

A short History

of

The Building of Saint David's Church

by

The Reverend M. G. Smith, M. A., B. D. (Oxon) Former Vicar of St. David's Exeter At the annual vestry meeting held at St David's Church on 11 April 1882, a growing dissatisfaction with the existing parish church finally came to a head. Not that the building was old or small. Consecrated in 1817, it replaced a small mediaeval building which the expanding population of the parish had outgrown. Built in the classical style with that penchant for an 'overloaded' west front, which Hawksmoor had made fashionable in his designs for the new London churches a century earlier, the church of 1817, with galleries on both the north and south sides, could seat 930 people. An elderly parishioner who worshipped there as a boy recalled it in 1950 and described it as 'a barn'. At the vestry meeting, Mr Ward, one of the churchwardens, complained that the windows in the north and south aisles were a disgrace. He suggested that if the parishioners could agree to the removal of the north and south galleries it would at least let more light into the church and might even encourage some wealthy parishioners to pay for some really handsome windows. Mr Ward freely acknowledged that the present building 'possessed no architectural features' and he felt that in the current movement of church restoration, St David's was being left behind the times. Mr Willey, his fellow warden, supported him and was ready to propose setting up a small committee to look into the cost of new windows. Mr Jerman and Mr Donisthorp intervened. They argued that pursuit of Mr Ward's proposal would be to throw good money after bad. It would be far better to pull down the whole church and build a new one. Once he realised the strength of support for this radical suggestion, Mr Ward did not insist on his proposal. The Vestry decided that the subject should be discussed and reported on at a special meeting by the Committee of Accounts.

So the first move was made in the process of rebuilding St David's Church. Those who attended that vestry meeting surely could not have foreseen that it would take over seventeen years to build the fabric and even longer to complete its furnishings. The 1880's were years of great confidence in British society. Men could see that much needed to be done, especially in making the crowded cities more civilised and humane places in which to live, but they were also sure that much could be done. Hand in hand with a great surge of municipal pride and reform went conviction on the part of all Christian denominations that their numbers were growing and that their influence was increasing. The parishioners who worshipped at the parish church considered that they had much to be dissatisfied about. W. A. Pugin had succeeded in educating a generation to believe that the only style of ecclesiastical architecture worthy of the name was fourteenth century Early English Decorated. The 'gothic' style became the litmus test of a religious atmosphere. St David's Church did not engage the emotions in that way. On the other hand, St Michael's on Mount Dinham, despite its odd proportions, did provide a prayerful ecclesiastical setting. Its eminent position, its soaring spire, lofty roof and raised high altar attracted a number of worshippers. The architecture, together with the high standard of music, made it one of the more fashionable churches in Exeter. The sight of three or four carriages and pairs waiting outside St Michael's to convey their owners home after Mattins on a Sunday morning was the more irritating to the supporters of the parish church when they reflected that St Michael's had never been built for a fashionable congregation. A chapel of ease was needed for the occupants of the Exeter Free Cottage Trust on Mount Dinham. The deed of consecration describes it as 'a church designed especially for the benefit of the poor of the parish'. In 1868, when it was consecrated, it was expected to become the church of a separate district with a minister of its own. This had not happened and there was a growing tension between the two congregations. St Michael's could acquire a fashionable congregation only at the expense of St David's. Another source of dissatisfaction with the parish church of 1817 was its lack of lighting. The galleries blocked the light from the windows and made it very dark. Evensong had to begin never later than half past three in the afternoon. Illuminating the church with candles for a concert of sacred music on Christmas Eve 1881 had to be carefully planned and organised. St Michael's, on the other hand, possessed the exciting new gas lighting

and was used for evening services. When the cathedral introduced evening Sunday services at the beginning of December 1881, the number who deserted their parish church for the cathedral caused so marked a drop in collections as to call for special mention in the February 1882 edition of the parish magazine. It looked as if the trend was toward evening services on a Sunday. If that was so then St David's would be left behind. Insufficient lighting, a newly built rival church only a few minutes walk away, and an unfashionable architecture were felt to be sufficient grounds for disliking the old 'Pepper-pot' church and for urging a rebuilding. There was another, equally powerful motive. Church rebuilding had become part of Exeter life. The parishioners of St Sidwell, St. James and St Leonard were all busy remodelling and rebuilding their churches. It would be a severe reflection on the self-esteem of the wealthier inhabitants of St David's parish if they were to stand idly by.

But were the men who crowded into the vestry room at the 'Pepper-pot' church on that April morning truly representing the feelings of the parishioners? Would a sufficient number be prepared to dig into their pockets to raise the thousands of pounds needed for a complete rebuilding? It had not been more than six years since a new organ had been installed at a cost of £180, and, in August and September 1876, repairs to the exterior of the building and to the churchyard walls and a repainting of the interior had cost one thousand pounds; all of which had to be raised by subscriptions. Nor were the early years of the 1880's an auspicious time in which to launch a new financial venture. The country was suffering one of those cyclical bouts of depression of trade which plagued the British economy throughout the nineteenth century; a depression so severe that it led to the setting up of a parliamentary commission of enquiry in 1885. It is not surprising to learn, therefore, that the proposal met with little enthusiasm. The Committee of Accounts duly met on 18 May 1882 and produced recommendations which gave the lie to the assertion that the thinking is a characteristic of post-imperial Britain. The Committee resolved that 'the character of the present church was not as ecclesiastical as could be wished'; that it was desirable to build an entirely new church but that 'they do not at present see their way to carry out' this desire.

The proposal languished for the rest of the year. At a vestry meeting on 1 February 1883, the vicar, Joseph Toye, tried to inject new life into the scheme when he announced a generous offer by Sarah Thornton West. The Wests lived at Streatham Hall and were far and away the wealthiest family in the parish. If the parishioners would undertake to build a new church Mrs West would take upon herself the entire cost of a new chancel. A committee was formed to seek subscriptions. It gave a gloomy report to the Vestry on 26 April. Only 37 parishioners had replied to a circular letter. Some had refused to give, one answered 'very conditionally' and the total amount promised amounted to only £2123. After considerable discussion, it was decided to publish the list of subscribers in the Exeter newspapers, if the vicar and churchwardens thought it suitable to do so, coupled with an appeal for further contributions. This action raised the sum promised to £2300, which was obviously inadequate. However, it had become clear to the Vestry that if the parishioners were reluctant to spend money on building a new church, they were equally unwilling to spend any more money on restoring the present one. Despite a small, articulate minority, who were against the whole proposal, it was resolved to ask Mrs West if she would hold her offer in abeyance for the time being. Nothing more was heard officially about the desire to build a new church for the next twelve years. In 1887 it was decided to add two more bells, to repair the tower and recast the tenor bell. A subscription list was opened which raised £143, £80 of which was given by three people. The new bells were dedicated on Saturday afternoon, 7 December 1889, but the Vestry was still collecting money in the year which followed in order to pay off all the out-standing bills. In 1891 the condition of the churchyard railings and the lack of piped water for flowers was causing some concern. Another subscription list was opened and a total of seventy nine persons raised £65 15s. 1d., with a special church collection raising an additional £4 10s. 6d. The population of the parish might be expanding but wealth and, or, generosity, were not keeping pace. The Vestry never quite managed to balance ordinary annual expenditure and receipts. A voluntary church rate of three pence in the pound continued to be collected but it produced on average only £135 a year. It is noticeable that after the death of Joseph Toye the amount collected each year began to drop away. The death of The Reverend Joseph Toye, on Christmas Eve 1893, was not unexpected. He was

eighty-five years of age and he had been ill since Easter. Nevertheless his death marked the end of an era in the life of the parish. Much had been achieved during his incumbency. The church schools in Dinham Road, Exe Street and Hoopern Street had been built. St Michael's had been built, a new vicarage provided, and the bulk of the stained glass in St David's had been added since his appointment. He was a man of strong convictions, forcibly expressed, but it was expecting too much of an elderly man to urge on the daunting project of a new church. Not that he was indifferent to the idea. The writer of his obituary declared that if Toye had had his way,

'the splendid site which St David's occupies would have been cleared of the beplastered walls of the present edifice, to be crowned with a Gothic temple of stone surmounted by a glorious steeple in lieu of the ridiculous pepper-pot.' The following year the dean and chapter presented the Reverend Cyril Valpy-French to be the new vicar. Valpy-French was then thirty-eight years old and a comparative newcomer to the diocese. He had been vicar of Escot, near Ottery St Mary, for only a year. Before that he had served two curacies, one at Sandown, on the Isle of Wight and the other at AH Saints, Knightsbridge. A graduate of Cambridge, he had no academic ability but he was a very capable administrator and a man of tireless energy. The arrival of this young and enthusiastic incumbent seemed a good time to re-open the question of rebuilding the parish church. The Archdeacon of Exeter fed fuel to the fire at his visitation by declaring that, in his opinion, the existing building was 'unfitted for purposes of Divine worship'. The new vicar delayed until he had tested the strength of opinion. Then, at the annual Vestry, on 18 April 1895, Valpy-French proposed that a special meeting be called to consider a thorough restoration of the parish church. The special meeting was held on the evening of 15 May in the Boys' schoolroom, Dinham Road. A general committee was elected consisting of the vicar, churchwardens and fifteen others. It was authorised to issue an appeal for subscriptions, and to obtain plans for building a new church on the present site. A week later the General Committee met again, elected thirty-two additional members, and an executive committee. Clearly the venture could not have been launched at a more opportune time. Britain was moving out of a slump; trade was improving and unemployment fell between 1894 and 1899. Much preliminary work had to be done but, with that far higher capacity for concentrated hard work possessed by our Victorian forebears, that preliminary work was carried swiftly forward.

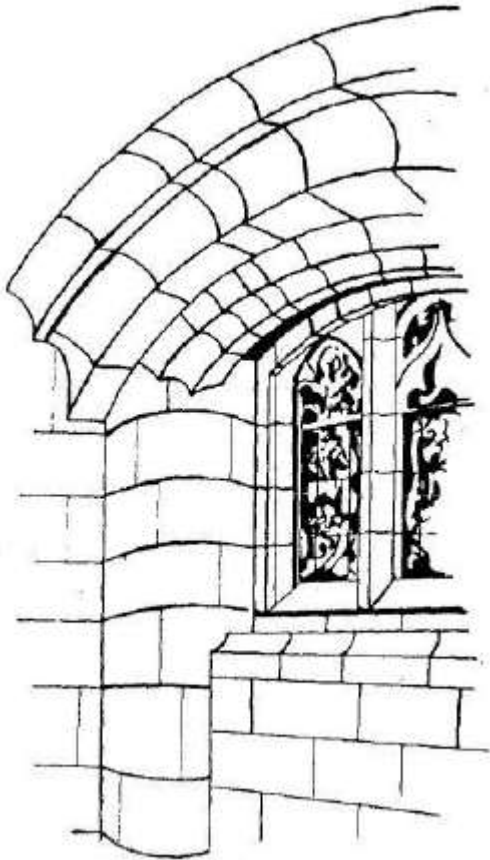


St David's Parish Church 1816 - 1897

On 21 May Valpy-French wrote to sound out the diocesan chancellor, Sir Lewis Dibdin, to see if he would grant a faculty. His reply two days later was cautious. Dibdin would not indicate approval or disapproval.

The only course was to present the petition and the name of the architect. Now at this stage the Committee had no architect in mind. It had been decided instead to hold a competition and, on 27 May, the Executive Committee agreed to ask the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects to advise on the usual form of procedure and to ask him to name two persons, each of whom could act as an assessor. Before holding the competition, however, the Committee decided to canvass the whole parish for subscriptions, by post, with a stamped form for reply. It was considered that at least £10,000 needed to be raised. The following month, (25 June), the Executive Committee met to learn the contents of the long reply from the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He explained that he would submit the name of only one person to be assessor. The Committee accepted the President's decision. It also agreed to the placing of an advertisement in the Exeter papers and Western Morning News, reminding all those canvassed who had not yet sent in their replies to do so. On 9 July, the Executive Committee met again and learnt that subscriptions promised totalled £5391 15s. 5d. and that a Mr James Brooks, F.R.I.B.A., had been nominated as assessor. Mr Brooks proposed that five architects be invited to submit competition designs. Mr Brooks came down to Exeter to meet with the Committee the following week, and, from that meeting, emerged the first serious difference of opinion. Some of the committee wanted at least half of the competing designs to- be the work of local architects, and wanted to advertise the competition in local, and building, newspapers. Mr Willey, backed by the vicar, wanted to ask five or six architects to submit designs and went so far as to name five to be approached. The Assessor poured cold water on the idea of advertising. No architect of repute would enter into an open competition. It would be far better to invite a number of first class London architects to submit their portfolios. Brooks then went on to name six London architects in order of merit. The Assessor had managed two faux pas in the space of an hour. No Devonian likes being presented with a cut and dried proposal by an outsider, especially one who rides rough shod over local pride. Were local architects so inferior to London ones as to merit total exclusion? Yet Valpy-French could see the value of Brooks's suggestion so he proposed a compromise. The Committee agreed to approach the first three names on Brooks's list but to warn them that they would probably have to compete with three selected local architects. The three London architects were W. D. Caroe, (the architect retained by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners), Fellowes-Prynne and Sir Arthur Blomfield. The Vicar wrote to the three London architects and the Executive Committee met at the vicarage on Tuesday, 30 July, to learn their replies. Sir Arthur Blomfield wrote to say that he never entered competitions: the other two indicated a readiness to do so. The Committee then resolved formally to invite Caroe and Fellowes-Prynne to submit designs, but to invite no other London architect. It was also agreed to invite three local architects, James Jerman, F.R.I.B.A., Tait, of Tait and Harvey, and Harbottle Reed to submit their plans. It went on to resolve, unanimously, certain conditions which the architects would have to abide by. The cost of the church, including tower or spire, was not to exceed £12,000 and the seating accommodation was to be for 800. The next fortnight saw discussion and correspondence between Mr Brooks and the secretaries of the Committee, A.J. Mackay, S. Ward, R. Jerman and Mr Willey. It resulted in a set of twenty-four conditions and instructions to the architects in respect of the designs they were to submit. There were restrictive conditions. In addition to the limit on the cost and the number to be accommodated on the ground floor (excluding the choir), the area of the site was limited to about fifteen feet beyond the existing church building 'both on the East and West sides'; the design had to include a tower, but no spire, capable of containing eight bells; two vestries, one for the clergy and one for the choir; and stone must be used both for the external and internal facings of the walls. The architects were given until 1 January to submit their plans. When the closing date arrived the number of competing architects had been further reduced to four. Fellowes-Prynne had declared that the site area was too restrictive to enable him to design a church to seat 800 on the ground floor. The Committee members examined five sets of plans (Mr Harbottle Reed having submitted two), which were then despatched to the Assessor in London. After careful consideration Mr Brooks dictated ten foolscap-pages of comment on the designs on 15 January. He concluded that one of the designs submitted by Harbottle Reed was superior to three of the others but that 'design B far excels it in merit.' Design B was the work of W. D. Caroe. Strictly speaking, no one at this stage knew which plan belonged to whom. A sealed envelope had accompanied each set of plans giving the name of the architect but, for the moment, these envelopes remained unopened. However, Brooks must have been able to guess

at the author of Design B. Caroe's work was well-known and his style unmistakable. Brooks probably saw the designs of St John's Mountfitchett at Stanstead in Essex, when a set was deposited in the library of the R.I.B.A. This church had only been completed in 1894. St David's and St John's are unmistakably the work of the same highly original and creative mind.



The Executive Committee heard the Assessor's report on Friday, 17 January, but postponed any decision until they could meet with him the following Tuesday evening. That evening, the second major difference of opinion emerged. The Assessor had selected Caroe's design solely on the basis of architectural and aesthetic merit. Some of the ten committee members who met that evening were motivated much more by cost. By the summer of 1895 total subscriptions amounted to only £5,391 15s. 5d. In October Mrs Thornton West promised to give £1000 toward the chancel fittings of the new church, but the total figure for rebuilding was well short of the £12,000 mark. It was decided to appeal for more subscribers by placing advertisements in the four Exeter newspapers. This action brought some response by the end of the year but it was still far short of what was needed. The Assessor produced Figures, which he had compiled in London, as to the cost of each design.

Design A at 7d. per cubic foot in Bath Stone £9002

Design B at 6 1/2d. do. £11771

Design C at 7 1/2d. do. £12481

Design D1 at 7 1/2d. do. £13515

Design D2 at 7d. do. £13111

It is clear from the minutes that cost alone prejudiced the Committee against C, D1, and D2, and that some would have preferred to ignore the recommendation of Mr Brooks and adopt design A purely on the grounds of cost. Caroe's choice of Bath Stone for the external wall was not favoured. Only the cost factor

swayed the Committee to accept design B. It was resolved without opposition, but with three abstentions, to recommend design B to the full committee. The General Committee met on 29 January with twenty-nine members present. Strong dislike was expressed of the proposed use of Bath Stone. Members were not satisfied that it was cheaper than Limestone and it was agreed to ask the Executive Committee to approach local contractors to find out what the cost of the two materials would be. Exeter contractors all agreed that Limestone would not be dearer unless an unusual amount of dressing were required, and most thought it would be cheaper. It turned out that Caroe was one jump ahead of the Committee. He had already secured a tender to accompany his design from a local contractor, Edwin Luscombe, who, in a letter he sent to the Committee dated 29 January, assured them that the work could be carried out at a cost of between six and seven pence per cubic foot. Luscombe wrote again two days later to say that, in his opinion, Bath Stone 'treated as proposed by Mr Caroe was greatly superior to Limestone and fully as permanent.' He went on to say that he would be willing to supply Limestone at the same price should this be the Committee's wish. Luscombe's letters were considered by the Executive Committee on 7 February. There was a strong preference for Limestone and the secretary was instructed to write to Mr Caroe to ask whether, if his design were adopted, he would be averse to the substitution of Limestone for Bath Stone. Luscombe's letter of 29 January had revealed to the Committee the name of the architect of design B. Caroe replied on 11 February to say that he had no objection. So, at a meeting of the General Committee on 14 February, it was resolved to accept Caroe's design, 'substituting Limestone for Bath Stone in the external walls', and to request the churchwardens to summon a vestry meeting to gain necessary authorization to proceed. The churchwardens called a vestry meeting for 27 February and the necessary motions were proposed and carried. The next few months were lost while efforts were made to satisfy all the legal objections raised by the registrar of the consistory court, Arthur Burch. By Canon Law the disposal of all pews and seats in a parish church or chapel is a right belonging to the bishop of the diocese, unless a lord of the manor or owner of an ancient estate can prove possession and repair of a particular pew from time immemorial. In practice a bishop usually leaves the disposal of seating to his officers, the churchwardens, but he may agree to allow certain seats to be attached to the ownership of certain houses or estates. He does this by granting a faculty under the seal of his vicar-general. There were several such faculty pews in the old St David's Church, and, if the possessors insisted, their rights would have to be transferred to the new building. Valpy-French thought there were three faculty pews: a search by the Registrar through his records revealed five. Further research showed that between them the families of Barnes at Duryard House, Biddell and Thornton West embraced all five claims. Harry Biddell and Sarah Thornton West were ready to relinquish all rights over their pews, but not the Barnes family. They insisted not only that a faculty pew be reserved for them in the new church, but also that eight memorial windows in the transepts of the old church be re-positioned in the new. There were memorial tablets and other windows to be considered. All the relatives who could be traced, agreed to have the memorial tablets taken down and refixed in the new church. Of the families connected with three remaining memorial windows, those of Underhill could not be traced. Colonel Bartholomew of Cleave House, Bideford, agreed to the proposal that the Bartholomew and Underhill windows be removed and replaced with some suitable memorial windows in the new church. Thomas Maitland Snow of Cleave House in St Thomas, Exeter, chose to have his memorial window removed until it could be re-positioned in his parish church of St Thomas the Apostle. All necessary consents having been obtained, the citation was issued on 3 July 1896; no objections were raised and the faculty was issued accordingly. The Architect was asked for detailed specifications so that the necessary bills of quantities could be drawn up. On 10 November the Committee met to hear the treasurers' report. The Building Fund then stood at around £8900, exclusive of Mrs West's offer of £1000 for the chancel fittings. This was still well short of the £12,000 needed, and a worried Committee requested that Caroe be asked what the legal position would be if funds ran out with the building half built. Preparations continued, however, and tenders were accepted on 14 January 1897. Thirteen tenders were submitted for re-building and the Committee accepted the next to lowest. William Dart of Crediton was given the contract. He offered to build at a cost of £11870 with £40 for drainage and £50 for a temporary roof. Dart was unsuccessful in getting the contract to demolish the old church. His was the highest of seven tenders. Instead the job was given to W. B. Berry at a cost of £312 10s. Od. The Committee was now anxious to

press forward. Berry was allowed eight weeks to demolish. William Dart was asked to complete the rebuilding by 31 December 1898 and, if possible, to have the nave ready for services earlier than that. By the end of 1896, the Building Fund seemed to be a stand. £8893 18s. 1 Id. had been promised and £8123 9s. 1 Id. had been paid. This did not include an extra gift of £200 by Mrs Thornton West toward the cost of demolishing the old church. As he wrote his parish newsletter on New Year's Day Valpy-French prepared himself and his flock for the worries and tensions the year would bring. Sunday, 7 February, would be the last time the parish church was used for services. Until the new church was ready, all worship, together with baptisms, weddings and funerals, was to be held in St Michael's Church. The congregation of St David's would not enjoy the prospect of worshipping there. The Vicar knew that the moment the pick-axes were swung against the walls of the old church, criticisms and objections of all kinds would be raised from those who had been silent or indifferent until that moment. 'Old prejudices will raise their heads, new doubts as to the future will find some molehill on which to make them selves conspicuous, and the religious life which the kindness and patience of parishioners has been gradually building up, will feel a serious shaking.'

He was not to be proved wrong! Subsequent parish newsletters hint at the difference of opinion between the congregations. Some preferred Holy Communion, after Mattins, at noon; others preferred a choral eucharist at an earlier hour on great festivals and practised a fasting Communion. Not all worshippers at St David's would take kindly to the ancient Anglican practice, revived at St Michael's, of separating the sexes. Females sat on the left, males on the right. Then there was the question of parochial protocol. The churchwardens of St Michael's were not prepared to give up their status to the churchwardens of the parish: nor was there any job for the organist, organ blower, verger and choir of St David's. To make matters worse, the organ at St Michael's, never a healthy instrument, chose to break down at Easter and the parish had to make do with a harmonium until Whitsun. The old church was taken down in February and March. The materials not to be re-used were carted away and the organ, clock, bells and windows were stored with Messrs Rowe and Sons in Longbrook Street. William Dart moved in with his men and the foundations for the new church were excavated. It is at this point in the story that two questions arise which the surviving records fail to answer. The new church was to extend further east than the old one. When the workmen dug out the foundations for the tower did they discover the unsuspected presence of ground water trapped between layers of gravel? One of the distinctive features of the set of plans Caroe deposited in the Library of the Royal Institute of British Architects is the massive foundation of the Tower, a solid block of concrete four feet thick. Another is the careful provision of a waterproof barrier of asphalt on the rear side of the back wall of the lower crypt. A statement of accounts dated 15 March 1899 includes under the heading 'extras', 'Foundations of Tower £24 15s 0d.' This evidence suggests that additional measures were taken to deal with an unexpected discovery. Secondly, how was a decision reached regarding the stone to be used on the exterior walls? The Architect had acceded to the Committee's wish that Devon Limestone be used in the external walls but all the carved stonework is, in fact, of the finest quality Bath Stone. Devon Limestone is not easy to carve whereas the shape and design that can be taken by freshly quarried Bath Stone is limited only by the competence of the stone mason. Perhaps Caroe pointed out the technical problem of reproducing his designs using Devon Limestone. Perhaps it was pointed out that using two kinds of stone would make the church blend with the buildings of Hele's Grammar School on the other side of the road. After the tenders had been accepted the Committee tended to leave decisions to the Vicar and the Architect jointly. The two men were in regular correspondence throughout all the stages of the work and had several meetings, so it is probable that the final decision was made quietly by these two. By the beginning of July 1897 work had advanced to the stage when the foundation stone could be laid. Mrs Sarah Thornton West consented to carry out the ceremony and the date was fixed for Wednesday, 28 July. The rain held off long enough for the short service and the laying of the stone in the presence of a large crowd including the mayor of Exeter, the archdeacon of Exeter, many of the subscribers and some twenty of the clergy from the city and neighbouring country parishes. The event attracted little notice in the local press being upstaged by the opening of the Bible Christian Conference in Exeter that same day. The foundation stone is a handsome one with room on two sides for lengthy inscriptions. One recalls the 1300th

anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine's mission in Kent, the other recalls Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, with a graceful reference to the peoples of the Empire enjoying 'light and unity' under her rule. The inscriptions have a curious origin. Valpy-French wanted to link the laying of the stone with the two anniversaries and hoped it might be possible to join the name of St Augustine of Canterbury with that of St David of Menevia. He sought the advice of Williams Stubbs, bishop of Oxford, and the greatest British historian of the day. Stubbs replied that too little was known for certain about St David for it to be possible ever to link him too closely with St Augustine. Thinking out loud, he then suggested an inscription in two versions. Dissatisfied with both, he added a third as a postscript. Having no ideas of his own, Valpy-French seized on this third suggestion and had it carved verbatim on the foundation stone. It is unfair to the memory of Bishop Stubbs that a tentative suggestion should have been given publicity in so enduring a way. With hindsight the choice of words about the peoples of the Empire has proved unfortunate. In the week the Executive Committee had met to consider the designs submitted by the architects, newspapers were full of reports of Jameson's ill-fated raid into the Transvaal. In the same month that the stone was laid, the Third Colonial Conference, meeting in London, heard Chamberlain virtually admit to the abandonment of any attempt to establish an imperial commercial customs union as a vital step in forging a bond of unity between the Colonies and the Mother Country. At the same Conference the colonial premiers rejected a proposal for setting up a council of the empire as a first step to greater political unity. The new church was to be consecrated at a time when British fortunes in the Boer War were at their lowest ebb. The collection at the stone laying ceremony amounted to £329 which was a welcome boost to the Building Fund. This was only slowly creeping upward. It now stood at £9580 0s. 1 Id. promised and £9000 19s. 1 Id. paid. During the year more money trickled in. By November a further £215 17s. 6d. had been received. Money continued to be a worry. In May the Committee resolved that the Architect must seek their approval for any additional items if the cost was to exceed fifty pounds.

*Here we might spend
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 can see your way
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 for these
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 figure of St. David for the
 tower niche. & that is*

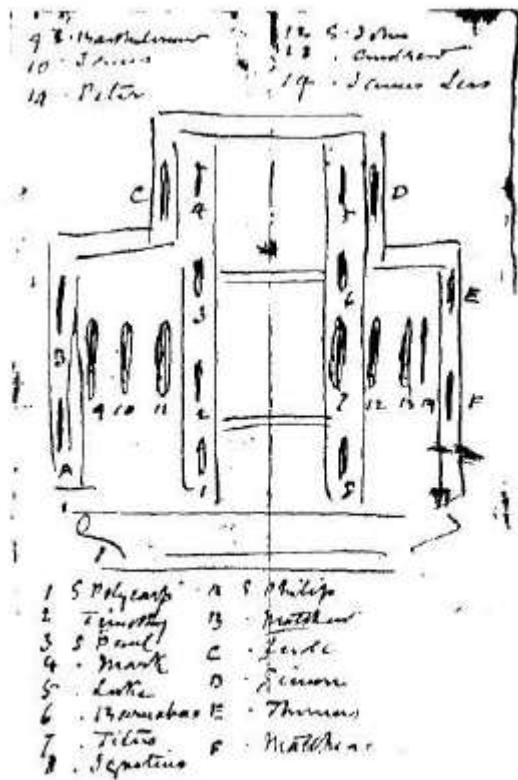


Caroe's sketch of a proposed sun-dial for the gable of the south transept. Shortage of money led to an alteration in the original design. Caroe had been very keen to include an outside pulpit between the south door and the clergy vestry. He estimated it would cost about one hundred pounds. He wrote to Valpy-French on 3 October, pointing out that building had now reached the stage that it was now or never for the pulpit. He wondered if the Wests would come forward with the money. He also wanted to put a sundial on the south transept gable at the cost of a further one hundred pounds and was prepared to make an anonymous gift of a statue of St David to fill the tower niche if the pulpit and sundial were also included.

The sundial he considered to be a 'sort of thank offering ... to recognise the glories and use of the sun — such a heaven sent symbolic gift to us.' As for the pulpit, Caroe explained i should like the influence of St David to reach outside his walls as within them.' Unfortunately there was no money for these extras and they had to remain pious intentions. Money was the principle item on the agenda when the Committee met again on 13 December. The total sum was now £9815. The total sum paid was £9216. Interest on the deposit account added a further £194. It was true that Mrs Thornton West had paid in another £1000 toward the fittings for the Chancel, but it was now reckoned that extras would cost at least £1500 more, and that heating and seating would require another £1000. The parish needed to raise another five or six thousand pounds. It was resolved to make a special appeal the following February. In his parish newsletter in January 1898, the Vicar exhorted the parish to 'give one pull more which will carry us over our difficulties.' In April Valpy-French gave hints of dissension and criticism. He pointed out that 'Every opportunity was given to the people of this parish to oppose the suggestion of building a new Parish Church, but not once in public was a single voice raised in such opposition. The parish apparently spoke with one voice, reckoned up the cost, and voted for a new Church. There is, surely, a responsibility which lies upon the parish to carry through the work which the parish itself voted should be done.' The special appeal fell on partially deaf ears. Twenty individuals and one collection raised only £416. The appeal was saved from miserable failure by the Wests, assisted by Lady Duckworth. Once again Mr West gave £2000. Mrs Thornton West gave £1000 for a new organ, and Lady Duckworth gave £400, 'if possible for a special gift.' A little over £200 more trickled in before the treasurers gave their next report on 9 June. The balance sheet now read as follows:

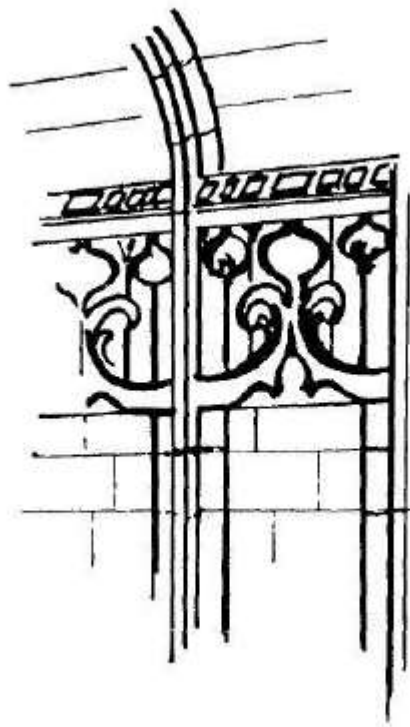
	£	s	d
Amounts already paid in	14,138	9	4
Promised but not paid from first appeal	357	0	0
Lady Duckworth	400	0	0
Promised but not paid from last appeal	196	10	0
Interest	150	0	0
Total	15,214	19	4

	£	s	d
Estimated Expenditure			
Church Contract	12,000	0	0
Fees – Architect and Clerks	1,500	0	0
Organ & Chancel	2,000	0	0
Heating, Seating & Lighting	2,000	0	0
Total	17,500	0	0



At the end of the month Caroe travelled down to meet the Committee to show them the designs for the interior of the Chancel and to discuss the progress so far. Caroe said that he was pleased with the standard of the work at that stage and that by next June it should be finished, with the exception of a small portion of the upper part of the Tower. Having explained that the organ would cost about one thousand pounds, the Architect then proceeded to show his designs for the Chancel together with estimates of the cost, which blew a gaping hole through the Committee's previous calculation. The floor design would cost £400; the sedilia, £100; an altar table, £60; the choir stalls, £500; the reredos £500 and the East window £400. The heating could cost anything between £400 and £800, depending on the choice of system, and seating for six hundred would cost £550; the lighting costs were not mentioned. It was with more than conventional gratitude that the Committee recorded its thanks to Mrs West in July for her offer to foot the extra cost of the Chancel fittings up to £700 above the £1000 she had already donated. A need for further expenditure continued to press itself upon the Committee. The Builder's request for further payment was deferred; the use of chairs instead of pews was under consideration and the Architect was asked to submit designs for oak pews for 250 persons. This was a far cry from the seating for 800 persons included in the original specifications. It was intended to use the old font, erect a temporary pulpit and not re-fix the old clock. The old pipes and saddle-back boiler were to be sold, and, when Hele and Co. submitted an estimate of £840 for a new organ (excluding case), the firm was asked what they would give for the old organ if its estimate was accepted. The Architect recommended that the more expensive system of heating by hot water be installed. This was accepted, but the Committee was relieved to learn that Wippell Brothers and Row submitted a tender of £543, well below the estimated cost. The Committee resolved to have the west doors made of pine instead of oak and so save an extra £50. One of the conditions included in the faculty had been the re-positioning of the memorial windows of the Barnes family. Clayton and Bell offered to include them in the new West window at a cost of £274. The Committee delayed a decision and, finally, asked the Vicar to enquire of the Barnes family if any of them would undertake to pay for the work. This meant writing to Buenos Ayres in South America and this appears to have been inconclusive. By the end of the year 1898, the Building Fund still needed an estimated £3,000. Any carving of fronts or bench ends of pews would have to be delayed until the money could be found. Only an objection by Lady Duckworth got the Committee to reverse its decision to have the interior doors made of pitch pine and revert to oak. The

extra £50 was to come from the £400 she had donated for special purposes. Work on the new church proceeded steadily. Wippell Brothers and Row began installing the heating on 15 March 1899. The Architect's recommendation that the lighting be a combination of gas and electricity was accepted and tenders totalling £238 17s. 0d. were approved. Only six rows of pews were ordered. The measurements were to be the same as those in St Michael's. To make up the rest of the seating, 484 chairs were purchased at a cost of three shillings each. Money still came in to the Building Fund. By the end of October, when the church was nearly ready, the deficit had been reduced to £1400. The old organ was to be installed temporarily, and the Vicar wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to invite him to attend the opening of the new church in January 1900. The Archbishop's chaplain replied to say that his Grace would be unable to attend, thereupon the Bishop of Exeter was asked what date would be convenient for him to consecrate the new church after 6 January. The Bishop replied giving Tuesday, 9 January, as the date. It was resolved that the Vicar and churchwardens prepare a circular announcing the day of opening and suggesting that it would be very desirable to open the church clear of debt. The design of the new church had been clear to onlookers for some months, and it had attracted much adverse criticism. Valpy-French wrote in the December magazine, that 'A work of art has no right to expect anything else.' He also pointed out that the adverse criticism had been balanced by some enthusiastic approval 'from those whose training as artists has made them best qualified to judge.' Local critics singled out the Tower. They did not like the unusual buttresses and the roof. Local criticism remains to this day. The present writer was told that it looks as if it had been designed by a committee.' But Valpy-French was right. Architects and artists have continued to be impressed by the design and recognise in it the work of an exceptionally talented and original mind. William Douglas Caroe was the son of the Danish Consul in Liverpool. When he grew up he preferred England to Denmark and became a naturalised citizen. He was apprenticed to the drawing office of J. L. Pearson, one of the leading ecclesiastical architects of the day, and one at the forefront of the Gothic revival. Pearson placed one criterion above all others when assessing the merit of a church, and that was the spiritual devotion it engendered. 'Does it make you want to fall upon your knees in prayer?' was the first question he asked. When Pearson was given the commission to design Truro cathedral, Caroe, by then his senior assistant, worked extensively on the designs. Caroe was no slavish imitator. When he came to design St David's he corrected some of the practical drawbacks of Pearson's ideals and he used his own study of mediaeval buildings to produce a very different style. Caroe's practical sense is felt the moment one tries to enter the building. The siting of the doors, which a stranger to the church finds so baffling, is intended to exclude draughts, for no door admits directly into the Nave. Not only is the heating system designed to be invisible and not to break up the lines of the Nave, it is also placed immediately below the windows where any heating engineer would recommend the positioning of a radiator in a house today: the provision of a water closet in the furnace room must surely be one of the first examples in an English church. Furthermore — and this is a great advance over Pearson's designs — every part of the roof is easily accessible for repair and maintenance. Small doors giving access to parapets and valleys abound.



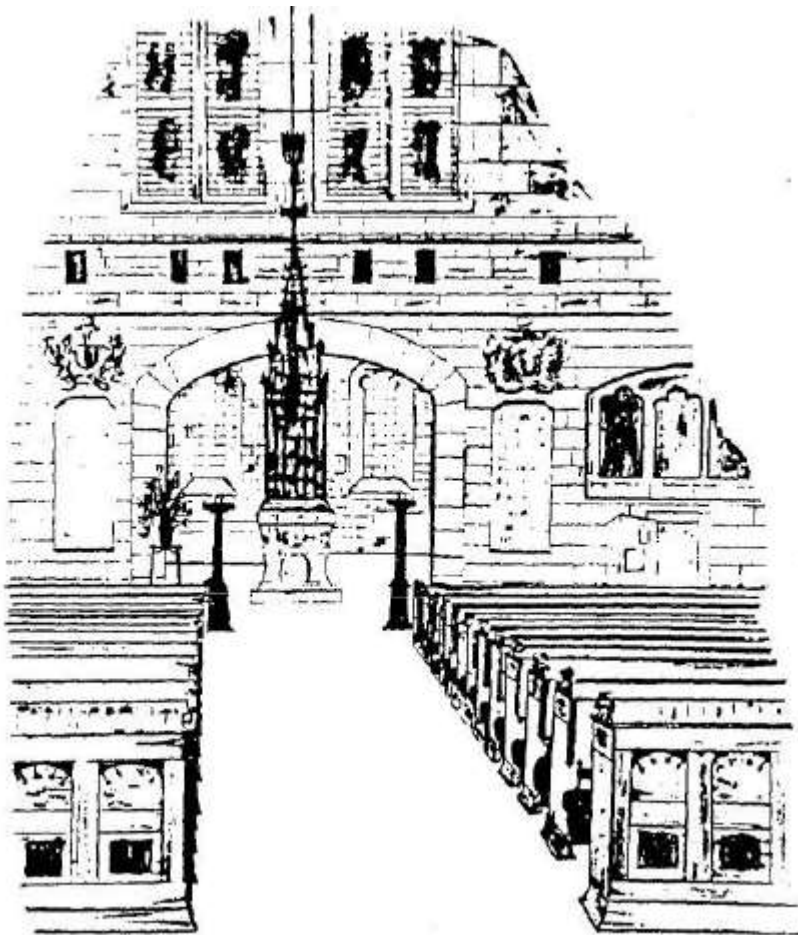
The influence both of Art Nouveau and of the Arts and Crafts movement, the latter being associated with the name of John Ruskin and of William Morris, can be seen in the details of Caroe's St David's. In the case of Art Nouveau it is more of a hint than a statement, but it is present in the free decoration of the organ loft and the panels to the right and left of the reredos, and in the strong contrast of light and dark on the face of the stone work achieved by the angle at which the stone is dressed. The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement is more pronounced. It can be seen in the use of craftsmen for metal, wood, and stone work, the use of local materials in the marble floor of the sanctuary and the rejection, wherever possible of the crude mass-produced fittings of the Industrial Revolution. Caroe designed the doors with their beautiful wrought-iron handles. He acquired the fine enamels for the altar cross. He selected the firm of Messrs Lee Brothers of Bristol to lay the marble and mosaic pavement, and he persuaded Nathaniel Hitch of London, probably the best 'Gothic' carver in the country at that time, one who had collaborated with Caroe in furnishing St John's Mountfitchett, to undertake the figure carving in the reredos and choir stalls, though the rest of the wood carving was done by local craftsmen. Once it had been agreed to light the new church partly with electric light, the Committee was eager to erect two standard cast-iron lamp posts to light the paths in the churchyard. It abandoned the idea in the face of vigorous protest from Caroe who condemned such 'hideousities.' The influence of movements strong at the time does not detract from Caroe's own creativeness. Alan Kimberley has rightly drawn attention to 'Caroe's interest in the interpenetration of space, the breaking down of barriers and the ability to see contained views of one space from another.' To view the Nave first from the Chancel then from the Lady Chapel (or Morning Chapel) is almost to experience two different churches. Caroe uses decoration not as it were 'to ice a cake' but to give order and unity to his whole design. The way in which the decoration in the transepts and on the chancel arch punctuates the modulation of the structure from a cathedral-like nave to a rectangular parish church chancel is finely done. Caroe had a highly developed sense of wholeness in a design and he did not neglect the setting. Provision of rooms below the sanctuary makes good use of the natural fall of the land. It was the express wish of the Architect that the row of lime trees in the churchyard should not be disturbed, even though it meant that one of them grows dangerously close to the north-west corner of the building. Caroe placed a high value on truth and integrity in workmanship and in materials. Only a shortage of money made compromise inevitable, if distasteful. No other explanation seems to fit the choice of brick on the external south wall of the Tower, at a point where the pitch of the nave roof makes inspection difficult: no

other explanation seems to fit the use of asphalt instead of lead on the box guttering of the vestry roof and on the walkways, particularly on the west front.



Reasons other than financial ones interfered with Caroe's wishes with regard to the stained glass windows. In a letter to Valpy-French, dated 28 October 1898, Caroe outlined a set of subjects for every window in the church, 'subjects which will make simple and architectural — not fussy-windows.' He considered that colour should be confined to windows east of the chancel arch. The nave windows should be treated in rich browns and yellows. The task of designing and making the windows was given to C. E. Kempe of London. He produced the designs for the front of the altar and his work was highly regarded. Kempe was not convinced that only browns and yellows should be used in the transepts and he found the iron bars in the windows an irritating intrusion, but he managed to produce designs for the Lady Chapel, north transept, and east windows which satisfied everyone. Irreconcilable disagreement came with the first donors of a window in the Nave, The Eland family wished to give a window as a memorial to Henry Eland and asked that the subject be SS. James and John. The Vicar agreed and approached C. E. Kempe in June 1901 who accepted the commission although he did not like the choice of subject. Caroe's views on the choice were more pronounced. He told Valpy-French that it was 'extremely weak' and reminded him of the scheme he had drawn up for all the windows three years earlier. He asked if he could not hang a drawing in the church and let potential donors of memorial windows either select one of his subjects or leave the thing alone.' 'One has to bear in mind,' he continued, 'that the very best Church may be ruined by bad windows... Do not let us run the risk in this case for a little backbone at the outset.' Valpy-French was annoyed at this accusation of pusillanimity. SS. James and John fitted in with his scheme for the Te Deum in the nave windows. He envisaged apostles, prophets and martyrs on one side and the 'Holy Church throughout the world' on the other. Caroe had also suggested the theme of Te Deum but his treatment would have been different. So, despite Caroe's criticism, SS. James and John remained the subject of the nave window, However, he got his way in the choice of colour. Browns and yellows, he insisted, 'are really the very richest colours, the total effect of which is golden sunlight.' Caroe's wishes were respected as long as Valpy-French remained the incumbent. In both the Hoskins window and the Pearse window yellows and browns predominate. Caroe's worst fears were realised after the death of Valpy-French. In 1925, the Lisle window not only breaks the theme of the Te Deum, it disregards the colour scheme on either side of it. No one has ever offered to give a memorial window on the north side of the Nave. Today, the cost would be

very high. Shortage of money remained a problem in the years immediately following the consecration of the new church. It had to open with a temporary organ, pulpit and font. Funds for a new organ were already in the bank, thanks to Sarah Thornton West, and the old organ was sold to Sidbury Methodist Church for £100 when the new instrument, build by Hele & Co., was installed in 1902. Valpy-French must have been over-joyed when Anthony Gibbs, of Tyntesfield, the son of the banker who had built St Michael's and the old vicarage, offered to pay for a pulpit as a memorial to his wife's parents, John and Louisa Merivale. The Building Fund benefited from the will of R. B. West who died in 1902. His executors paid over a further £1565. By 1902, the total expenditure on the new church amounted to £20,512 5s. 6d. By April 1903, the debt had been reduced to £480. Mr Bowerman West, the son of the Mr West who had died shortly after the consecration, offered to pay half if the parish would find the rest. This seems to have been done. The parishioners had a number of financial commitments and the size of the congregations conceals the fact that approximately three hundred adults were outnumbered by between four and five hundred children. The schools, the curates, had all to be paid for: even the cost of the parish magazine had to be subsidised by donations. The fact that over twelve of the eighteen thousand pounds subscribed or collected was given by the members of just two families is surprising. Perhaps there was less wealth in the parish than the size of the houses suggests. At all events, it does not permit too much credit to be given to the parishioners of St David's as a whole.



The new church still had no font. Miss Susan Drew donated the whole of a legacy she received in 1906 to provide one which was sited not against the west wall, as Caroe had originally intended it, but a few feet in front of it. Shortage of money has prevented the completion of the final part of Caroe's design. Pews were added either as families were prepared to pay for one as a memorial to a relative, or as money built up in the Seating Fund. Additions were made up to 1934 when the project seems to have been abandoned. Recently (1984) the present incumbent closed the Seating Fund Account. It then stood at £6 15 pence.

Caroe and his firm continued to be consulted from time to time. In 1925, at the request of the vicar, Charles E. Burkitt, Caroe prepared a design for an aumbry to be inserted in the wall at the north end of the altar in the Lady Chapel. The bishop refused to give permission. When the proposal was revived in 1941, the firm of Caroe and Passmore were again approached. Caroe's original sketches had been lost but the firm produced the design of the present aumbry. It was also consulted about the design of the sliding brass rods which close off the communion rail before the altar. In 1938 there was some talk of a memorial in St David's church to the later W. D. Caroe. It was to take the form of a reredos in the Lady Chapel executed to a design by Caroe's son. The proposal came to nothing. The proposal was a kindly but an unnecessary one. The new church itself is a fitting memorial. The Bath Stone has weathered badly, indeed dangerously, in some places. Settlement of the foundations, at the west end gives some cause for concern. The roofs have needed attention at frequent intervals. Caroe himself gave several hundred pounds to put an end to a leaking roof. Apart from these problems both Time and human behaviour have dealt mercifully with the structure. Apart from new heating and lighting systems the only major changes in the interior have been the erection of an elaborate carved font cover as a memorial to Valpy-French, the building of a choir vestry to the south of the chancel and a new stone altar with a crucifix and statue of Madonna and Child in the Lady Chapel. Another major alteration, the conversion of the lower vestry and furnace room into a parish meeting room, will affect the design very little. The reredos and the mosaics no longer gleam in the gaslight. The modern visitor finds it hard to believe that the boarded barrel roof of the Nave is stained green and that the angels have copper wings. However, all in all, the church remains very much as Caroe intended it to be.

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