

John Macduff Derick

(c. 1805/6 - 1859) [A](#)

A biographical sketch by

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REFERENCES - In each case, 'click' on the blue letter or number. Click on the  to return.

In preparing a paper on "The History of Ilam Cross, Staffordshire", published in Issue 31 of *Ecclesiology Today*, the name of the relatively little-known architect, John Macduff Derick, [B](#) who designed Ilam Cross, came to light. A preliminary study for this sketch was undertaken, in direct conflict with the self-denying ordinance usually observed when doing historical research - "no-browsing". But Derick is at least worthy of a footnote in the Gothic Revival, since he became an approved exponent of the style in the early days of its development. It is hoped that a more complete and widely sourced account will eventually be given. Meanwhile, the most straightforward, brief basic account is provided by an obituary in *The New York Evening Post* of 23rd September 1859, which can be fleshed out considerably. It states:

'Death of Mr. DERRICK, Architect.'

'The late John Macduff Derrick, whose decease was recorded in the journals of the 20th instant, was the Son of James Derrick, Esq., [C](#) of Ballymoat, in the county of Sligo, Ireland. He was descended, by the father's side, from an old and honourable Connaught family, and maternally from the ancient race of the Macduffs, Earls of Fife. After, studying at the University of Dublin, [D](#) Mr. Derrick became a pupil of the eminent Sir John Soane, architect of the Bank of England, and of several important public buildings in London. [E](#) He completed his professional training by an extensive course of travel in Normandy, southern France, and Italy. His career was now one of rapid and unprecedented success. Though bred in a classic school, his attention was early turned to the revival of Christian art and he may be considered one of the veterans of that movement.

While still a young man, he was engaged in an extensive and lucrative practice, chiefly in Ecclesiastical works, in the north of England and Ireland, being at one time established simultaneously in Oxford, London, and Dublin. But severe domestic affliction and failing health induced him to relinquish the active pursuit of his profession till a course of unforeseen losses compelled him again to revert to it for the sake of his family. [F](#) His life was now a continued battle with ill fortune - a career of which the unflinching courage and heroic energy can only be appreciated by those who witnessed it.

He at length resolved, though comparatively late in life, to begin entirely afresh, and sailed for the New World. He landed in our city in the summer of 1858, and at once applied himself with almost youthful ardour to the practice of his profession. But the already overwrought brain at length gave way to continued mental excitement. He fought the battle of life bravely to the last, and his death was worthy of his career.

Among his works may be mentioned St. Saviours, Leeds: the church at Bombay in memory of the troops who fell in the Affghan war; the Bruen testimonial at Carlow and several restorations and additions among the Collegiate Buildings at Oxford. His contributions to the

literature of his profession were numerous and varied - his pen and pencil being ever employed more for the interest of art than the gratification of literary vanity. [G](#) / [1](#) The opinions of many capable judges bear testimony to the rare union of vast antiquarian learning, mathematical ability, practical skill, and deep artist-feeling which distinguished his professional character.

Mr. Derrick was one of the original promoters of the Architectural Society of Oxford, [H](#) a member of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and of several learned Societies, He enjoyed the friendship of the lamented Pugin, of Douglas Jerrold, Wilkie, Haydon, Allan Cunningham, Chantrey, [I](#) and many others equally distinguished in the world of art and letters.

Although naturally of a modest and retiring nature, Mr. Derrick was ever cheerful, his conversation animated, pointed, and always profitable. In his intercourse with the world, he was a man of strict integrity and honour. His hand and heart were always open to the suffering and needy; self was a word the meaning of which he had never learned to comprehend; deceit, chicanery, and oppression in all its forms, were his perfect abhorrence. The writer of this hasty tribute to his memory had the honour of knowing him intimate and never has he met a man more unselfish in his aims, more true and abiding in his friendship, more frank and chivalrous in his bearing, or more generous and genial in his feelings -

"His life was gentle, and the elements

"So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up

"And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

Cut off in middle life, at a moment when a brilliant future in his newly adopted home again dawned before him, it will be felt by many of his professional friends that no ordinary man has passed from among them."

Derick's Career

There are considerable problems in dating Derick's first completed works. The *NYEP* obituary seems to indicate that his career was preceded by travel on the continent, but no record of dates or itinerary have emerged. His design for 'a proposed church' at Killesher, in County Fermanagh, of which a signed drawing exists in the records of the Representative Church Body [of Ireland], is given at the head of the list of works on the Irish Architectural Archive database, though grounds for its early date are not given. However logical it would be for his first efforts to be made in Ireland, there seems a possibility that this project might be associated with the erection of a Chapel of Ease, at Druminiskill around 1855-60, which IAA cross references with Killesher.

Information given to the IAA by Howard Colvin dates the Boatmen's Floating Chapel on the Oxford Canal only to the '1830s', but it must be a strong contender for Derick's first project in England. This is described as of 'Grecian style with bellcote', which, in view of his later conversion to Gothic, may be another interesting indication of his early taste in styles. This preference persisted in his Roman Catholic, Holy Trinity Church, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire which was opened about October 1836. (Figure 1). No design by Derick could be a sharper contrast with his later work. It too might be described as Grecian in style and was highly praised by 'Viator', a Catholic reporter, in the remarkably titled *London and Dublin Orthodox Journal of Useful Knowledge* of April 1, 1837. [2](#) After an engaging account of seeing the church from the Worcester Sovereign coach and receiving an account of it from the coachman, he also reflects on the

satisfactory growth of the Roman Catholic faith after the oppressions of the past. In describing the church he claims that 'its chaste and beautiful simplicity cannot fail to give pleasure to every man of taste who sees it.' and remarks that it 'has apparently two entrances with enclosed porticoes on the north side, but that at the north east end opens into a vault beneath the sanctuary. The porticoe's finish[ed] with a sarcophagus, which is a bold, original, and fine conception of the architect, a Mr. Derick of Oxford.'



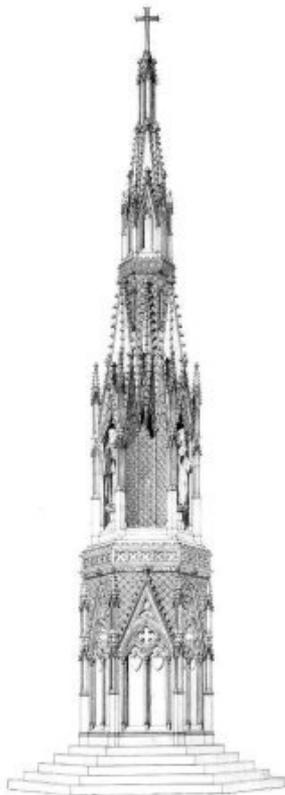
Holy Trinity, Chipping Norton. Completed 1836.

The bell tower and cupola became dangerous and were removed in the 1950s.

Photograph: Center for Oxfordshire Studies, Packer 312

The dates for his St. John's Church, Banbury (also Roman Catholic), are usually quoted as 1835-36, but a Gazetteer [3](#) dates its opening to 1838, so it probably came after Chipping Norton and shows that Derick had time to switch his allegiance to the Gothic style, though Pevsner thought that it has, 'a mean W tower with top-heavy

pinnacles' and that 'the Gothic details, as to be expected at this date, are thin and shallow'. Several of the sources describe the architects as 'Hickman and Derick' and there are other indicators that, for a short time, Derick was in partnership. There is also one reference in 1839 to another Hickman & Derick work at St James, Aston, Oxfordshire, with little detail except Pevsner's dismissal of it as 'drab and uninspired, a cheap cardboard Gothic preaching box.' In 1839, the Gothic Revival received a tremendous boost, with the formation of The Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, later to become The Oxford Architectural and Historical Society. The list of founder members, in addition to the usual descending strata of Patrons, Bishops, College Heads, Professors and Honorary Members, included Ordinary Members, one of whom was 'Mr. J.M. Derrick'. In the second list of 1840, they managed to spell his name correctly. He continued to be listed throughout the golden age of the Society until at least 1851.



Derick's entry for the Martyrs' Memorial Competition.

Bodleian MS Top.Sen.a4

It was at this period that, in reaction to the Tractarian movement in Oxford, a scheme to erect a memorial to the Protestant martyrs, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer, was set in train - as a reminder to the Church of England of the perils of a drift to Popery. In addition to extensions of the Church of St. Mary Magdalen - principally the addition of a north aisle - it was decided by the Martyrs' Memorial Committee to build a monument in the style of an Eleanor Cross, derived from that at Waltham. A competition for the design was held and entries were to be submitted by 15 May 1840. The design by George Gilbert Scott and his partner Moffatt, was selected, but the rather strange, elongated design by Derick was said to have been the runner-up 'by a trifling majority'. ⁴ His enrolment into the mainstream of the Gothic Revival was complete.

Jesse Watts Russell of Ilam Hall, Staffordshire, was a generous donor to the appeal for funds for the Martyrs' Memorial, and seems therefore to

have been a committed anti-Tractarian.



Ilam Cross by Derick.
Erected 1840/1

When his wife Mary died in the Autumn of 1840, Jesse commissioned the design for a memorial in the centre of Ilam Village. Derick was chosen as architect and his new design for a much smaller Eleanor-style Ilam Cross was vastly better proportioned than that he produced for the Martyrs' Memorial. It seems to have been built in quite short order and was certainly finished well before the Oxford monument. In addition to the usual attributes of an Eleanor cross, it incorporated basins fed with spring water, piped a considerable distance from a nearby hill called Bunster. Ilam cross may well be among the best of Derick's Gothic Revival work and seems to have led to several other, large scale projects.

Meanwhile, Derick had also submitted designs for the north aisle addition to St Mary Magdalen, also part of the adjacent memorial to the protestant martyrs. But he was superseded by George Gilbert Scott, though consoled with the commission of work on the interior of the new aisle and other parts of the church, as well as by the contract for Ilam Cross. Further commissions from Jesse Watts-Russell were to be forthcoming in the region of Jesse's other estate near Oundle, Northants.

In the early 1840s, Derick also obtained much work on restorations of churches, some of them so radical as to constitute extensive rebuilding of major parts of the churches involved. In 1840 he worked on St Andrew's, Sandford-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, where he made an exception to the normally *de rigueur* 'First Pointed' style. According to Pevsner, 'J. Derick built the aggressively "Norman", W tower to replace a wooden structure. At the same time the chancel arch was rebuilt and two new windows were inserted, probably the N lancet in the chancel and the two-light window in the S wall of the nave.' In 1840/41 he carried out a less radical restoration at St. Giles Church, Oxford. The Proceedings of the Society reported work on 'the North aisle and the chapel at the east end of the south (now the Vestry) ...

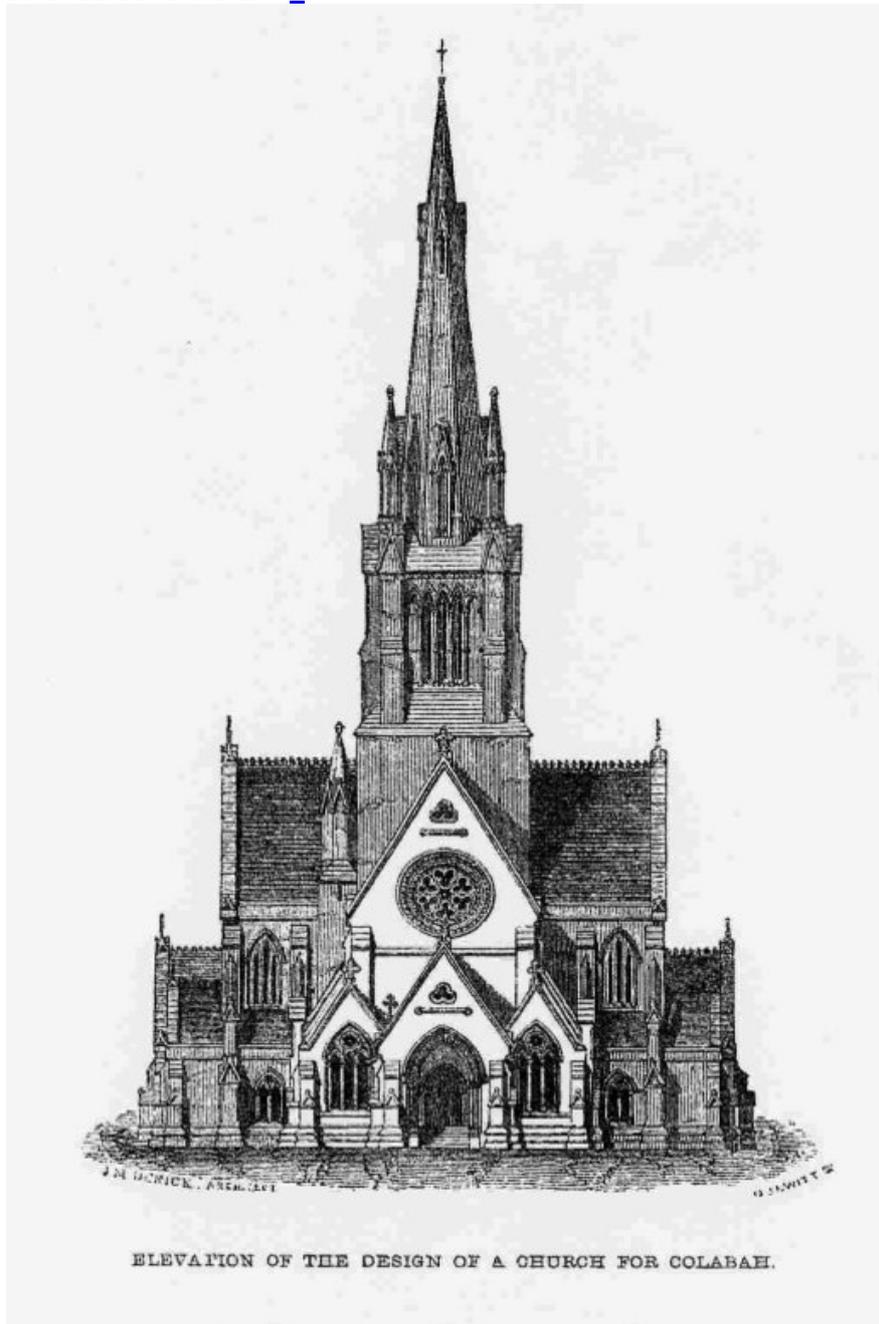
The east window of this chapel has been beautifully restored by Mr. Grimsley under the direction of Mr. Derick.' [5](#)

In the same issue of Proceedings, the list of new, 'Ordinary Members' included both J.Watts Russell, Esq., Ilam Hall, Derbyshire [sic - Staffordshire] and D.W.Watts Russell, Esq., [sic - Jesse David W-R, the eldest son, then about twenty-eight years old] Biggin Hall, Oundle, Northants. In 1843, G.R. Mackarness, of Merton College, was elected to membership. From 1854 -1875, Rev. Mackarness was vicar of Ilam and this may be his first contact with Jesse Watts-Russell, the patron of the living. Asterisks by all these names, as well as that of Derick, indicate that were all life members.

In 1841, the Society published in Folio, "Working Drawings of Stanton-Harcourt Church, Oxfordshire, by John M. Derick, Esq., Architect. [6](#) This is the only published work by Derick which has come to light, despite his obituarist's claim. In 1844, Derick exhibited at the Society some extra drawings for a second edition being prepared at that time. At a meeting of the Society in June 1841 he read a paper by Benjamin Ferrey on St. Catherine's Chapel, Abbotsbury. At the same meeting he displayed a model of the porch of St. Peter's Church, Oxford showing the construction of a vault without cement. Throughout the 1840s, as the Society grew in size and influence, it was approached by many people wanting advice on restoration of their churches, or help with designs for new churches. Many of the projects were too small to appear in the Society's proceedings, but several major requests were reported. At the 1842 AGM of the Society it was announced that ' We have had the satisfaction of furnishing a design for a Gothic Cathedral at St. John's, Newfoundland, at the request of the Bishop. The drawings have been made by Mr. Derick, under the superintendence of the [Committee of the] Society. It is in the Early English style.' Superintendence by the Committee must have been the lot of all the architects producing designs for the Society to send out. It is not difficult to guess who would be blamed if a design was not accepted. In fact Derick was later superseded in the Newfoundland project - not for the first time - by George Gilbert Scott.

A more interesting case arose when the Society received a letter in March 1843, from the Chaplain to the Honourable East India Company, asking for them to supply a design for a church to be built at Colabah (now Kolabah), in the outskirts of Bombay (now Mumbai), as a memorial to the forces who died in the disasters of the Afghan and Sind campaigns a couple of years previously. By November, the designs by Derick were presented for inspection at a meeting of the Society and the occasion was taken to praise the skill with which he

had adapted the Gothic style to the extreme climate of India. The Master of University College commented that he thought that, 'Mr Derick had shewn considerable skill by the manner in which he had carried out this object, without injuring the Church-like effect, or departing from the purity of Gothic Architecture. The plan is cruciform, surrounded on all sides by a cloister masking the lower windows and protecting them from the sun, and enabling them to receive the sea breeze at all seasons; the western porch is large enough for carriages to drive under it, so that persons may enter the Church without being once exposed to the direct rays of the sun. There is a crypt under the Church, and an air-chamber in the roof, connected with the central tower and spire, so as to ensure a continual current of air.' [7](#)



Design for the Afghan Memorial Church at Colabah, Bombay, 1843

[Note the low level open cloister arches either side of the West end.] [8](#)
These arrangements seem perfectly reasonable and it is clear that Derick also supplied specifications and estimates of cost - a

considerable amount of work. A little later, engravings of one elevation and a ground-plan were printed in the Proceedings. However, in June 1845, the proceedings recorded that, 'The Committee regret to state that Mr Derick's beautiful design for Colabah, after all the pains taken to adapt it to the requirements of the climate, has been found altogether unfit for the purpose, as well as requiring an expense for its erecting far surpassing the extent of any funds which can be provided for that end. Under these circumstances a second application was made to our Society, and Mr. Salvin, one of our Honorary Members, has been engaged to furnish a second design at the expense of the Bombay Committee.' The church eventually built seems to have been designed by [Henry?] Conybeare, though one web image of the church, shows only the tower which seems to be very similar to Derick's drawing. [9](#) Another web photograph of the present interior clearly shows that Derick's aisle-less design was not carried out. A year later, the Society received a handsome present of architectural engravings from the Bishop of Bombay, so there seem to have been no ill feelings in that quarter.

In June 1849 the Ecclesiological Society [J](#) reported that, 'S. John, Colaba [sic], Bombay. - We have received from an anonymous hand a lithograph of this church, now in course of erection ...' The description tallies with the modern web image and indicates that it is almost certainly Conybeare's design.

If Derick felt slighted by this experience, his feelings can not have been improved by a paper read to the Oxford Society in April 1845 by Mr. Millard, "On the style of Architecture to be adopted in Colonial Churches". In a more than slightly mean-spirited depreciation of Derick's design, in which, of course, he does not mention his name, he quotes from a letter from the Bishop of Bombay, giving hints on principles of design for hot climates, and infers that Derick's design failed to take them adequately into account. Indeed he goes on to claim that the problems were really insoluble, especially any attempt to reconcile the presence of punkahs in the nave with Gothic Revival orthodoxy. Derick's opinion about this scholastical put-down is not recorded.

However, Derick had some very successful designs. Indeed in the Index of Contents for The Ecclesiologist of September 1843, there is a rare notice taken of mere architects, who never normally appear in indexes. The effect is rather spoilt by the rather crude classification of the men concerned, either as 'Approved' or 'Condemned'. 'Mr. Allen, Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Carpenter, and Mr. Derrick' get in under the wire, while apostates such as Mr Barry, and Mr Blore are cast out.

About this date, the Goodhart-Rendell card index at the RIBA, lists two churches, about which little has come to light. G-R was doubtful about the work on a church in West Moulsey [sic - Molesey], Surrey and the Church of Eisey (Latton) Wilts. is also listed in IAA. An opportunity to investigate these references has not occurred.

In 1843 and 44 Pevsner lists the church of St John the Apostle, Marchwood, Hants, whereas NMR/LBS lists it as 1847. A web site confirms J.M.Derick as the architect and, from the image used, it seems to be a creditable design, built in yellow brick with Caen stone mouldings. Its 40m high tower is conspicuous across Southampton Water. [10](#) Goodhart-Rendell seemed to admire it and thought it, 'Extraordinarily typical of a passing phase.'

Derick carried out some restoration on St Cross Parish Church, Oxford. G.W.A. Perry dates this work to 1837-38 and refers to 'extensive demolitions and creation of new aisles.' [11](#) But it seems there maybe a confusion and the NMR/LBS and Pevsner records are more accurate when they limit Derick's participation to the creation of a new south aisles in 1843.

In September of the same year *The Ecclesiologist* reviewed a completed church by Derick in Trevor, Near Limerick, which indicates that Derick continued to find work in Ireland, even at this busy period of his life. In the Index of Contents, this church is given a small letter 'p', meaning 'praised'. Indeed the reviewer writes,

'This is an excellent design and approaches very near to the style and spirit of an ancient country church. Simplicity is admirably maintained throughout; there is no attempt at elaborate detail or conspicuous ornament, but every feature is bold, consistent, and real.' Then, having found only seven points of criticism to make, comes the pat on the head, 'Upon the whole the design is deserving of high commendation.'

But one of Derick's most significant works was the design and building of the new church of St Saviour, Ellerby Road, Leeds. [12](#) Pusey is reputed to have said to the Tractarians, 'We have heard of your sayings, let us hear something of your doings.', by which he meant church building. [13](#) Obviously meaning to practice what he preached, he decided to pay for the erection of a new church and chose a part of Leeds which clearly seemed to be in urgent need of religion, the 'Bank' District in the roughest part of the city. It was reported that, at the laying of the foundation stone, on Holy Cross day, 1842,

'J. M. Derick, Esq., the Architect, handed the mallet to Dr. Hook who laid the stone. ... Very soon afterwards it was discovered that the stone lay over the shaft of a disused mine, but as the situation was so good, and so well adapted for a Parish Church ... £1000 had therefore to be spent in making the foundation secure. The foundation stone bears the inscription, 'A.D. 1842 ... JOHN MACDUFF DERICK, of Oxford, Architect. JOHN NEWLAND HILLAS, of Headingley, Builder.' [14](#)

Pevsner says of St Saviour, 'Macduff Derick's is a remarkably serious piece of design, both scholarly and emotionally potent.' He refers to a planned spire (never built) modelled on that of St Mary Oxford.

Goodhart-Rendells card index has only the bare details so Orbach's claim that he had been impressed by St Saviour seems to be based on some other evidence. [15](#)

The church was consecrated three years later and it was originally intended that the name would be Holy Cross but, in the first of many pettifogging objections by an obstructive Bishop, it was named St Saviour. He also objected to the inscription over the West door, 'Ye who enter this holy place, pray for the sinner who built it.' Whether this meant Pusey or Derick or even Hillas the builder is not revealed. The church has been described as the very first Tractarian church and its Anglo-Catholic leanings led to the expected controversies, the result of which was a group of parishioners and clergy seceding to Rome and building their own Roman Catholic church in Leeds.

In 1844, Derick is named as re-building Holy Trinity Church, Over Worton, Oxfordshire. [16](#) Betjeman describes it merely as 'Rich Victorian' but Pevsner and NMR/LBS identify the work as rebuilding, the latter reporting, 'Rebuilt incorporating some medieval work by J. Derrick for Revd. William Wilson.'

Late in 1844, the results of a competition to design a new Choristers' School at Magdalen College, Oxford, were announced and Derick won the contest, his drawings being handed round at a meeting of the Oxford Architectural Society in May the following year and exhibited at the Royal Academy and, as late as 1852, at the Royal Hibernian Academy, in Dublin. The opposition included no less than Pugin and Scott and this triumph was widely noted. Unfortunately, an anonymous letter in *The Builder* of 30th November, made a not very subtle insinuation that Derick had been allowed unfair advantages, perhaps even having had access to the other entries as well as being allowed to enter his designs a fortnight after the deadline specified in the printed instructions for the competition. This was hotly denied in the next issue, by a letter from the College Bursar, J.R. Bloxham, who vouched that, 'Mr. Derick has never had a single glance at any one of the numerous designs intrusted to my care, and laid before the college for its decision, and I may truly say that Mr. Derick had no facility or advantage allowed him which had been refused to any other competitor.' Nevertheless, Derick's design was not carried out and the School was eventually built to a design by John Buckler in 1849. [17](#)

In the same year Derick exhibited a drawing at the Royal Academy of a 'Memorial to a Lady, now erecting at Munich,' [k](#) together with the design for the Holy Cross (eventually St Saviour) church in Leeds. Around 1845/46 a Church by Derick was built at Birch-in-Rusholme, Manchester. The reviewer from *The Ecclesiologist* had to admit that he had not seen this church but had 'been favoured with a

description by a friend on whose taste we rely' and 'a newspaper account', for his critique. Relations with Derick show signs of deterioration. The reviewer 'could have wished'; 'could very heartily have wished'; 'had seen the elevation of the east end, which we do not think felicitous', etc etc. According to NMR/LBS this church has now been converted into a nursing home.

In 1846, Derick's Church of Ireland church at Clonbur, Galway indicates that Derick was still actively engaged in Ireland. The caption for the drawing exhibited at the Royal Academy describes it as an 'Episcopal chapel now erecting ... for Lady E.S. Clements'. *The Ecclesiologist* is rather cool about a drawing, almost certainly of this building, exhibited at the R.A., where it accuses the chapel of the sin that dare not speak its name in ecclesiological circles, being 'without the vestige of a chancel.' [18](#)

1846 must have been a busy year for Derick. At Swettenham in Cheshire, he carried out alterations which NMR/LBS describes as 'in the Romanesque style' - not designed therefore to endear himself to the ecclesiologists. Despite having failed to be placed in a competition for designs for the restoration of Eton College Chapel in 1844, he got the drawings exhibited at the R.A. in '46.

In the same year, he started on the large church of St Mark at Pensnett, Kingswinford, Staffordshire. This handsome church was built, on the steep slopes of Barrow Hill, to serve the new district parish of Pensnett, and cost £13,000. [19](#) The June edition of *The Ecclesiologist* noted that they had received a lithograph of the church, taken from the south-west. The decline in Derick's relations with the ecclesiologists then seemed to reach a nadir. The review was scathing, with an affected regret, -

'We are really sorry to have to criticise this church. It is a very wearying thing for us to have time after time to repeat the same blame of the same faults, to have to put so many earnest persons to pain, by unfavourable notices of churches, which are really churches in their mass, and not conventicles, ... We are fully alive to the imputations which we may render ourselves liable to, of unfair feelings whether of praise, or of disfavour to particular individuals.' [20](#)

The complaints are based on the accusation that, 'It is designed too much for effect.' and refers to 'needless profusion of ornament, and irregular multiplicity of effects'. They go on to assert that 'such a design ought never to have been entertained.'

Not surprisingly, the following issue of the Proceedings refers to a letter (not, of course, printed in full) received from the incumbent of St Mark's, 'with the tone of which we are much grieved and surprised.' They plead wide-eyed innocence of the accusation of having 'administered unjust and unasked-for condemnation to one who "might indeed have looked for sympathy and encouragement"' and of 'pique against particular architects'. They add an objection to 'the use of transepts in modern churches', shown in another print they have received and then insert an escape clause about judging from

drawings. Pevsner, however, thinks this church, 'A large serious, decidedly High Victorian building', despite 'an unfortunately incomplete S tower.'

In 1847 Derick designed one of the only two domestic buildings recorded, Stanmore Hall, Middlesex. This was built for the prototype oil magnate, William Knox D'Arcy. Later, it was described by William Morris as, 'a wretched uncomfortable place! a sham Gothic house of fifty years ago ...'. The hall was extensively altered in c. 1890.

Also in 1847, one of Derick's most important restorations was carried out for the Watts-Russell family at Benefield, the parish in which their second large estate at Biggin Hall, near Oundle was situated. About this time Ilam Hall became the usual country residence for Jesse Snr. and Biggin for his eldest son Jesse David, but it seems likely that Jesse snr would have been the patron of this radical remodelling of the building. Pevsner quotes Goodhart-Rendell in characterising the completed scheme as, 'An important specimen of the sumptuous Tractarian church' but this is an opinion which the Watts-Russell may not have found congenial, since it had been only six years since Jesse had supported the Martyrs' Memorial appeal and Ilam Cross, with its close connection to that at Oxford, might be interpreted as an anti-Tractarian tract-in-stone. Benefield is an illustration that a sumptuous church was not necessarily a symbol of Anglo-Catholic allegiance. Jesse never seems to have leaned to the right in religion and was horrified when his second son Michael, converted to Rome. *The Ecclesiologist* did not get round to reviewing this restoration until 1852, when they seem to have taken a reasonably positive attitude to it, finding that, 'Everything is most solid and costly in construction, and the design is very fair'. They also had praise for Watts-Russell, who eschewed the provision of a bench and desk for him in the chancel, 'but with excellent taste that gentleman prefers a seat in the nave'. There was also praise for the use of polychrome, very handsome fittings and a complete floor of encaustic tiles. Typically however, their praise had to be qualified. 'Upon the whole this interesting church must take a high rank among the many which owe their restoration to the earlier times of the present movement.' The implication that, in a few years, their ideas of good Gothic Revival had significantly evolved hardly sits fair with their earlier obsession with a fairly narrow series of orthodox principles. Goodhart-Rendell's praise and Pevsner's echo of it tend to indicate that Derick was at the peak of his 'restoration' powers. [21](#)

In 1848, Derick rebuilt the chancel of St Lawrence, Bradfield-on-the-Green, Northants. but no details have come to light.

There then occurs what may be evidence for the break in Derick's career mentioned in his NYEP obituary, since there is only the

restoration of a window in the south chapel of St Giles parish church in Oxford and restoration and windows at the Church of St Peter & St Paul, in Marton, Cheshire [L / 22](#) before the (possible) resumption of Derick's practice in 1850, when he started to design a church to be built at Carlow in Ireland. This was the Bruen Testimonial (Church of Ireland) Church.

In 1841, Colonel Henry Bruen was returned to parliament in an election the result of which was challenged. There seems to have been a collection to finance his defence of the election petition but, when he received a petition for the erection of a new church and the petitioners had only £2,000 in hand, he agreed to cover the rest of the cost from the funds raised for his case - presumably the money not having been needed after all. Derick's wife, Joyce, [M](#) laid the foundation stone on 21st May 1852 and the building was completed in 1858, when *The Builder* for 28th August reviewed it. One interesting feature was that, 'Attached to the tower is a smaller one of octagon shape, terminated with pyramidal roof and crocketed pinnacle, and containing a winding staircase leading to belfry and to the pulpit, through a doorway formed with solid granite in the massive but deeply splayed and moulded pier of the tower.' Here might be noticed a trace of the eccentricity which was to appear more prominently later. The review also remarked on the polychrome effect of the use of several different local granites and 'window tracery, gurgoyles, [sic] &c of Yorkshire stone on the exterior'.

The fate of the church was quite strange. In 1926 it was purchased by Very Rev. James Fogarty parish priest of Graiguecullen, was taken down stone by stone and was re-erected in his parish as the Catholic Church of St Anne. 'It still lacks its spire, the stone of which [is] awaiting a propitious time for erection. Both at the taking down and the erection of the church, a steeplejack was killed.' [23](#)

The last two ecclesiastical buildings which have come to light are a small Chapel of Ease at Druminiskill, which is cross referenced by IAA to the church at Killesher. It is possible that both were part of the same commission for the mother church and the chapel, which would date them to 1855-60. The Chapel is described in IAA as, 'a small but characterful church in red brick, with grey stone trim. Completed after his death.' Architects Carmichael and Jones are listed, but perhaps they finished the work on a building started by Derick, for whom there are several references in the local press. The only other restoration project found was at St Lawrence, North Hinksey, Berkshire, where Derick is named in NMR/LBS as rebuilding the chancel arch, 'in the 1800s.'

The suggestion in the NYEP obituary, that Derick may have suffered from mental problems, might be considered to be supported by

Derick's final Irish design, which is only the second domestic building which has been traced. This was for a house for John Dawson Duckett, described in *The Builder* in 1855 - Duckett's-grove, Carlow. *The Builder* quotes the *Carlow Sentinel* describing the 'new buildings',

'The mansion is said to belong to a transition period between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The style is castellated domestic. It consists of a centre and wings, - the centre, composed of the principal gateway, with lodges on either side, in flanking towers to the gateway. These towers are of unequal height - the one being 50, and the other 43 feet - the taller tower having a characteristic spiral stair leading to apartments above, which are fireproof. By the staircase, which is continuous, there is an ascent to a level flat or terrace of solid masonry, composed of Carlow flags with drips, after the manner of Roslyn Castle. The pile of the building is of irregular outline in plan, covering an extent of about 240 feet. The design is by Mr. J.M. Derrick [sic], and the contractors are Messrs. Kelly and Kinsella, who have been occupied about two years in the work.'



Ducket's-grove, Carlow.

Photograph by Suzanne Clarke. 2003

The Latin tag on Wren's memorial, '*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*', would, one hopes in Derick's case, be applied to one of his successful high Victorian designs such as St Saviour, Leeds or St Mark, Pensnett - but Duckett's-grove?

The Duckett family lived there until around 1915. The house was gutted by fire in 1933 and the Bishop Foley Schools were partly built with ashlar from the ruins. But the shell of the huge range of the building and the spiral staircase tower survived. Could it be the work of a mentally disturbed architect, or is it the result of a mentally disturbed patron? [24](#) The New York Evening Post obituary, tells us that Derick arrived in America in the Summer of 1858, so there is a

gap between his last recorded building and his arrival. This may be the withdrawal from architect referred to, but would not allow time for its resumption. His death, 'recorded in the journals of the 20th instant' [September] 1859 must have occurred shortly before that date.

A rather sad epilogue to Derick's life was reported in *The Builder* of October 26th 1861. After a short obituary, referring to Derick dying 'recently' and causing many sources to list 1861 incorrectly as the date of his death, it announced that,

'We regret to learn that his widow, who has come to this country for the recovery of her child's health, is now in entirely destitute circumstances. She is endeavouring to raise a small sum to enable her to return to America, where she anticipates a better opportunity of obtaining a livelihood than in this country. Mrs. Derrick, we are glad to learn, is meeting with much sympathy from the members of the Architects' Benevolent Society; and we trust she will speedily be able to realize the object she has in view.' [25](#)

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JOHN MACDUFF DERICK LIST OF DESIGNS EXHIBITED & ADDRESSES

Royal Academy of Art

- 1843 1228 New church of St. John the Evangelist at Marchwood, Hants.
1263 New cathedral church at St. John's, Newfoundland
- 1844 1059 Memorial to a lady now erecting at Munich.
1142 Holy Cross new church, Leeds. [St. Saviours]
- 1845 1220 New choristers' school, etc., Magdalen College, Oxford.
1291 Interior of an Anglican church.
- 1846 1290 Design for restoring Eton College.
1291 The Episcopal chapel now erecting at Cloabur [sic - Clonbur], Mayo, for Lady E.S. Clements.
- 1852 1217 New church at Carlow, SE view (No. 1217)
Interior of new church of St. James at Birch, near Manchester.

Royal Hibernian Academy DERICK, John McDuff A.R.H.A.

- 1846 Clonbur Church (No. 210)
- 1853 1853 St Saviour's New Church, Leeds. (No. 173)
New Church of St James at Birch near Manchester. (No. 210)
Choristers' Buildings, Interior of Hall, Magdalen College, Oxford (Nos. 216; 389)
Design for the Bruen Testimonial Church, Carlow, SE view. (No. 373)

National Exhibition of the Arts, Manufactures & Products, Cork.

- 1852 1852 Stanmore Hall. (No.262)
Afghan Memorial Church, Colaba (No. 264)

Addresses used

- 1839 St John's Street, Oxford.
- 1843-46 54 Cornmarket, Oxford. 'Left c.1848'
- 1846,1852 Hanover Chambers, 13, Furnival's Inn, London W.C.
No Irish addresses found/looked for.

SOURCES

It is hoped to publish a fully detailed and accurate list in due course and information about new sources would be gratefully received.

The Ecclesiologist. Journal of the Ecclesiological Society.
Goodhart-Rendell card index at Royal Institute of British Architects
Irish Architectural Archive.
National Monument Record/Listed Buildings database
The New York Evening Post, 23rd September 1859.
Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture. Later
Oxford Architectural Society - proceedings.
Pevsner CD-ROM, all counties.
Royal Academy of Arts. GRAVES (Algernon) 1905 "The Royal
Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their
work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904". London.
Representative Church Body, Ireland.
Royal Hibernian Academy.
Royal Institute of British Architects, Biography files.
Information from internet web sites. It is a matter of some surprise
and regret how few churches have a an illustrated web site, but the
links enable one to refer to more images than can be included in the
text. These will lead to sites including image/s of the relevant church.

REFERENCES

The author would welcome details of any other references to Derick's life and/or works.
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A A note at the RIBA indicates that Howard Colvin found that Derick was listed as being aged thirty-five in the 1841 census. The *NYEP* obit. indicates that he died shortly before 20th September 1859. The usual date of death cited, 1861, is a misunderstanding caused by the delayed notice in *The Builder* of Oct.26 1861, where his death is referred to as having

occurred 'recently'. 

B . In March 1846, Derick was present at Ilam Hall, Staffordshire at the signing of a legal deed, which he signed as a witness. Unfortunately he signed in the wrong place and the signature had to be crossed out and repeated overleaf - an embarrassing moment for a young architect. His spelling of his own name with one 'r' must be considered definitive. In direct quotes the verbatim spelling has been adopted. Elsewhere the correct version is used.



C Irish Architectural Archive [IAA] queries whether his father might be a recorded builder and architect by that name. 

D His name does not figure in Alumni Dublinenses. 

E The Research Centre at The Sir John Soane Museum is justly proud of their comprehensive records. All assistants were properly articulated and anyone providing paid

services was entered in a ledger. Alas, Derick's name is not listed in either case. 

F . No significant break in his work is immediately apparent, so the gap was not a particularly long one. 

G . In fact, apart from exhibiting designs and making a small number of presentations to meetings, only one published work has yet come to light, a folio edition of his drawings of the church at Stanton Harcourt, a copy of which has not been located. 

H . The Society was originally formed as The Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture. It wasn't until 1847 (by which time their commitment to Gothic Revival was common knowledge) that it occurred to them to choose a less clumsy name. 

- I.** It was Chantrey's close relationship with the promoters of the Martyrs' Memorial which probably brought him into contact with Derick. See ["The History of Ilam Cross"](#). 
- J.** Launched as the Cambridge Camden Society in 1838 and later called The Ecclesiological Society. The Proceedings were published as The Ecclesiologist. For much of the 1840s, the notices of Derick's work were on the whole favourable. Later, they became more critical. 
- K.** No information about this monument has come to light. 
- L.** One might tremble at the prospect of Victorian restoration of this remarkable, half-timbered church. At least the priceless wall paintings survived Gothic Revival zeal. 
- M.** This is her one and only citation. 
1. "Working Drawings of Stanton-Harcourt Church, Oxfordshire, by John M. Derick, Esq., Architect." (1842). Published by the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, (OSPSGA). 
 2. ANDREWS (Wm. Eusebius) Ed. 1837 *The London and Dublin Orthodox Journal of Useful Knowledge*, 205. Cited by COLVIN (Howard) 1995 "Biographical Dictionary of British Architects". 
 3. GARDNER (R.) 1852 "Gazetteer of The County of Oxford". 
 4. WELLS (J.P.) 1968 "The Martyrs' Memorial". IN: *Oxford Magazine*. 2nd February 1968 
 5. OSPSGA, December 2, 1840. 
 6. There is no subsequent reference to the actual publication of a second edition. No copy of the Folio (of either edition) has yet been found. 
 7. OSPSGA, November 15, 1843 
 8. Ibid. June 17, 1844 
 - 9 [The Afghan Memorial Church, Mumbai -WEB](#) 
 - 10 [St. John the Apostle, Marchwood, Hants - WEB](#) 
 11. PERRY (G.W.A.) ND 'An accumulation of architects, being a listing of those architects who designed the buildings of Oxford'. 
 - 12 [St. Saviours Leeds - WEB](#) OR [Another view.](#) 
 13. Cited in GRANTHAM Rev. George Peirce B.A. [1872] "A History of Saint Saviour's Leeds." 
 14. Ibid. 
 15. ORBACH (Julian) 1987 "The Blue Guide: Victorian Architecture in Britain" 
 16. [Holy Trinity Church, Over Warton, Oxfordshire - WEB.](#) 
 17. HARPER, (Roger H.) 1983 "Victorian Architectural Competitions", p.210; COLVIN (Howard) 1983 "Unbuilt Oxford". 
 18. *Ecclesiologist* XII June 1846 p.254 
 19. [St. Martin's, Pensnett, Kingswinford, Staffs.](#) [A bell-ringers web site with a reasonable picture, showing the unfinished tower.] 
 20. *Ecclesiologist* August 1846 p.150 
 21. Jesse Watts-Russell also spent large sums on the restoration of Ilam Church in 1854/55, one of George Gilbert Scott's early restorations in which Scott used the services of two important exponents of Gothic Revival arts - Francis Skidmore, who made the delicate chancel screen and Clayton and Bell, who made several stained glass windows. Both were in the early stages of their careers and became close associates with Scott, Skidmore in particular for many years. 
 22. [St. Peter & St. Paul, Marton, Cheshire - WEB](#) 
 23. [Bruen Testimonial Church \(of Ireland\), later St Anne's \(Catholic\) Church, Carlow, Ireland - WEB](#) 
 24. [Duckett's Grove, Carlow, Ireland.](#) 

25 . *The Builder* carried another letter about Derick in its next issue, drawing attention to some more of his works not listed in the original obituary. It was signed 'W.P.', probably the indefatigable collector of architectural history, Wyatt Papworth, later curator of the Sir John Soane Museum, where he died in 1894.