



Lancaster Archaeological and Historical Society

<https://lahs.archaeologyuk.org>

Discussion and Research Group Newsletter

No. 14: December 2023

Welcome to the Discussion and Research Group Newsletter

CAN YOU HELP US?

Michael Haslam will be standing down as the Discussion and Research Group (DRG) Coordinator at the AGM in April 2024. We will need to appoint a replacement if the DRG Newsletter is to continue to be published. If any Society members are interested in volunteering to take on the role, please contact Michael direct who will explain what is involved (1066mh@gmail.com).

If no volunteers come forward, the DRG will carry on, but on a more informal basis. Articles written by DRG members will instead be published in *Contrebis*, on the Society's website or on a social media page, as appropriate. Research Advisory Guides, Regional Archive Services, and Lancaster Library and Museum Services updates will continue to be published on the Society's website.

NEWS UPDATE

REGIONAL ARCHIVE SERVICES

An update of online links to Regional Archive Services, and Lancaster Library and Museum Services, is included on pages 10 and 11 of this Newsletter. It will also be available as Research Advisory Guide 3 (Issue 2) and is accessible on the Group's own webpage on the Society's website at <https://lahs.archaeologyuk.org>.

SOCIETY WEBSITE

The Research Group has its own webpage on the Society's website which has been updated to include Newsletters, Issues 1 to 14, and Research Advisory Guides (RAGs) 1 to 4. RAG 4 is a new addition describing three archival collections relating to Lancaster.

We welcome suggestions for future Research Advisory Guides and articles from guest authors. Comments and corrections on all News Updates and articles we publish are welcome.

LANCASTER CITY MUSEUMS

PODCAST, 100 YEARS, 100 OBJECTS: STORIES FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF LANCASTER CITY MUSEUMS

Lancaster City Museum has now issued all 100 podcasts online (at 14.12.2023) based on objects in their collection. These podcasts are fascinating and well worth listening to. Since Podcasts Nos. 13, 16, 17, 26, 28, 39 and 43 were reported in the last Newsletter (Issue 13), a further three by members of the Society have been released:

Christine Workman (and Emma Holborn):

- No.57 *Felt Hats* [in Wray], 18.07.2023

Tim Churchill:

- No. 94 *Shrapnel from the White Lund Explosion* [in 1917], 23.02.2023

Dr Gordon Clark:

- No. 95 *Shrigley and Hunt Window Design* [in one of the galleries in Lancaster City Museum], 28.11.2023

These are available to view online at: <https://onehundredyearsonehundredobjects.podbean.com> (Ctrl+Click to follow this link).

LOCAL HISTORY FAIR

The LAHS was represented with a stand at the Local History Fair organized by the Regional Heritage Centre (RHC: Lancaster University History Department) held on Saturday, 2 December at the Friends Meeting House on Meeting House Lane, Lancaster, as part of the University's 50th anniversary celebrations. Many thanks to the LAHS committee members who managed the LAHS stall on a rota basis.

Several local history and heritage organisations were represented, exhibiting their interests and activities to visitors. The RHC provided three talks by Dr Chris Donaldson, RHC co-director, Dr Jean Turnbull (Lancaster University) and Dr Sarah Rose, Victoria County History of Cumbria project, all of which were well attended.

The Society had copies of *Contrebis*, Research Advisory Guides, 'The Buildings of Sharpe, Paley and Austin in Lancaster' booklet, and copies of the LAHS talks programme on display, of which many copies of the latter were handed out to visitors. There was a good atmosphere all day with a room full of stalls and an excellent networking opportunity with many interesting and interested visitors.

Source: Eleanor Fisher, Gordon Clark

MEMBERS RESEARCH PROJECTS

Keith Walton discusses the lasting importance of Harrison's work in Lancaster.

NOTES ON THOMAS HARRISON IN LANCASTER

Thomas Harrison came to Lancaster in 1782 to supervise the building of a new bridge over the River Lune, now known as Skerton Bridge, having won the competition to design it.¹ It was his first architectural commission at the age of 38. Harrison had studied architecture in Rome for seven years, returning to England through France, studying and drawing as he travelled. In these Notes I have considered the details of Harrison's work in Lancaster that are in plain sight but easily overlooked.

Skerton Bridge (Figure 6) was the first major road bridge in England with a flat road deck.² The intention was to create a grand entrance to the town, connecting the bridge to a proposed development of fine houses on Green Ayre from Cable Street. Harrison's design of a flat deck on semi-elliptical arches is based on Perronet's Pont de Neuilly bridge in Paris³. Harrison incorporated elements from classical and contemporary architecture into Perronet's design. The niches above each pier derive from the Ponte Fabricio in Rome. Although he told the sponsors it would have the practical value of lightening the load on the piers, aesthetically they allow the

eye to flow through the bridge adding vertical contrast to the bridge's horizontality. Each pier is faced with an aedicule - literally 'a little building,' traditionally designed to shelter an altar, a statue, or a figurine. These are very similar to those on the Roman bridge at Rimini,⁴ another classical influence. The appearance of the bridge conforms to the Palladian ideal, contrasting the basement with the main building using rusticated piers (rough-faced), and the bridge in ashlar (smooth-faced).

At the end of the bridge Harrison built bridge houses, a Palladian ensemble of classical houses flanked by lower buildings and pavilions (Figure 1). It was a design derived from his competition entry for a grand entrance to Rome. He enhanced the central building with Ionic half-columns, despite only being a toll house. The effect of bridge and toll house was lost with the extra bridge arch to accommodate the Little North-Western railway, and subsequent road engineering. The Green Ayre development never took place, as Lancaster's river trade declined.



Figure 1: The southeastern end of Skerton Bridge



In 1781 Major Jarratt designed the new Town Hall in Market Square. However, the Committee were not happy with the spire, and asked Harrison to provide an alternative.⁵ Harrison designed a tall, intricate cupola (Figure 2). A square base surmounted by an octagon contains the clock, and from this rises a rotunda containing the striking mechanism, surrounded by eight slender Ionic columns. Above this is a low dome, a drum decorated with carved garlands (for which Nicholas Weston was paid £9.16s)⁶ and capped with a small dome. One can imagine it rather in a landscaped garden than on top of a northern Town Hall. But for me it draws the eye up, and lightens, even subverts, Jarratt's imposing, overbearing building.

Figure 2: Harrison's cupola over the new Town Hall

Harrison followed this in 1783 with a bell tower for St John's Church, on North Road, Lancaster. He matched the church's solidity and austerity in a square tower to roof level. Then, in three cornice-defined stages, Harrison's design took off. First the belfry, a Palladian cube lightened with wide openings and Tuscan aedicules. This was followed by an open rotunda, shorter and more robust than on the Town Hall, with eight Doric half-columns topped by a decorated frieze. A low dome decorated with garlands forms a base for a slender spire, with eight concave sides, which draw the eye up to the pinnacle. It is a feature that draws my attention from wherever I see it in the town (Figure 3).

Both towers derive from the 4th c. BCE Choragic monument to Lysicrates near the Acropolis in Athens. It had been 'discovered' in 1751, and illustrated in a 1761 book, and often copied in garden settings (Figure 4). But according to Champness,⁷ Harrison was the first architect to use it as the source of new designs rather than simply copying it.

Harrison came to Lancaster brimming with knowledge and ideas, which he applied in his earliest buildings in the town. We benefit from their continued presence here.



Figure 3: St John's bell tower
North Road, Lancaster, 1782



Figure 4: The Choragic Monument of
Lysicrates near the Acropolis in Athens

Although Harrison only built in the northwest of England and in Scotland, the influence of his 1782 design of Skerton Bridge can be seen in John Rennie's 1831 design of London Bridge, dismantled, and reassembled at Lake Havasu City, Arizona in the 1960s. Compare Rennie's London Bridge design of 1831 (Figure 5) to Harrison's Skerton Bridge design of 1782 (Figure 6).



Figure 5: Rennie's London Bridge, 1831



Figure 6: Harrison's Skerton Bridge, 1782

References:

- ¹ Champness J (2005) *Thomas Harrison: Georgian Architect of Chester and Lancaster 1774 – 1829*. Lancaster Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster. p.16. Unless otherwise stated, all information in this article is from this exemplary work.
- ² Hartwell C & Pevsner N (2009) *The Buildings of England: Lancashire North*. New Haven and London. Yale University Press. p.386.
- ³ Champness (2005) *op. cit*; p.19.
- ⁴ Clark G (2022) *Lune Bridges Walks, Lancaster, Lancaster Civic Vision 22*. Lancaster Civic Vision. p.2.
- ⁵ White A (1992) *The Old Town Hall, Its Building and Its Uses. Local Studies no. 16*. Lancaster. Lancaster City Museums, p.6.
- ⁶ White A (1992) *op. cit*; p.19.

⁷ Champness (2005) *op. cit*; p.29.

Acknowledgements:

Champness J (2005) *op. cit*; for all unreferenced information.

Keith Walton

Darren Webster writes about the indispensable series of Occasional Papers produced by Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre (formerly the Centre for North-West Regional Studies)

OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF THE CENTRE FOR NORTH-WEST REGIONAL STUDIES, PART 1 1976-1994

Over the past few years, I have been collecting the Occasional Papers of the Centre for North-West Regional Studies (now called the Regional Heritage Centre (RHC) <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/>) (Figures 1 and 2). The first volumes were published in 1976 and cover a wide range of subjects relating to Lancaster and the wider north-west region on topics such as the Romans, religion, leisure, culture, social history, architectural history, and industrial history. The pamphlets are written by authors who are well respected in their field of research and are indispensable in the library of any researcher of Lancaster and/or the wider north-west region. Many of the authors are current or former members of LAHS. I have produced a catalogue below of the titles in the series (Figure 3) – a few are still available to purchase directly from the RHC, however many of the older titles are now out of print which the author has managed to purchase, mostly from a well-known second-hand charity bookshop in Lancaster. I have found Stephen Penney's Occasional Paper No. 9 (*Lancaster: The Evolution of its Townscape to 1800*) particularly useful and have consulted it for several research projects relating to Lancaster. Regarding collecting the series, I have found Occasional Paper no. 7 the most difficult to find (*Peter Newby: 18th Century Lancashire Recusant Poet*). Of the first 30 volumes I am currently missing nos. 4 and 8. If any readers have copies of these they no longer require, I would be pleased to purchase them. In Part 2, I will produce a catalogue and brief overview of volumes 31 to 61.

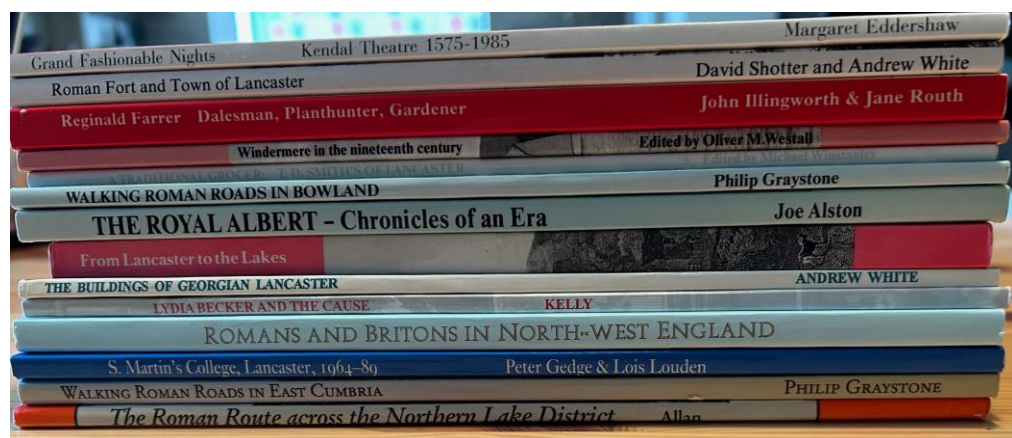


Figure 2: Volumes 17-30 of the Occasional Papers.
Photo © Author's Own Collection.

Figure 1: Some of the early volumes (1-3, 5-7) of the Occasional Papers series.
Photo © Author's Own Collection

Volume Number	Publication Year	Author(s)	Title	ISBN Number
1	1976	Westall, Oliver (Ed.)	<i>Windermere in the Nineteenth Century</i>	0901699365
2	1976	Roberts, Elizabeth	<i>Working Class Barrow and Lancaster 1890 to 1930</i>	0901699454
3	1977	Timmins, J	<i>Handloom Weavers' Cottages in Central Lancashire</i>	0901699551
4	1978	Halliday, G	<i>Flowering Plants and Ferns of Cumbria</i>	01901699624
5	1978	Mullett, M (Ed.)	<i>Early Lancaster Friends</i>	01901699497
6	1979	Watson, R and McClintock, M	<i>Traditional Houses of the Fylde</i>	0901699586
7	1980	Whitehead, M	<i>Peter Newby: 18th Century Lancashire Recusant Poet</i>	0901699691
8	1981	Lawler, U	<i>North-West Theses and Dissertations, 1950-1978: A Bibliography</i>	0901699810
9	1981	Penney, S	<i>Lancaster: The Evolution of its Townscape to 1800</i>	0901699756
10	1981	King, J	<i>Richard Marsden and the Preston Chartists, 1837-1848</i>	0901699764
11	1982	Betjemann, A	<i>The Grand Theatre: Two Centuries of Entertainment</i>	0901699861
12	1982	Poole, R	<i>Popular Leisure and the Music Hall in 19th century Bolton</i>	0901699942
13	1983	Price, J	<i>The Industrial Archaeology of the Lune Valley</i>	0901699977
14	1984	Shotter, D	<i>Roman North-West England</i>	0901272094
15	1986	Rollinson, W and Harrison, B (Eds.)	<i>The Diary of William Fisher of Barrow, 1811 to 1859</i>	0901272191
16	1988	Mutch, A	<i>Rural Life in S.W. Lancashire 1840-1914</i>	0901272361
17	1989	Eddershaw, M	<i>Grand Fashionable Nights: Kendal Theatre 1575-1985</i>	0901272620
18	1990	Shotter, D and White, A	<i>The Roman Fort and Town of Lancaster</i>	901272809
19	1991	Illingworth, J and Routh, J	<i>Reginald Farrer, Dalesman, Planthunter, Gardener</i>	090127285X
20	1991	Westall, O (Ed.)	<i>Windermere in the nineteenth century</i>	0901272884
21	1991	Winstanley, M (Ed.)	<i>A Traditional Grocer: T .D. Smith's of Lancaster 1858-1981</i>	0901272892

22	1992	Graystone, P	<i>Walking Roman Roads in Bowland</i>	0901800023
23	1992	Alston, J	<i>The Royal Albert - Chronicles of an Era</i>	090180004X
24	1992	Hanley, K and Milbank, A (Eds.)	<i>From Lancaster to the Lakes - the region in literature</i>	0901800031
25	1992	White, A	<i>The Buildings of Georgian Lancaster</i>	0901800120
26	1992	Kelly, A	<i>Lydia Becker and The Cause</i>	0901800139
27	1993	Shotter, D	<i>Romans and Britons in North-West England</i>	0901800198
28	1993	Gedge, P and Loudon, L	<i>S. Martin's College Lancaster 1964-89</i>	0901800279
29	1994	Graystone, P	<i>Walking Roman Roads in East Cumbria</i>	0901800341
30	1994	Allan, M	<i>The Roman Route Across the Northern Lake District</i>	0901800465

Figure 3: Catalogue of the titles in the series based on list provided to the author by the Regional Heritage Centre, Lancaster University.

Darren N. Webster, Archivist

Michael Haslam examines the one-hundred-year history of St Paul's Parish Hall in Scotforth.

The influence of St. Paul's Church, Scotforth, on the design of St. Paul's Parish Hall, Scotforth

Introduction

St. Paul's Anglican parish church on the west side of Scotforth Road, Lancaster, was designed by local architect, Edmund Sharpe, in the Romanesque (or Norman) style and built between 1874 and 1876. There are four other buildings associated with the Church. The adjacent vicarage (formerly called the parsonage) was built to the north immediately after completion of the Church for the support of the parish minister and was paid for by Mrs. Julia Ripley. St. Paul's Church of England Primary and Nursery School was built to the south of the Church in 1879 designed by Paley and Austin. St. Paul's Parish Hall is a community centre diagonally opposite the Church on the west side of Scotforth Road on the corner of Palatine Avenue, designed in the Arts and Crafts style by Lancaster based architects, Jackson and Jackson, designed and built between 1921 and 1924.¹ In 1985 a second community centre, St. Paul's Hala Centre, was opened on Hala Square, south-east of the Church (Figure 1).

The Management of St. Paul's Parish Hall

This article discusses the history of St. Paul's Parish Hall and refers to the Church, the Vicarage, the School and the Hala Centre where appropriate.

In 1921 the newly formed Parochial Church Council set in motion plans for a parish hall to be built on land situated diagonally opposite St. Paul's Church on the corner of Scotforth Road and Palatine Avenue. Plans for the new parish hall were deposited in 1923 on behalf of St. Paul's Building Committee for approval by the (Lancaster) Borough Building Committee. The application was approved and building work was completed in October 1924.

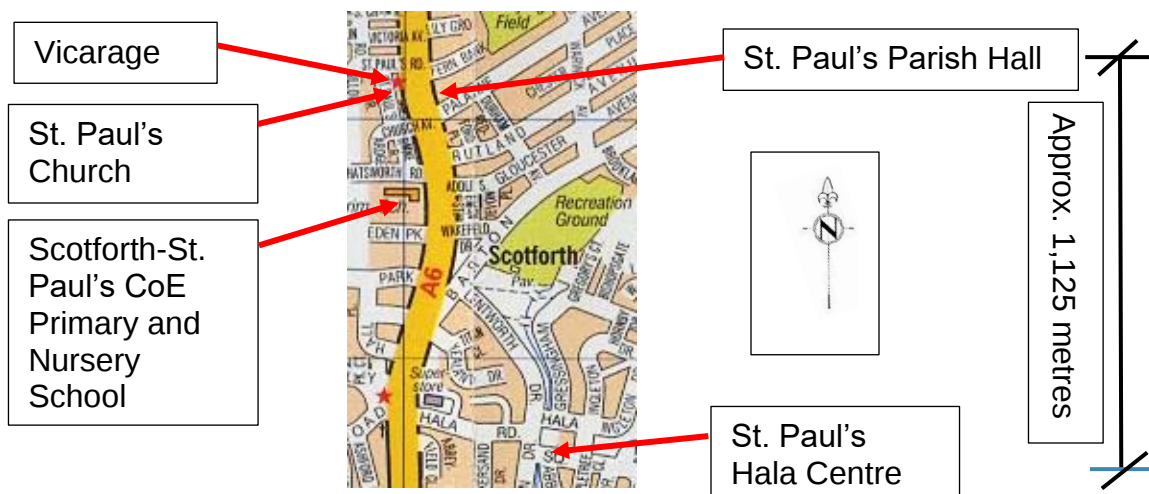


Figure 1: Buildings connected to St. Paul's Church
Source: A-Z Map of Lancaster, ©Geographers' A-Z Map Co. Ltd.

A Parish Hall Committee was formed to manage the Hall as a separate Trust which they did very successfully for over 40 years, despite incurring substantial maintenance and running costs and facing high inflation. There was a lack of community space in Scotforth and the Trust secured valuable income by renting out the Hall. The increase in pupil numbers at St. Paul's School from 300 to 380 resulted in the Victorian Scotforth School buildings becoming so overcrowded that some pupils had to be taught in the Parish Hall over a 13-year period which included the Second World War.²

Responding to the future expansion of Scotforth Parish

The building of new houses in the Hala area since the 1950s extended further south beyond Hala. As a result of the rising population, the Parish Church Council decided to open a centre there for the worship of 90 people and for community work. In 1982 an opportunity arose to construct an additional parish hall in Hala Square attached to a sheltered housing site provided by Lancaster City Council. The new hall was approved by the Diocese and dedicated as the St. Paul's Hala Centre in November 1984. By the mid 1990s the Centre averaged an attendance of 40-50 at the Sunday Service and the large room for community activities was socially important and raised additional income for the church.³

The influence of St Paul's Church on the design of the Parish Halls in Scotforth and Hala

In 1874 at the age of 65 Edmund Sharpe had the opportunity of designing St Paul's Church, twenty-three years after he had ceased to practise as an architect.⁴ As well as being the architect for the church, he served on St. Paul's Church Building Committee to obtain a critical understanding of the Parochial Church Council's aims and objectives.

Sharpe was responsible for the concept design and passed the production of the detailed design to Paley and Austin. The Church was designed in the Romanesque style and comprised a nave with two side aisles, circular windows in the clerestory, a south porch, and an apsidal east end to the chancel, over which rises the tower.⁵ The tower is terminated with a saddleback roof, a feature introduced in the 1860s by G F Bodley who greatly influenced Paley and Austin's work.

Romanesque architecture c.1000 - c.1200, was the architectural style most closely associated with church building in Britain combining features of Roman and Byzantine buildings. The style is distinguished by austere but stunning design, solid buildings of an imposing size to intimidate and enthrall, creating a sense of permanence with its semi-circular arches, sturdy piers, a large tower, and a projecting apse. In the 12th century Romanesque design began to evolve into the Gothic style which dominated medieval architecture by the 13th

century. More recently, Romanesque architecture inspired architects of the 19th and 20th centuries to revive the style. Outside the body of the church in the medieval period, few people could read or write, so medieval craftsmen symbolized their religious beliefs in wood and stone, making their churches representations of their ideals.

Art Deco was a popular design style of the 1920s and 1930s characterised by regular geometric forms and structure using man-made materials. The distinguishing features of the style are simple, clean shapes, often with ornament that has a geometric or representative meaning. The style went out of fashion during the Second World War (Figures 2 and 3).

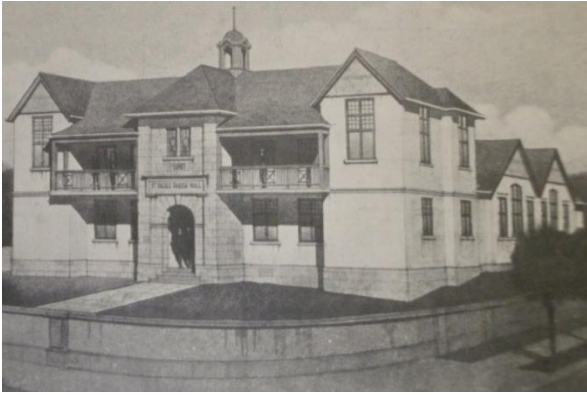


Figure 2: St. Paul's Parish Hall perspective
by Reginald Jackson c.1921

Source: Colin Stansfield's archives:

A database of Lancaster Borough plans



Figure 3: St. Paul's Parish Hall in 2023

Source: M. R. Haslam

St Paul's Church is a symbolic anchor point around which the parish of Scotforth expanded. Edmund Sharpe was criticized by Pevsner for designing '*... a strange building ...*' and '*... an anachronism, almost beyond belief...*' because in 1875 Sharpe's design, in positioning the tower over the choir at the east end of the Church after the French fashion, installing geometric window tracery in the tower windows and building a saddleback roof, are all out of context for a Neo-Norman church. The adjacent vicarage too was criticised as being '*... austere and minimally Gothic.*' Pevsner's comments in 1969 excluded the 1924 Arts and Crafts design of the Parish Hall by Reginald Jackson.

Arts and Crafts were influenced by Pugin, Ruskin, William Morris, Ashbee, Webb and Voysey who sought to revive medieval standards with truth to materials, construction methods and functionality to be the essence of design, learning from problems and finding solutions through design to revert to the 'Old English' style. Their legacy to architectural design was the appreciation of vernacular buildings (meaning buildings using local materials in traditional ways) emanating from Gothic Revival to produce ordinary buildings that were considered to be more friendly than grand architecture.

All buildings have meaning, especially in settings that are well-known to us, creating a connection to recognition and familiarity. Growing accustomed to buildings in our surroundings, their shape, their functionality, and our usage of them, simply by having been there for a long time, becomes part of our daily life and a familiar landmark.

The criticism of Sharpe's design was ill-informed. Sharpe was an acknowledged expert in Romanesque design and understood the meaning and lasting impact St. Paul's Church would have. By siting the tower at the east end of the Church and building a saddleback roof adjacent to the main road, Sharpe knew the Church would attract attention and become a landmark building. If the tower had been situated at the west end and designed with a flat roof it would have been invisible and no different to many other churches in Lancaster. Reginald Jackson, the architect of the Parish Hall, recognised this and translated and repeated the principles of Romanesque design into an Arts and Crafts context, to acknowledge the vernacular style of modern domestic

buildings in Scotforth. This gave the Parish Hall a similar feel to St Paul's Church and a connection to the Vicarage, creating a tightly knit central focus to the presence of St. Paul's Church and the facilities it offered.

The community centre at St. Paul's Hala by contrast, while being successful and contributing to the finances of the Church, does not have the same sense of admiration, strength of feeling and recognition as the group of three buildings in Scotforth. That demonstrates the skill of carefully considered design over the production of nondescript functional buildings.

References:

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3. Gedge op.cit.
4. Brandwood G (2012) *The Architecture of Sharpe, Paley and Austin*. Swindon: English Heritage, pp.38-40, 228.
5. Brandwood op. cit.

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- Wilkinson P (2009) *The Pocket Guide to English Architecture*. Barnsley, North Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books, pp.12-19, 101-110, 117-119.

REGIONAL ARCHIVE SERVICES

Archive services update: information is correct as of 18 June 2023.

Cumbria Archives: <https://cumbriaarchives.org.uk>

Lancashire Archives: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives-and-record-office/>

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies: <https://www.cheshirearchives.org.uk/visiting-us/visiting-us.aspx>

Manchester Archives: https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/448/archives_and_local_history

Liverpool Record Office: <https://liverpool.gov.uk/libraries/archives-family-history/>

Derbyshire Record Office: <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record-office/derbyshire-record-office.aspx>

Wigan and Leigh Archives: <https://archives.wigan.gov.uk>

The New Archives Card

The new ARA Archives Card was recently launched and replaced the previous CARN scheme. Users visiting most archives in the UK (including Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Offices) will need this card to access archival material. Begin registration at the following link and visit a participating archive within three months to complete the registration, bringing two forms of ID with you:

https://www.archivescard.com/ARAHUB/About/Card_Guidelines.aspx The Archives Card is free of charge and valid for five years.

Darren N. Webster, Archivist

REGIONAL LIBRARY UPDATE

Lancashire Libraries: Lancaster Central Library, Morecambe and Heysham

Access: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk> Go to: Find a Library

LANCASTER MUSEUMS UPDATE

Lancaster Museums: Lancaster City Museum, Lancaster Maritime Museum, The Cottage Museum, Judges Lodgings Museum, Lancaster Castle, The Ruskin and Lancashire Police Museum

Access: [Lancaster Museums](#) Click on one of the seven museums highlighted.

Library and Museums updates: information is correct as of 18 June 2023.

Michael Haslam

CONTACTS

Research Group Coordinator

Michael Haslam

1066mh@gmail.com

Editor

Dr Gordon Clark

clark4be@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary

Don Walker

dnw281@gmail.com