

George Edmund Street



George Edmund Street (1824–81) was beyond doubt one of the greatest architects of the 19th century, not just in Britain, but in Europe. Sir Arthur Blomfield — another great church architect — claimed that he was ‘universally admitted to be the first architect of the day’. The Diocese of Oxford is extraordinarily fortunate to possess so much of his work.

Above All Saints, Boyne Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire. One of Street's finest churches, designed in 1854–5. The polychrome brickwork is combined in the chancel with tiles and alabaster. Street's pews and other fittings survive.

His connection with the Diocese originated in his being recommended by Benjamin Webb (secretary of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society) to the Revd William Butler, the well-known Vicar of Wantage, for the design of his vicarage in 1849. Butler introduced him to Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, and as a result in 1850 he was appointed architect to the Oxford

Diocesan Church Building Society, and moved to Wantage.

The job involved checking designs submitted by other architects, and brought him commissions of his own. Also in 1850 he made his first visit to the Continent, touring Northern France. He later published important books on Gothic architecture in Italy and Spain.

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In 1852 he moved to Oxford. Important commissions included Cuddesdon College, in 1853, and All Saints, Boyne Hill, Maidenhead, in 1854. In the next year Street moved to London, but he continued to check designs for the Oxford Diocesan Church Building Society, and to do extensive work in the Diocese, until his death in 1881.

In Berkshire alone he worked on 34 churches, his contribution ranging from minor repairs to complete new buildings, and he built fifteen schools, eight parsonages, and one convent. The figures for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire are similar.

Street's new churches are generally admired. They include both grand town churches, like All Saints, Boyne Hill, and SS Philip and James, Oxford (no longer in use for worship), and remarkable country churches such as Fawley and Brightwalton in Berkshire, Filkins and Milton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire, and Westcott and New Bradwell in Buckinghamshire.

There are still some people for whom Victorian church restoration is a matter for disapproval. Whatever one may think about Street's treatment of post-medieval work, his handling of medieval churches was informed by both scholarship and taste, and it is a substantial asset for any church to have been restored by him.

We want to draw particular attention to the fittings which he

He would not even let his assistants design a keyhole



designed — and it was said that he would not even let his assistants design a keyhole. They are of the highest quality in both design and execution.

We illustrate a few examples. His ironwork is notable, including his characteristic door-hinges and altar rails; he used a Maidenhead blacksmith called James Leaver. His woodwork, such as Altars, choir-stalls, pulpits, screens and pews, is always first-rate. His tile floors (sometimes

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including marble or stone) were designed with equal care.

With careful thought and the input of experienced conservation architects, it is usually possible for the contemporary needs of parishes to be accommodated while retaining Street's carefully designed and wonderfully crafted fittings.

The Victorian Society wishes to encourage those considering alterations to those churches fortunate enough to have work by Street to think very carefully before destroying or disposing of any of it.

The Society is always willing to help with information or advice.

Further reading

The *Memoir of George Edmund Street* by his son Arthur Edmund (1888) is not easy to get hold of, but an important recent book is David B. Brownlee's *The Law Courts:*

Above St Mary the Virgin, Fawley, Berkshire. One of Street's best country churches, built in 1865-6, it has a powerful apse and tower.

Above right St Peter's, Burnham, Buckinghamshire. The church was restored in 1863-4 by Street, who designed the pews with their striking traceried ends.

Right All Saints, Boyne Hill. The 'superbly modelled tower' (Paul Joyce), with its striped belfry and stone broach-spire.

Below Assumption of the Virgin, Leckhampstead, Buckinghamshire. The church was restored in 1871-2 by Street.

the architecture of George Edmund Street (MIT Press, 1984).

In 1998 the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Reading published *George Edmund Street: a Victorian architect in Berkshire*, edited by John Elliott and John Pritchard, an invaluable introduction and gazetteer.

The volumes of the *Buildings of England* series ('Pevsners') contain basic information. The Street entries in *The Faber Guide to Victorian Churches* (edited by Peter Howell and Ian Sutton, 1989) were written by Paul Joyce, who knew more about Street than anyone.



The Victorian Society is the national charity campaigning for the Victorian and Edwardian historic environment

The Victorian Society

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THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

G E Street in Oxford Diocese

BERKSHIRE

Bray, St Michael
Brightwalton, All Saints
Chaddleworth, St Andrew
Chilton, All Saints
Denchworth, St James
Drayton, St Peter
Eastbury, St James
Fawley, St Mary
Goosey, All Saints
Lambourn, St Michael
Lockinge, All Saints
Maidenhead, All Saints, Boyne Hill
Milton, St Blaise
North Moreton, All Saints
Peasemore, St Barnabas
Purley, St Mary
Sandhurst, St Michael
Shottesbrooke, St John the Baptist
Speen, St Mary
Stanford-in-the-Vale, St Denys
Steventon, St Michael
Sunningdale, Holy Trinity
Tilehurst, St Michael
Uffington, St Mary
Wantage, Sts Peter and Paul
Warfield, St Michael
Watchfield, St Thomas
West Challow, St Laurence
West Ilsley, All Saints
White Waltham, St Mary
Winkfield, St Mary

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Addington, St Mary
Ashley Green, St John the Evangelist
Aston Abbots, St James
Beachampton, Assumption
Bierton, St James
Bradenham, St Botolph
Burnham, St Peter
Chalfont St Giles, St Giles
Chalfont St Peter, St Peter
Cheddington, St Giles
Coleshill, All Saints
Colnbrook, St Thomas
Cuddington, St Nicholas
Denham, St Mary
Eton College Chapel
Fingest, St Bartholomew
Fulmer, St James
Hardwick, St Mary
Hedsor, St Nicholas
High Wycombe, All Saints
High Wycombe, St Anne, Wycombe
Marsh
Hulcott, All Saints
Ivinghoe, St Mary
Leckhampstead, Assumption
Lillingstone Dayrell, St Nicholas
Longwick-cum-Imer, St Peter
Marlow, All Saints
Middleton, All Saints

New Bradwell, St James
Monks Risborough, St Dunstan
Nash, All Saints
Newport Pagnell, Sts Peter and Paul
Oving, All Saints
Sherington, St Laud
Slough, St Peter, Chalvey
Soulbury, All Saints
Stewkley, St Michael
Stoke Poges, St Giles
Wendover, St Mary
Westbury, St Augustine
Westcott, St Mary
Wexham, St Mary
Whitchurch, St John the Evangelist
Wotton Underwood, All Saints

OXFORDSHIRE

Oxford, Jesus College Chapel
Oxford, St Ebbe
Oxford, St Michael
Oxford, St Thomas
Oxford, St James, Cowley
Ascott-under-Wychwood, Holy Trinity
Barford St John, St John
Bloxham, St Mary
Bloxham, All Saints School Chapel
Brize Norton, St Britius
Burford, St John the Baptist
Cuddesdon, All Saints
Cuddesdon College Chapel
Deddington, Sts Peter and Paul
Drayton St Leonard, St Leonard
Elsfield, St Thomas of Canterbury
Enstone, St Kenelm
Filkins, St Peter
Fritwell, St Olave

Glympton, St Mary
Great Rollright, St Andrew
Hethe, St Edmund and St George
Iffley, St Mary
Little Tew, St John the Evangelist
Middleton Stoney, All Saints
Milcombe, St Lawrence
Milton-under-Wychwood, St Simon
and St Jude
North Leigh, St Mary
Salford, St Mary
Sandford St Martin, St Martin
Shiplake, Sts Peter and Paul
Shipton-under-Wychwood, St Mary
Tackley, St Nicholas
Waterstock, St Leonard
Westcote Barton, St Edward the
Confessor
Wheatley, St Mary
Witney, St Mary

Below Assumption,
Leckhampstead. The
strikingly individual pews
are characteristic of
Street.

