
Gilbert Blount: A Victorian Architect through his diaries

by Philippa Hunter and Richard Barton (Philippa Hunter copyright)

Part I: An overshadowed architect

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Gilbert Robert Blount

HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND

Gilbert Robert Blount was born at Mapledurham, near Reading, on 2 March 1819, the second child and son of Michael Joseph Blount and his wife Catherine (nee Wright). His parents were half first cousins. Michael was the second son of Joseph Blount and Mary Canning, and Catherine the daughter of Catherine Petre and her first husband Francis Wright. Her second husband was Michael Blount III of Mapledurham and brother to Joseph. These were all recusant Catholic families.



Michael Joseph Blount [1783-1868]



Michael Joseph Blount [1783-1868]

Mary Canning, the daughter of Francis Canning of Foxcote in Warwickshire (born 27 October 1755), married Joseph Blount (born 15 July 1752) in the chapel of Foxcote House, on 19

February 1776. It appears that they rented Britwell House near Watlington, Oxon for a time, as two of their five children were born there. They moved to France in the 1780's and Joseph died at St Cyr, near Lyons, on 1 January 1793. He is buried there at the foot of the altar. Mary Blount returned to England with her children, and she died at Cheltenham on 29 December 1843. Her burial took place at St Benet's, Kemerton and she was the first person to be interred there as the church and cemetery were only blessed on 18 July 1843.



Britwell House, near Watlington

Michael Joseph (Gilbert's father) was born at Britwell House on 30 March 1783, and he married Catherine Mary Wright of Kelvedon, Essex. The Wrights were bankers and the majority of clergy and Catholic laity banked with them. The bank collapsed during the depression of the 1820's-1850's. Michael and Catherine were married at the Spanish Embassy in London, one of the few places in London where Catholic marriages could be celebrated at this time. In order to have the marriage legalised, another ceremony had to take place in an 'Established Church'. This legal formality took place at the old St Mary-le-Bone Church on 26 February 1816.

Gilbert married Sophia Margaret Brown (born 8 October 1844), daughter of Samuel James Brown and Jacobina Sophia Radcliffe of Lofftuss Hill, Yorkshire, on 11 January 1870 at St Mary's Chapel, Knaresborough. They had four daughters, Emma, Marjorie, Louisa and Gilberta, who was born after her father's death. They lived at 1 Montague Place, London



Samuel Joseph Brown, Father-in-Law of Gilbert Blount



Lofftuss Hill, Knaresborough, birthplace of Sophia Margaret Blount (nee Brown)



Sophia Margaret Blount with (left to right) Emma, Louisa and Marjorie (1876)

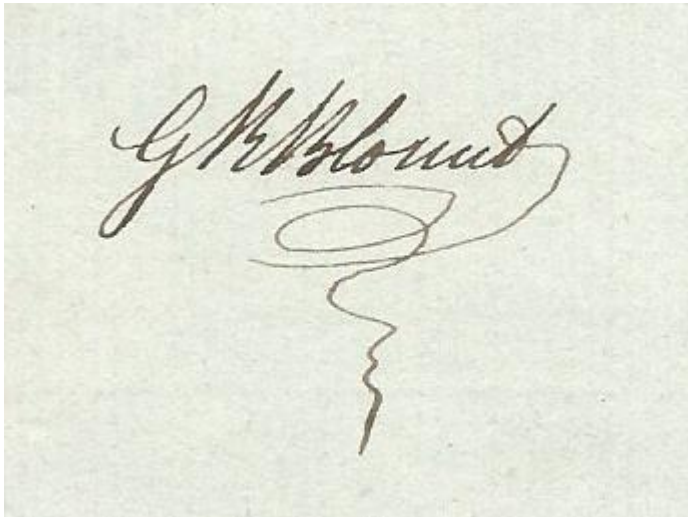


Sophia Margaret Blount

WORK FOR BRUNEL

Gilbert was educated at Downside (September 1834 – December 1836) and began his professional training as a civil engineer with Isambard Kingdom Brunel, working on the Thames Tunnel (Rotherhithe to Wapping) in 1841. It appears that Gilbert's father had some influence upon the directors of the Tunnel Company, and he obtained this trainee post for his son shortly before Christmas 1840. The aspiring engineer took a lodging at 16 St James Place, Bermondsey so that he could be near to his place of work, namely, Walbrook Buildings, Walbrook. In September 1841 he received a letter of appointment "*I have much pleasure in*

acquainting you, that the board this day agreed to your appointment as a temporary assistant at the works at a weekly pay of 10/-" and, a month later, this salary was enhanced with the reimbursement of his expenses, "In consideration of your not receiving Fuel and Candles from the Company's works in kind, the Board have authorized your being paid hence-forward an additional 10/- per week in lieu. "

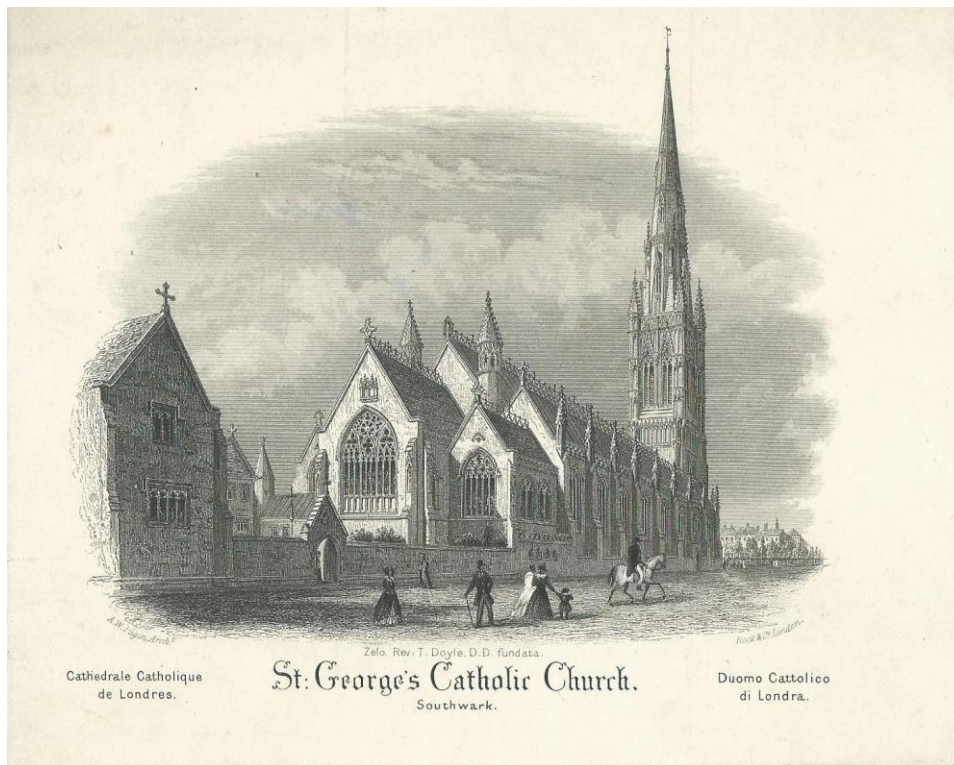


Signature in diary of 1841

Gilbert was appointed as Superintendent of Construction and, during one of the many floods in the tunnel, he narrowly escaped drowning. His mother, brother Alfred and sister Louisa, came in a carriage to visit the Tunnel on January 17th 1842, and his diary reveals that, on February 2nd, *'the King of Prussia attended by Lord Hardwick passed through the Tunnel and back, taking us rather by surprise.'*

Soon afterwards the company experienced financial difficulties, and on 13th February, Gilbert received an official notice from Mr Charlier, clerk of the Thames Tunnel works, *'that my services would be dispensed with in one month from yesterday as an engineer at the Thames Tunnel.'* However, he continued to work at Sir Marc Isambard Brunel's house on the Rotherhithe Staircase.

By June 1842 the young man was showing signs of a change of direction and he began studying architecture and even undertaking some of his own commissions. On 15th June: *'Lady Camoys sends me a ticket of admission for the British Museum so I can commence reading Palladio on Architecture.'* Gilbert also *"went to examine St George in the Fields Catholic Church (now Southwark Catholic Cathedral) and had a bit of a row with the contractors.'* He was a great walker and, when staying with his parents at Purley, which is situated on the opposite side of the River Thames to Mapledurham, thought nothing of walking to Reading and back for Mass.



By March 1842, Gilbert's involvement with the tunnel was minimal and the young man was considering whether his future might better lie in emigrating to Australia. Nothing came of this idea, but he wrote to Edward Charles Blount, a first cousin, who was engaged at the time building the 'railroad from Paris to Rouen in France.' The line was opened on 9th May 1843 and again, nothing seems to have come from this.

During May, Gilbert stayed with his parents at Purley, near Reading, as his health was impaired as a result of the poor ventilation in the tunnel and the noxious fumes. He seems to have spent his time at Purley making architectural drawings. During the following month Lady Camoys sent him an entrance ticket for the reading room at the British Museum and it is here that he began to read the works of Palladio.

WORK FOR ANTHONY SALVIN

Many biographical dictionaries, state that Gilbert Blount trained in the office of Sidney Smirke. In fact, Blount worked with Anthony Salvin (1799-1881).

Constance C. McPhee, in her thesis for the Department of the History of Art in the University of Pennsylvania, entitled 'Gilbert R. Blount (1819-1876) Catholic Gothic Revival Architect' clearly outlines the architect's early career. McPhee's M.A. thesis, written in 1987, under the supervision of Dr David B. Brownlee, includes the following passage,

'Early in 1842 Blount experienced a professional upheaval which was to divert him from engineering into architecture. Faced with the imminent loss of his position at the tunnel, he attempted to secure a position with the Le Havre and Rouen Railway Company through a relative in France and even considered emigrating to Australia. It was, however, a developing

interest in architecture which became the channel for his energies and hopes. The architect's diary from the first six months of 1842 records him reading a biography of Christopher Wren and books on Greek architecture and Palladio. At the same time he was writing: "an article on architecture", designing: the plan and model of a house, and carrying out field works: a visit to Pugin's St. George's, Southwark, which was then building. On November 28, 1842 these preparations culminated in the beginning of a new career. Blount entered the Saville Row office of Anthony Salvin (1799-1881).

Salvin was a student of John Paterson of Edinburgh and a member of the Society of Antiquities with a successful practice in country houses and Gothic revival churches.... Blount's diaries indicate he came to Salvin without adherence to any one stylistic philosophy and was quickly exposed to the most advanced thought on Gothic revival church design. Already interested in Pugin as the most prominent Catholic architect of the day, Blount now absorbed his theory, reading his writings for the first time. He also set to work on a proposed monument to the recently deceased Bishop of York. Modelled in part on Edward III's tomb in Westminster Abbey.'

McPhee points out that as late as 1847 Blount was still working in Salvin's office, but he became 'increasingly involved with small independent projects for relatives and Catholic friends.' However, having written of his move to 1 Montagu Place in 1849, McPhee makes the following remark: 'Sometime during this period there may have been a brief association with Sydney Smirke ' In support of this she cites Blount's R.I.B.A. obituary but she comments, in Footnote No. 58, that this 'is substantiated by no further evidence (see Barry, "Address", Proceedings of the R.I.B.A. (1877-78):11'

Blount Family correspondence for the year 1842 may help to clarify the question – Smirke or Salvin?

His aunt was instrumental in obtaining this position, as Mrs Anne de Lisle, Anthony Salvin's half-sister, was a great friend of hers.

Letter from Eliza(beth) Riddell to Gilbert Robert Blount from Field-gate House, Kenilworth, Aug 24th 1842.

'My Dear Gilbert,

Not knowing for sure whether your Father is at home or that you may not be at Purley (1), I will address this to you, but wish you to communicate the contents to your Father and Mother. I hope, I need not assure you, that it has been my most earnest endeavour and wish to hear of some situation for you and particularly so, since I heard your Father say, your wish was to study architecture. I applied a few days ago to Mrs. De Lisle (Mr. Salvin's sister) a great friend of mine and have received an answer from her today, which I consider very good. I enclose you a copy of my note to Mrs De Lisle which I hope you will be able to make out, also her answer to me – at your leisure (?) when you have made what use you please of them, I shall like to have them returned to me, and I think it will be a good plan to write a line to Anthony Salvin

Esq at his Office to inform him what morning you can call upon him, as he will then make a point of being there. He stands very high in his Profession, I remember some years ago seeing his plan for the new house of Parliament and after Barry's, it was the most approved of. Mrs Canning from Devonshire tells us, they have lately been to Mamhead, where a new house has been built by Mr Salvin (for Sir R. Newman) they think it is the most perfect place and house they ever saw. I cannot tell you, my dear Gilbert, the pleasure it will give me, if you can arrange matters with Mr Salvin. I have not the slightest idea on what terms he will be willing to receive you, that will depend upon what your knowledge is, as to architecture, be sure to take some of your drawings, and be not discouraged at first, if he does not seem to think your knowledge so great as he may expect it to be, as you have not had time or experience. Be sure to let me know the result of your interview with Mr. Salvin, and if he is willing to receive you, whether he will remunerate you, or you on the contrary have to give him a premium, but all this remains to be seen, and of course that subject you will have Mr. S. to broach. I will write a line to your dear Mother – wishing you a happy termination to this business I remain, Dear Gilbert. Your affectionate Aunt, El. Riddell

Best love and good wishes from my dear Mother, Sister, Elizabeth.'

(1) Purley is situated on the River Thames opposite to Mapledurham, and it was the home of Gilbert's parents.

(2) In 1823, Mamhead Park was bought by Robert William Newman (1776–1848), who completely rebuilt the house on a new site in 1827–1833, to the designs of Anthony Salvin.



Eliza(beth) Riddell, nee Blount

Letter from Eliza(beth) Riddell to her brother, Michael Joseph Blount, father of Gilbert Robert Blount, from 53 Wellington Street, Leamington Spa, and dated 2nd October 1842:

'I cannot tell you, my dear Michael, how pleased I am at your account of your interview with Mr. Salvin, I do think it promises well. I hope you will have several drawings to show him next time you go to town, it will indeed be a great gratification if I have been the means of promising him what I trust may turn out a desirable situation. In the mean time a little country air, good living, and cheerful society with a little shooting will do him good for he has had long confinement in town and hard work....'

Letter from Michael Joseph Blount to his son, Gilbert Robert Blount, from Purley, dated 13th October 1842:

Gilbert's father wrote to his son who was, at the time, staying with father's first cousin, Robert Canning, at Hartpury.

'Dear Gilbert

I had an interview yesterday morning with Mr Salvin who received me with cordiality, examined your drawings and agreed to receive you in his office. I had a clear understanding with him that you were to be initiated into every department of the profession. My impression is that you will like him, and I think he is favourably inclined towards you. Let us hope that it will prove an advantageous opening for you. Mr. Salvin appears to be a good natured gentlemanly person. He will let us know when he has moved into his new house, which I do not expect will be the case for three weeks to come, therefore make the most of your time... Pray remember me very kindly to all friends at Hartpury and I hope you have some good shooting. Adieu M.J.B.'

Letter to Michael Joseph Blount from Anthony Salvin, from 32 Somerset Street and dated 21st October 1842:

'Dear Sir,

I have sent the drawings to Lower Berkeley Street. The first work to study is certainly Vitruvius and if your son has not yet looked into it my copy is at his service. There are others on church and domestic architecture which I shall recommend his attention to afterwards. The work in Saville row gets on slowly but I hope in two or three weeks I shall be able to move my offices there. I am dear Sir, Yours truly, Anthony Salvin.'

Forwarding notes from Michael Blount to Gilbert Blount:

'I expect that Sir Edward Blount has got a Vitruvius or some other works on architecture.'

'Dear Gilbert,

I send you Mr. Salvin's note in order that you may not think it necessary to hurry back to Town, for I don't expect he will remove to his new office in Saville Row, at soonest, before the middle of Novr. We hope you will enjoy yourself at Mawley ...'

Letter to Gilbert Blount from Eliza Riddell, his aunt, from 53 Wellington Street, Leamington, and dated 2nd December 1842:

'My dear Gilbert,

I was very glad to find by a letter from your Father, that you had entered into Mr. Salvin's employ, also that you and Alfred have most comfortably lodged in Mr. R. Walmesley's house, I trust you will go on most satisfactorily with Mr. S. and that you will like your occupation. Your hours of attendance are very reasonable, from 9 till 5 so you will have plenty of time to yourself. I enclose you half a £10 note which I shall be glad to hear you have received, the other half will follow in a day or two. I send £10 this quarter, as you may want a few extras, the next quarter I will send £5 which will make the £25 I told you, I would give you the first year you are with Mr. Salvin. May every blessing attend you, for your own sake and that of your anxious Father and Mother...'

Gilbert began working for Salvin on November 28th at 32 Somerset Street in West London. The office was to move, in 1844, to Savile Row and then, later on, to Argyle Street. Salvin, himself, lived at Elmhurst, Finchley from 1833 to 1852 when he moved to 11 Hanover Terrace in Regents Park.

We read in the diary, *'Went to Mr Salvin's office for the first time and commenced tracing for a monument for the late Bishop of York.'* Whilst working with Salvin, Gilbert produced office plans for Trinity College, Cambridge, the screen for St Sepulchre's Church, Cambridge, work at the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Torquay, Shottesbrooke Church, near Twyford in Berkshire, St Stephen's Church, South Shields, and Buckland Church and House, near Faringdon, in present-day Oxfordshire. Sadly, his diaries for 1844-1847 are missing, so it is not known how long Gilbert worked for Salvin, except that we know that Gilbert spent time in Madrid from February to September 1846.

However, by early 1847 Gilbert was working on various house alterations for some well-known Catholic families such as the Doughtys of Tichborne in Hampshire. He worked on the Priest's House at East Hendred, Berkshire, for the Eyston Family and carried out alterations at Sawston Hall, Cambridgeshire, for the Huddlestons. He described Sawston Hall as, *'a very curious place.'* He also produced vestment designs for the Riddell Family. During the following year Gilbert was working on a canopy for one of the choir stalls at Wells Cathedral. It is noteworthy that by May 1st *'Archdeacon Law (had) found fault with the canopy.'*



Rotherwas House

On 31st August 1849, Gilbert received a letter from Father William Amherst, an old family friend and a brother of Francis Amherst a future Bishop of Northampton, *'asking me to get out two sketches for a church in Germany.'* These plans were for Charles De la Barra Bodenham, of Rotherwas, Hereford, whose wife, Irena Dzierzykraj-Morawka, was from Operow in the Grand Duchy of Posen (then in the Polish part of Germany). Sadly, it is not known whether this church was constructed.



Rotherwas

During the year 1860 Gilbert became a frequent visitor at Rotherwas which is situated near to Hereford and was the home of Charles' father, Charles Thomas Bodenham. Here he made significant internal alterations to the house, especially to the kitchens and hall. He also provided new stables.

20th May 1860: *'Thompson from Rotherwas called.'*

28th May 1860: *'Heard from Mrs C.D. Bodenham.'*

Five years later, Charles inherited the Rotherwas estate but today only the historic chapel remains. The stables were badly damaged by fire in 1907 and the estate was sold in 1909 because of colossal family debts.

Although Gilbert worked long hours during the week, he never worked on a Sunday, however, he did sometimes attend social events. One such occasion was on 10th February 1859 when we read in his diary, *'Went to music party at the A. Salvin's. Campanello or some such name, sang there – he makes himself out to have been a monk.'*

By the year 1850, Gilbert had left Salvin, and he had established his own office. Jill Allibone, in her book, *'Anthony Salvin – Pioneer of Gothic Revival Architecture'*, remarks, *'With his contemporaries, like Gilbert Scott, Salvin must bear part of the responsibility for the rape of the English parish church in the nineteenth century.'*



Gilbert Robert Blount

AN OVERVIEW OF GILBERT BLOUNT'S PATRONS AND CLIENTS

When looking for a builder or an architect, a prospective client often goes on personal recommendation or possibly a family connection, and, in this the Victorians were no different to us today. In the mid nineteenth century Roman Catholics were often shunned and unable to pursue certain professions so architects, tended to work for fellow Catholics. Gilbert Blount was no exception, but, saying that, he had numerous wealthy connections including Cardinals Wiseman and Manning as well as the Wright and Canning Families. It is interesting to note that up until at least the mid-1800's most of the Catholic families who could be described as

'landed gentry' were related to each other. However, at this time, we also have the 'Second Spring', that massive re-awakening of Catholic life in England.

To begin with, there were two main branches of the Wright family descended from John Wright IV (1580-1654). He married twice and his first wife was Anne Sulliard, who died in childbirth in 1617, having had six children, including John Wright V. The descendants of John Wright V were to remain at Kelvedon Hall, Essex, for 400 years.

Joane, John Wright IV's second wife, was to have three children, the youngest being Henry. In 1699 Henry's son, William Wright, was working as a goldsmith in Great Russell Street, London. Goldsmiths were bankers and the Wrights' thriving business continued until about 1760 when Anthony Wright widened the range of business to include elementary banking operations (similar to what we have today). He was described as a banker at "*Ye Golden Cup, Common Garden, London*". The Wrights later moved their business to Henrietta Street and the goldsmith side of the bank gradually fell away leaving Wright & Co as a private bank of increasing repute and growing prosperity, until it collapsed, disastrously, on 17th December 1840.

Anthony's grandson, another Anthony Wright, married Anne Biddulph of Biddulph in Staffordshire and Bruton Park in Sussex, and they became Gilbert Blount's maternal grandparents. One can only assume that considerable wealth came from these Biddulph estates, which were entailed and safe from the creditors, because some of the other grandchildren of Anthony and Anne were to become major patrons of Gilbert.

The first grandchild to be a patron was Edward Blount (1795-1881), Eighth Baronet of Mawley, Shropshire, whose mother-in-law, Frances (nee Wright) was an elder sister of Gilbert's mother. Sir Edward Blount, almost certainly, paid a considerable sum towards the building of the Church of St Ambrose at Kidderminster. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Ullathorne on Whit Monday 1857 and the church was opened in August 1858. This church, which cost £2,400, included a High Altar which was made of Caen stone, with black pillars and 3 Old Testament scenes, carved by William Farmer of Vauxhall in London.

Interestingly, in 1859, Hardmans installed a stained-glass window at St Gregory's, Cheltenham, in memory of Sir Edward's parents-in-law, Edward Blount, the M.P. for Steyning and Founder of the Provincial Bank of Ireland, and his wife, Frances. The window depicts St Edward the Confessor and St Frances of Rome with etchings of Westminster Abbey and St Peter's, Rome. It was presented by their ten children including their youngest son, Dom Henry Joseph Blount O.S.B. (1827-1865), who was the assistant missionary at St Gregory's from 1854 to 1860. He is remembered for his commitment to the education of poor children, urging the wealthy to sponsor a '*large crop of Murphy's, a tribe of Flanagan's and a collection of Driscoll's, Flemings and Sullivan's.*'

Dom Henry Joseph Blount later became procurator of Belmont Abbey, but his health deteriorated and, in 1861, he became chaplain to the Bodenham Family of Rotherwas and it was here that he died in February 1865.

His brother, Edward Charles Blount (1809-1905), provided a short, if somewhat inaccurate, account of Dom Henry's life:

'My youngest brother, Henry was a distinguished member of the Benedictine Order (of which he was ultimately President in England), and was attached to the college of that Order at Prior Park (surely Downside?) near Bath. He was subsequently appointed (assistant) mission priest at Cheltenham, where he was highly esteemed by all religious communities. A memorial window (actually a brass plaque) was placed in Cheltenham to his memory, and amongst the subscribers were many people who had little sympathy with the Catholic Church. He was President of the Benedictine College (Downside), and amongst his students was Cardinal Vaughan, now Archbishop of Westminster.'

Although St Gregory's Church (1854-1876) was designed entirely by Charles Hansom, it illustrates how Gilbert's relationship with these first cousins could have led to this window being a commission for him instead.

Sir Edward Charles Blount, Gilbert's 1st cousin, known as Ed Blount, was a banker in Paris and in 1870 he was made the British Consul. He lived at 61 Rue de Courcelles, Paris and the bank in the Rue de la Bix. He also had a house in Kensington, London, and later he was to buy Imberhorne, East Grinstead. Gilbert was asked to design a monument for Ed's daughter, Mary Francis Gertrude, who died on 13th June 1871, and for a granddaughter however, we do not know where this monument was erected.

1st August 1871: *Letters re Monument for Ed Blount's Daughter & Grand Daughter.*

2nd August 1871: *Mrs Ed & Mrs Hen Blount called.*

1st September 1871: *Letters. Sent drawings of Monument for Mrs E. Blount's daughter to Farmer. [stonemason].*

15th December 1871: *Accounts. Rode to Farmer's to see Ed Blount's Monument.*

Dom Henry Blount's sister, Frances Joanna or Fanny, (1816-1858) was the first wife of the banker, Henry William Pownall, of Whitford House, Isleworth. His brother, Frederick Hyde Pownall (1831-1907), an architect, lived at 33a Montagu Square, just around the corner from Gilbert. Frederick Hyde Pownall, was a convert and he, not only, designed the Anglican Church of St Peter's, London Dock, but also Corpus Christi, Maiden Lane, and other churches for the Diocese of Westminster. He was the father of Canon Arthur Hyde Pownall (1857-1935) and Gilbert Pownall (1877-1960), who carried out much of the mosaic work in Westminster Cathedral. Gilbert's cousin, Frances Joanna Pownall, was mother of Bernard Henry Pownall (1857-1918) who, like his cousin Arthur, was a Roman Catholic priest who worked in the Diocese of Westminster.

Fanny Pownall died on 27th November 1858 and, on 5th December, her husband, visited Gilbert with a request and, as a result, this entry appears in his diary: *'Hen Pownall called & told me to cover Fanny's vault with stone, instead of the arch Ross has put.'*

This initial discussion led to a proper monument which Gilbert worked on during the following weeks:

6th December 1858: *'called on Ross about Pownall's vault.'*

15th January 1859: *'Wrote to Pownall sending the tracings for monument.'*

20th January 1859: *'Wrote to Pownall & told him cost of stone landing for his vault £8-19-0.'*

22nd January 1859: *'Heard from Pownall enclosing cheque for £8-19-0.'*

22nd June 1859: *'Chinock called & took the tracing.'*

July 1859: *'Pownall's monument went with him to see it at Freemans wharf, also called at Farmers.'*

12th September 1859: *'paid Chinock & Farmer.'*

During the month of October 1859, Gilbert worked on the railings for the monument but, we are unsure where this family monument was erected, possibly Mortlake.

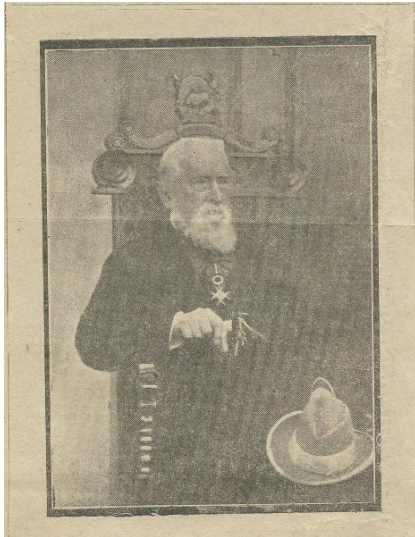
The second of the Wright grandchildren to be a patron of Gilbert Blount was Anthony John Wright-Biddulph whose residence was Burton Park, Sussex.

BIDDULPH OF BURTON.

Wright-Biddulph, Anthony-John, Esq. of Burton Park, Sussex, J.P., b. 29 Jan. 1830; m. 1855, Sarah-Anne, dau. of J. Downes, Esq. (From Burke's Landed Gentry 1879)

Wright-Biddulph was a wealthy man and he invited Gilbert to design a church which was to be erected, for the benefit of local Catholics, on the edge of his estate at Duncton. Work commenced in 1867 and when it was completed two years later it had cost him £3,000. The elaborate Caen stone altar was again carved by William Farmer of London. Archbishop Manning consecrated and opened this church in August 1869, and many have felt that it is a memorial to the firm of Messrs Wright & Co. of Covent Garden. The church is dedicated to SS. Anthony and George – presumably named after the benefactor, Anthony Wright-Biddulph, and his steward, George Morley.

Geraldine, a sister of Anthony Wright-Biddulph, married Godfrey Radcliffe in 1860 – he was later to become Gilbert's uncle-in-law when he married Margaret Brown in 1870. The Radcliffes lived at Dan-y-Craig, Monmouthshire, and it was here that Gilbert designed for them a small chapel next to their house which was to serve the needs of Catholics living in the locality.



Sir Joseph Percival Radcliffe of Rudding Park (1824-1908)

St Filumena's Church, Caverswall, Staffordshire, may have resulted from another family connection as Caverswall Castle came into the hands of the Radcliffe family in 1860. The church was commissioned by Joseph Percival Radcliffe, Brother of Godfrey. The church was built on the land lying between the castle and the main street of the village. Construction began in 1862 and the church was opened in January 1864 by Bishop William Ullathorne. It was built of local stone and the altar and other stone carvings were, yet again, executed by William Farmer of London. Joseph paid the bill for the entire building which came to £1,700. (See later under Caverswall)

Joseph Percival's father, Sir Joseph Pickford Radcliffe, lived at Rudding Park, nr Harrogate and after Gilbert's marriage in 1870 to his granddaughter, Sophia Brown, Sir Joseph asked Gilbert to make various alterations to the estate buildings. Sir Joseph died in 1872 and Joseph Percival moved back to Rudding Park. Gilbert was then asked to design a church close to the house and was working on it with A.E. Purdie when he died in 1876. Purdie completed the project using Gilbert's plans.

In August 1843, Eliza Canning inherited Foxcote, near Ilmington in Warwickshire, on the death of her uncle, Robert Canning of Hartpury, a few months before her marriage to Philip Howard of Corby Castle and M.P. for Carlisle. Eliza Howard was a first cousin of Gilbert and Foxcote was where his grandmother, Mary Canning, was born, brought up and married.

The Howards had two estates, but they spent most of their time at Corby Castle, mainly because of Philip's parliamentary work, which meant that Foxcote was often in the hands of tenants. Thomas and Mary Gillow rented Foxcote during the 1860's and Gilbert's father, Michael Blount, often stayed with them for two or three months at a time, as they were very distantly related. Thomas was a member of the Gillow furniture-making family and a keen Catholic antiquarian. During one of Michael's visits to Foxcote, Gilbert wrote to his *'Dad about the Foxcote school'* (24th April 1864). Whether the Howards had asked Gilbert for a design is

not known, but he was certainly consulted. A new catholic school was opened at Ilmington in 1867 to replace Foxcote School but, in the event, it was designed by Charles Buckler.

Throughout his life Gilbert regularly stayed with his Canning cousins at Hartpury, especially during the shooting season. Robert Canning (1773-1843) was his father's first cousin and Robert had two daughters Maria and Frances. Gilbert was, for instance, staying at Hartpury in 1842 when his father informed him of his appointment to train with Salvin. This close relationship with the Canning's led to at least three valuable business connections for Gilbert.

Firstly, the family erected a memorial in 1823 to Robert's first wife, Catherine Canning, in Hartpury Parish Church and it was designed by Cooke of Gloucester. It is possible that Gilbert saw this work whilst staying at Hartpury and, as a result, chose Cooke for various jobs, such as memorials and tombstones, for his own family and for his Catholic clients.

See 'Blount Gravestones at Kemerton': <https://wp.me/p4BX9P-qR>

Later, Cooke, the local stonemason, became involved with William Farmer of London in the building of St Peter's Church in Gloucester.

See 'Robert Canning of Hartpury': <https://wp.me/p4BX9P-3iZ>

This leads to the second connection, the Church of St Peter ad Vincula in Gloucester. The Bishop of Clifton and Canon Calderbank (the Missioner) wished to build a new church in Gloucester, and they invited Gilbert to be their architect. He accepted and his relative, Frances, became a major benefactress. She laid the foundation stone in 1859 and Gilbert attended this ceremony spending the previous night with Frances at Longford, just north of Gloucester. As the building work progressed, Gilbert often stayed at Hartpury with Maria and her family and he thought nothing of walking the six or so miles into the city to oversee construction.

Thirdly, as a small boy, Gilbert stayed at Hartpury with his cousins and when, in 1862, he was asked by the Dominican nuns to design Carisbrooke Priory on the Isle of Wight, one of the elderly sisters remembered him from those childhood visits to their convent at Hartpury.

Some of the nuns who had been at Hartpury, had moved first to Atherstone, Warwickshire; then Hurst Green, Lancashire, to a house belonging to Mr Parker, father of one of the nuns. At Hurst Green Gilbert oversaw minor alterations to the house but the planned major alterations were cancelled as the Nuns moved to the Isle of Wight.

St Dominic's Priory (1865-66), built of local grey stone, was funded by Elizabeth, Dowager Countess of Clare and cost £12,000. The correspondence between Gilbert and the nuns gives evidence of his wish to fulfil their requirements, his care, and the kindly advice that he gave them.

One can only guess, but was it because of his childhood visits to Hartpury or his diligence as an architect that led him to become one of the favoured architects of the whole Dominican Order?

His other works for the English Dominican Province included:

Dominican Convent and Church, Stone, Staffordshire



Sisters' Choir, Stone

The Church of the Immaculate Conception and St Dominic was commissioned by Mother Margaret Hallahan, when St Dominic's Convent was first established. Mother Margaret (1803-68) was the foundress of, and drew up the rule for, the Third Order Dominican Congregation of St Catherine of Siena, and the Convent became the mother house. The convent and school were built from designs by Charles Hansom on the site of a medieval Augustinian Priory. Mother Margaret conceived the church, which was also designed by Hansom as a 'book of the poor', depicting the principal truths of faith and history of the Dominican order. Like Hansom, she was a close associate of Bishop Ullathorne, who laid the foundation stone on 4 August 1853 and opened the church on 3 May 1854. The east end consisting of the Sanctuary and Sisters' Choir was added by Gilbert Blount between the years 1861 and 1863. He also provided the Sisters with a Chapter House, Guest House and further accommodation for the boarding schoolgirls.

Dominican Convent, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire



The school of 1858 and also the 'new wing' of 1864-65 on the northern side of the convent were designed by Gilbert Blount. The additions made after 1864 were designed by his pupil, A.E. Purdie.

St Dominic's Priory and Hill, Camden Town, London (1863-67, 1874)

Haverstock Hill was to be a huge enterprise, occupying a three-acre site. The planned church was to hold 5,000 people and was to cost £50,000. The foundation stone was laid in 1863, but only the foundations were completed so a temporary church was opened in 1867. Work did not recommence here until 1874 and this had not progressed very far when Gilbert died in 1876. The present enormous church was built to a new design by Charles Buckler.

Gilbert lived through the tumultuous events surrounding the Restoration of the Hierarchy and he noted in his diary for 16th August 1850 that Dr Wiseman left for Rome "*to be elected a Cardinal*" and a group of people '*met at the Thatched House Tavern to get up a memorial.*' In the same year we read, '*Archdeacon Manning, Lord Camden, Revd Anderton of St Margaret's, Leicester... they have put themselves for instruction under Father Vincent, the Passionist at Broadway.*'

The diary entries for April and May 1854 include references to Gilbert's frequent visits to Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman and these usually took place in the evening.

On May 16th, 'Breakfast at the Cardinal's but he did not appear, not having recovered from his fall.'

On 11th September 1854 Gilbert left a sketch of the Cardinal's reliquary with Mr Searle. He later produced a bust of the Cardinal.

Both Cardinals Wiseman and Manning gave Blount considerable work in the Diocese of Westminster. He was asked to carry out work at Etloe House in Church Road, Leyton, which was the home of Cardinal Wiseman from 1858 to 1864. He was also involved with Cinderford Cottages, at Grove Hill Farm, Hellingby, in Sussex – a property belonging to the same Cardinal.

In later years, Alfred Francis Blount, Gilbert's elder brother, a solicitor, was closely involved with Cardinal Manning and his purchase of the site of Westminster Cathedral. In a pastoral letter of 1868, referred to by McPhee, Gilbert was appointed to design Archbishop's House and other ancillary buildings which were to adjoin Henry Clutton's proposed Cathedral Church. This project did not, of course, come to fruition.

CARDINAL WISEMAN'S PEDESTAL AND RELIQUARY AND MEDALLION OF THE POPE

The pedestal was designed to hold a bust of the Cardinal, possibly made when he was elevated to the Pontifical College in Rome.

16th March 1852: *In the evening, went to the Cardinal's, met there Mr Moore, the sculptor. He and the Cardinal seemed to like my design for the pedestal for the Cardinal's bust, which the Cardinal says he will have executed in Belgium. The Cardinal spoke about the Warwick St Church.*

19th March 1852: *In the evening, on pedestal for the Cardinal's bust.*

20th March 1852: *In the evening on the Pedestal for the Cardinal's bust. Elected a member of the new Catholic Club.*

20th April 1852: *Went to the Cardinal in the evening.*

6th February 1858: *Farmer returned the Medallion of the Pope to the Cardinal.*

6th April 1858: *Patnam called, went with him to arrange how to fix Medallion at the Cardinal's.*

8th April 1858: *Had Medallion fixed for the Cardinal, there about 3hrs.*

27th August 1858: *Cardinal's Reliquary, heard from Mr White.*

11th October 1858: *Heard from Mr White.*

12th October 1858: *Wrote to Mr White.*

11th June 1870: *Sent Carew to have the Cardinal's Monument covered.*

Gilbert's projects within the Diocese of Westminster included:

The House of Mercy in Blandford Square – new Convent and chapel

St Elizabeth's Hospital – the original one, not the one used today.

St Helen's Church, Brentwood – now part of the Cathedral with newer additions of 1860

Clapham Convent - Chapel and School

Brook Green Schools

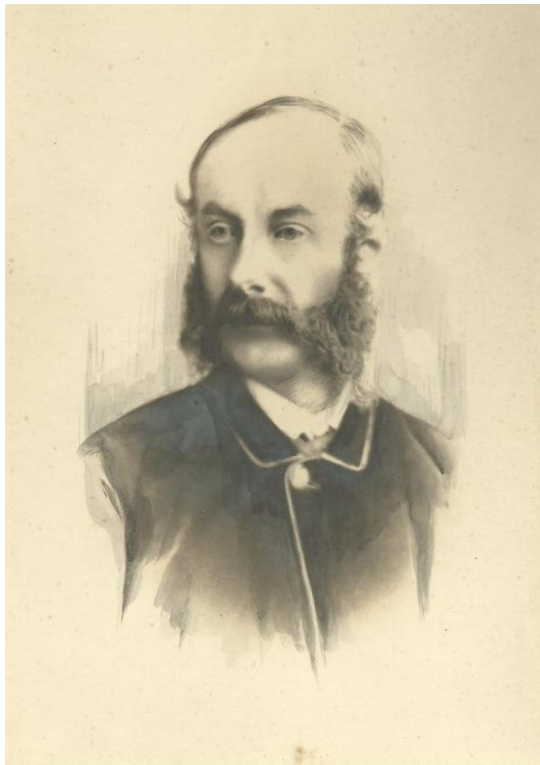
Hammersmith Convent and Church

Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Marylebone – demolished in 1960 because of dry rot.

St Catherine of Siena, Bow – 1868-70

Mental Asylum in Hertfordshire

Gilbert provided sets of plans for house alterations and extensions for other Catholic families – the Riddells in Northumberland had a church built at Felton, cottages were designed for the Duke of Norfolk in Sussex and the Gerard's, of Ashton-le-Willows, commissioned a number of projects. He also carried out numerous minor works for clients in London.



Gilbert Robert Blount

SCHOOLS DESIGNED BY GILBERT BLOUNT. [MOST WERE BUILT]

These plans were still in the office when A.E. Purdie took over the practice following Gilbert's death, and almost certainly went with Gilbert's widow when she moved to Surrey in the late 1800's.

Brentwood- 1849

Mortlake [London]-1851

Brook Green [London]-1851

Blandford Square [London]-1853

New Road, Homer Row, Winchester Row [Marylebone, London] this is one school, but built on the junction of these roads- 1853.

Mr Wenham's [near London Bridge]-1854

Coventry-1858

Swindon, Wiltshire-1858

Stoke [on Trent]-1858.

Wardour [Dorset]-1859

Hanley [Staffordshire]-1860

Clapham [London]-1860

Sir Robert Gerard's [Lancashire] -1861

Spitalfields [East End of London]-1862

Gloucester-1863

Bedford-1866

Wolverton [Bedfordshire]-1866

Cambridge Poor School-1866

Ilford Manor [London] -1867

Wrightington [Lancashire]-1870

Burton Hill [Sussex]-1871

Dorking [Surrey]-1871

Wednesbury [Birmingham]-1871

Brighton [Sussex]-1872

HIS OWN PRACTICE

New Year's Day, 1848, saw Dr Wiseman (then Vicar-Apostolic of the London District) and Gilbert Blount staying with the Camoys at Stonor Park, near Henley-on-Thames. The Camoys were related to the Blounts and Gilbert later designed the two lodges at the entrance to their Park.

22nd February 1848, was perhaps a turning point in Gilbert's life as he 'was introduced to Pugin at Dr Wiseman's Conversazione.' Later in that year Gilbert met the Pugins whilst staying in Ramsgate.



On 4th July 1848 we know that Gilbert attended the solemn opening of the Church of St George in the Fields (Southwark Cathedral) and was given a V.I.P. chair in the nave. This may indicate a blossoming acquaintance with A.W. N. Pugin, who was the architect, or perhaps a connection with one of the clergy or benefactors. Interestingly, Dominic Barberi was one of the 240 clergy to attend and was seen walking in the procession of clergy.

Clearly, Gilbert was becoming firmly established as a Roman Catholic architect and, on Christmas Eve 1849, he and his brother Alfred Blount, finally left their residence at 27 Upper Montagu Street to live at 1 Montagu Place. At the end of 1853 Gilbert moved his office from 6, Duke Street, Adelphi, to his home, 1 Montagu Place, where he converted the stables. This property was where he was to live and work for the rest of his life.



1 Montagu Place

A diary entry for 15th March 1850 mentions that Thomas Gibbins '*called for a clerk of the works place.*' On May 6th '*Gibbins (was) taken on as clerk of the works for St Ed's convent Blau Sq at £2 per week.*' By May 27th the first signs were apparent that Gibbins, the clerk, "*was in liquor*" and the authorities at Blandford Square wanted him dismissed. We also read more about Gilbert's clerk of works and his disturbing antics, '*Gibbins has been twice in the Station House and was fined 5/- for being drunk and he lost three plans for Spitalfields House and grounds.*' It cost Gilbert 12/6 to recover them! Alcohol turned out to be a major problem whilst he worked for Gilbert who eventually gave him notice and he left on 5th December 1859.

John Theodore Carew first '*offered himself as Clerk of the Works*' at Spitalfields on 8th March 1852. He was a surveyor and the son of John Edward Carew, a sculptor. Carew was taken on a few days later and remained working with Gilbert until Gilbert's death in 1876.

Alfred Edward Purdie joined Gilbert on 21st November 1864: "*Ed Purdie came to the office*" as a trainee architect. Purdie remained with Gilbert until 1875 when he set up his own office. After Gilbert's death in 1876, Purdie took over some of the clients and projects, notably Ridding Park Church, Bow, Bedford and Husbands Bosworth.

One of Gilbert's closest collaborators was the stonemason, William Farmer, who lived at 4 Mead Place, Westminster Road, Sutton, London, who was the stonemason used for the majority of his church commissions. Farmer had his works at Freeman's Stone Wharf at Deptford, and here he produced numerous tombstones, monuments, altars and other richly carved stone details. The diaries reveal that William Farmer, '*the carver,*' called upon Gilbert a great deal during the year 1854.

October 1852 was an important month for Gilbert because it marked his introduction to Hardman of Birmingham. However, it was not until 12th November 1855, when he was in Birmingham journeying from Kenilworth to Chillington, that he '*called at Hardman's and went over his establishment.*' This establishment was at 66 Great Charles Street. John Hardman's father, also John, was originally a button and medal maker, but he set up the firm, John Hardman & Co, in 1838, to meet the growing demand for metal fittings for new churches. When the firm moved to Great Charles Street, in 1845, they also supplied stained glass. From that time on Gilbert was to use Hardman's for most of his door fittings, tabernacles and altar rails. John Hardman & Co also had an office at 13 King William Street, Strand, London.

During the year 1852 Gilbert spent time working on plans for a presbytery at Gravesend for Mr Butt. Like the Crewe complex these plans do not appear to have been realised.

1853 was a busy year for Gilbert Blount as work continued at both Spitalfields and Blandford Square, two major projects. He also prepared two sets of plans for Lanark Church and Presbytery for a Mr Monteith. The designs for the schools at Homer Row (Marylebone Road) were also commenced during this period.

During 1854 Gilbert spends a great deal of time on plans for a school at Winchester Row (possibly near Marylebone Road) and the school at Mortlake. He also carried out work at Clapham Convent and oversaw alterations to Hippenscombe House, near Chute in Hampshire, the home of Edmund Wheble his brother-in-law. At the same time, he was responsible for the enlargement of St Mary's Training College at Hammersmith.

Diary entries for 1855 reveal further projects and commissions:

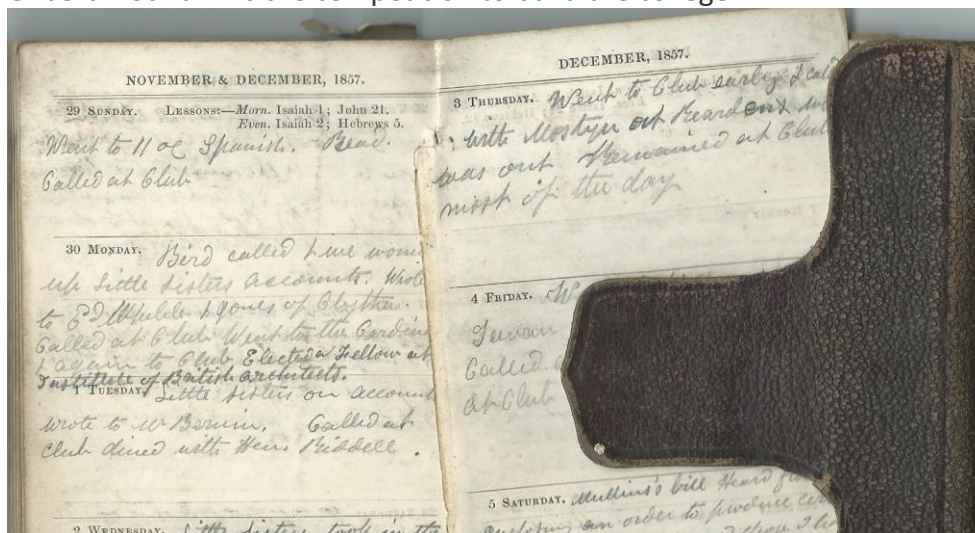
23rd January 1855: *'Heard from the Clapham Nuns, giving up my design and asking for my account.'*

In April, Gilbert is asked to begin plans for the Chelsea Almshouses and a second design for the nuns at Clapham.

9th August 1855: *'Win Row Schools opened.'*

1st September 1855: *"I understand Hansom has brought down the builders contract for Brook Green within the £7,000.'*

Gilbert Blount wins the competition to build the college.



Gilbert Robert Blount was elected a Fellow of the Institute of British Architects on 30th November 1857.

Diary entries:

9th October 1857: *Called on Salvin, who signed recommendation paper for Institute & promised to get other signatures.*

Accounts, 10th December 1857: *Institute of British Architects £42-0-0.*

Gilbert's portfolio was extensive and, just to take 1859 as an example, he was involved with Bromsgrove Catholic Church and Cinderford Cottages Further projects included the Convent at Westbury-on-Trym, the Catholic Church at Brentwood, a gate house for Highgate Cemetery in London and the schools at Wardour in Dorset. Gilbert also had various house alterations in progress as well as the monument for Lady Newburgh of Slindon.

Gilbert Blount died in 1876. No obituary seems to have appeared and when Charles Barry, the President of the R.I.B.A., gave his annual address in 1877, he had great difficulty in finding any information about him, even though Gilbert had been a member of the Institute for 20 years. However, he was described in the address as:

'a disciple of Pugin, he was a capable architect responsible for a small body of interesting but unadventurous works, variable in quality. Whilst he was not in the first flight as a designer, his work often had character – a personal flavour – due to his choice of parts and, at times, the wayward handling of their details..... He was a gentleman of very courteous manners and much respected among friends who deplore his death.'^[iii]



Mourning Locket of Gilbert Robert Blount (copyright reserved by Mrs Philippa Hunter and not to be reproduced without her permission)



Reverse: 'Gilbert R Blount died 13 Novr 1876.'

Gilbert Blount died on 13 November 1876, 'at 9.20pm, very calmly and beautifully.'^[iii] His funeral took place on 18 November at St James' Church in Reading. He was buried in the churchyard, beside the south wall of the church, in the family vault alongside his parents and sister. Since the alterations to this church in 1962, the Blount vault is now under the side aisle and is, unfortunately, not marked, but a plaque has now been placed on the nearest wall. His wife and three unmarried daughters, Marjorie, Louisa and Gilberta are all buried there with him. Emma, his eldest daughter, married William May, a solicitor, and they are both buried at St Edward's, Sutton Park, Guildford.

From the pages of his diary:

9th November 1876 Gilbert took to his bed and he died on 13th November 1876.

9th November 1876 [Written with a very shaky hand] *Felt a great chill in the morn washing & with nothing on. Just before breakfast very sick & very ill during the day & night.*

10th November 1876: *Tegart [Dr] came & found I had an attack of pleurisy, came again in aft & put the 5 leches. He came again at night, found me still in great pain.*

11th November 1876: *Mr Tegart came early found me no worse, still in great pain. Margt-with Gilbert almost all day 7 with him very often during night.*

12th November 1876: *Rather better night, in less pain. Mr Tegart came in morn & at 8 o'clock in even. Ann Forter [?] came & sat up with Gilbert. Margt laid down.*

13th November 1876: Gilbert had no sleep all night, very weak, still wandering, gradually got weaker. Mrs Brown came [Margaret's mother]. Father Barry came & gave all the last sacraments at 3 O'clock. Sir Wm Gill came with Mr Tegart at 5.30. G getting weaker, died 9.20 very calmly & beautifully.

14th November 1876: Gilbert remained laid out. Nuns came to pray by him. Mr Taylor & Co [undertaker from Reading] 7 put him into the shell & took him into dressing room.

16th November 1876: They took Gilbert downstairs & put him into the coffin in the back room.

17th November 1876; Mr Taylor & co came to take away the body of Gilbert which had been taken downstairs. It went to Reading that night & was put in the church. [St James']

18th November 1876: Papa, Willie, Charlie [Margaret's brothers], Hen Riddell, Alfred & went to Reading for Gilbert's funeral, which took place at the Catholic Church there. They came back here after & Hen Riddell read his Will.

21st November 1876: Margt, Tilda, Mr & Mrs Brown, Willie & Charlie to Reading by 10 o'clock train to Mass there & after to visit Gilbert's grave, & plant evergreens.

21st December 1876: Accounts - Mr Taylor Funeral expenses £105-14-6.

1876. DEATHS in the District of <i>St. Mary</i> , in the County of MIDDLESEX.									
No.	When and where Died.	Name and Surnames.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
18	<i>Thurstalk November 1876 1 Montague Place</i>	<i>Gilbert Robert Blount</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>57 years</i>	<i>Esquire</i>	<i>Pleurisy 5 days Exhaustion Certified by Ed. Tegart M.R.C.S.</i>	<i>Alfred F. Blount Brother present at the death 2 Taville Row Bond Street</i>	<i>Fifteenth November 1876</i>	<i>G. F. Rossiter Registrar</i>

I CERTIFY that the above is a true Copy of an Entry in the Register Book of Deaths in the Registrar's District of *St. Mary* in the Superintendent Registrar's District of MARLBORNE, in the County of MIDDLESEX; AND I FURTHER CERTIFY that the said Register Book is now lawfully in my custody.

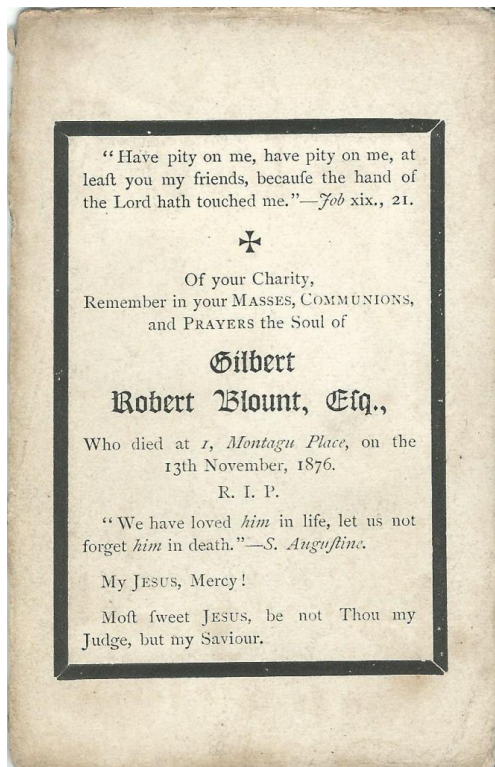
WITNESS my hand, this *Eighth* day of *June* 18*88*

Book No. *37*

Joseph Peard

By the 14 & 15 Vict., c. 99, sect. 14, a Copy of any Book which is of such a Public nature as to be admissible in evidence on its mere production from the proper custody, is made admissible in evidence in any Court of Justice provided it be Signed and Certified as a True Copy by the Officer to whose custody the Original is intrusted.

SUPERINTENDENT
REGISTRAR OF
BIRTHS, DEATHS AND
MARRIAGES.



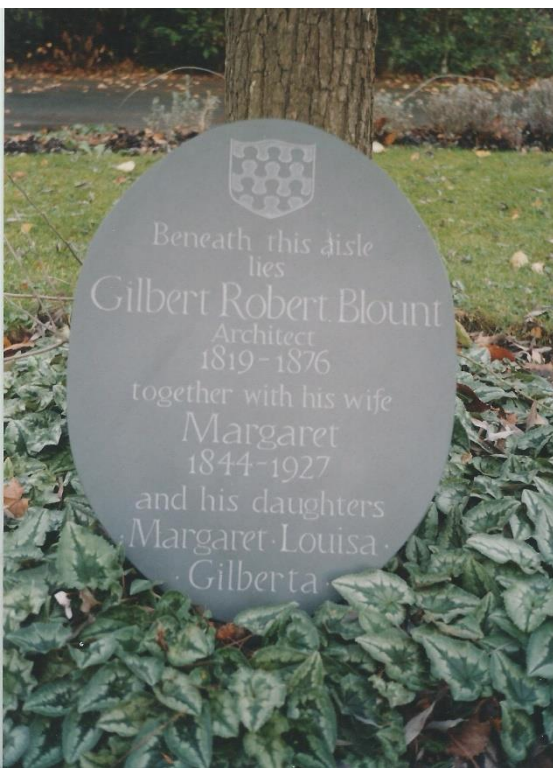
[\[i\]](#) Letters to Gilbert Blount from Elizabeth Riddell (author's collection) and Jill Allibone, 'Anthony Salvin – Pioneer of Gothic Revival Architecture'

[\[ii\]](#) Charles Barry, R.I.B.A. address, November 1877

[\[iii\]](#) Gilbert Blount's diary 1876 – continued by his wife. (author's collection)



Gilbert Blount gravestone at St James Church, Reading



Gilbert's widow, Sophia Margaret Blount, continued living at 1 Montagu Place until the early 1880s when she moved to Woodbridge Park, Guildford. Alfred Blount, Gilbert's brother, moved back to the property in Montagu Place where he stayed until he died.

Sometime between 1918 and 1923 she moved to a house in Camberley which was renamed 'Woodbridge.' Here she died in 1927.



L to R. Jacobina Maria Sophie Brown nee Radcliffe (1820-1910), Emma Mary Agnes Theresa May nee Blount (1873-1956), Michael William Blount May (1906-1982) and Sophia Margaret Blount nee Brown (1844-1927)



Sophia Margaret Blount and grandson Michael Blount May

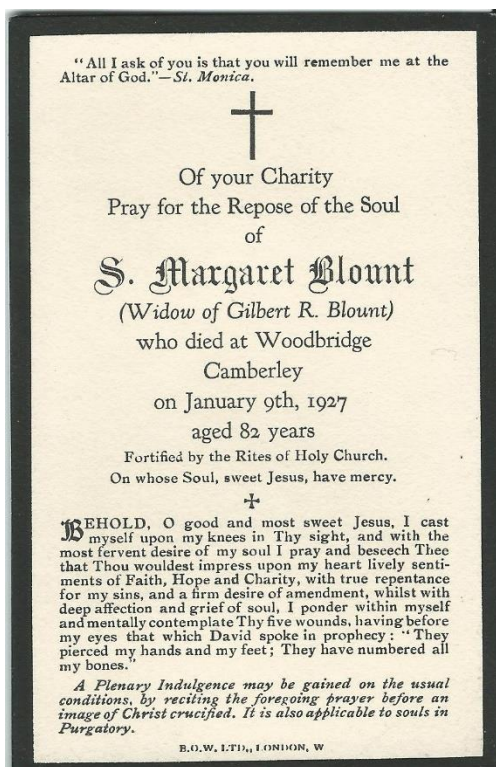


Woodbridge Park in 1885 (Acknowledging the Chris Quinn Collection)



Woodbridge Park, Camberley





JOHN THEODORE CAREW

John Theodore Carew, b1823, was the seventh child of John Edward Carew, an Irish sculptor, who came to London at the beginning of the 19th century. He had a studio in Edgware Road and later moved to Petworth, Sussex to be near his patron the Earl of Egremont. While he was at Petworth, he executed *The Baptism of Christ* [1835] for the Church of St John the Baptist, Brighton. John Edward was made bankrupt in 1842 following the death of the earl. His eyesight began to fail, and he died in 1868. His most prominent work being *The Death of*

Nelson, one of the bronze panels on the pedestal of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London.

John Theodore was a widower and joiner living at 22 North Street, Edgware Road in 1851, one of a number of young men employed by Thomas Butcher, a joiner. Butcher was already working for Gilbert Blount as the carpenter and joiner at The House of Mercy, Blandford Square and had reported in October 1851 that Gibbins, Gilbert's assistant, '*had been twice in the station house and was fined 5/0 for being drunk and had lost 3 plans for Spitalfields house and ground.*' Butcher also came to 1 Montague Place, Gilbert's home, in November 1853 to look at the plans for altering the stables into an office. This he did and Blount moved from his office at Duke Street, Adelphi on the 16th December.

John Theodore first came to Gilbert Blount's office on 8th March 1852 to '*offer himself as Clerk of the Works*' at Underwood Road, Spitalfields in the East end of London. Gilbert took him on trial at 36/- per week. Carew calls at the office on 7th July and goes with Blount and Gibbins to Spitalfields because, "*Carew seems to fancy the bottom pier of Staircase has bulged a little. I fancy it must have been built out of the perpendicular.*" He also helped equip Gilbert's new office in 1853 with trestles and a desk for which Gilbert paid him £2-17-0 on 26th March 1853. Meanwhile John Theodore moves to The Red Leaf House, Penshurst, Kent. He does not stay there long, as by the end of 1854 he is back in London at 18 Henry Street, Bedford Square, Mile End Road and an office at 7 Mitre Street, Algate. He becomes engaged on 25th May 1854. The last move according to Gilbert Blount's diaries is in 1856, when John Theodore moves to 3 Westbourne Grove North, Bayswater, London and the 1861 census says he is a surveyor. This clarifies the work that Gilbert Blount asks him to do as written in Gilbert's diaries. Blount dies in 1876 and Alfred Edward Purdie, who had been trained by Blount and then set up his own practise in 1875, took over Blount's office and clients.

John Theodore Carew had a son of the same name, who was born in 1852 and in the 1871 census he is referred to being an 'Architectural Student'. In Gilbert's 1869 accounts there is a reference to payments of: Purdie £25, J. Carew £20, Carew junior £10. Carew junior's first project as Clerk of Works was for Mr Oldham's Schools in Brighton, which began in April 1872. Carew junior was clearly being trained up to be an architect by Gilbert, but Gilbert's early death put an end to that.

John Theodore, senior, becomes Purdie's surveyor, and father or son, have an office at 22 Sarrey Street, The Strand, London in 1891. One of them is certainly involved with Purdie, in the additions and alterations at the Jesuit church in Farm Street, London in 1889.

ALFRED EDWARD PURDIE F.R.I.B.A.

'Ed' Purdie, as Gilbert Blount called him, was born in 1843. He came to Gilbert's office for the first time on 21st November 1864: "*Ed Purdie came to the office*" to work as an architectural assistant and it is possible that he took over this role from John O'Connor who - "*looked very ill*" earlier in the year.

Ed Purdie's first wage was 10/- on 24th December 1864; there after he was paid £7 per quarter. The last mention of his wages in the diaries is 24th December 1869, when Ed Purdie was paid £25 for the quarter.

Ed Purdie became Gilbert's assistant almost immediately and helped in the running of the office in Montague Place and of course helping with drawings etc. There are very few references to him, except in 1875 when we know that he set up his own practice. In September 1876 he was clearly helping Gilbert with the plans for the church at Rudding Park, Yorkshire.

After Gilbert's death, Ed Purdie took over the practice and the remaining clients. The paperwork, but not the drawings which were retained by Gilbert's widow, were moved to Ed's office. Here he finished the work on Rudding Park Church using Gilbert's plans; he also made additions to the Church of Our Lady and St Catherine at Bow; the Chapel at Husbands Bosworth and the Church of the Holy Family at Bedford.

Purdie was made a Fellow of the Institute of British Architects in 1893 and he later moved his practice to Meadow Grange, Canterbury, Kent, where he died on 26th February 1920.

Purdie was a prolific architect in his own right, but it is often said that he was solely responsible for Rudding Park which is of course not the case, as Gilbert's diaries demonstrate.

Gilbert's widow, Margaret, kept in touch with Purdie as the correspondence below illustrates:

GILBERT BLOUNT – A MISCELLANY

Correspondence regarding Gilbert Blount's Work

In the possession of Philippa Hunter (Great Granddaughter)

(i) The Priory, Little Malvern, Oct. 15. 1912 to Mrs Blount

'Dear Madam,

Mr. Wm Berington encourages me to write to you and to ask you, if you can without inconvenience, give me some information, which I have been long seeking for.

I began some years ago to draw up a list of the works executed by Catholic architects during the past century and was particularly anxious to make your husbands' list as full as possible, as however, I believe, an alumnus of Downside, my own college.

I have a catalogue of some of the churches, convents, etc. which he designed – but, I dare say you could easily give me a fuller one than I could compile. If so, I shall be very grateful. Someday soon I hope I may be able to work it into a short article for the Downside Review of which I am editor – and when I come to that, I should dearly like to have a portrait

of so distinguished a man. Perhaps you could give me, or lend me, a photograph of Mr. Gilbert Blount, for reproduction with a few dates for the contemplated memoir.

With every apology for thus troubling you,

I am yours very sincerely.

Gilbert Dolan OSB'

(ii) From Meadow Grange, Near Canterbury, 26th October 1912

A.E. Purdie was Blount's assistant, and he continued the incomplete works after Blount's death.

'Dear Madam,

We had at the office Montagu Place, a fairly, full list of most of the work designed and carried out by the late Mr. Gilbert Blount, this list I made out many years ago and fastened with paste on the inside of the cupboard doors of recess (?) where most of the drawings and tracings were kept, so now I am quite at a loss to remember a twentieth part of them.

An interesting work or article might however be written giving a brief account of his useful life, serving his time after leading a collegiate education, with the eminent Engineer Brunel and then following by preference the study of Architecture in which he was most successful, 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever;' and this was his principal aim in life, and is expressed to a marked degree in all his buildings, for the greatest and most minute care was lavished on them. His architectural studies through Britain, France and Italy etc., were greatly appreciated by a mind so fertile, so persevering, so painstaking and richly rewarded in the number of Churches, Convents, Schools, Mansions, Restorations, Monuments, Altars and other work requiring skilful and educated treatment, with his vast knowledge, he was consulted frequently by Prelates, Priests and Laity and often called on by architects of high standing to arbitrate on complicated matters of dispute and misunderstanding.

Tall of stature handsome in build and appearance, of a gentle and modest nature, few can surpass him, always ready to do a good and help in works of charity, a devout son of Holy Church. He passed to his reward on ... and is buried in the beautiful churchyard at Reading.

Here follows a list of some of his works:

Churches –

Spitalfields

St Thomas's Fulham

St Helen's Brentwood

Church & Schools Holy Rosary Marylebone

Felton Church.

Garswood Newton-le-Willows

St Mary Magdalene Brighton

St John's Brighton restoration and additional chancel

Church of the Holy Family, Bedford

Church and additions to Mansion, Swynnerton Park

Church, House and Presbytery Burton Park, Sussex

Church etc at Wednesbury

Lanark Church & Convent

Restoration Chapel at Richmond

Church, Hendon

(Church) at Bosworth Hall

St Mary's Mortlake

Church at Caverswall

St Dominic's Priory, Haverstock Hill

Glasgow Friary

Training College, Hammersmith

Convent of Mercy Blandford Square

Convent of Dominican Nuns and Chapel, Isle of Wight

Sisters of Nazareth, Hammersmith

Schools at Spitalfields

School Chapel, Dorking

Do (School Chapel?) at Wolverton.

Convent of Notre Dame, Clapham

Notre Dame, Southwark

Visitation Convent at Westbury

College buildings and additions for the Jesuit Fathers, Beaumont, old Windsor also the expensive deep foundations for the Church of St Ignatius.

and many others too numerous to mention.

Probably you may remember more than I have described, if so kindly append them.

I trust you and your family are keeping in the best of health and hurrying to catch post, with kindest regards,

I remain dear Madam.

Yours very sincerely,

A.E. Purdie'

(iii) Letter from A.E. Purdie to Mrs. Blount 30th October 1912

Editor – Purdie was Gilbert Blount's assistant and took over the Practice after Gilbert died.

Meadow Grange, near Canterbury.

Dear Madam,

I return your list with a few corrections added thereon.

Those shown by X I am uncertain about since they might be additions only.

I dare say you will be able to assist the Revd Father a good deal.

With Kindest Regards

I remain dear Madam.

Yours very sincerely

A.E. Purdie

(iv) Some of the works of Mr. Gilbert Robert Blount

Undated List probably by Margaret Blount, widow

Ashton-le-Willows Church and Schools (Sir M. Gerard afterwards Lord Gerard)

Arundel Cottages (for Duke of Norfolk)

Archbishop's House Westminster (formerly the Guards Institute structural alterations were made to suit the requirements of the late Cardinal Manning)

x Aldworth Church
Blandford Square complete Convent and Chapel
x Barfriston Church
Burton Park Church and house Mr. Bullocks (editor – should be Wilcocks) house.
Bromsgrove Church
Brentwood St. Helen's Church
Bow Church of Our Lady
Brighton Church St. Mary Magdalen
Brighton Church St. John the Baptist an old Church to which was added Chancel and chapels and other extensions – a mural monument to the memory of the late Mrs. Fitzherbert is fixed on the epistle of the nave.
Bosworth Hall Church of Our Lady for St. Francis Turville
Bedford Church of the Holy Family (for the late Canon Warmoll)
Old Beaumont College, Church and additions
Clapham Notre Dame Convent, Schools and Chapel
Carisbrook Priory complete Convent and Chapel
Crewe Church
Castle Rising Church
x Colney Hatch Asylum
x Chelsea Almshouses
x Cinderford Cottages
Caverswall Castle Church and additions for the late Sir Percival Radcliffe Bart
Chalgrove Church
Dan-y-graig Church
Dorking (? not sure of word following – editor) Church, St Josephs, Schools Presbytery
x St. Dormier Church
x Englefield and x Ewell Churches
Felton Park Church

Glasgow Friary (added in pencil – editor)

Goring Church
Garswood and Wrightington schools
Hendon Church
Hammersmith Training College
Hammersmith Church and Convent Good Shepherd
x Highgate Cemetery uncertain as Cemetery etc of this (being (concluding illegible note – editor)
Homer Row London Our Lady of the Rosary Church and schools
Hartbury Church
x Ivor Church
Ingatestone Hall Church and additions
Kidderminster (Church of the Holy Family)

Lanark Church and Convent (added in pencil)

x Leydden Church

Mortlake (in pencil)

Manor House Ilford Church and additions to old house

Marylebone Church and Schools (added in pencil – possibly Homer Road above – editor)

Nazareth House Church, Convent and Schools

New Hall Convent Lodge and Porch

Newton le Willows (added in pencil – probably Ashton-le-Willows – editor)

Romford Church

Rudding Park Cottages

x Swindon Schools

Spicer St Spitalfields London schools

Spitalfields St. Anne's Church

Stone part of Church and complete Convent

Stoke Staffordshire Convent and schools

Swynnerton Park Church and additions to house

x Streatley Church

x Shotterbrook Church

Southwark Notre Dame Convent (added in pencil)

~~Westminster r-Archbishops House. This was formerly the Guards Institute. Structural alterations were made to suit the requirements~~

Shrine enclosure for the late Cardinal Wiseman's tomb removed to Westminster Cathedral.

Numerous tombs, sacred vessels and Altars were designed by Mr. Gilbert Blount

Oscott College extensions and additions

Haverstock Hill St. Dominic's Church

Large drawings for metalwork

Fonts etc etc.

Benches, vestment chests

and numerous other designs

The names with x against them I am uncertain about, they might be additions only but there are drawings of them among Mr. G. Blount's

Wednesbury Church (added in pencil)

Westbury Convent (added in pencil)

Wolverton (added in pencil)

Wrightington schools (added in pencil)

(v) *The Priory, Little Malvern* (postcard, postmarked 26th January 1913, addressed to Mrs. Blount, Woodbridge Park, Guildford, Surrey)

I have not yet completed my paper – So, with yr kind permission will keep the documents a little longer. I have, alas, only one eye to work with, & must use it economically. My article I trust will appear in the Downside Review & of course you shall have a copy.

Yrs. v. faithfully

Gilbert Dolan O.S.B.

(vi) *The Priory, Little Malvern 27.10.1913*

(To Mrs Blount, Woodbridge Park, Guildford, Surrey)

Dear Mrs Blount,

I cannot tell you how much I am obliged to you for your kind communication – the photograph and Mr Purdie's letter: & I shall look forward with pleasure for the further information which you promise me.

I am sure you will agree with me that our leading Catholic architects of the revival, especially such a one as your husband, deserve commemoration in some proper quarter.

With renewed thanks I am

Very sincerely yours

Gilbert Dolan O.S.B.

(vii) *The Priory, Little Malvern, 12.3.14e*

Dear Mrs. Blount,

I thank you very much for so kindly giving me the supplementary information, dates etc., regarding your late husband's career. In a day or two I shall be sending it off to Father Abbot Butler, who has relieved me from the editorship for this year. As it is the Centenary year of Downside, instead of the three usual numbers, one volume with history, memoirs etc., for the period, will be issued in the summer, ~~it is usual~~ and I do not suppose that you would care for

five copies of a work likely to run over 300 pages. With the ordinary numbers one often had application for reprints (taken before the type was broken up) of special articles; the terms for these reprints varied, of course, with the number of pages; whether there was a portrait or print; whether a special cover was asked for etc. I will look up a specimen of what I mean that you may judge for yourself. I have had the photograph reproduced and hope funds will run to its appearance in the Review. There would be, of course, no difficulty of printing it there if you kindly thought fit to guarantee the cost. If I were not a poor monk without a sixpence of my own I would gladly be at the expense myself, being anxious to preserve the memory and the features of so distinguished an alumnus of my old School, and me who was such an ornament to the Catholic body. When I hear from the Right Rev. Editor I will write again.

Meantime with best thanks and wishes.

I am.

Yours very sincerely,

(pro) Gilbert Dolan O.S.B.

(viii) Undated List of Gilbert R. Blount's designs etc.

The pencil additions and the Crosses are possibly by Emma Blount, his daughter (according to Philippa Hunter, Great Granddaughter)

Clapham, Notre Dame Convent & Schools & Chapel (pencil)

Stoke Staffordshire Convent & Schools

Nazareth House Church (pencil addition) & Convent & schools

Westbury Convent

Stone (pencil addition) part of Church & Convent complete

Carisbrook Priory (pencil addition) Dominican complete convent & Chapel

Blandford Sq Convent & Church (pencil addition) complete convent & chapel

Goring Church

Swynnerton Park Church (pencil addition) & additions to House

X Englefield

X Bradfield,

X Basildon

X Ivor

X Barfriston

X Upton Church

Ewell (pencil addition) Chapel

X Hartbury

X Horne churches

X Tilehurst Church

Cheltenham Church (pencil addition) this was by Charles Hansom, but could be the memorial window to Blount's.

X Aldworth

X Shotterbrook Churches

X Leydden

X Streatley

X Chalgrove

Kidderminster Church of the Holy Trinity

Romford Church

Burton Park Church (pencil addition) (Mr. Willock's House)

Wednesbury Church

Brentwood ~~St Jos~~ (pencil addition) Helens

Manor House Ilford Church (pencil addition) is an old house & additions to House only.

Bow Our Lady Church

Gloucester St Peters Church

Brighton St Mary Magdalen

Brighton New Church (pencil additions) changed from new to old. St John's Brighton Additions of chancel and chapels

Woodchester Franciscan Convent & Church (incorrect – editor)

Hammersmith Good Shepherd Church & Convent.

Bosworth Church of Our Lady (pencil addition) Hall for Sir Francis Turville KCMG

Bedford Church of the Holy Family (pencil addition) for the late Canon Warmoll

Dorking St Jos. Church schools & Presbytery

Ingatstone Hall Church of St Erconwald (pencil addition) additions

Stone Convent (pencil addition) complete

Felton Park Church

X St Dormier Church

Dan-y-Craig Church

Spitalfields St Anne's Church

Hendon Church

Homer Row London "Our Lady of the Rosary Church & Schools"

Castle Rising Church

Wolferton Church & schools

Old Beaumont College & Church (pencil addition) additions

X Coney Hatch Asylum

New Hall Convent Lodge and Porch

Rudding Park Cottages

Schools, Spicer Street (pencil addition) Spitalfields London E

X Swindon Schools

X Chelsea Almshouses

X Cinderford Cottages

X Highgate Cemetery (pencil addition) uncertain as to extent of this being protestant.

Garswood & Wrightington Schools (pencil addition) & additions to house

Arundel cottages (pencil addition) for the Duke of Norfolk

Ashton-le-Willows Church & Schools Sir B Gerard afterwards Lord Gerard

(ix) Undated Pencil Notes:

Bromsgrove Church

Brentwood Church

Crewe Church

Caverswall Castle

Garswood Church

Felton (actually written Fetern – editor) Church.

Hendon Church

Dorking Church and Presbytery Schools

Gloucester Church

Manor House, Little (could be another similar word – editor) Ilford.

Wednesbury Church

Richmond Church

Archbishops House

Two bottom drawers etc. (not clear – editor)

St. Dominic's Haverstock Hill Church

Carisbrook Convent and Church

FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT: btsarnia@gmail.com