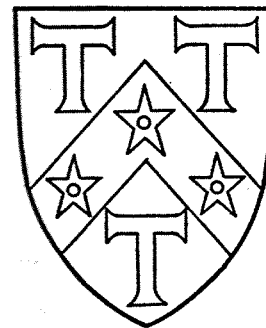


# ST. ANTONY'S COLLEGE OXFORD

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A HISTORY OF ITS  
BUILDINGS AND SITE



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### I. *The Site and its History*

ALTHOUGH one of the most recent colleges of the University, St. Antony's may claim to be amidst the site of one of Oxford's oldest known settlements. Reviewing the evidence at the turn of this century, a commentator on *Hutten's Dissertation on the Antiquities of Oxford* (1630) observed that St. Margaret's and Bevington Roads represented the 'traces of the Roman settlement nearest to Oxford in this direction';<sup>1</sup> subsequent indications point to early occupation where the University Church and where the Museum now stand. There is a scatter of Roman material throughout the City, but the bricks and tiles found along Bevington Road, half the length of which is now occupied by the College, would testify to actual habitation. A history of the neighbouring parish church of St. Philip and St. James states that Roman coins were found in the excavations for the convent which has become the College and that 'the late Professor Westwood was convinced that some remains found there were of Roman construction, with some of the well-known Roman bricks intermingled in layers'.<sup>2</sup> Although Westwood may have gone too far in conjecturing a Roman building, the narrow gravel terrace between Isis and Cherwell is sufficiently high above each river to have been flood-free farmland for neolithic settlers, whose Romano-British descendants continued to till it. The College site borders the prehistoric route from the

<sup>1</sup> A. Herbert Hurst, *Oxford Topography* (Oxford, 1899), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Henry W. Taunt, *North Oxford and its Mother Church* (Oxford, n.d.: c. 1912).

Berkshire Downs to the high ground of north Oxfordshire; on the other side of this Portway, partially paved in Roman days, lay the burial ground and ditched area (with pottery of about A.D. 150), discovered during excavation of the Museum forecourt in 1971.<sup>1</sup> The skeleton of a Briton or Dane, buried in a sitting position, was unearthed in digging foundations for St. Philip and St. James' School, about two hundred yards from the present College.

The College land never had more substantial economic value in recent times than a gravel pit and a market garden but it has for long been delineated on three sides by public roads. The quadrilateral occupied by the convent, the construction of which began in 1866, has the Woodstock Road to its west and Bevington Road to the south: the latter is a prolongation of Horse and Jockey Lane<sup>2</sup> which entered history briefly as the path by which Charles I, with six thousand troops, escaped from Oxford on 3 June 1644, thence to check the Parliamentarians at Cropredy.<sup>3</sup> Hurst describes it as bordered by a cliff of gravel with a row of white poplars. Such local importance

<sup>1</sup> T. G. Hassall, *Oxford, the City Beneath Your Feet; Archaeological Excavations in the City of Oxford, 1967-1972* (Oxford, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Later St. John's Road, but changed in 1961 to St. Bernard's Road to avoid confusion with St. John Street, closer to the town centre. The name was chosen in consultation with St. John's College, the freeholder of much of the area, and honoured the patron of the Cistercian house in the buildings of which St. John's was founded.

<sup>3</sup> That he took the lane from the Banbury Road, viz. along the line of Bevington Road is clear from M. Toynbee and P. Young, *Cropredy Bridge 1644* (Roundwood Press, Kington, 1970), p. 41 and the source there cited.

as it subsequently had derived from its linking two inns, the Horse and Jockey (which still stands opposite the College) and the Hayfield Hut (now the Anchor) via Hut Road (now Kingston Road).

The natural boundary to the east is the ancient Portway (now the Banbury Road), but the convent property ends midway between the two main roads, at a point where the expansion of the town in the eighteen-sixties developed Winchester Road at the boundary of Pear Tree Farm. The freeholds of the houses built from and around the farm-house in that road adjoin leasehold property (formerly of St. John's College, now of the University) which St. Antony's has used for living accommodation. These leases revert to the University in 1974 when the east boundary of the College will again conform to that of the convent. The high stone walls on the three sides have been carefully maintained: the gateways no longer needed (e.g. by the closure and demolition of St. Denys' School) have been filled in with stone from the northern boundary wall, half of which was taken down when the College New Building was erected in 1967-70. The remainder of the walling is in store for rounding off the walls as the completion of future buildings requires.

The ownership of the land on which the College stands can be traced to King Ethelred (reigned 978-1016) as Lord of the Manor of Headington, and an inquisition of King Edward I in 1279 records that Hugo de Plessis held it from the King for one Knight's fee. His title seems to have been gained through his wife, Isabel, a descendant of Thomas Basset, who received the property from King

John (1168-1216) for a fee of £20 yearly. Subsequent owners were John and William Byset, Sir Richard d'Amorey, Sir Christopher Broome and his son George. After a brief tenure by the City, it passed at the end of the sixteenth century to St. John's College, which made the purchase with the life interest of its founder's widow: Sir Thomas White died in 1567 and she in 1572. In the same group of transactions St. John's gained the advowson of St. Giles' Church in the parish of which the site remained until St. Philip and St. James' was built just before the construction of the convent.

By then the land was part of the leasehold of 'The Shrubby' (now 72 Woodstock Road), occupied at the time by Thomas Mallam, Clerk to the Oxford Magistrates. St. John's College gave the main part of the northern parcel for St. Philip and St. James' Church (1859) and leased the southern parcel for the Convent (1865). Canterbury Road was then laid down, dividing the house from the new development, and giving access to the Church from Park Town. A house in the northern parcel at the intersection of Canterbury and Woodstock Roads now serves as the Warden's Lodgings, which (on reversion of the leasehold to St. John's College in 1983) is intended to move to the Old Vicarage, described on p. 23. 'The Shrubby' itself is now the Principal's Lodgings of St. Hugh's College, having housed the Maison Française between 1948 and 1963. Beyond that property ran Gallows Baulk Road, now St. Margaret's Road, during the laying of which several bodies were disinterred of those there hanged, and, to the north, Diamond Farm,

which stretched to the hamlet around which Summer-town grew up in the same period as the College.

The zone as a whole, before the mid-nineteenth century transformations, was sufficiently close to the North Gate and to the northernmost residential area of the city around St. Giles' Church, the Radcliffe Infirmary, and the Royal Oak Inn, to be usable for entertainment. The gallows had their gruesome attraction; to the south, on the other side of Banbury Road, a 'fancy-garden place' was developed at 'Rome' where stood, as documents of St. John's College show, a stone cross, taken down in 1498 to make way for a windmill, itself demolished in 1609. Much later, the Royal Agricultural Show was held at Diamond Farm in 1870. In the first half of the nineteenth century the disused gravel workings along Horse and Jockey Lane were a regular resting place for the caravans of showmen at St. Giles' Fair, and circuses were held on the convent site itself. A photograph taken about 1858 and reproduced by Taunt partly shows the site: the scene is entirely rural, with the dusty lane cutting across rough meadow and vegetable gardens to meet the Banbury Road in the background.

## 2. *Holy Trinity Convent*

THE history of the Old Building of St. Antony's begins in the days of Victorian religious fervour and the controversy centred on the Oxford Movement. By 1860, High Church Anglicanism had won its battle for

respectability, and the ensuing two decades saw a number of its institutions springing vigorously to life in the developing area of North Oxford. The buildings of two churches, a college, and a convent still testify to the zeal and taste of the religious reformers, but while St. Philip and St. James' Church, St. Barnabas' Church, and Keble College continue in their original use, it is St. Antony's fortune to have taken over the fine set of Gothic Revival buildings erected by the Society of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in 1866-8, and occupied by them until the Second World War.

As one of the pioneering Anglican communities for women, the Society, like other contemporary sisterhoods, faced fierce opposition. Its foundress, the remarkable Marian Rebecca Hughes (1817-1912) became in 1841, under Pusey's personal influence and supervision, the first woman since the Reformation to take vows within the Church of England. She immediately began to gather a group of women round her at Rewley House for the ends of education and charity, but only after several years, in 1849, did she gain the permission of the Oxford Diocesan, Bishop Wilberforce, to constitute them into an order of 'Sisters of Mercy'. They quickly moved to 24 St. John Street, but Mother Marian (as she was always known) resolved from the first to build suitable permanent buildings. The site she eventually selected, in about 1864, adjoined the church of St. Philip and St. James, as yet incomplete, but already the focus of a new and fashionable residential district rising upon the Walton and Norham Manor estates.

Mother Marian commissioned her new buildings from a local architect, Charles Buckeridge (1832/3-1873) of 39 St. Giles', an interesting figure among Victorian architects. He is now almost totally unknown, but was on the verge of a wide reputation when he died at the age of forty. By the time that Holy Trinity Convent was begun, he had a substantial number of works in the Oxford area to his credit, notably the rebuilding of churches at Wolvercote, Bladon, Little Wittenham, and Britwell Salome; the Probate Registry in New Road, Oxford; and, among private houses in Oxford, 3 and 9 Norham Gardens and the house at the corner of Museum and Parks Roads. Elsewhere, Buckeridge had a flourishing practice of church restoration in South Wales, and many scattered ecclesiastical commissions in the Midlands. He had been a pupil of that most popular of contemporary church architects, George Gilbert Scott, and so spent much of his early career in superintending works of his over-employed master, such as the construction of Exeter College Chapel and University College Library, and the restoration of St. Mary the Virgin; in other cases he took over complete responsibility for designs commissioned from Scott. Buckeridge had opened his own office at Oxford in 1856, thereby filling the void left in that year by the departure to London of G. E. Street, the only other really scholarly architect to practise at Oxford in the mid-century. Buckeridge's contacts with Street were close. He and his office staff were consulted over minor details of design for Street's church of St. Philip and St. James (1860-6), and virtually monopolized membership

of the choir there; so it is scarcely surprising that the Convent reflected St. Philip and St. James so closely in materials and feeling. The style, however, is much less forceful, coinciding more closely with Scott's simpler handling of Gothic, and with the tradition set for conventual architecture by Butterfield's buildings in Plymouth and London for Lydia Sellon.

It was probably through Mother Lydia rather than local connections that Charles Buckeridge was chosen as architect to the Society. Another of Pusey's disciples, she surpassed even Marian Hughes's achievements in the establishment of Anglican communities for women. Her third convent, at Ascot in Berkshire, begun in 1861, was among the commissions which the latitudinarian Scott handed straight over to Buckeridge, who evidently showed 'higher' leanings, and competence enough to be recommended for the Oxford convent. Mother Marian and Mother Lydia were constantly exchanging ideas and experiences, as is illustrated by their choice of architect.

Under such strong tractarian and ecclesiological influences, the first set of plans that he produced for the convent may seem a shade less extraordinary; but they remain very remarkable indeed, perhaps unparalleled in the Gothic Revival (Fig. 2). The chapel designed by Buckeridge for Ascot, though never executed, contained some remarkable features of planning, but nothing as all-embracing as what he originally conceived for Oxford. Here, the ground plan of his first project was a medieval representation of the Trinity (to which the order was dedicated), viz. a shield in the centre of which is the one

God, joined to the three Persons, symbolized by circles in the corners, by straight bands and interconnected with segmental sides. Victorian ecclesiologists had taken pains to republish the classic texts on church symbolism, such as Durandus, and Buckeridge developed the concept so that the central position, which was naturally occupied by the chapel, was formed from a trefoil of three hemicycles and a central equilateral triangle. The altar and sanctuary were unfortunately not to occupy the centre of the trefoil but the eastern of the three apses; entry to the chapel was to be from between the junction of the hemicycles. The conventual buildings were consigned to the three gently curving external segments and the three circular rooms at the junctions of the segments. Access to all the chief rooms was from cloister walks,<sup>1</sup> planned on both main floors along the inside of each segment in order to face the chapel, from which they were separated by a yard. The main conventual rooms were on the ground floor, the refectory occupying most of the eastern segment; the upper floor was to be occupied by classrooms, common rooms, and bedrooms. In elevation, the chapel walls would have risen a little over the flanking sides, and would then have been surmounted by a roof

<sup>1</sup> Partridge's original design for St. Antony's New Buildings (1960) was a cruciform block with similar external cloister walks. These latter have been retained in the modified building, ringing the Hall block now completed and ready for connection to similar covered ways if further blocks can be added. A model of the abandoned project was shown in an exhibition of new and prospective Oxford buildings in the Indian Institute in 1961 and is now kept in the College. On the New Building as constructed, see p. 24.

rising steeply over the core of the building, crowned by a tall central *flèche*.

A persistent tradition connects Pusey with this extraordinary conception: he certainly dabbled now and again in design, but so too did Mother Marian, who herself designed the nuns' attractive habit (black with light blue facings modelled on the Ursulines). Either could have suggested the idea to Buckeridge, but there was no obvious ecclesiological precedent. The few Trinitarian plans among baroque churches in Germany and the two curious semi-secular Elizabethan examples in England (Sir Thomas Gorges's Longford House and Sir Thomas Tresham's Triangular Lodge at Rushton) were unlikely to have appealed, or even to have been known, to Buckeridge.

Regrettably but understandably, the Trinitarian design was rejected on presumed grounds of impracticality (hardly any of the rooms had right-angular corners) or expense. Though no date is given on the surviving plans, the executed design must have been produced before 1865, when the ground was staked out for building. Buckeridge's new designs abandon the Trinitarian conception, though the same amount of space is provided, and details similar to the old elevations were used. The sides are straightened, the chapel turns into a conventional apsidal structure without aisles, and the whole composition becomes E-shaped. There was also provision for an extra north wing, to be slightly lower than the rest of the building. This was never built, though the place where the join was to be effected can still be seen: the arches

for eventual doorways or passages were inserted at basement and first floor levels and are hence available for an eventual connection to the New Building.

The long-established Oxford building firm of George Wyatt undertook the erection of the main conventual blocks from 1866 to 1868, but execution of the chapel was deferred. The works were delayed not so much by the finds of Roman coins on the site, nor by a dispute with St. John's over the lease, as by religious bigotry. The Protestant party, which resented the recognition of Mother Marian's order, was still strong in the Oxford diocese, and it seems that Earl Beauchamp, an influential friend of the foundation, had to reassure some dons that delinquent nuns would not be locked in the basement rooms.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, in March 1868, before the outer doors had been put up, the Mother Superior and one companion began to sleep in the building; Buckeridge's offer to lend his large dog to keep out intruders was spurned. The whole community finally moved into the completed building in November.

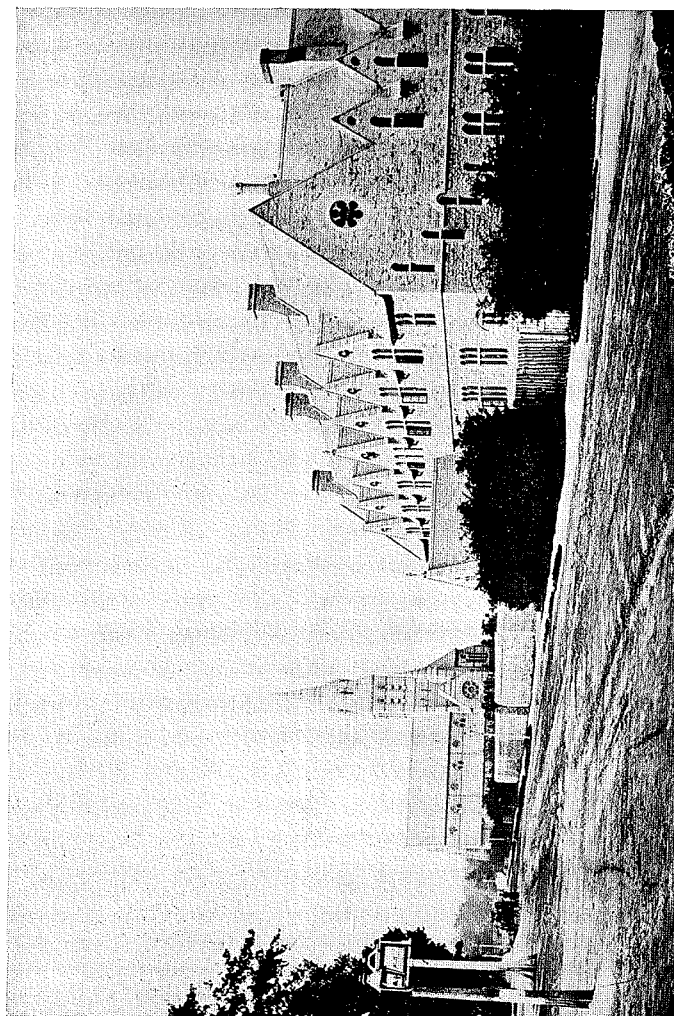
The walls of the Convent were constructed with stone

<sup>1</sup> Those along the Woodstock Road front are now book stacks (a compact system of moveable shelved trolleys having been installed to capitalize on the constricted space) but one with a low-beamed ceiling served as the College Buttery for twenty years until a larger one was opened in the New Building. The boiler room of the convent (only briefly used as such by the College) might well seem a cell: the sub-basement of the sacristy, it can be entered only from outside the building, has small ceiling-level lights, and is liable to flooding to waist-height because its floor is below the water table. Its central heating equipment was advanced for the day, but not strikingly efficient, to judge from reminiscences.

from the Gibraltar quarries between Shipton-on-Cherwell and Kirtlington, so as to harmonize with Street's neighbouring church; the dressings were of Box stone and the roofing Stonesfield slates. The total cost was about eight thousand pounds, most of which came from Mother Marian's private fortune, with help from Sister Caroline Buckland. As at Ascot, Buckeridge chose an early period of Gothic for the style of the conventual buildings, so that the simple tracery of the windows and the rough hammer-dressing of the walls give a sombre appearance to the exterior (Fig. 1). At the time, the building was considered a great success; Buckeridge was warmly congratulated by *The Ecclesiologist* on his design, and William Butterfield considered it the best modern building in Oxford 'after my college' (Keble).

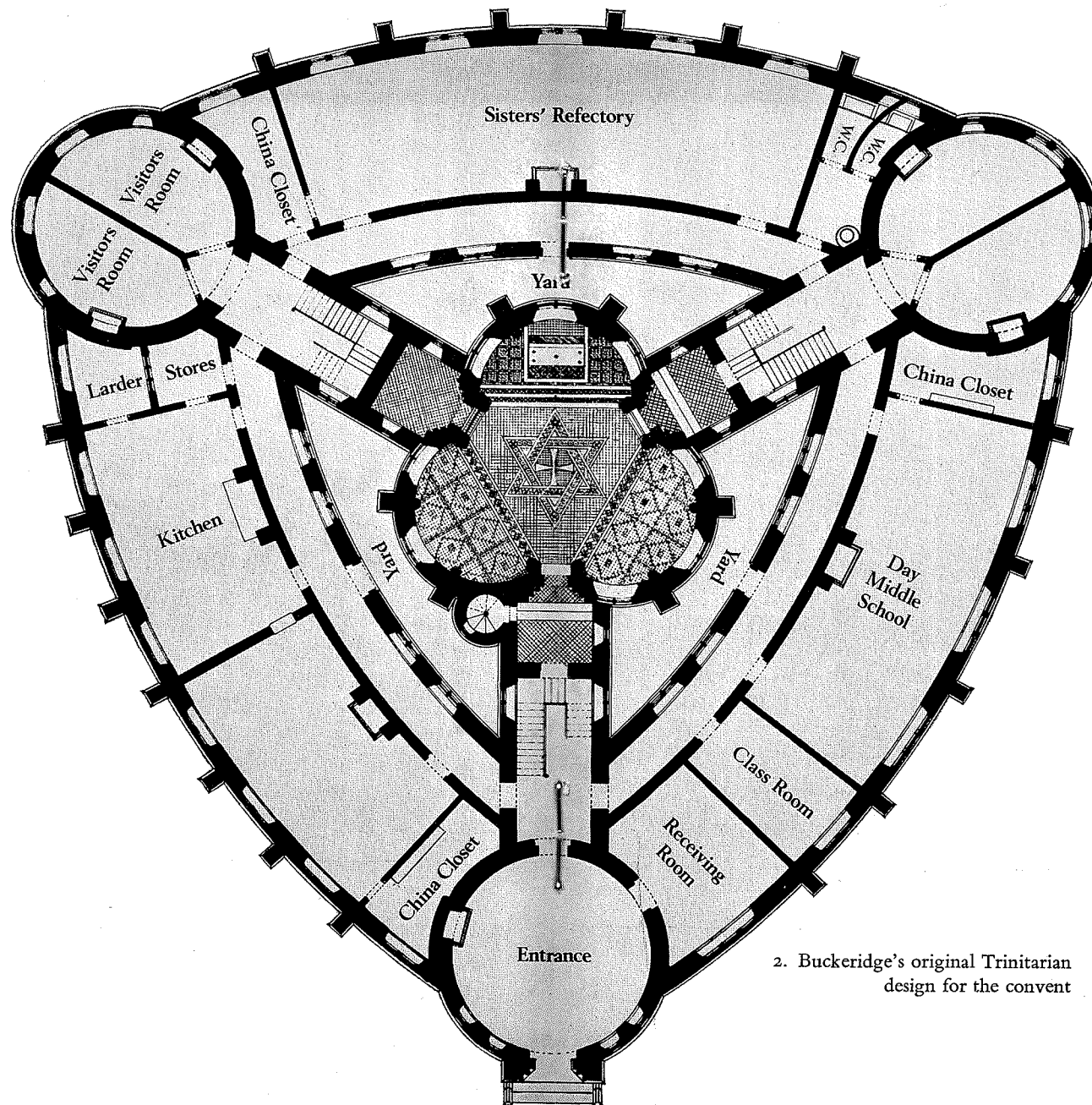
The plan of the buildings is simple. The land slopes down to the east, so that the entrance floor from Woodstock Road becomes the first floor from the area within; on this level, the principal rooms give on to a corridor along the inside of the west and south wings. There were, as now, two full staircases, at the south-west and north-west angles. North of the entrance lobby, the building was devoted to schoolrooms.<sup>1</sup> In their heyday, the Society ran three schools and a girls' orphanage, firmly classified by social rank. Two of these—the 'Middle

<sup>1</sup> The principal classroom of that time and the school Library were thrown together to form the Senior Common Room in 1950. It was then redivided, in 1971; the room nearer the Porters' Lodge became the East European Newspaper room, the lost stone of its doorway arch being simulated in cement; under new paintwork it appears indistinguishable from the other Victorian doors of the building.

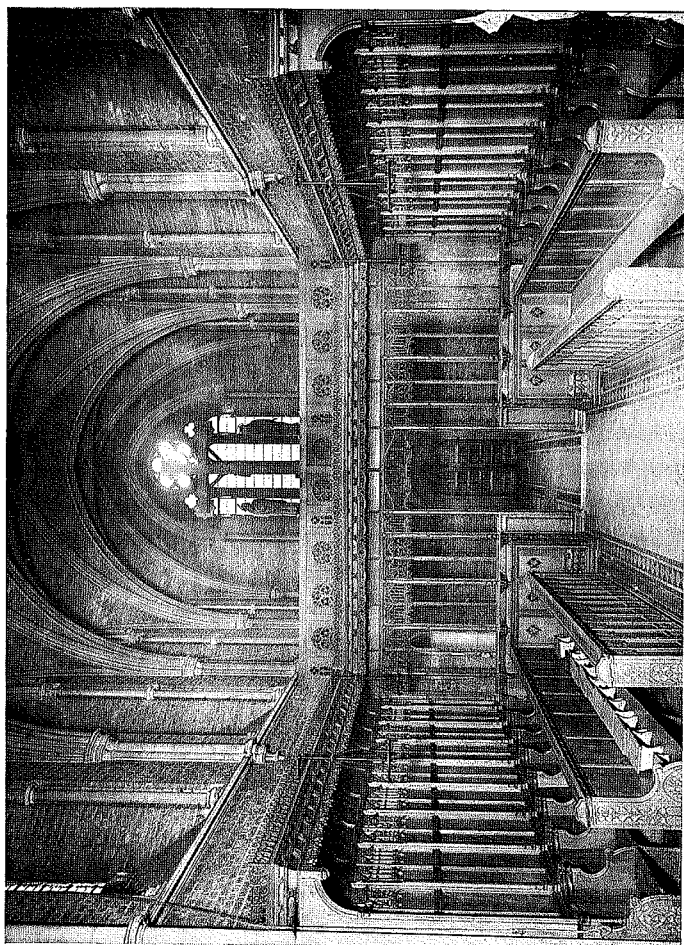


1. Exterior of the convent from Woodstock Road in 1868 by Taunt; the Church of St. Philip and St. James is in the background





2. Buckeridge's original Trinitarian design for the convent



3. Chapel facing west, with stalls and screen completed in 1926

School' of St. Denys, founded in 1857, and the girls' day school of St. Faith (opened in Bevington Road in 1900 and later in Woodstock Road)—had premises outside the convent. But St. Michael's, the 'Upper School', which consisted of about twenty-five girls of professional background, was taught in the north wing from the time of its foundation, shortly after the completion, until it was moved to Cirencester in the late 1920s. Space was very limited until 1900; the schoolchildren were rigidly excluded from the south wing, where the nuns had the orphanage and their conventual rooms. In this period the north wing consisted of only one storey with a pitched roof, open-timbered within; this was the Convent's first chapel, furnished with a few fittings such as a simple rood screen and stained glass in the three east lancets.<sup>1</sup> But in 1900–1, when the new chapel had been open for six years, an extra storey was skilfully added above as school dormitories,<sup>2</sup> while the room below was given a flat ceiling and became the principal classroom for St. Michael's School. The architect is not known, but it could have been Leonard Stokes; the style is right, and not only

<sup>1</sup> A photograph (from the College Library) of the temporary chapel is in John Betjeman and David Vaisey, *Victorian and Edwardian Oxford from Old Photographs* (London, 1971), fig. 71. In College occupation it became successively the lecture room, a common room, and the Russian Library; the beams are now concealed under a false ceiling, put in to house stronger and more even lighting and to adjust the proportions of the room. A door to the north-west stair has been suppressed. The floor of the basement was deepened in 1970 to improve the ventilation in the lecture room, the ceiling being strengthened to hold the weight of the new bookstacks above.

<sup>2</sup> Now used as Bursary offices.

was Stokes building schools in Oxford at this date, but he had just made substantial additions to the Ascot convent. Throughout the building as originally finished, the interiors of the rooms (each given a name such as Annunciation, Perseverance, Faith, Hope, and Charity), were left in plain brick, relieved only by the occasional darker course along the walls and round the fireplaces.

Any plans the Sisters may have had for immediate expansion were unfulfilled. Proposals were indeed made in 1872-3 for building an Infirmary on the ground to the north, and for bringing up St. Denys' School from the dilapidated premises in St. Giles' where it had been operating since 1857 to a plot on the east side of Winchester Road. But all this came to nothing. Funds were low, and St. John's College seems to have been refractory about the use of the sites which Mother Marian suggested, due somewhat to reservations against Tractarianism and perhaps also to a certain grudge against Buckeridge, whose alterations to the College chapel in 1872 had taken much more time and money than had been anticipated. And then, in September 1873, Buckeridge died very suddenly of heart disease.

In these years, the Sisters busied themselves with the educational work which was their chief commitment. Both St. Denys' and St. Michael's had high reputations; hardly surprising in the latter case, for the intellectual level of the Society's recruits was high, and the girls, kept under constant surveillance in the Convent and rarely let out, were few enough in number to be given individual attention. For the outsider, the best time to glimpse the nuns

and their charges was on a Sunday, when the exigencies of church attendance meant that a crocodile was taken several times a day down to St. Barnabas in the Jericho slums; St. Philip and St. James was soon considered not 'high' enough. The elder girls were let out alone to go to Evensong at Christ Church—a much-awaited weekly escapade! Strict social divisions were exercised; the St. Michael's girls were not supposed to speak to the orphans, whose crude pink dresses and little aprons and caps foretold the approaching day when they would be 'put out to service' in the town. For the orphans, the great adventure was to help the Sisters' odd man and gardener Fyfield in driving their herd of Jersey cows down the Woodstock Road past the fashionable new houses for daily milking at the Convent.

The first subsequent construction was not the Chapel, but St. Denys' School, eventually sited within the convent garden on the west side of Winchester Road. It was opened in November 1876, after having been destroyed by fire when nearing completion.<sup>1</sup> This little red-brick school-room, demolished in 1966, was the work of the major Victorian architect John Loughborough Pearson (1817-97), most famous for St. Augustine's, Kilburn, and Truro Cathedral. At Buckeridge's death, Pearson, who

<sup>1</sup> An account of the school, Grace Hargrave, *St. Denys' School, Oxford*, was printed for private circulation in 1957, and reproduces photographs of Mother Marian, the first site of the school at 9 St. Giles', the school itself, and a pupil-teacher's agreement of 1873 signed by Mother Marian. The University Printer has executed the present pamphlet in the same format.

had been a personal friend, took over his extensive practice, including not only the Society's chapel, but two other commissions for Anglican orders, the Hospital for Incurables (now St. John's Hospital) at Cowley and the community founded at Llanthony by the picturesque Father Ignatius.

By 1891, money enough was finally raised for the chapel, and it was built in 1891-4 by the same firm of Messrs. Wyatt. Pearson scarcely altered Buckeridge's design; he merely introduced windows into the east end of the crypt for the chapter house, and made slight changes to the design of the *flèche* and the line of the cornice. The chapel walls rise high above the surrounding buildings, and are pierced only by tall lancets, except at the west end, where a four-light window is surmounted by a rose window in the gable. Inside is a complete vaulting system characteristic of Pearson's mature churches, and known to Buckeridge from his superintendence of Scott's Exeter College Chapel; the ribs are of stone, the cells between them of brick. The chapel was filled with fittings from the temporary chapel, glass from which was probably included in the stained glass put into the five apsidal lancets. Faithfully to Buckeridge's intentions, the altar was placed neither on the chord of the apse nor against the east wall, but halfway in between—a position which had evoked criticism by *The Ecclesiologist* in the 1860s and the effect of which may be seen in the vaulted ceiling of the chapter house below. The old screen from the temporary chapel was placed in the vestibule. The paintings in the blank arcading round the apse, which remain

*in situ*, are the work of two hands. The three central panels (Christ Riding into Jerusalem, the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, the Journey to Emmaus), and the two panels at either end of the series (St. Anne and the Virgin, the Finding of the True Cross) are the work of Charles Edgar Buckeridge (1864-98), the architect's son; he also painted the front of the altar with a beautiful Annunciation, now to be seen in the Chapel of the Guest House of the Community of the Holy Name (St. Saviour's, Ranelagh Road, Malvern Link). C. E. Buckeridge's career is another sad tale of unfulfilled promise in this remarkable family. Like his father, he concentrated entirely on ecclesiastical work, devoting himself painstakingly to the recreation of that Burgundian style of painting so much admired in the latter years of the century; he worked with the greatest architects of the day, Bodley, Sedding, and Shaw, but died unhappy and unrecognized. The family certainly continued to be closely linked with the Convent, for his sister Marian Emma Buckeridge (1865-97) was Mother Marian's goddaughter, and became a member of the Society. The remaining panels were painted by Ethel King Martin (on the left, Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Christ in the Temple, Martha and Mary at Bethany; on the right, Miraculous Draught of Fishes, Ascension, Pentecost, Dormition of the Virgin, St. John on Patmos). Underneath the Chapel, the body of the crypt was used first as a library and later as a refectory, while the eastern room served as a chapter house for the nuns. In College hands, the refectory continued in the same use until 1970; the chapter house became

a committee and common room, its beauty enhanced by a remarkable collection on the walls of Tibetan *tunkas*, given by the first Bursar of the College, Major P. C. Hailey. When the corresponding facilities became available in the New Building (to which the *tunkas* were moved), the undercroft became a periodicals and reading room for the Library. Partridge has extended into it an apron of black brick to carry through the idiom of the lower floor of his entrance lobby; the chapter house with the sacristy above (now the microfilm reading room) has been retained.

The next important work was the raising of the north wing, already discussed. The chapel had to wait until 1919 for further embellishment, when an elegant rood screen and choir stalls with flamboyant tracery were designed by Cecil Hare as a memorial to Mother Marian, whose close supervision of all the most vital matters of convent life continued right up to her death in 1912. The screen and stalls were finished only in 1926, at a cost of two thousand pounds (Fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> Thenceforward until 1945, the buildings were little altered.

After temporary use by the naval authorities during the Second World War, the future of the area in which Holy Trinity Convent stood was uncertain, and, in view of the University's plan to buy the freehold from St. John's, the Society preferred not to remain until expiry of the lease. The sisters therefore left Oxford for South Leigh near Witney, where they stayed until 1956. The few

<sup>1</sup> The Chapel before insertion of the screen may be seen in Betjeman and Vaisey, *op. cit.*, fig. 72.

surviving members of the community are now at Malvern Link with the Community of the Holy Name. Besides the altar, a number of other fittings such as embroidered frontals and a processional cross are preserved there. But most of the chapel fittings were dispersed or sold in 1945-6, and Cecil Hare's short-lived screen and stalls, though sold to a Roman Catholic school, have not been successfully traced. At this time, several structural alterations were made to convert the Convent for its new use as Halifax House. The main changes were the blocking of the doorway into the Chapel from the lobby, the removal of the lobby floor, and its replacement by a steep staircase to give direct access to the crypt; an additional external staircase in the north yard restored access to the Chapel.

### 3. *St. Antony's College*

HALIFAX HOUSE—which transferred to South Parks Road—soon yielded the buildings, except for the school in the gardens,<sup>1</sup> to St. Antony's College, founded on the benefaction of Antonin Besse in 1950. The main structural alterations were the addition of an external staircase

<sup>1</sup> Which by then had become the Infant Department of the parochial school of St. Philip and St. James. On completion of the Bishop Kirk Middle School in Summertown, the Department moved to the Leckford Road school, leaving the site free for the erection of the college's New Building.

in the north yard, which compensated as access to the Chapel for the blocking of the latter's South Door (closed off when the adjoining cells formed the Sub-Warden's flat) and the insertion of a roof-high partition along the chord of the apse in the Chapel. The Chapel had never been consecrated and became the College Library, the Librarian being installed in the sacristy.

The Chapel partition, intended to be temporary, was to have been demolished under the alterations of 1970. Partridge designed a plan for the Library which would have converted the apse into a raised platform and opened up the east lancet windows to a view through from the Woodstock Road entrance. After much discussion, the College temporized on the full scheme, implementing his plan as far as the Library lobby. A few improvements were made to the appearance of the partition, which, being of insubstantial construction, can easily be dismantled should the continued division prove unsatisfactory.

Partridge's alterations not only greatly enhance the first impression of the visitor to the College, but also required the demolition of the inelegant staircases built in the forties; a pretty turret stair of the original structure was inevitably lost, but the re-opening of the blocked west door led to a better siting of three bronzes commissioned by the College—a statue of St. Antony of Padua by Mestrovic and busts by Oscar Nemon of the Founder and his widow.<sup>1</sup> Access from the entrance by

<sup>1</sup> A further bronze, of the first Warden, F. W. Deakin, is in preparation by the same sculptor, and, when received, will help to determine the suitable placing of the Besse busts.

the Porters' Lodge is now gained directly to the Library by a light glass and concrete corridor in the fashion of the New Building, the black-brick ground floor of which has been reproduced at the lower level, a lobby to the Calouste Gulbenkian Room, named in appreciation of the grant for building the new link and two new library-service rooms.

These additions create a tiny quadrangle, two sides of which are Buckeridge and two Partridge, thereby carrying the flavour of the new building into the old.

The New Vicarage of St. Philip and St. James apart, the entire site bounded by Woodstock Road, Bevington Road, Winchester Road, and Church Walk is now in the College's freehold. The most attractive of the houses in the curtilage is the Old Vicarage (68 Woodstock Road), with tile-hung walls, built in 1885–6 to the design of Street's pupil, H. G. W. Drinkwater. The other houses were variously constructed on the St. John's College development of 1870–1900 under the superintendence of William Wilkinson and Harry Wilkinson Moore.<sup>1</sup> Those along Church Walk, both sides of which are now owned by St. Antony's, together with St. Philip and St. James' Church and North Parade, form part of the Conservation Area of North Oxford. The College has located three of its regional centres (those for Far Eastern, Iberian, and Latin American Studies) in Church Walk. The semi-detached houses in Winchester Road and Woodstock Road, used as College hostels, are of little distinction.

<sup>1</sup> For details see Andrew Saint, 'Three Oxford Architects', *Oxonien-sia*, 35 (1970).

The garden area of the main site has progressively diminished over the last century. First came the convent itself, then St. Denys' School, then a small outhouse, used later as the bursary of St. Antony's. During the Second World War, concrete air raid shelters were put up, and later came tennis courts and a squash court. Of these, only the tennis and squash courts remain and the opportunity was taken of remodelling the garden when the New Building was erected in the centre of the College site.

The New Building was opened by the Chancellor of the University, the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan, on 8 October 1970, Howell, Killick, Partridge, and Amis being the architects, and Messrs. Norman Collisson of Bicester the contractors. From outside it rises up strikingly behind the screen of the old convent walls along the perimeter roads. In Woodstock Road and Winchester Road these walls have been pierced by iron gates designed by Partridge, complementing those of his own partnership's work at St. Anne's College. It won awards from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Concrete Society, and has been warmly received in the specialist press. It comprises a lofty dining hall, kitchens, and common rooms, a transfer of functions from the Old Building which enlarged the main College Library and allowed the College's Centre for Soviet and East European Studies to unify its Slavonic collection. The time for an account of the New Building will come when it is complemented by the teaching and accommodation blocks which the architectural plans show as

two further sides of a quadrangle one of which would unite the Woodstock Road frontage. The square would be open along Bevington Road, on the other side of which Howell, Killick, Partridge, and Amis have built for St. Anne's College an impressive crescent in a similar but distinctive style. Inevitably for an Oxford college, which is precluded from finance by the University Grants Committee, the further development of St. Antony's must await adequate funds from private sources. The grant of funds by the Volkswagen Foundation for the construction of a second new building (announced in December 1972) thus represented a major step forward. For the work already carried out the College's gratitude is particularly due to its Founder, Monsieur Antonin Besse, and to much subsequent support by his widow, Madame Hilda Besse.



## A Note on Sources

ST. ANTONY'S Library contains two plans and one elevation of Buckeridge's Trinitarian design, which is otherwise undocumented, and a number of working drawings of his executed design. There are also some old photographs of the Convent buildings, and a lithograph showing elevation and plan of Cecil Hare's rood screen and stalls.

The surviving Sisters of the Society have only a very few documents left about the Convent. The bulk are said to have passed to Pusey House, but cannot be traced there.

A manuscript account of the parish, kept at St. Philip and St. James' Vicarage, by the architect A. W. M. Mowbray, a pupil of Buckeridge, furnishes a number of details about the Convent. On North Oxford in general, two local topographers are helpful: Taunt's *North Oxford and its Mother Church*, noted above, p. 3, n. 2, which is better for photographs than for its text, while the opposite could be said of H. Minn's volume on North Oxford in the Bodleian Library (MS. Top. Oxon. d. 501). Some information can be found in leases and letterbooks in St. John's College Muniments. The life of the Convent's founder is in R. Townsend Warner, *Marian Rebecca Hughes* (Oxford, 1933), while Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister* (4th edition, London, 1964), is particularly rich in religious anecdotes. Hargrave's booklet has already been mentioned above, p. 17, n. 1.

There is an interesting review of the executed design with an accompanying perspective in *The Ecclesiologist*, 27 (1866), p. 125; another account and lithograph occur in *The Builder*, 28 (1870), pp. 106-7. Progress in the building is reported in *Oxford Chronicle*, 13 October 1866, 19 October 1867, 17

## A Note on Sources

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October 1891, 15 October 1892, and 14 October 1893, and in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 19 October 1867. The cowman's daily drive of his herd for milking in the Convent is shown in a photograph in the Bodleian Library (Bodley MS. Top. Oxon. d. 501, p. 66).

The New Building was described and analysed in *Architectural Review*, 149 (1971), pp. 81-90.

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Fig. 1 appears by kind permission of the City Librarian, Oxford.