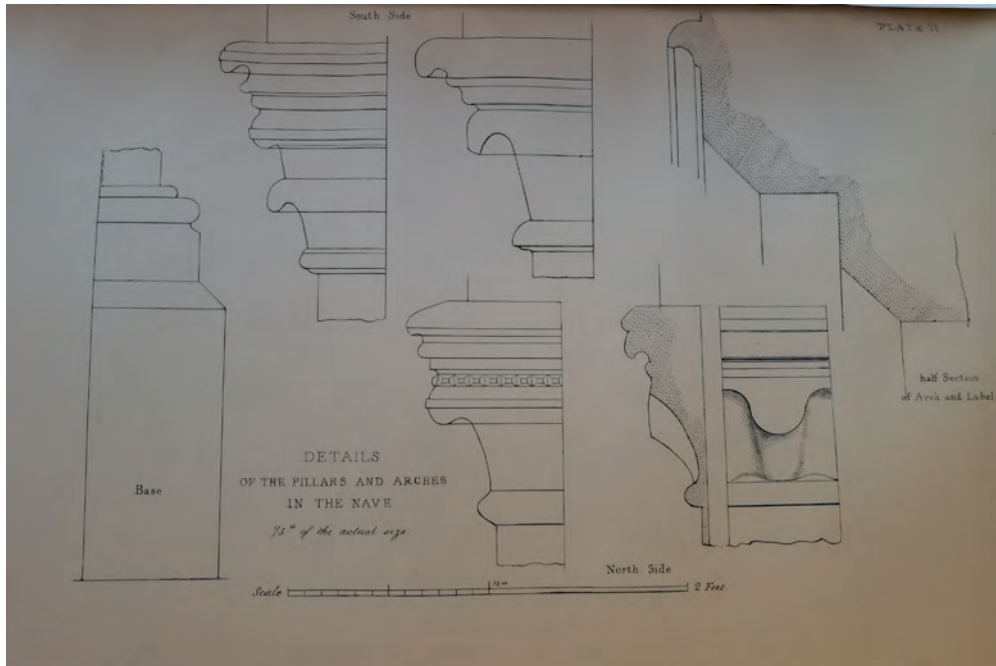


Fig. 13. J.P. Harrison's drawing showing section of aisle capital Fig. 15 below, published in Harrison's Views and Details of Saint Giles' Church.



Fig. 14. 'Suite of mouldings from St Giles' c.1200' (OAS-E27/OMS-1975.238.54).



Fig. 15. Capital of jamb-shaft in north aisle (c.1200), St Giles' church, Oxford (OAS-1975.238.37).

(Fig. 14), and the capital of the clustered jamb-shaft of the north aisle window (OAS-E9/OMS 1975.238.36) (Fig. 5), and the capital of the side jamb of the same window (OAS-E10, OMS-1975.238.37) (Figs. 15). This suggests that Harrison either directed the making of casts, or at took advantage of having them; indeed it is most improbable that the depiction of a section of the nave aisle capital could have been drawn without access to the cast OAS-E1/OMS1975.238.28 (Figs. 16 and 17). Yet more conclusive evidence that the casts were used as the basis for drawings is given in the proofs of plate XIV of the nave corbels of Henry III and a bishop under which it is written that they have been drawn from plaster casts of the originals. This evidence dates the casts to before 7 May 1842, when the OAS committee confirmed the recent publication of Harrison's book, however, the date can be further clarified.<sup>61</sup> On 27 November, 1841, the committee had undertaken to produce a set of lithographs of St Giles'; and at the same meeting had agreed that Mr J.M. Derick should 'superintend the making of a series of plaster casts' up to a cost not exceeding £20, although the nature of these casts is unspecified.<sup>62</sup>

The architect H.J. Underwood, known to the Society for his design of Littlemore church, was involved in restoration work at St Giles' between 1838 and 1839, but in 1840, Mr J.M. Derick, who was also regularly engaged as advisory architect to the Society during the 1840s, took over the specification and supervision of the restoration work.<sup>63</sup> During 1840 the work was carried out on the restoration of the east window in the south chapel by sculptor/mason Thomas Grimsley, who lived close to St Giles' and had previously been engaged as a modeller by the Society.<sup>64</sup> It can thus be reasonably supposed that the casts were made by Grimsley somewhere between November 1841 and May 1842. Moreover, since they were made during

<sup>61</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 54.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

<sup>63</sup> C. Barrington-Ward, *St Giles' Church: An Illustrated Guide* (c.2012), pp. 36–7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*



Fig. 16. St Giles' jamb moulding shown in Harrison's unnumbered plate of the south doorway (OAS-E26/OMS-1975.238.53).



Fig. 17. Section of capital in St Giles' church with 'traces of the cushion form of the preceding period', c.1200 (OAS-E1/OMS-1975.238.28).

restoration, it is probable that Grimsley, with Derick, chose the subject matter, signalling as they do a rather more workmanlike interest than is evident in the next case study.

#### *All Saints, Cuddesdon*

Four casts from Cuddesdon church were purchased by the Society in April 1845.<sup>65</sup> These comprise two capitals from the south-west pier of the tower crossing; and a pair of capitals cast together in one piece (OAHs-T1/OMS-1975.238.18); and a section arch moulding from the west doorway (OAHs-T4/OMS-1975.238.21). The capitals from the crossing have figurative carving described in the OAS 1896 inventory as ‘monstrous heads.’ One is quite crudely carved and possibly represents a green man with foliage erupting from his mouth (OAHs-T2/OMS-1975.238.19); whilst the other is crisply carved and depicts what appears to be a human face under the hood of a bearskin, and ornamented with a studded ribbon which loops around the other faces of the capital OAHs-T3/OMS-1975.238.20) (Figs. 18 and 19). Both these capitals have square abaci (although the abacus is omitted from the greenman cast) and support pointed arches, the combined features being indicative of their transitional, late Norman – Early English dating of c.1180.<sup>66</sup> Two other casts of the capitals of the jamb shafts of the west doorway are dated to the same period, and are protected within a fourteenth-century porch. These are good examples of transitional carving combining aspects of Norman stylised leaf-carving and freer English stiff leaf (Figs. 20 and 21).<sup>67</sup>

As for when, and by whom, the casts were made? The church was not restored until 1849 when the architect Benjamin Ferrey carried out the renewal of the chancel windows. However, in July 1843 the bishop of Oxford (Richard Bagot) had made an application to the Society, requesting that ‘an architect should go to Cuddesdon and recommend a new east window for the chancel, and to examine the church generally to make recommendations



*Fig. 18. One of two adjacent capitals (Transitional) from tower arch, Cuddesdon church, showing ‘monstrous head’ c.1180 (OAS-T3/OMS-1975.238.20).*



*Fig. 19. Detail of capital with ‘monstrous head’ (OAS-T3/OMS-1975.238.20).*

<sup>65</sup> *Oxford Architectural Society Proceedings* (1845).

<sup>66</sup> J.H. Parker, *A Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford, Rides II and III* (1846) pp. 289–91.

<sup>67</sup> J. Sherwood, *A Guide to the Churches of Oxfordshire* (1989), p. 62.



*Fig. 20. Cast of capital of west door jamb shaft, Cuddesdon church (OAS-T1/OMS-1975.238.18).*



*Fig. 21. West door jamb shaft capitals.*

of restorations which could gradually be affected.<sup>68</sup> The committee responded by sending Mr Derick, but no evidence of drawings or work carried out by Derick at this time have been identified. Indeed, this was three years prior to the casts arriving in the collection. In 1846, J.H. Parker published Part IV of his *Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford* in which he describes Cuddesdon church. In this he reports that ‘many of the most interesting features have been carefully restored’, itemising the arches under the tower and the west doorway as ‘good specimens of the latest Norman work.’<sup>69</sup> The carved capitals of the tower arch are not described but a small drawing is provided, together with details of the lozenge moulding over the west door (Figs. 22 and 23), but unlike St Giles’, the quality and detail shown in the illustrations of Parker’s guidebook do not suggest that they are derived from casts. Parker gives acknowledgement to E.A. Freeman and S. Rook for their assistance in drawing up the account. In 1845, Freeman was acting as Society secretary with Parker.<sup>70</sup> It might then be the case that the casts were made in 1845 at the time that the entry for Parker’s book was being researched, and that the selection of subject matter highlights their antiquarian curiosity over and above an interest in the form of mouldings or other more standard features.

## CONCLUSION

In contrast to the OAS’s collection of church models, which was amassed contemporaneously and now is entirely lost, the cast collection itself is remarkably intact, retaining all those casts listed in the 1896 inventory. Through the analysis of the Society’s records and of the plaster casts themselves, a greater understanding of when and why these were made has been established. A close association with the processes of church restoration, illustration and publication has been noted in relation to the casts taken from local churches. The selection of subject matter for casting appears to have been focused on exemplars of each period style drawn from members’ knowledge of Oxfordshire churches. There was no attempt to create a comparative

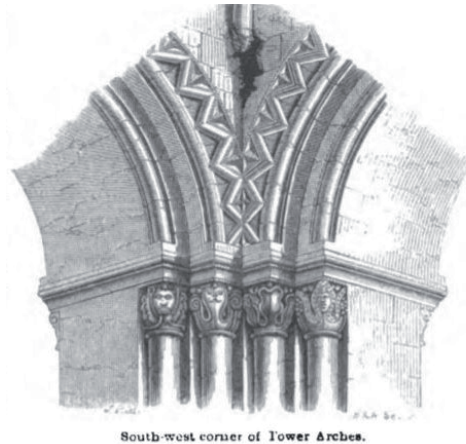


Fig. 22. Illustration in J.H. Parker’s *A Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford*, with capital in Fig. 19 shown on right-hand side. The sister capital (OAS-T2) depicting a ?green-man is shown on the left of the group.



Fig. 23. Further illustrations of Cuddesdon from J.H. Parker’s *Guide*. The arch mouldings were also cast.

<sup>68</sup> Bodl. Dep. d. 510, p. 63.

<sup>69</sup> Parker, *Guide to Architectural Antiquities*, p. 289.

<sup>70</sup> Pantin, ‘Oxford Architectural and Historical Society’, p. 192.

or comprehensive collection; nonetheless, the surviving collection is remarkably intact with only a very few pieces identified as having been lost. Less information has been brought forward regarding the way that the casts were used but it seems probable that their purpose lay primarily in the decoration of the Society's rooms. It is more difficult to assess the significance of the large number of pieces from Lincoln Cathedral and other major ecclesiastical buildings. These have been much more widely reproduced and were mostly gifted to the Society, nonetheless the possibility that they were influential in the development of decorative detailing of new church buildings and domestic architecture in and around Oxford is worthy of further investigation.

The conditions in which the cast collection is currently kept raises concern as to their vulnerability to damage. Curatorial concern has also been expressed that the collection does not meet the current collection policy of the Oxfordshire Museum Service, though the justification for their deposit in an unsigned file-note written by the Museum Service, 31 October 1973, seems entirely clear: '...they represent, with their documentation, two important aspects of local study: architectural details from the region; and the workings of a nineteenth-century society.'<sup>71</sup> The casts are indeed an extraordinary survival, and their study has revealed aspects of the workings of the first, and one of the most influential societies of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. Though other diocesan and provincial architectural and archaeological societies were founded during the 1840s, investigations by the present author have found none with surviving collections of casts.<sup>72</sup> Later collections made by the Royal Architectural Museum and now in the V&A are understood not to include examples from Oxfordshire churches.<sup>73</sup> The survival of the Society's contemporaneous collections of drawings and prints, and its extensive library further elevate the significance of the casts as an element in a larger assemblage extending across all media. These separate parts should be brought back together at a single venue, not least because they have together done much to influence modern-day perceptions of the architecture of English churches.

The casts themselves are also to be valued for their objective qualities, in the case of Great Haseley, the cast of a jamb-capital at the west door has details now entirely lost to erosion. They also have other qualities – their 1:1 scaling for example, render them real and life-like albeit entirely severed from their surrounding contexts. Indeed, they convey a sense of antiquity, even though they are mere copies. Until the recent development of 3D casting, no other means of reproduction offered this. Unlike drawings, casts reflect a mode of representation and assemblage which has significant similarities with the sampling of the natural world. Indeed, the Revd William Buckland, one of the founding vice-presidents of the Society, established his international reputation as a leading formative geologist based on the study of his own extensive collections of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is thus, in the vein of positivism and science, as much as the religious proclivities of the Oxford Movement, that further interpretation of the significance of the Society's collection of casts might be sought.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>71</sup> Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre, uncatalogued and unauthored manuscript, 31 Oct. 1973.

<sup>72</sup> Personal communications from Dr David Morrison, Worcester Cathedral Library and Archive, Thomas Cadbury, Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, and Nicola Lyons, York Museums Trust, July and Aug. 2018.

<sup>73</sup> Based on online catalogue search, Sept. 2018.



*Appendix. Details of casts and models*

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1839	Payments for casts & models [total annual expenditure £170 13s. 7d.]	£45 14s. 2d.	Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1840	
1839/Feb 9	Proposal to spend £20 on casts approved by Committee	Instruction	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 5	
1839/May 2	Casts and models to be deposited in Society's room [at Maidenhead, Turl St]	Instruction	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 11	No longer in collection
1839/May 10	Casts of two corbel heads supporting the label over the east window of Merton College chapel	Gift from the Revd E. Bigge, Merton College		
1839/Jun 4	Payment of bills Grimsley for casts [?] Bossom for casts Cowley for carpentry work	£14 12s. £2 12s. 10d. £5 14s. 11d. for fitting out room? Gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 12	
1839/Dec 5	Received model of porch of Northleach church, Glos.	Gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 16	Lost
1840	Payments for casts and models	£4 8s. 7d.	Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1840-1	
1840/Feb	Bill presented by White for casts and models Cowley for carpentry	£20 19s. 6d. £9 8s. 3d. for fitting out room? Gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 17	
1840/Feb 26	Collection of casts from shrine [chantry chapel] of Abbot (?) 'Bumridge' [Abbot Thomas Ramryge 1492-1520] St Albans Abbey	Mr Derick	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 19	Extant

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1840/Feb 26	'impression' [cast?] of the tomb? of Abbot Esteney? in Westminster with description [Abbot John Esteney 1474-1498]		OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	
1841	Payments for Casts & models Casts of Iffley etc. for NZ Model of font at Winchester	£12 6s. 6d. £5 5s. Gift CCS <sup>74</sup>	Dep. d. 510, p. 19 Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1841	Extant
1841/May 26			OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost
1841/July 25	Cast of canopy from St Alban's Abbey	Gift Mr Derrick	Dep. d. 510, p. 38 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Extant
1841/Oct 30	Resolved to 'send set of casts from Iffley church similar to those in the Society's room' to Bishop of New Zealand	Instruction [Use of casts as exemplar/pattern]	Dep. d. 510, p. 33 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost [pers. com. Diocesan Archivist, Canterbury, NZ]
1841/Nov 3	Collection of casts from Glastonbury chapel of Joseph of Arimathea consisting of corbels from different parts of the chapel, bases, central band mouldings, capitals of shafts, and zig-zag ornament from the turrets. Model of Bitton church received	H. W. Acland All Souls Coll.	Dep. d. 510, p. 43 <i>Proceedings</i> 1841	1 piece only
1841/Nov		Gift M.H. Estcourt	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	lost
1841/Nov 13	Models of two churches at Buscot sent by Mr Jewitt to be purchased	No details	Dep. d. 510, p. 46 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	lost
			Dep. d. 510, p. 45	

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1841/Nov 27	Mr Derick to 'superintend the making of a series of plaster models of vaults at a cost not exceeding £20' [probably St Giles' casts where he was engaged on restoration]	instruction	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 47	
1842	Payments for Casts & models	£15 4s. 10d.	Statement of Accounts	<i>Proceedings</i> 1842
1842/Apr 27	Model of Early English font at Wellow, Somerset received	gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 53	lost
1842/ Iffley May 7	Collection of casts from Glastonbury	Gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 54	1 piece only
1842/May 7	Model of new chapel of Holy Evangelists in Devon based on Chapel of St Joseph, Glastonbury	H.W. Acland All Souls Gift	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 54	lost
1842/Jun 6	Casts of Iffley sent to ?New Zealand 'to serve as Guide for executing the details which he proposes to erect in Norman style, for which the design was furnished by CCS'	H.W. Acland All Souls report	AGM 6 June <i>Proceedings</i> 1842	As above
1842/Nov 5	Purchase of set of casts from Lincoln for about £20	£20	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510, p. 59	Extant. [Large collection bought at various times. Not possible to identify specific pieces relating to this purchase.]
1843	Casts & models from Lincoln Cathedral etc. [£44 2s. 2d. on books for library in this year]	£43 15s.	Statement of Annual Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1843	

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1843	Carriage of casts from the Earl of Shrewsbury	£5 9s. 6d.	Statement of Annual Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1843	
1843/Mar 8	Plaster cast of small shield from St Albans	Gift M. Swabey DCL Christchurch	OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510	Extant
1843/Mar 22	Plaster cast of monumental effigies of FitzHerbert family	Gift Earl of Shrewsbury	<i>Proceedings</i> 1843 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost
1843/May 24	Six model fonts	Gift Mr [?]Hartt, Cambridge	Dep. d. 510, p. 66 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost
1844	Payment for casts and models	£7 6s. 6d.	Dep. d. 510, p. 69 Statement of Accounts	
1844/Jan 31	Parker authorised to purchase model of Porch of Redcliffe Church	2 guineas	<i>Proceedings</i> 1844-5 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost
1844/Jan 31	Plaster casts of altar plate	Gift G. Mefoers Harvey, Strand, London	Dep. d. 510, p. 74 OAS Reports of General & Committee Meetings	Lost
1844/Nov 27	Demonstration of a wood carving machine used to make bench end based on those in Steeple Aston church of which was a plaster cast in the Society's room	Use of cast as template	Dep. d. 510, p. 75 <i>Proceedings</i> 1844	Lost
1845	No payments for casts	none	Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1845	
1845/Jan 21	Agree to employ servant to open society room daily 1-5pm with servant in constant attendance		Committee Meetings Dep. d. 510	
1845/Apr 30	Bought casts from Cuddesdon	?	<i>Proceedings</i> 1845	Extant

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1845/April 30	Collection of impressions [? casts] of seals with cabinet	Gift Revd Principal, Brasenose Coll.	<i>Proceedings</i> 1845	Lost
1845/May 14	Casts of 'Evangelistick symbols in Basso relief'	Gift J.H. Parker	<i>Proceedings</i> 1845	Lost
1845/May 28	Two casts of the sides of the font at East Meon church, Hants.	Gift Revd C. Walters, Magdalen Hall	<i>Proceedings</i> 1845	Extant
1845/May 28	Cast of modern finial, Llangynfelyn church, Cardiganshire	Gift W.B. Jones	<i>Proceedings</i> 1845	Lost
1846	No payment for casts		Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> 1846-7 Howell, p. 62	
1846/April 7	London sculptor John Thomas writes to say happy to undertake modelling for the Society			
1846/May 20	Cast of finial from tomb of Bishop Aquablanca, Hereford Cathedral, received from	Gift Dean of Hereford	<i>Proceedings</i> 1846	Extant
1846/June 3	Casts of friezes above doorway of south porch, Breedon church, Leics.	Gift F. Ottley, Oriel College	<i>Proceedings</i> 1846	Lost
1847/Nov 29	Payment to 'Shelos[?] for casts'	£2	OAS Expenses 1845-49 Dep. f. 60	
1847/ Dec 2	Payment to 'Stone for repairing models'	6s.	OAS Expenses 1845-49 Dep. f. 60 Howell, p. 62	
1847	Bill received from 'Thomas the sculptor employed at Dorchester'			
1848/Nov 22	Grant to Mr Whately 'for 2 shelves & other fittings for the better arrangement of the Society's collection of casts'	£2	Committee Minutes 1847-49 Special Meeting 22 Nov. Dep. d. 519, p. 32	

Date	Entry	Details/Cost	Source	Status 2018
1848/Dec	Agreed Mr Whately had permission to dispose of some duplicates of casts in the society's collection	Instruction	Committee Minutes 1847-49	
1849/Feb 3	Mr Whately requests treasurer to pay 15/- for collection of casts procured from Mr Bell, Fleet Street, London	Instruction	Dep. d. 519, p. 32 Committee Minutes 1847-49	
1850/Jan 25	Present of a cast of the inscription of a bell		Dep. d. 519, p. 38	
1850/Feb	Casts of inscription on bells, Broughton Gifford	Gift	Register of Presents 1849-55	Lost
1850/June	Models of fonts Trumpington, Cambs.; St Peter, St Edward and St Mary the Less, Cambridge	Revd Wilkinson Gift	Dep. e. 263 Register of Presents 1849-55	
1851/May 28	Twenty casts from Lincoln Cathedral	Mr Norris Deek Gift	Dep. e. 263 Register of Presents 1849-55	As above
1851/May 28	Model of St Mary's spire	Mr Combes Junell Gift	Dep. e. 263 Register of Presents 1849-55	
1852/Nov 3	Cast of a statue in St Mary's tower (Oxford)	Vice-Chancellor Gift	Dep. e. 263 Meeting 3 Nov. <i>Proceedings</i>	Lost
1852/Nov 3	President's address 'The collection of casts, books, prints and brasses which now graces our room, is one of great value to the architectural student'	OAS president Report	Meeting 3 Nov. <i>Proceedings</i> 1852	
1853/Mar 2	Thirty specimens of stone & carved work	Gift	Register of Presents 1849-55	Lost
1853/Mar 2	Cast from Whitchurch church (Bucks.)	Mr Bradfield Gift	Dep. e. 263 Register of Presents 1849-55	Lost
1855/Mar 14	Two casts from [?]echefield, [?]gartholian	Mr Street Gift	Dep. e. 263 Register of Presents 1849-55	Lost
1860	Payment to Mr Grimsley etc. for the removal of casts	J.P. Jeffense £1 10s. 6d.	Dep. e. 263 Statement of Accounts <i>Proceedings</i> New Series, vol. 1	