

WILLIAM HENRY SHELLEY: AN INTERWAR ARCHTECT IN LANCASTER

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Abstract

This paper describes the work of William Henry Shelley, an architect for seven very busy years in Lancaster in the 1930s. It shows the types and amount of residential work he designed, particularly at Scale Hall, as part of the suburbanisation of Lancaster. The paper notes his close links with a small number of prolific housebuilders in this decade.

Biography

William Henry Shelley was born on 24 April 1910 in Hull. His father, Henry, was born in the USA where he worked in the Engineer's Depot of the local railway company. Young Mr Shelley was a pupil at the Technical College (the Storey Institute) in Lancaster and when his first architectural plans were deposited with Lancaster's Borough Surveyor his office was at 43 Church Street, where he was an assistant in R W Jackson's large architectural practice. He lived at 35 Dale Street in Bowerham (Figure 1). In 1934 he designed a house for himself which adjoined the old mansion house of 'Luneville' on Slyne Road in Skerton, his plan being approved on 18 June. In 1936 he married a local girl, Ethel Proctor, at the Priory Church and a year later their son Alan W Shelley was born. When the couple married they moved to 67 Owen Road in Skerton. By 1939 the family had left Lancaster and moved to 33 Lon Isa in Cardiff. He had secured employment as the chief assistant to another architect. 1941 saw the birth of a daughter, Patricia Margaret Shelley. The following year the architect was elected as a Licentiate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (LRIBA). The family eventually settled in Hillingdon in London where William Henry died in 1973. Mr Shelley is recorded as the architect of over 152 plans deposited with Lancaster's Borough Surveyor between 1932 and 1938. His 'Calling Card' survives in one of his plan wallets at the Lancashire Archives in Preston. This paper lists 104 plans he submitted to Lancaster Borough Council. He also submitted 48 amendments to existing plan applications which are not listed here. Omitting minor works and drainage schemes, the 104 plans proposed 406 properties, nearly all for houses and most of them semi-detached.

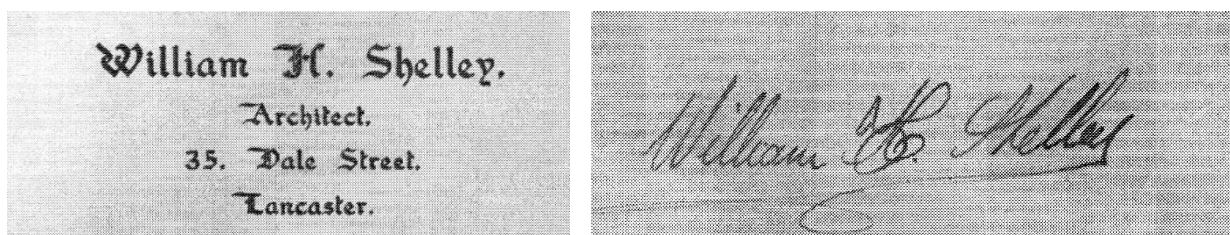


Figure 1 Shelley's letter head and signature

Shelley specialised in the development of private housing though his first signed plan in Lancaster in 1932 was to convert a store to a garage on Newton Terrace, Caton Road for Mr J E Slater. This survives, much altered, as a petrol station. His second plan, for a pair of semi-detached houses on the Scale Hall housing estate, was rejected but a second version was approved later that day and this was the start of many years of designing houses for developers at Scale Hall. He was approached by Vernon Royle, a local solicitor, to design and build a modern villa on the Albert Park Estate (Haverbreaks), which was his only work there. He produced a number of house designs for Mr Fred Kelly at Scotforth but his major body of work was at Scale Hall. This catalogue of his plans includes both those approved and those 'disapproved' (i.e. rejected) by the Borough Council's Buildings Committee. He produced a huge number of plans at a time when Lancaster was rapidly expanding. The repeated re-use of standard house designs already approved by the Building

Committee allowed for plans to be produced quickly and cheaply. In 1925 Frederick Hill (the Borough Surveyor) supplied three main types of semi-detached houses (with sub-types) that Shelley and other local architects could use with confidence (Lancashire Archives A). Shelley's work typifies the rapid building activity using standard house plans around British towns and cities in the interwar period. Shelley got work from several local builders who 'drip fed' small numbers of houses into the local housing market. The builders are identified below in the areas in which they worked. Other local architects working in the interwar years on similar housing schemes in Lancaster include other members of R W Jackson's practice, C B Pearson & Son and R J Skilling. The 'interwar semi' became a notable feature of Lancaster's expansion during this period and that of most British towns. They were the product of local architects working for local builders.

The source of the information in this paper about Shelley's commissions is the author's unpublished database of Lancaster building plans between 1851 and 1951. This database is derived from the records of Lancaster Municipal Borough held at Lancashire Archives in Preston, deposit number MBLA Acc 5167: Building Plan Registers and Surveyor's Report Books. The dates relate to when the plans were decided by the Municipal Borough Council.

The town-centre projects

1934

Queen Street – Mr F Kelly had his plan to erect six lock-up garages rejected in November.

Regent Street – Hermon House, originally built for the grocer Thomas Davidson Smith and designed by Paley & Austin, was purchased by the Lancaster Nursing Association and became a Nurses Home, his plan for a modern wing being approved in December.

1935

George Street – A new bathroom was installed in this house for Mr W Winskill in January.

Little John Street, off Rosemary Lane – A temporary garage for Mr Sharples was approved in January.

Thurnham Street – A house to be converted into a shop for Mr J Swainson was approved in April.

Sibsey Street – Mrs Walker had a new roof to the scullery of her house at No. 22 in May.

North Road – A storeroom was approved for the legal firm of Hall, Marshall and Sewart in October.

Moor and Mary Streets – Plans to replace houses with a fruit and vegetable warehouse for Mr N Atherton were approved in December.

Little John Street – J W and A Sharples of 16 Lower Church Street sought approval for Mr Shelley's design for a new warehouse and showroom: it was disallowed in December.

1936

Moor Street – Mrs A E Atherton wished to convert some condemned houses into a warehouse and it was approved in March.

Nelson Street – It was proposed to convert two houses into one house for Mr W Winskill: Mr Shelley's plans were approved in March.

Bath Street – Mr A Anderton was allowed to convert a small house into a garage in March.

King Street/Middle Street – proposed lock-up at the Waverley Hotel for Mr James Atroy approved in June.

Bath Street – Conversion of an outbuilding into a garage for Mr Armistead was approved in June.

1937

Damside Street – Mr R L Dilworth received approval for a petrol pump at his builder's premises in February.

Thurnham Street – Conversion of a house into two shops by Mr J Swainson was not approved in July 1937.

This was Shelley's last commercial project in Lancaster.

The Scale Hall Estate

W H Shelley was one of many architects working through the major depression years of the 1930s. The City Engineer, Frederick Hill, had been given the task of improving the town – it was granted City status by King George VI in 1937 – including road works, improving poor housing and street improvement. The town had incorporated much of its new outer townships and planned to erect council housing on the newly expanded urban areas. Some local landowners saw an opportunity to convert their farmland into areas of building land.

One such landowner was the Penrhyn-Hornby family whose principal landholding was Dalton Hall, Burton-in-Kendal in Westmorland. In their portfolio was the Scale Hall Estate between Skerton and Torrisholme.

Scale Hall is a mid-Georgian mansion which still exists and has seen many uses over the years – in the 1960s it was the home of Thomas Maldwyn Jones, the architectural partner in Middleton & Jones, Middleton being the City Architect for many years. The Penrhyn-Hornby family – hence the name of one of the streets in the Scale Hall Estate – employed Mr W Whinnerah, the land agent for the Clifton Estate at Lytham Hall, to organize the venture with Lancaster’s City Engineer Frederick Hill. The plans and surveys for the private housing development at Scale Hall were approved after a number of consultations between Mr Whinnerah (representing the Penryn-Hornby family) and the Lancaster Borough Engineer, Frederick Hill. It was Whinnerah who planned the street layout at Scale Hall that we see today. Shelley’s brief was extended to include adjoining landowners who also wished to develop building land. Local architects like Charles B Pearson were busy and they were supplemented by other architects who arrived, like Shelley (Stansfield 2020). Mr Shelley was responsible for the plans of 179 dwelling houses, mostly varied types of detached and semi-detached houses, a few shops and some garages. A few alterations, additions and amendments are in the list below. 53 of his plans are for the Scale Hall Estate. Mr Shelley’s regular clients included Messrs J & B Whittaker, Messrs E Proctor & Co, Mr G W Payne (12 commissions with Shelley) and Mr J Hudson (11 commissions with him). Other Lancaster architects working at Scale Hall included R J Skilling, G W Danson and C. B. Pearson, and A A C Moore from Blackpool. The first houses were approved in June 1932 on Scale Hall Lane. Other streets developed early were Lymm Avenue and Torrisholme Road, mostly through the Scale Hall Housing Estate Company Ltd (Figure 2)



Figure 2 Houses in Scale Hall

1933

Watery Lane/Torrisholme Road – The first plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for Mr J Hudson was Rejected but another plan was approved on the same day in March. These plans were the first by Mr Shelley for Mr Hudson and for the Estate.

Watery Lane – A pair of semi-detached houses for Mr H Grantham was approved in June.

Cleveleys Avenue – The first work for J & B Whittaker on the Scale Hall Estate was for a pair of houses and shops, approved in September.

Torrisholme Road – Three pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr H Grantham were approved in October.

Scale Hall Lane – A detached-house for Mr Heaseyman was approved in October.

Scale Hall Lane, Ryelands Estate – A plan for ten pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr J M Cornes was approved in December.

1934

45 and 47 Torrisholme Road - Amended plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for Mr A Heathcote was approved in January.

Torrisholme Road ‘Cross Hill’ – A detached house for Mrs T Cross was approved in February.

Penrhyn Road – A plan for two pairs of houses and shops for Messrs J & B Whittaker was disapproved in February.

Watery Lane – The proposal was allowed by the Borough in March but has not yet been located by the author.

Morecambe Road – A design for a veranda over the front door of a new house for Messrs J B Whittaker was approved in April.

Morecambe Road – Three pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr G W Payne were approved in June.

Morecambe and Penrhyn Roads – Seven pairs of semi-detached houses for J & B Whittaker Ltd were approved in June.

119 Torrisholme Road – A detached house for J Whittaker was approved in September.

Morecambe Road – A detached house for Mr G W Payne was approved in October.

Morecambe Road – A pair of semi-detached houses for Mr G W Payne was approved in October.
224–238 Torrisholme Road – Four pairs of semi-detached houses for Miss E Proctor were approved in December.

Ingleborough Road – A detached house for Mr Hudson was disapproved in December.

1935

80 to 98 Morecambe Road & 2 and 4 Penrhyn Road – Six pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr B Whittaker were approved in February.

9 to 17 Leycester Drive – Plans for wash houses and coal stores for two houses were approved in February.

Cleveleys Avenue – Six pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr G W Payne were approved in February.

Morecambe Road – A detached house for Mr G W Payne was approved in February.

89 Cleveleys Avenue opposite the Post Office – A temporary garage for Mrs Kirkbride (J Abbot) was approved in February.

Penrhyn Road – A pair of semi-detached houses for Mr B Whittaker were approved in July.

Morecambe Rd – A plan of amended drainage for Mr B Whittaker was approved in July.

Cleveleys Avenue – Two detached houses for G W Payne were approved in October.

Barton and Cleveleys Avenues – Three detached houses for G W Payne were approved in November.

232 and 234 Torrisholme Road – A pair of semi-detached houses for Messrs E Proctor & Co was approved in December.

1936

Morecambe New Road – A pair of semi-detached houses for G W Payne was approved in January.

Lymm Avenue, Penrhyn Road and Torrisholme Road – Plans for nine pairs of semi-detached houses and one detached house for Messrs E Proctor & Co were disapproved in February.

Torrisholme Road near Powder House Lane – An amended drainage plan for Messrs E Proctor was approved on the same day as the above plan.

Torrisholme Road, Penrhyn Road and Lymm Avenue – The amended layout for seventeen houses for E Proctor & Co was approved in March.

Torrisholme Road, Penrhyn Road and Lymm Avenue – Eight pairs of semi-detached houses for E Proctor & Co were approved in March.

87 Torrisholme Road – the design of a detached house for E Proctor & Co was approved in March.

Torrisholme Road near Powder House Lane – An amended layout and drainage plan of two houses for E Proctor was disapproved in March.

Lymm Avenue – A design for a new bay window for Mr H Priestley was approved in March.

Cleveleys Avenue Extension – A pair of semi-detached houses and one detached house for Mr G Payne was approved in April.

Torrisholme Road – Three pairs of semi-detached houses for E Proctor were approved in June.

Torrisholme Road – Amended street layout and drainage plan for Messrs E Proctor & Co. approved in June.

98 and 100 Morecambe Road – Two garages for Mr A E Brown of ‘Kingsmere’ No. 2 Lodges Grove, Morecambe were approved in June.

Torrisholme Road, Lymm Avenue and Lancaster Avenue – One detached house and five pairs of semi-detached houses for E Proctor & Co were approved in June.

224 and 226 Torrisholme Road near Powder House Lane – A pair of semi-detached houses for E Proctor & Co was approved in June.

7 Penrhyn Road – A wash-house for this new house was approved for the Luneside Building Company in November, his only commission from them.

Torrisholme Road, Penrhyn Road and Lymm Avenue – An amended drainage plan for seventeen houses for Messrs E Proctor & Co was submitted and approved in December.

3 Leycester Drive – A plan of internal alterations to a house for Messrs E Proctor & Co was approved in December.

Torrisholme Road – A garage for Mr T W Jackson was approved in December.

1937

Torrisholme Road/Powder House Lane junction – Permission was sought to convert a wash-house into a garage and wash-house and this was approved in January.

Lymm Avenue – A plan for two pairs of semi-detached houses type A, one pair type B, and one pair type C For Mr J E Sanders was approved in June.

206 Torrisholme Road – A new bay window for Mr T Clark was approved in July.

Work at Ridge

A plan for Mr Slater was the first one deposited by Mr Shelley on his arrival in Lancaster and he submitted the second one for him three years later. The two Anderton plans in 1936 completed his work at Ridge, the area being largely developed by the Borough Engineer and Architect, Frederick Hill.

Newton Terrace, Caton Rd – His first plan in Lancaster was to convert a store into a garage for Mr J E Slater, deposited on 6 April 1932 and approved on 9 May.

Newton Terrace, Caton Rd – Mr J E Slater submitted a plan to install another underground petrol tank at his garage which was approved in February 1935.

Derwent Road (27) – A plan to convert an outbuilding into a garage for Mr F Anderton was not allowed in October 1936.

Derwent Road (27) – The above plan revised was re-submitted was again disapproved in December 1936.

Work at Skerton

After living in Lancaster for two years Mr Shelley submitted a plan to the Borough Building Committee to erect on Slyne Road a detached-house for himself, with the intention of remaining in Lancaster as one of the town's growing number of architects. His plan received approval in June 1934. His principal clients in Skerton were Mr Cornthwaite, Mr T W Jardine, Mr H Priestley and C H Prince, the latter two also employing him at Scale Hall.

1935

82 to 100 Torrisholme Road, Vale Estate – Five pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr H Hudson were approved in February.

Barley Cop Lane – A plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for Mr C Clark was approved in May.

Main St – A plan for Mr T Cornthwaite to convert a house and stables into three houses was disapproved in September.

Main St – Mr T Cornthwaite's intention to make alterations to 'Laburnham Cottage' on Main Street was approved in November.

Owen Rd – The first detached house plan for Messrs E Proctor & Company was submitted in December.

1936

Main St – Conversion of a store into a garage for Mr T Cornthwaite was approved in January.

Main St – Plan for a stable to be converted into an engineering workshop for Mr J T Gorst was approved in January.

27–29 Barley Cop, Vale Estate – Six pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr T W Jardine were approved in February.

Torrisholme Rd, off Vale Estate – Plans for seventeen pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr H Priestley were approved in March.

Vale Estate – An amended plan for the layout for the above (Mr H Priestley) was disapproved in May 1936.

Torrisholme Road – Another plan similar to the one above for Mr Priestley was also rejected in May.

Torrisholme Road – A further plan as above for Mr H Priestley was again disapproved in May.

Vale Estate – Mr H Priestley submitted another layout plan for sixty-four houses with combined drainage, which was approved in June.

Vale Estate – A further amended plan for three pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr Priestley was approved in June.

Barley Cop Lane – Mr Jardine's application for a new w/c and coal store was approved in June.

Barley Cop Lane – An amended plan for Mr T W Jardine of drainage for six semi-detached houses was submitted and approved in June.

Torrisholme Road – Plan for a garage for Mr H Priestley was approved in October.

Torrisholme and Noel Road corner – A detached house and shop for Mr H Priestley was disallowed in November.

Noel Road, Fairhope Avenue and ROAD No.3 – 14 pairs of semi-detached houses for Mr T W Jardine were approved in December.

1937

Noel Road – A detached house for T W Jardine was approved in March.

78 and 80 Torrisholme Road, Vale Estate – Amended drainage plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for C H Prince was approved in April.

Torrisholme Road near Vale Farm – A pair of semi-detached houses for C H Prince was approved in June.
Vale Estate at the junction of Noel Road – An amended drainage plan for Mr H Priestley was approved in June.

12 Clare Road – The final work of Mr Shelly's architectural practice in Lancaster was a delayed plan to provide additional bay windows to a property for Messrs G W Taylor which was approved on 21 March 1938, by which time Mr Shelley had secured a position with an architect's practice at Cardiff.

Work at Scotforth

Mr F Kelly was the person who gave Mr Shelley most of his Scotforth work (Figure 3).

20–22 Barton Rd – A plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for Mr F Kelly was approved in June 1933.
Wellington Rd – Mr F Kelly submitted a plan for a pair of semi-detached houses, which was approved in June 1933.

10 Barton Rd/Gloucester Avenue – A detached house for Mr F Kelly was approved in January 1934.

Kensington Rd – Five terraced houses for Mr C Robinson, a plan approved December 1934.

23–29 Barton Rd – A plan for a pair of semi-detached houses for Mr F Kelly approved in January 1936.

Greaves Rd/Kensington Rd 8 & 9th on the right – A plan for two new wash-houses for Mr Grundy were approved in February 1936,

19–21 Barton Rd – Mr F Kelly submitted a plan for a pair for semi-detached houses and a drainage plan, which were approved in June 1936.

Greaves Park Estate – A temporary tool-house for Mr A Hunter of Greaves Road was approved June 1936.

Warwick Road/Gloucester Avenue – A garage for W H Darwen was approved in June 1936.

Street No. 3, Hall Park Estate – A pair of semi-detached houses for F Liptrott was disapproved in June 1937.



Figure 3 Houses in Scotforth

A house in Haverbreaks

When Amos G Douthwaite purchased building plots on the Albert Park Estate at Haverbreaks they were divided by a carriage drive which extended from Main Drive to the Avenue, which became Brettargh Drive (Stansfield 2016). Plans for nine villas were quite quickly produced and later redrawn: the chicane in the centre of the carriageway being re-aligned in a plan by W B Ray, who became the Estate's architect to Mr Douthwaite. The Estate had a number of resident architects but occasionally an intending resident would bring in his or her own preferred designer. Vernon Peter Royle gave the newly-arrived W H Shelley the opportunity to design a unique house on this prestigious Estate. It was only Shelley's third commission in Lancaster and his only one on Haverbreaks. Stanmore Lodge was erected in 1933 in what is now Stanmore Drive, Haverbreaks.

Similar in style to whitewashed Cumbrian longhouses, the part which would have been the barn was adapted to provide an integral garage with a bedroom over, the first house in the district designed with such a garage (Figure 4). It was later incorporated into the house as a garden room, probably because of the good views to the west. It is a three-bay house, the centre bay is slightly recessed and has a triple-arched integrated porch in the popular Spanish style of the inter-war period. It is flanked by triple windows divided by mullions.



Figure 4 Stanmore Lodge, Haverbreaks

The same design is used for the chamber window over the recessed porch and flanked by smaller windows. A special feature of the design is an additional bay, slightly recessed to provide for the integral garage with accommodation over with a further pent-roofed addition to the west. A double-storey extension protrudes on the north-east. It is a particularly good example of 1930s residences found in Cumbria and the Home Counties. Vernon Peter Royle, a solicitor and partner with Sanderson and Royle, was the son of the Reverend Vernon Peter Fanshawe Archer Royle of Stanmore Park Middlesex where he was the Principal Headmaster of a private preparatory school. Royle built his Stanmore Lodge on The Lane, which became Stanmore Drive. In 1914, VP Royle married Constance Stokes in the parish church in Ellel. With their daughter Bridget M Royle they first occupied 'Fairlight', the house built out of the original farm at Haverbreaks. In 1932 they purchased Plot 7 from the Albert Park Estate Syndicate, which had been developing the Estate since 1898. Royle commissioned Shelley to design a white, modern house on the site.

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Author profile

Born in Openshaw, Manchester, and a resident Freeman of Lancaster, Colin Stansfield (BA Hons) is a retired civil servant with a life-long interest in North-West architects which led him to compile databases of Preston and Lancaster architects between 1851 and 1951. He is a founder and life member of the 20th Century Society. Email: colinstansfield979@gmail.com

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