MEMORIES IN TRANSITION:
CHURCHES, WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Across Europe, post-World War II reconstruction focused on rebuilding the centers of destroyed cities, towns and communities in an effort to aid in the overall recovery. The physical rebuilding of these centers held significance and meaning for people as a sign of resurgence and renewal. City-wide reconstruction plans were then designed to aid in this emotional, physical and economic recovery by either looking to the city’s past or its future. By rebuilding to either pre-war designs or by creating a modernist city center these reconstruction plans symbolized a hope and desire for renewal for the post-war community. Churches then, as they had for centuries, played an important role in the planning as they represented a spiritual focal point as well as a visual marking of the civic center and center of life for the residents. Churches played an important role in restoring a sense of place and their reconstruction in one form or another came to symbolize a sense of recovery for their respective communities.

Church reconstruction then, as an integral part of an overall city plan, usually followed one of four routes: one, the church was stabilized and left in ruins to serve as both a memorial and as a reminder of the devastation to both people’s lives and their surrounding community; two, the church was reconstructed according to the historic design because of its significance or as an attempt to recapture the prewar world; three, the ruins were kept but incorporated in a new structure adjacent so as to both serve as a memorial and a new gathering place; four, a contemporary church was built on the same site to accommodate the spiritual needs of the surrounding community.

This thesis seeks to uncover what decision-making processes led to the adoption of a particular approach. Four sites in England were selected to examine how those decisions are or are not interconnected. With the first-hand memories of wartime survivors disappearing and the recollection of the devastation fading, it is important to not only consider the past but also to explore how these embedded memories are transferred; how those decisions are viewed and interpreted today and how they may or may not have an added layer of significance. Is the layered significance of these sites recognized today? Has the post-war layer added meaning and how does it affect preservation decisions today? How important is the meaning of the reconstruction or reestablishment and how relevant is it in the transfer of memory from first to second generation?
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Introduction
Introduction

Across Europe, post-World War II reconstruction focused on rebuilding the centers of destroyed cities, towns and communities in an effort to aid in the overall recovery. The physical rebuilding of these centers held significance and meaning for people as a sign of resurgence and renewal. Citywide reconstruction plans were then designed to aid in this emotional, physical and economic recovery by either looking to the city’s past or to its future. By rebuilding to either pre-war designs or by creating a modernist city center, these reconstruction plans symbolized a hope and desire for renewal for the post-war community. As part of these reconstruction plans Churches, as they had for centuries, played an important role in the planning as they represented a spiritual focal point as well as a visual marking of the civic center and center of life for the residents. Churches played an essential role in restoring a sense of place to the community and their reconstruction in one form or another came to symbolize a sense of recovery for their respective communities.

Despite the role these churches played in the rebuilding, there was a conflict between modern urban planning, rebuilding and the overall preservation of bomb-damaged churches. It is through this conflict that various church rebuilding techniques emerged. These various techniques and the circumstances that led to them are the basis of this thesis.

Church reconstruction, as an integral (and sometimes conflicting) part of an overall city plan, usually followed one of four routes: one, the church was stabilized and left in ruins to serve as both a memorial and as a reminder of the devastation to both people’s lives and their surrounding community; two, the church was reconstructed according to the historic design because of its significance, or as an attempt to recapture the prewar world; three, the ruins were kept but incorporated in a new structure adjacent so as to serve as both a memorial and a new gathering place; four, a contemporary church was built on the same site to accommodate the spiritual
needs of the surrounding community. All four of these routes stem from either compliance or conflicts with citywide reconstruction plans.

In addition to citywide reconstruction plans, other factors such as the local congregation or patriotism played a role in the preservation of churches post-war. The Bishop of London clearly stated which factors might influence rebuilding decisions in the 1942 Spring Session of the Archbishops’ Church War Damage Committee. He stated,

Almost certainly... we should not wish to restore all the parishes in such a group precisely as they were before... But in replanning such an area the considerations to be borne in mind are immensely varied. There are the interests of the incumbent, the parishioners, and the patron. There are in relation to some churches interests of association, history, architecture, local patriotism... There are the general interests of the Church and the diocese as a whole in that particular area, and there is the interest of the civil planning authority in many cases contemplating a completely fresh lay-out of the whole area. Behind it is the final decision of the War Damage Commission as to what compensation shall be awarded in any particular case and upon what conditions. There must quite clearly be an immense amount of consultation and good will, first within the Church and between the parishes, then, out of that, between the churches themselves, so that they shall not plan in complete ignorance of what each body is doing, and then between the Church and the civil authorities.¹

The Bishop’s statement defines key points of consideration that helped determine the fate of the four case studies presented in this thesis. The congregation and diocese, historic association, local patriotism and civil planning authorities are four main factors that are seen repeatedly in the case studies’ reconstruction planning. Now, decades later, we can review more critically the plans and decisions made after World War II. How has the interpretation of these sites changed and what does that mean for the churches’ future preservation? Has the post-war layer added meaning and how does it affect preservation decisions today? How important is the meaning of

the reconstruction or reestablishment and how relevant is it in the transfer of memory from first to second generation?

To begin my research I selected four sites that exemplified the four routes explained above. I focused my research on England-based churches in an attempt to lower the amount of cultural discrepancies from choosing sites in multiple countries. I chose the specific sites based on rebuilding strategy, location, current status and accessibility to research materials. The first site, Charles Church in Plymouth, is an example of a war-damaged church that was left as a ruin and a memorial for the city (see Images 1 and 2). This church, although atypical in its siting as it sits in the middle of a traffic roundabout, embodies a specific preservation viewpoint as it relates to war memorials. As a preserved structure, current preservationists struggle with three key difficulties: the historic association and local patriotism embodied in the church as a war memorial, the fact that it is inaccessible to the public and the idea that it is slowly losing its material strength due to the traffic vibrations caused by the surrounding roundabout. Charles Church is important to study as it allowed me to understand how an English city answered questions about post-war rebuilding without the level of publicity that a much larger and more prominent city such as London would have to endure. As we will see with St. Bride’s Church and Coventry Cathedral, the next case studies, increased levels of local and national significance added to the pressure of preservation and rebuilding. Plymouth also implemented a thoroughly modernist city reconstruction plan so I was able to study how the city dealt with the conflict between a modernist city plan and church preservation.

The next site, St. Bride’s Church in London was chosen for its important association with Christopher Wren and the London City Churches. As a historically significant church this site allowed me to research how the city of London might handle its more architecturally significant buildings (see Images 3 and 4). St. Bride’s Church was reconstructed according to the historic design due to its association
with Wren and the London City Churches. In contrast, I also chose to study St. Paul’s, Bow Common Church in London; a church that was razed to allow for a contemporary church building on the same site (see Images 5 and 6). These two case studies specifically allowed me to compare churches that were at opposite ends of the rebuilding spectrum within the same city, but located in different boroughs. Between these two buildings I could compare the rebuilding approaches and discern which factors were the main influences on the two very different design decisions. Civil planning authorities and reconstruction plans both influenced the sites; however, St. Bride’s rebuilding was affected by its historic association and local patriotism, whereas St. Paul’s, Bow Common was dominated by the congregation.

My final site, Coventry Cathedral in Coventry, proved to be the most well-known site and was selected because of its popularity and general recognition (see Images 7 and 8). Although not a typical reconstruction approach, as the ruins were preserved with a contemporary structure built adjacent, Coventry allowed me to discover what elements led to its famed reputation after such an uncommon rebuilding decision. Local patriotism was at the forefront of Coventry’s rebuilding program, which, like St. Bride’s, is key in its future preservation. Both sites now rely on that patriotism to gain support for the site and ensure the financial future of the buildings.

With these four sites, I have been able to answer questions such as “has the post-war layer added meaning and how does it affect preservation decisions today?” I also explored the transfer of memory from first to second generations and studied if the meaning of the reconstruction or reestablishment is relevant today in that shifting of memory.

In the following chapters I will explain in further detail the history, significance, rebuilding strategies and past and current interpretations of each site. In addition, I will place the case studies within the greater post-war European reconstruction context as well as the Liturgical Movement.
Image 2: Charles Church, 2013
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Image 3: St. Bride’s Exterior, 2013

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Image 4: St. Bride’s Interior, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 5: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 6: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, interior, 2013

Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 7: Coventry Cathedral, exterior, 2013

Jennifer Whisenhunt
European Context
Greater Europe Reconstruction

Major reconstruction efforts, cultural and geopolitical shifts and advances in technology, architecture and urban planning defined the post-World War II period in Europe. Important to this study are both the broader context of urban reconstruction after the war and fundamental changes in views in liturgy, known as the “Liturgical Movement,” affecting the design of Christian churches. All across Europe countries struggled with the question of how to rebuild their cities and lives. After the devastation brought on by World War II, there was a common notion of creating a “brave new world” after the war and, with that, the idea that physical rebuilding would help emotional and spiritual healing for nations and communities. Immediately after the war there was a need to move on, but also to remember; and, as such, rebuilding held a huge significance within each community as a physical representation of this emotional and spiritual renewal.

Two rebuilding ideologies emerged as a result of this need to move forward: one was the modernist approach where the historic infrastructure of the city was razed and a modern city plan was implemented with new, contemporary buildings. This approach left historic buildings either to be demolished or to be commemorated as war memorials and symbols of the past. The other approach was the historicist option that encouraged war-damaged historic buildings to be rebuilt to their pre-war design, usually with new, contemporary interiors to suit the modern needs of the public. This approach exhibited a city’s desire and capability to restore the image of the town pre-WWII, while the modernist approach demonstrated an excitement for the future and the demand for city improvement. In addition to these rebuilding ideologies, the Liturgical Movement influenced the designs of contemporary churches and thus the construction of new churches that were replacing historic, war-damaged churches such as St. Paul’s, Bow Common.
The four case study sites represent an overall trend of rebuilding seen throughout Europe. The need to rebuild, move forward and create a better tomorrow crossed cultural boundaries. Here will I discuss the rebuilding strategies implemented by four major cities whose rebuilding schemes are reflected in the rebuilding of the four church case studies: Le Havre, France; Warsaw, Poland; Dresden, Germany; and finally London, England. From these four cities and their post-war rebuilding plans, the four England-based case studies can be more easily understood as part of a greater rebuilding taking place across Europe. Each city struggled with post-war reconstruction planning, yet all came out with different rebuilding strategies, similar to the four church case studies wherein each dealt with the reconstruction plans and implemented different rebuilding strategies. By examining and understanding the broader context, the individual case studies are more easily understood within the greater post-war rebuilding.

The first three sites were selected because they each implemented a different rebuilding strategy. In Le Havre, a completely modernist approach to planning and reconstruction was applied while Warsaw took the historicist approach and rebuilt its historic city center. Dresden, on the other hand, combined two tactics. London, as a primary focus for this thesis, implemented a modern plan and proposed a new road system that utilized a ring road with interior radial roads; these roads connected various precincts and would be rezoned for specific uses such as industry or residential. At the same time, London city planners respected buildings or historic or architectural interest within the City district and allowed for their preservation, such as St. Bride’s Church. Each city had its own political agenda at play, its own set of enemies responsible for destruction, and its own rebuilding strategies overall, yet all experienced the same sense of need for the rebuilding, whether by a modernist approach or historicist approach. Each city felt the drive to create and rebuild a better tomorrow for its citizens, no matter the specific circumstances that led them to it. It is
from these different rebuilding strategies that church reconstruction and preservation took its cues. Church reconstruction plans were founded on either the conflict or conformance to the citywide plans.

After discussing the rebuilding strategies of each city I will place the rebuilding in the context of the Liturgical Movement as it relates to church design specifically. In addition to reacting to citywide reconstruction plans, churches also had to fulfill the changing liturgical needs that were surfacing as a result of the movement. The movement, beginning in the early twentieth century, caused a renewed focus on the physical unity between clergy and congregation. This focus affected the interior space planning of the Eucharist celebration and thus the altar placement within the church. A more centralized altar was seen to encourage community participation which, in turn, influenced overall church design and shifted planning from the traditional Latin Cross plan to a centralized design. The movement merged with the post-war rebuilding campaigns and allowed the public to express their need to move forward after the war, as well as their desire to reconnect with each other on a more personal basis and create their better tomorrow, together. This influence is seen at Coventry Cathedral as well as St. Paul’s, Bow Common as both churches built new structures and could embody the new ideas surrounding the Liturgical Movement.

Le Havre, France

Le Havre was heavily bombed between 1940 and 1944. The first bombing by the Germans in 1940, along with the Royal Air Force (RAF) bombings in 1944—among the heaviest of the Allied air raids in the country—destroyed an estimated 82 percent of the city by the end of the war.¹ Raoul Dautry, De Gaulle’s minister for reconstruction, appointed French architect Auguste Perret chief architect for the

reconstruction of Le Havre in 1944. Perret created the reconstruction plan for the city and approached the rebuilding with a totally modern mindset. The rebuilding process took 20 years to complete and was “unlike the old in almost every respect.”

Le Havre, then, is a prime example of the modernist approach to rebuilding. Similar to Plymouth, the city chose to adopt a reconstruction approach that looked to the future and built contemporary buildings to align with their ideas about creating a better, stronger city. Perret’s city plan and his design for the modernist church, St. Joseph, represents one rebuilding route which manifested itself in the modernist design of the entire city as well as the church, much like the design of St. Paul’s, Bow Common (see Images 1 and 2).

Perret, known for his reinforced-concrete construction, studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris but left before receiving a diploma to join his family business. The plan Perret and his team created was “cost effective, grandiose, generally well built, and architecturally coherent.” The plan called for a grid that covered 150 hectares, incorporated some surviving historic buildings and created new “traffic arteries” to account for the modern traffic flow. In addition to the master plan, Perret also designed the Hôtel de Ville and the Church of St. Joseph in Le Havre, both in 1950.

In 1955, The New York Times wrote that Le Havre was “the most reconstructed city in the world” as well as “the most modern town in Europe.” Perret’s plan was controversial at the time and one French journalist stated, “the only aesthetic hope for Le Havre is another war and an atom bomb.” The Church of St. Joseph was called

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2 Knapp, 495-496.
3 Knapp, 496.
6 Ibid.
“almost blasphemous” by those in the city who were more comfortable with the medieval cathedrals of the past (see Image 2). By 1955 the citizens of Le Havre had warmed up to the new designs of the city, particularly the City Hall, designed by J.E. Tournant (see Image 3).

In 2005 UNESCO listed the city as a World Heritage Site. The listing cites “unity and integrity” of design as part of its exceptional quality and stated that Le Havre is “an outstanding post-war example of urban planning and architecture based on the unity of methodology and the use of prefabrication, the systematic utilization of a modular grid, and the innovative exploitation of the potential of concrete.”

Le Havre, similar to Plymouth, implemented a modernist plan that, in turn, affected the design of new and existing churches. It is from this modernist plan that the debate over Charles Church in Plymouth began. As a preserved ruin, the church interfered with the new city plans; yet, a compromise was made in order to save the structure as a memorial. In Le Havre, however, Perret’s designs for the new church of are more reminiscent of the modern St. Paul’s, Bow Common and Coventry Cathedral. This modernist approach to city planning will also be seen in Coventry and is perhaps one of the reasons that a modern-designed church was more easily built at Coventry than in the historic City district of London, where much of the historic fabric was left intact and where St. Bride’s Church is located.

Warsaw, Poland

On the other side of the rebuilding spectrum is Warsaw, Poland. Warsaw approached rebuilding from the historicist perspective and implemented a careful program to rebuild Old Town, the historic core of the city. Unlike Le Havre, Warsaw,

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7 Ibid.
as a capital city, had the added pressure of exemplifying a nation’s identity in the rebuilding process. Much like the case study of St. Bride’s Church in London, rebuilding according to a historic design became more about the history of the city than it did about its future. Proving the city’s resilience after destruction, nostalgia for the past, patriotism and a determination to overcome the destruction were all factors at play when both Warsaw and St. Bride’s were rebuilt.

Between 1939 and 1944, during the Nazi occupation of the region, 80 percent of the city’s historic buildings were destroyed.9 The city chose to rebuild the entire historic center aided by a sense of patriotism and victory over the enemy. During the Nazi occupation, Varsovian town planners created covert architecture offices as well as secret planning departments to start designing the reconstruction of their city. Working off pre-World War II photographs, as well as eighteenth century paintings by Bernado Bellotto, design for the rebuilding began to emerge. Polish social scientist, Stanislaw Ossowski promoted, “if the Warsaw community is to be reborn, if its core is to be constituted by former Varsovians, then they have to be given back their old rebuilt Warsaw so that they can see in it the same city and not a different town in the same spot.”10

In 1963 Stanislaw Lorentz, head of the Directorate-General, explained the rebuilding tactic by stating:

The enemy had intended to raze Warsaw, and nearly did it. Therefore it was our duty to resuscitate it. The reconstruction of old Warsaw was the last victorious act in the fight with the enemy... the finishing touch of our unbending struggle against enemy violence, and was so heroic in its very struggles for freedom and independence that it would be impossible to obliterate its historic aspect. We did not want a new city on the ruins of ancient Warsaw. We wanted the Warsaw of our day and of the future to continue the ancient tradition.11

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10 Tung, 84.
Today, the historic center of Warsaw is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is listed (as of 1980) as a “meticulous restoration of the Old Town” and an “outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction.” As UNESCO notes, Warsaw is a prime example of physical reconstruction (see Image 4). Today many would not agree with the organization’s definition of “meticulous restoration” and would instead call the area “pastiche.” This sense of “pastiche,” or a feeling of fakery and imitation, could also be applied to St. Bride’s Church as it is also a contemporary reconstruction based on historic designs. Both Old Town in Warsaw and St. Bride’s Church in London were rebuilt out of a sense of patriotism, but both struggle with current criticism that says they are inauthentic and lack historic integrity.

Dresden, Germany

The third case study, Dresden, Germany, combined the two approaches and introduced contemporary design as well as historic reconstructions. The RAF bombed Dresden between February 13-14, 1945 in a “raid that served little clear military purpose beyond killing masses of civilians and obliterating a symbol of German culture.” It was said that Dresden was targeted because it was “the center of a railway network and a great industrial town.” This explanation left many questioning the motives behind the attack as the bombings mostly hit the city center and many innocent residents’ lives were lost.

Prior to the air raids of World War II, Dresden had been known as a cultural center for art, architecture and music; the town was particularly recognized for its many buildings with baroque and rococo design influences. The time after the

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bombings was spent reconstructing many of these buildings while, at the same time, razing the remnants of others. Although some buildings, such as the Semperoper and Zwinger Palace were rebuilt before German unification, others were razed and redeveloped (see Image 5). The Zwinger, built in 1709 during the reign of Augustus the Strong, was reconstructed at a very early date after the war. An article from 1955 stated that due to “reasons of propaganda” the building was rebuilt “on its old lines” and copied “its former features to the minutest details.”15 Despite the lack of building materials and construction builders, the reconstruction was completed in 1955. Other parts of the city, like the Prager Strasse, consisted of new, modernist construction (see Image 6).

In 1946 an exhibition, “Das neue Dresden,” opened with various reconstruction proposals designed by architects. Author Mark Jarzombek stated that the mood of the city during the time was “optimistic.”16 A competition was held in 1950 and Herbert Schneider’s modernist plan entry won in 1952. The design submissions for the city’s centre had “little regard for the city’s past” and disregarded historic street and lot lines.17 By June 1953 Schneider’s plan was approved. The plan altered the main city axis from a north-south orientation to an east-west direction. The Socialist architecture constructed during this time, as part of the plan, was later slandered and is possibly a reason for it being “refurbished, concealed, or, more likely, replaced” in later years.18

The historic Frauenkirche was one of the famed landmarks destroyed in the RAF attack (see Image 7). Its destruction and subsequent rebuilding forms the framework for the rebuilding campaign of Dresden. Built between 1726 and 1743, under the construction supervision of George Bähr, the church’s iconic dome

15 Diefendorf, 154.
17 Diefendorf, 155.
18 Jarzombek, 12.
shaped roof served as a landmark on the city’s skyline. The idea to reconstruct the church based on its historic design came soon after the bombing in 1945 but a lack of financing and little government interest halted reconstruction plans. Between the bombing and the reconstruction post-unification, the site became “a monument of warning. The powerless in the country had taken over the church and turned it into a place of silent protest against violence and despotism.” Not until the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 did the rebuilding begin again (see Image 8). These political underpinnings, especially post-reunification, were not as important in the other case studies and allow us to see the impact that a shift in politics can have on a site such as the Frauenkirche.

In 2004 UNESCO placed the Dresden Elbe Valley on the World Heritage Site list. The site was subsequently delisted in 2009 after construction of the Waldschlösschen Bridge began in 2007. The bridge, which UNESCO said would “irreparably cut off the Baroque centre with the Elbe’s flood plains,” was deemed necessary in reducing traffic congestion in the city. Dresden, as a combination of both a modernist city plan and historic reconstruction, is similar to Coventry Cathedral that preserved the old church ruins and built a contemporary structure adjacent. Coventry is arguably the most successful of the case studies as it allows the visitor to adequately remember the war and destruction via the ruins but also looks to the future with the adjacent new building. I would argue then that Dresden also had one of the more successful post-war rebuilding campaigns as it implemented a new city plan to meet the current needs of the population but rebuilt its significant buildings in an attempt to recapture a pre-war world.

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London, England

The final case study looks at the planning of London after the destruction of the 1940-1941 blitz, specifically at the “County of London Plan” that was prepared in 1943 for the London City Council by J.H. Forshaw, Architect to the London County Council and Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Town Planning at the University College in London. This was the first comprehensive city plan since Wren’s design after the 1666 fire. In the preamble of the plan, the authors debated which method they should choose and asked “are we to clear the site of London... can we consider the site as the Romans saw it when they planned our most direct roads?” They later asked “or are we to endeavor to retain the old structure, where discernible, and make it workable under modern conditions? It is upon this basis, regarded by us as at once the most promising and most practical, that the present Plan is drawn.”

London was already experiencing a lull in development as the population was shifting out of the city and a large number of buildings were being destroyed or heavily damaged by air attacks. The authors noted that there were four defects in then present-day London: traffic congestion, depressed housing, inadequacy and misdistribution of open spaces, and indiscriminate zoning. Another defect was the continued outward sprawl of the city that was leading to the suburbanization of the outlying country towns. To combat the traffic and zoning problems, Abercrombie and Forshaw proposed a new road system that utilized a ring road with interior radial roads that connected various precincts and would be rezoned for specific uses such as industry or residential (see Image 9). We will see that Abercrombie’s plan for London was similar to his plan for Plymouth and Coventry’s City Architect, Donald Gibson’s plan for Coventry. All proposed road redevelopment that incorporated an outer ring

22 Forshaw, 3.
The plan encouraged preservation of the surviving historic buildings and called for

planning and redevelopment of war-damaged areas within England. The act provided

churches to aid in overall neighborhood development.

In addition to the County of London Plan, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was also published and one in a series of acts passed to aid in the future

planning and redevelopment of war-damaged areas within England. The act provided

for the association with Christopher Wren, the City Churches were held in much

higher regard. As such, the City Churches were recommended for preservation and

reconstruction. The authors also suggested incorporating community centers into

The London plan recognized the “great wealth” of historic buildings within

the city and the need for special consideration when dealing with them. The authors

stated that a “London redefined of these buildings would be vastly poorer.” The

plan encouraged preservation of the surviving historic buildings and called for

Traffic planning was often at odds with preservation and is part of the reason why

Charles Church sits on an inaccessible traffic roundabout.

In addition, the city faced a handful of other pressing concerns including new,

modernist high-rise housing open spaces, the development of the South Bank as a

cultural center, the Festival of Britain and new road construction. These were the first

issues addressed post-war. The 1951 Festival of Britain offered a glimpse into a future

of “light, modernity and fun” with ideas that were intended to lift the public’s spirits

and celebrate Britain’s post-war resilience and achievements.

road with connecting inner-roads to serve the use-specific precincts. See Images

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*SVWLE [ ]
for Ministerial approval of buildings containing “special architectural or historic interest.”\textsuperscript{26} Section 43 of the Act went further and gave power to local authority to acquire these sites for the “proper control or management” of the buildings.\textsuperscript{27} The Act also prohibited the demolition of any buildings on the list or alterations that would “seriously affect the character” of the buildings.\textsuperscript{28}

Overall, the main themes that are present in the above case studies also appear in the four specific church case studies that will follow in the subsequent chapters. A major theme is the pressing need to modernize cities through their reconstruction plans. In terms of Charles Church, this ultimately left an inaccessible historic ruin in the middle of a roundabout for the sake of traffic control. In Coventry, the modern city plan allowed for contemporary structures such as Coventry Cathedral to be constructed within the context of their new city. London city planners saw the need for both preservation and modernization, as demonstrated in St. Bride’s reconstruction, while St. Paul’s, Bow Common was razed and a contemporary structure built on the same site. This thesis will refer back to this theme as the history of each site is described in more in depth throughout subsequent chapters.

\textbf{Liturgical Movement}

In addition to citywide reconstruction plans, the Liturgical Movement also impacted the design of new churches being constructed throughout Europe. Like other businesses and community groups, churches experienced a dramatic shift after World War II. Changing populations, construction methods, design aesthetics and views on liturgy contributed to a shifting view on churches and, thus, church reconstruction. The Church of England itself, as well as the diocesan and parish levels


\textsuperscript{27} Hill, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{28} Hill, 83.
of the Church all had to respond to both the physical and spiritual changes that had been taking place within their communities and congregations as a result of World War II. Two forces affected the designs of post-war churches: the desire for a symbol of renewal and recovery post-war and new ideas about how contemporary churches should function. Both Coventry Cathedral and St. Paul’s, Bow Common were impacted by the movement.

The movement originated in the Roman Catholic Church and subsequently impacted the Church of England and other Protestant faiths. Pope Pius X, who served as Pope from 1903 to 1914, essentially began this movement in the early 20th century. His ideas centered on the “growing estrangement, both spiritual and spatial, between the clergy and the congregation.” A Eucharist celebration focusing on a more centralized altar location was part of his recommendation to combat the growing estrangement and was soon felt in church design itself. The “Liturgical Movement,” as it became known, came late to Britain but also sought a greater unity and “fuller participation” before God between the congregation and clergy. The center of liturgy, the Eucharist for which the altar is the physical center of the celebration, became one of the main concerns in new church design and its placement was thus at the forefront of the movement.

Peter Hammond, ordained minister, architectural theorist, writer and professor, described an overall unity of the church members when he said, “the celebration of the Eucharist is not the exclusive purpose of a church, but it is in fact its chief purpose. Therefore the spatial arrangements of a church will be made principally to serve the requirements of the mass. We can say, then, that the structure of the


Christian community assembled for the celebration of mass determines the spatial organization of the material church.”31

Another impact on the spiritual and liturgical issues of post-war rebuilding was the Second Vatican Council that met between October 1962 and December 1965. The Roman Catholic Church’s series of meetings had profound impacts on current liturgy that influenced the Church of England. A major component of this change generated from the idea of a more active participation between the clergy and congregation. This in turn revealed itself architecturally in the form of bringing the “priest and congregation physically closer together around the focal point of the altar.”32 The Council’s “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” stated that “the faithful” should be engaged in a “fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations...”33

In 1964, G.E. Kidder Smith, FAIA, wrote, “there is without question need for a more intimate ambience than a column-forested, attenuated nave can provide. A closer clergy-congregation relation must, of course, affect the entire design of the church.”34 These ideas led to an overall rejection of the traditional Latin Cross plan with a nave, side aisles, transepts and a crossing. A more open, unified and centralized plan took over. Kidder argued for a plan that took into account the site, climate, neighbors and program as opposed to traditional ideas of church planning (the Latin Cross plan, for instance). Overall church design changed to a more centralized plan that placed the altar in a more prominent and accessible position “meant to emphasize the importance of gathering people for worship.”35 Here the main focus was the altar...

32 Christ-Janer. 60.
35 Kieckhefer, 12.
once again, but this time it emphasized the community as opposed to a secluded altar only attainable by the clergy.

Hammond, in his book “Towards a Church Architecture,” explained the Liturgical Movement as based purely in doctrinal and pastoral issues such as the resurrection, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and the basic theology of the Church. He argued that these fundamental issues were at the heart of the physical transformations of the church building. Hammond advocated for the design of a church from the inside out, from understanding these basic principles of the Christian Church and then applying them to the design of the building. He stated:

The nascent liturgical movement was beginning to provide the radical theological thinking that was so desperately needed, not only by church architects but by all who were seeking to embody authentic Christian tradition in forms of equal authenticity. Architecture was beginning to be related to theology and it was becoming clear, that in order to understand the purpose of the domus ecclesiae, one must first seek to understand the purpose of the ecclesia itself.\(^\text{36}\)

The Liturgical Movement in the church coincided with the Modern Movement in architecture. Architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Alvar Aalto were at the forefront of this movement, which sought to look toward the future without historic references or precedent and reduced building ornamentation. This movement gained popularity post-World War II as communities looked to move forward and create a better tomorrow after the destruction brought on by war. St. Paul’s, Bow Common exemplifies this overlap in conjunction with the “brave new world” ideology of the post-war rebuilding movement. The designers, Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, specifically utilized contemporary liturgical requirements to inform their design for the new church. The designers noted that the liturgy was seen as a “movement towards the place of the altar and communion, a movement towards the

\(^{36}\) Hammond, 17-18.
light.” The church became known as one of the most influential of modern British churches.

In the following chapters I will explain in greater detail the history and interpretations surrounding each case study as they relate to the themes discussed in this chapter, citywide reconstruction plans and the Liturgical Movement.

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Image 1: Le Havre final ground plan approved by lead architect, Auguste Perret
Image 2: Church of St. Joseph
*Image Courtesy Frans and Banja Mulder*
Image 3: Town Hall (Hotel de Ville)
Image Courtesy Philippe Ales / Wikimedia Commons
Image 4: Warsaw, 2012

Image Courtesy Jenna Van Aswegen
Image 5: Semperoper

Image Courtesy Sebastian Terfloth / Wikimedia Commons
Image 6: Prager Strasse

*Image Courtesy Gabriele Delhey / Wikimedia Commons*
Image 7: Frauenkirche ruins
Image Courtesy Richard Peter / Wikimedia Commons
Image 8: Frauenkirche
Wikimedia Commons
Image 9: Diagram of Proposed London Road System

County of London Plan
Image 10: Proposed Plymouth City Centre Functional Diagram

A Handbook of the Plymouth Plan
Image 11: Proposed Coventry Central Area Reconstruction, 1940

Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain
Charles Church, Plymouth
Introduction

Charles Church is located in Plymouth, a port town on the south coast of England. This site is an example of a bomb-damaged church that was preserved as a memorial to the destruction of war. There was significant controversy surrounding the preservation of the church, as it interfered with various planning schemes such as road design and traffic control. The debate lasted for over 15 years but ultimately the church was preserved. The church currently sits in the middle of a traffic roundabout and is inaccessible to the public (see Images 1 and 2). In Plymouth, the planning, reconstruction, and ultimately the economics surrounding a rebuilt modernist city center were at odds with the idea of preserving the church. The traffic planning designed for the new city center was similar to Perret’s plan for Le Havre and Abercrombie’s plan for London, which proposed an outer ring road with connecting inner roads. It is from this main road plan that the controversy surrounding Charles Church is based. Despite this, the public’s outcry and ongoing debate about the site led to the City Council relenting and deciding to leave the church as a memorial.

First, a look at war memorials before a closer study of Charles Church history: *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*, was printed in 1945 and contains articles expressing the opinions of experts on the proposal that some bombed churches be preserved as war memorials. In one article, the current Dean of St. Paul’s asks two questions: “what would be the sincerest, most genuine memorials to the dead of this war… and what is to be the future of the bombed churches in Britain.”¹ British architect, Sir Hugh Casson, wrote an article for the book titled “Ruins for Remembrance” in which he argues for the preservation of ruined churches as war memorials as they held the potential to “become places of value and great emotional significance to future generations.”² Casson was known for his role as director of

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² *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*, 11.
architecture for the 1951 Festival of Britain as well as president of the Royal Academy of Arts from 1976-1984. The first segment of the essay states that the decision would fall to the Church and its advisors and would depend on “the state of the building, the needs of the parish, and the demands of town-planning and economics,” as well as public opinion.\(^3\) Casson gives three options for the future of the ruined church: “we can rebuild them as they were; we can pull them down and re-use the sites for other purposes; we can leave them as they are.”\(^4\) Casson argues that the “total disappearance” of these ruined churches “would sever a link with the past, and deprive us of something which might be precious to posterity” and as such, they should be preserved as memorials.\(^5\)

Casson also raises objections to the preservation of church ruins and states that preservation might only be “sentimental and obstructionist” and that populations are shifting, people are moving out of the city center, the congregations are dwindling, and that the sites as potential real estate development opportunities are more valuable than the church buildings.\(^6\) Despite this, Casson ultimately claims that a church serves as more than “disseminating point for religious instruction” and that “to destroy all this just because it was in the way, or because on Sunday the pews were mostly empty, is surely indefensible.”\(^7\) These opposing viewpoints are at the heart of the Charles Church debate.

**Original Building History**

Charles Church belongs to the Church of England and lies within the Province of Canterbury within the Diocese of Exeter. The first mention of the church is found

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\(^3\) *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*, 5.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*, 11.

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Ibid.
in a 1634 petition from the Mayor of Plymouth and 30 cosigners. The group wrote to King Charles I of England advocating for a division in the Plymouth parish. The city wanted to create a second parish along with a second church as the growing population thought the city needed another church to support the community. However, the fact that the King and the town were at religious odds (there was a lack of Puritan teaching in the town at the time) is the more commonly accepted reason for the petition. The differences in opinion, the citizens believed, could be solved with the second church.\textsuperscript{8} Finally, after petitioning for seven years, in 1641, the King decreed that the new church would be built. The two churches, “The Church of Plymouth called Charles Church” and “The Church of St. Andrew’s in Plymouth” became to two main places of worship within the community.\textsuperscript{9} The church became known for being one of the few established churches built during the Commonwealth.

The main portion of Charles Church was completed in 1657, and a wooden spire was constructed in 1708 (see Images 3 and 4). Eventually the spire was taken down and a stone one replaced it in 1767.\textsuperscript{10} Bishop Seth Ward of Exeter consecrated the church in September of 1665, giving it the name of “Church of Charles” and it was thus referred to as Charles Church.\textsuperscript{11} By 1890, the church was considered “one of the finest post-Reformation Gothic churches in the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{12} The building, a rare gothic survival style church, was constructed with limestone ashlar and granite.


\textsuperscript{9} James, 4.

\textsuperscript{10} Worth, R.N. \textit{History of Plymouth From the Earliest Period to the Present Time}. Plymouth: W. Brenden, 1890. 244. Print.

\textsuperscript{11} James, 4.

\textsuperscript{12} Worth, 244.
Despite the devastation, the city set out to recover quickly and a sense of resilience and resurgence was seen within the population. As one author wrote, “the centers of Plymouth and Devonport were completely obliterated. Many thousands of homes were destroyed or damaged. The loss of life was tragic in the extreme... But the old spirit remained. Out of the agony of these days, a resolve was born to rebuild after the War, a city better than the one which had existed in the past.”

This resolve to rebuild post-war was seen in all four of the European city examples from the previous chapter. Although the sentiment was similar for each city, the outcome, particularly for Charles Church, was unique to the planning and preservation needs of Plymouth.

A 1941 article from the *Western Evening Herald* dated March 21 stated that the blitz lasted hours and began shortly after King George VI had visited the city. An estimated 100 German planes attacked the city and German radio stated that the raid was “particularly effective” and that the bombs were “of the heaviest caliber.” The incendiary bombs dropped were “one of the fiercest of the war” and “came down like a hailstorm” on the city. One report noted the “fabric of the city was shattered, one-

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13 “A Plan for Plymouth: Old and New in the Making of a Modern City.” Print.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
third of its property-value destroyed.”

It was during this blitz that Charles Church suffered the most damage. The church was essentially gutted (see Image 6). The neighboring Mother Church of St. Andrew’s was also destroyed, though not to the extent of Charles Church, and was later rebuilt. In the aftermath, open air services were held in St. Andrew’s Church after debris and rubble was cleared, the floor “turfed and beds of bright flowers planted.”

The decision to rebuild came quickly and by late 1941, when the first Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lord Reith, visited the city, the City Council had decided that Plymouth needed a comprehensive plan for the ensuing reconstruction.

Plymouth Reconstruction Plan

The city enlisted Professor Patrick Abercrombie to help prepare a rebuilding plan. Abercrombie, a well-known town planner, was trained as an architect, worked as a civic design professor at Liverpool University, and was a town planning professor at London University. Abercrombie, along with James Paton Watson, then the city engineer and surveyor of Plymouth, presented a reconstruction plan to the Plymouth City Council soon after the blitz.

In 1943, their proposal, titled “A Plan for Plymouth,” became a chance for the city to “repair past errors in lay-out and to create a new Plymouth worthy both of its fame and its site between the hills and the water.” The city boasted a stable agricultural employment, a shopping hub, a thriving tourism industry and active military naval base. To enhance these qualities the plan employed a series of precincts, a “pocket surrounded by traffic routes, but so designed that through traffic is either

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19 Watson, vi.

20 Ibid.
impossible or discouraged.” These precincts would be grouped by function such as shopping, industrial, educational, historical and cultural (see Image 7). Plymouth’s new, modernist city plan followed the same ideals that Le Havre did when Auguste Perret proposed the modernist approach to rebuilding. This choice, in both Le Havre and Plymouth, demonstrated an excitement for the future and the ability to advance the city as they attempted to not only repair physical damage and improve upon current problems but also to repair the emotional trauma by expressing that they would move on and look to the future, not the past.

Prior to the plan’s implementation, the city was wrought with issues such as the shopping center growing too big for the narrow streets to manage and traffic congestion that was “already the worst in the West of England.” The Navy also had difficulties with a cramped and overcrowded dockyard.

The plan proposed the creation of a new city center that would be formed out of the destruction of the “civic and shopping heart” of the city. Watson and Abercrombie presented an idea to “rebuild a Centre of really modern design and on an adequate scale—a re-adaptation of the city’s functions into an orderly and economic pattern which will ensure that the daily civic and business life of the city will function smoothly and with less exertion then in the past.”

Watson and Abercrombie saw the new city center as an opportunity to integrate the civic, cultural and business districts of the city into a cohesive city center (see Image 8). To do this the plan suggested “treating of the whole central area for planning purposes as a cleared site except for such few important and still standing buildings as can be worked into the plan” so they could revamp the road system to reduce traffic congestion (see Image 9).

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22 Watson, 66.
23 Watson, 69.
before architecture and preservation and are a theme that will be seen throughout the history of Plymouth’s rebuilding. The plan called for function-specific precincts that would be surrounded by roads prohibiting through traffic, which would allow for a pedestrian friendly area inside the outer roads.

In addition to the new city center, the plan made special mention of the historic core of the city, the Barbican. Watson and Abercrombie encouraged it to be treated as a historic precinct with traffic routes surrounding the area, leaving the space free for pedestrians. The plan called for the restoration of the historic buildings in the area and redevelopment of the district “to form a fitting frame for the priceless antiques which it contains.” The streets within the Barbican would be preserved, unlike the streets of the city center. The authors were against a “faked, exhibitionist pseudo-antique district” and so advocated for the “reconditioning and reconstruction of the buildings so what, whilst retaining its historic features… [the precinct] shall possess those additional communal and personal facilities demanded by modern standards of living.” This treatment of the Barbican is similar to Warsaw’s plan for their Old Town, yet does not restore to the highly detailed level that is seen in Warsaw.

To do this the plan proposed building a physical wall around the historic core. The south, west and north sides would enclose historic Plymouth and would run westwards from the Citadel, then north via the line of the existing Hoe, St. Andrews and Kinterbury Streets. The wall would eventually turn east towards Charles Church, giving the church a position of “enhanced importance.” This proposed wall was never actually built.

The plan also suggested rehabilitating the present buildings that were in good condition, restoring those that had been defaced and re-creating their historic

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24 Scotland, 16.
25 Watson, 14.
26 Watson, 15.
character features “as not to disturb the existing layout.” The plan assumed that St. Andrew’s Church would “be restored in greater glory than before.”

As part of the historic Barbican, J. Paton Watson suggested that the ruined Charles Church be preserved as a war memorial. The plan stated that Charles Church would be given new prominence in the new plan as it had “suffered severely from enemy action, but the walls and towers still remain proud and defiant.” It also noted that an open-air church would serve as a “memorial to the forty Churches of all denominations, which the enemy has destroyed.” It suggested that the names of the victims of the war be “fittingly enshrined under cover within these walls [to] be a centre of historic interest and pilgrimage.”

Charles Church Preservation

The plan was controversial specifically as it related to Charles Church. The Council’s Reconstruction Committee wanted to buy the church and demolish it instead of creating a memorial as the plan suggested. The planning and road design schemes were seen to be superior to the preservation of the church so it was eventually suggested to keep the tower and spire in the middle of a newly proposed roundabout so it would not impeded the implementation of a newly designed road system.

The authors of the Plan disagreed with the Reconstruction Committee as they noted the new status and prominence given to Charles Church after the construction of the wall (which was never built). They stated that “as the new city plan gives the Church of Charles a position of prominence which it has hitherto lacked... it might

27 Watson, 16.
28 Watson, 15.
29 Scotland, 20.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
well become one of the city’s primary features... we suggest that the ruins of this church be considered as a fitting memorial to symbolize the city’s grief and honour in the triumphant survival of the trials of this tragic war.”32 The Plan noted that the church walls and tower, which survived the Blitz, stood “proudly upreared, defying both enemy and elements.”33 Watson and Abercrombie noted the success of St. Andrew’s as an open-air church and enclosed garden and suggested that Charles Church use the same tactics to create a “Garden of Rest.”34

The Reconstruction Committee’s ideas about Charles Church raised a great debate within the entire country that would last until 1955. In 1945 the Diocesan Reconstruction Committee wrote to Plymouth’s Lord Astor clarifying the notes of the Reconstruction Committee to the City Council: “My Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that there can be no question of retaining the ruins of the Church as a memorial to Nazi brutality. It is agreed, however, that the tower and spire be retained and a small memorial chapel be set up in the base of the tower.”35

Another letter confirmed the public disapproval of a memorial to “Nazi brutality” but suggested that the opposition be placated by explaining that the proposal was for “tidying” up the ruins in the same manner as St. Andrews and that the “names of the people who lost their lives would be put on a suitable plaque in the wall.”36

In 1947 a letter from the secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) to Captain H. Allen in Plymouth asked if the Society could be of

32 Watson, 16.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
assistance in the preservation of Charles Church.\textsuperscript{37} In November of 1947 Watson wrote to SPAB updating them about the proposal to preserve the church as a memorial, which had been put forth to the Council but was not approved, and had thus been abandoned. Watson dismissed any ideas of rebuilding the church stating that “the intended redevelopment of the surrounding area would render it redundant.”\textsuperscript{38} At this point the suggestion was made to simply leave the tower in the middle of the new roundabout.

A letter from the Plymouth Town Clerk’s Office, dated December 1947, asked SPAB to conduct a survey of the Barbican area of Plymouth to aid in its preservation as per the Abercrombie plan.\textsuperscript{39} A newspaper article published a few months later confirmed that SPAB would form a local committee to undertake the survey. The survey would cover the “restoration and improvement of the housing of the residents in the Barbican area [and] the preservation of the old buildings that are worthy of preservation.”\textsuperscript{40} By October of 1948 a draft report was written and the proposal of leaving Charles Church in the middle of a traffic roundabout on the new main road was established, stating, “There is a strong feeling in Plymouth that it should be restored for use as a Church, but the Surveyor has pointed out that its position on an island makes this inadvisable from a traffic point of view.”\textsuperscript{41}

This, along with the general plan for the Barbican was controversial and in 1950, the Bishop and vicar of St. Andrew’s stood together to give their opinion on the church’s future. They pointed to the facts that the church was an ecclesiastical property that was for the Church only to decide its future. They cited factors such as

\textsuperscript{38} Watson, J. Paton. “Plymouth Reconstruction Area No. 1.” \textit{Letters to the Secretary, SPAB}. 24 Nov 1947. Print.
\textsuperscript{39} Campbell, Colin. “Historic Plymouth.” \textit{Letters to the Secretary, SPAB}. 29 Dec 1947. Print.
\textsuperscript{40} “National Group to Aid.” \textit{Western Independent}. 22 Feb 1948, n. pag. Print.
manpower and money and putting it to the best use possible as well as the shifting population to support their idea. They mentioned that the church was not needed on its present site and suggested it be rebuilt in a new area. They also stated that the creation of a public opinion to support such an idea “would insist on the granting of the necessary licenses.”\textsuperscript{42} The Old Plymouth Society (OPS) did not support this idea of physically moving the church building and wanted it to be both “repaired and left as is, or restored and used as a parish church.”\textsuperscript{43} OPS also rejected the tower in the middle of a roundabout suggestion.

In 1950 the City Council approved plans to demolish the church with the exception of the tower and spire. They cited the road gradient as a reason for not keeping the church, as they wanted the road to stay within a 1:20 slope, which they argued would not be possible if the church was preserved. They acknowledged that the church was not on a roundabout in the Abercrombie plan but charged the Ministry of Transport’s needs for road alignment and gradient as the reasons the plans had changed and, thus, the church was to be in the middle of a roundabout.\textsuperscript{44}

The decision was widely criticized in newspaper articles. SPAB weighed in on the matter saying the church was “a particularly fine feature of the city and of great interest as combining Gothic plans and outlines with Renaissance details.”\textsuperscript{45} SPAB stated, “it is deserving of every consideration from those concerned with the future planning of Plymouth. Such churches are extremely rare in this country.”\textsuperscript{46} As the debate about Charles Church escalated, more architecture and preservation groups weighed in on the situation. In 1951, the Plymouth Town Clerk’s Office received a

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} “Charles Church to Go: Tower Stays.” Plymouth Western Morning News 4 April 1950, Morning n. pag. Print.
\textsuperscript{45} “Need for Charles Church.” Plymouth Western Morning News 25 April 1950, Morning n. pag. Print.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
letter from SPAB hoping “that this Church, which is of great interest to archaeologists
and architects, will be saved.”47 By 1951 Mr. C.B. Willeocks of SPAB launched an
official appeal to preserve the ruins of the church.48

The church was finally listed on the Ministry of Housing and Local
Government’s “List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest” for the
city. Under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, “no person may demolish a
building which has been listed nor may any alteration or extension to the building
be carried out until at least two months’ notice has been given to the local planning
authority.”49 Despite this, in 1953, the Committee minutes showed the definite
intention of the Council to “acquire the Church and burial grounds and to arrange for
the demolition of the church building, the Corporation reserving the right to demolish
the spire and tower, if they should so decide in the future.”50

Despite the controversy regarding the church, English Heritage listed the
Charles Church ruins as a grade I parish church ruin in January 1954. It is important
to note that this listing is a key contributor to the turn of events that led to Charles
Church’s preservation. In June of 1953 the Plymouth Reconstruction Committee
wanted to demolish the church and leave only the tower and spire. English
Heritage listed the ruins on The Heritage List in January 1954 and by July 1955 the
Reconstruction Committee decided to keep the ruins as a war memorial. Charles
Church is the only case study where the listing of the ruin affected the future outcome
of the church. St. Bride’s Church was listed after recommendations for restoration
were made and the ruins at Coventry Cathedral were listed after the decision to keep
the ruins was made.

47 SPAB Deputy Director. “Charles Church, Plymouth.” Letters to Colin Campbell, Plymouth Town Clerk’s
Office. 02 Jan 1951. Print.
pag. Print.
Finally, after years of debate, in July of 1955 the Reconstruction Committee
decided to preserve the ruins and the council approved the decision. The Ancient
Monuments branch of the Ministry of Works, the Pilgrim Trust, the City Council as
well as the Old Plymouth Society contributed funds for the preservation. These
debates and letters demonstrate how the town planning ultimately came before the
wants of the community and the preservation needs of the church as the roundabout
road was constructed in the 1950s and ultimately rendered the site inaccessible (see
Image 10).

On November 1, 1958 the Reverend J. Allen James, vicar of Charles with Saint
Luke, dedicated the site as a memorial to Plymouth’s 1,200 civilian dead in WWII. The
Lord Mayor of Plymouth unveiled the plaque of dedication for Charles Church at the
ceremony. Several hundred attended the service where James said “In this hallowed
place, we remember all those men, women, and children who suffered and lost their
lives in the senseless barbarism of war.” The plaque, which describes a brief history
of the church, is now attached on the railing of a subway entrance, across the street
from the church, right next to the Drake Circus shopping center entrance. The plaque
reads:

On the night of March 21st/22nd 1941, the church was wholly gutted by fire
as a result of a heavy air raid, and until 1957 the ruins remained in a derelict
condition.
The church authorities having decided that the church was not to be rebuilt,
the Plymouth Corporation purchased the site and in 1957, with the assistance
of the ministry of works, carried out the preservation works.
The church now forms a fitting memorial to the civilian population of Plymouth
who lost their lives due to enemy air attacks on the city during the Second
World War.53

Past Interpretation

The plan itself was heralded during the reconstruction period but the specifics about the treatment of the Barbican, which was ultimately preserved and stands as a tourist destination today, were very controversial and the subject of numerous newspaper articles and editorials.

In 1944 *The Times* published an article about the town plan specifically and stated that it was a “remarkable and exemplary achievement” and praised the plan for being “complete, practicable, and confident in purpose.” The plan was compared to the County of London plan as Abercrombie had directed both. Schemes such as the decentralization of the population and preservation of historic buildings via the creation of a precinct were present in both plans. The plan was called “heroic.”

In 1964, after the dedication of the church as a war memorial, the book “The Life Continues” was published about the Parish Church of Charles with St. Matthias, whose parishes were united in 1964. The Lord Bishop of Exeter at the time, Robert Exon, stated that the church’s influence had been “very great” and that the ruins served as a “melancholy reminder of the war.” The book aimed to paint a complete picture of the life of the church and showcase how the life of the church has continued since the devastation of WWII.

Current Interpretation

A 2010 publication on the rebuilding of Plymouth calls the plan “optimistic” and states that “there was no doubt in the authors’ minds that this proposal... was going to be symbolic of the rebuilding of a better Britain.” Author Jeremy Gould

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calls the plan “the greatest post-war plan in Britain” but noted that because of Basil Spence’s Coventry Cathedral, which “captured the public imagination,” Plymouth’s reconstruction was no longer the “national symbol of revival and reconciliation” but that Coventry became the symbol instead.\(^{58}\) Plymouth was thus “eclipsed and its significance forgotten.”\(^{59}\)

Arnold Whittick’s book, “War Memorials” defines a memorial’s purpose as its ability to “stir remembrance, and to keep alive and ever before us what is commemorated.”\(^{60}\) Has that happened in the years since the war? A variety of factors suggest that perhaps the site does not live up to this definition. Currently, the Drake Circus Shopping Center sits adjacent to the site and overpowers the church sitting across the street (see Images 11 and 12). The shopping center, based on the typical American mall plan first opened in 1971. A second, however was designed in 1980 but not built until 2002. Construction was completed in 2006.

Despite the public’s lack of attention to the site, the presence of a shopping center and total inaccessibility of the site, plans to fence off the church in 2009 were met with conflict. A Plymouth council spokesperson said: “This is an extra precaution to ensure that members of the public do not enter the grounds, which will not only help to preserve the memorial, but keep the public safe.” One member of the community said he was appalled at the plan to block access to Charles Church: “I find it offensive. Charles Church is an iconic image of Plymouth. People identify with it as part of the city… It should be restored, not put behind fencing. They should be opening it up so that we can use it for civic events and memorial services,” he said.\(^{61}\) After public outcry the idea of a fence was scrapped.

\(^{58}\) Gould, 77.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.


Mark Lowry, Labour councilor for Honicknowle, who opposed the proposal said, “I’m delighted that the council has chosen to reverse this unpopular decision. It would have made Plymouth a laughing stock. The church is a reminder of what the people of the city had to endure during the Second World War. It is good news that the council has listened to public opinion and the views of Labour councilors. The idea was clearly unpopular – and it would have cost a fortune.”

In an interview, Bob Brown, Head of Architecture for the School of Architecture and Design at the University of Plymouth, made the point that the main concern for the WWII reconstruction and development in the subsequent years was the economic downturn and major need for jobs and growth within the city. He noted that the job creation argument post-war was much more convincing than any aesthetic argument, much like today, and that, at least in the city center, anything a developer wanted to pursue essentially was approved on the basis of job creation. He explained that a similar principle is still in practice today and is part of the approval of the Drake Circus Shopping Center that seems to be so despised for its aesthetics. When asked about his thoughts on Charles Church and the public’s consciousness of it he stated that it was not in the public’s day-to-day mind. He explained that the post-war sentiment was one that encouraged a progressive future, which seemingly left little room for connection to the historic fabric that remained.

Another local resident and member of the Church of St. Andrew moved to Plymouth in 1951 and remembers a general air of excitement throughout the city during the rebuilding. She called the siting of Charles Church, along with the newly constructed Drake Circus shopping center “dreadful.” The church member commented that the ruin is most likely only significant for those whose family died in

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62 Ibid.
64 ___. Barbara. Personal Interview. 11 Jan 2013.
the war, but otherwise it held very little significance for the rest of the population. She mentioned that the church, being so inaccessible to the public, was not something that the rest of the community either interacted with on a daily basis or considered all that significant.

Conclusion

With all this in mind, the answers to my general thesis questions are more difficult to answer for Charles Church than they are for the other case studies. This is due in part to the fact that the site has multiple issues at play even today such as local patriotism, lack of site accessibility and possible loss of structural strength which all stem from the early decision made about the church post-war. The elements that led to the preservation of Charles Church are a result of a combination of factors including the city plan, specifically the road designs and traffic controls, taking precedence over other elements of the plan, as well as the preservation of the Barbican. In addition to these elements a strong public voice contributed to the long debate that ensued after the City Council’s initial plans to demolish the building. In the end, a compromise was agreed upon, leaving a preserved church in the middle of a newly designed roundabout intended to reduce traffic congestion.

Now we ask the question, “is the significance layered onto this site post-war recognized today?” I would argue that at first glance it is not. Rarely does the public acknowledge or visit the site; yet, as we saw with the fence proposal, any plan that would endanger the ruin is met with public outcry. This fact supports my answer to the next question of “will the added meaning and significance affect preservation decisions today?” Clearly, yes it will and has affected preservation decisions. The great debate of the late 1940s and 1950s is carried on today as displayed when the fence proposal was brought forward. There is a public connection with the site, however small it may seem on the surface, which will rise within the residents to protect the
church they associate with World War II destruction and subsequent rebuilding.

My last question, “is the meaning of the choice to preserve the church relevant today in the shifting of memory from first to second generation,” is more difficult to answer. The fact that the public spoke against the fence proposal and thought the Drake Circus Shopping Center took away from the importance of the church site leads me to believe that the significance of the church will continue to be defended over multiple generations. However, the fact that the church is so seldom visited is cause for concern. If the church continues to be physically alienated from the public then perhaps interest for the church will dwindle. On the other hand, the fact that numerous residents drive past the site every day could be a source of daily awareness that transforms into a public consciousness of the site that the residents would not allow to be threatened by future development. The siting of the church, both its positive and negative attributes, could be what saves or ultimately leads to its destruction.

It is this combination of patriotism and remembrance along with inaccessibility and lack of context that Charles Church battles with today. Current preservationists struggle with the notion of preserving a relic that lacks historic context or public accessibility, and ask what an appropriate response or design intervention for such a site would be. The siting due to the road plan fundamentally affected the site’s past, and now future, preservation. The citizens of Plymouth must be aware of the preservation challenges that could affect Charles Church in the future due to such problems. Constructing a walkway to the site could be the first step in ensuring the church’s future as more people could visit the site, connect with the past and ultimately fight to ensure its future preservation.
Image 1: Charles Church, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 2: Charles Church, 2013

*Jennifer Whisenhunt*
Image 3: Charles Church 1889
Copyright The Francis Frith Collection
Image 4: Charles Church Interior
*A History of Plymouth and Her Neighbors*
Image 5: Plymouth, post WWII blitz
*Image Courtesy Western Morning News*
Image 6: Charles Church ruins, post WWII blitz

Image Courtesy Western Morning News
Image 7: Proposed Plymouth City Centre Functional Diagram

A Handbook of the Plymouth Plan

Charles Church
Image 8: Proposed City Centre Diagram

1 Railway Hotel, Offices, and Bus Station
2 Government and Professional Offices
3 Market
4 Theatre
5 Concert Hall
6 Council Chamber
7 Guildhall (New)
8 Municipal Offices
9 Law Courts
10 Banks
11 Hotels and Boarding Houses
12 Stadium and “covered in” Amusement Centre
13 Marine Pavilion
14 Barbican Neighborhood Centre
15 Public Baths
16 Health Centre
17 BBC and other Cultural Buildings
18 Shopping Centre
19 Residential Area
20 Open Air Theatre
21 Royal Sailors’ Rest

*Numbers indicate possible utilization of sites

Charles Church
Image 9: Proposed City Centre Layout (red lines show proposed central layout over existing streets)
A Handbook of the Plymouth Plan

Charles Church
Image 10: Construction of roundabout c1950s

Plymouth City Council, Central Library
Image 11: View of Charles Church and Drake Circus Shopping Center, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 12: View of Charles Church and Drake Circus Shopping Center, 2013

*Jennifer Whisenhunt*
St. Bride’s Church, London
Introduction

St. Bride’s Church is located in the City district of central London. St. Bride’s is an example of a bomb-damaged church that was reconstructed according to its historic design, although the interior layout underwent significant changes during the post-war reconstruction. St. Bride’s rebuilding is similar to Warsaw’s reconstruction plan as they both looked to the past in an attempt to move forward and recover from the destruction post-war.

The City was historically a commercial district with offices, warehouses and the marketing industry operating within its boundaries. St. Bride’s then, in association with this specific location became known for its connection with the Fleet Street journalism industry that operated close by. Designed by Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of 1666, its architectural importance is clearly tied to the architect in combination with the rest of the City Churches in the area. Wren, best known for this design of numerous City Churches in London including St. Paul’s Cathedral, was also a well known scientist and mathematician. Wren was appointed Surveyor of the Royal Works in 1669 and knighted in 1673.¹ It is from these ties that St. Bride’s gains most of its significance and is what dominated the decision to reconstruct the church according to its historic design. The building’s association with a great architect and the journalism industry are what made the restoration of St. Bride’s possible.

Original Building History

The site of St. Bride’s church has an extensive history, as the present building is the eighth church to have been constructed on the site. A stone church was constructed in the sixth century and was then enlarged between the ninth and tenth centuries. A fire in 1135 caused another church to be built, with extensions

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constructed in 1330 and in the 1400s. The building was then destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. St. Bride’s then became one of the over 50 churches rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren.

In 1671 Wren commenced work on the site to build yet another church, which opened in December 1675 (see Images 1 and 2). The spire, among the tallest of any Wren church, was added between 1701 and 1703 but destroyed in 1764 by a storm. It was later rebuilt eight feet shorter. St. Bride’s was one of the most expensive of the Wren churches and was only exceeded in price by St. Lawrence, Jewry (the Lord Mayor’s Church) and Christ Church at Newgate. St. Bride’s is one of only six churches believed to be designed by Wren alone.

St. Bride’s was one of the first ten churches planned for construction after the Great Fire and was among the first to open. “Wren did his work brilliantly” author Dewi Morgan stated, “with his genius for relating a building to its surroundings and… enabling it to overcome them, he made St. Bride’s Church a simple structure on the outside but exquisite inside.” The church became well known as a Wren masterpiece for its “splendid steeple” and plan, which was regarded as one of Wren’s finest basilican interior schemes. Mr. Rich, a pastry cook on Fleet Street, became famous for his wedding cakes modeled on the tiered arcades of the spire.

An essay dated 1838 included a description of the church as part of an overall essay about Wren. The author stated “the steeple of St. Bride’s Church, alone, does

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6 Morgan, 136.
not assert the strength of [Wren’s] genius, nor the play of his fancy, so much as his judgment and taste in producing an elegant arrangement of simple and resonating geometrical forms, within an outline of unimprovable grace.”

In addition to the popularity of this Wren design, the church was also known for its association with the rise of the British newspaper and printing industries. In 1500 William Craxton’s assistant, Wynkyn de Worde, moved their printing press business to a new site near St. Bride’s Church. Soon other printers moved to the area including Richard Pynson and Thomas Berthelet. By 1702 London’s first regular daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, was published “next door to the King’s Arms Tavern at Fleet Bride.” In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the newspaper industry continued to expand. Fleet Street’s convenient location between the financial and political districts of the city allowed for the area to become a center of newspaper and periodical publishing. By the early twentieth century, Fleet Street was still known as the heart of the nation’s press and media industries. Consequently, even before World War II, St. Bride’s Church held a vast amount of significance from its association with both Wren and Fleet Street.

**WWII History**

The London Blitz began in September 1940 and a devastating bombing raid occurred December 29, 1940. The church suffered serious damage as a result. A reported 27 of the 50 City Churches, all designed by Wren, were destroyed or seriously damaged. St. Bride’s roof, windows and interiors were all burnt out; everything except the spire was destroyed (see Image 3). Once the rubble was cleared and

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9 *St. Bride’s Church, Museum.* Museum Exhibition. St. Bride’s Church, London.

columns encased in concrete for support, the church hosted open-air services (see Images 4 and 5). The amount of damage to City Churches as a whole illustrated “the irreparable loss that London [had] suffered; the proportion [was] far more than the proportionate loss of other buildings.”

Between 1939 and 1945 the District Surveyors of the Metropolitan Boroughs assessed the damage that occurred to buildings due to enemy bombing that took place between 1939 and 1940 for the London County Council War Damage Survey Section of the Architect’s Department. Each map was color-coded to show the extent of the damage and included impact points of V1 flying bombs and V2 long-range rockets of 1944 and 1945. St. Paul’s Cathedral, to the west of St. Bride’s, suffered very little damage but the area immediately surrounding the cathedral was documented as having been “damaged beyond repair.” The area to the north of St. Bride’s also suffered serious damage while the church itself was listed as “seriously damaged; but repairable at cost.”

A survey of the City’s destruction, *The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival*, noted that the “fringe of buildings north of Fleet Street survived” and included the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Telegraph* and several other newspaper offices. The book stated that “looking south, the spire of St. Bride on the far side of Fleet Street [stood] out with an unexpected clearness.”

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13 Ibid.


15 Ibid.
London Reconstruction Plan and the City Churches

Many of the reconstruction plans, guidelines and publications regarding the London rebuilding mentioned the City Churches specifically, of which St. Bride’s was regarded as among the elite. Overall, London planners understood the role of the church in city life and were eager to retain as many as they could. The connections with the historic City area of London, Sir Christopher Wren as well as the publishing and newspaper industries contributed to the attention showered upon St. Bride’s. Without these important connections the church may have been completely torn down with a new structure built on top, similar to St. Paul’s, Bow Common. As with Warsaw, a deep connection to the past is what propelled the historicist rebuilding scheme for St. Bride’s.

The Bishop of London originally set up a Diocesan Committee to manage the rebuilding of London churches as a whole but, after realizing the unique character of the City Churches due to their historic and architectural importance, created a separate Committee, the Bishop of London’s Committee for the City Churches, to handle this group of churches specifically. The Committee for City Churches employed Godfrey Allen as a consultant architect. Allen and Prebendary Wellard, the Secretary of the Committee, were to visit “every church where any problem arises and make sure that the necessary steps are taken.”

The first meeting of the committee took place in October 1941. Their task was to “correlate the spiritual, historical, architectural factors with conditions as they are now, and arrive at tentative conclusions.” St. Bride’s Church, along with All Hallows Barking-by-the Tower, St. Giles, Cripplegate, St. Mary-le-Bow and St. Stephen, Walbrook, all of which suffered damage, were recommended by the commission to

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be restored. The commission published their final report in 1946, titled “The City Churches.” They echoed a recommendation from their Interim Report that stated “no Wren Church, not already destroyed, nor damaged beyond the possibility of satisfactory restoration, should be removed, except in a case of most urgent necessity, and after all the schemes for entire or partial preservation have been fully considered.”18 The report noted that, even if the congregations were diminishing in number, it was “impossible to regard the matter from that aspect only” as the “Wren towers and spires with the churches to which they belong… are an essential part of the London scene.”19 “Their disappearance in the war,” the report argued, “would have been an irretrievable loss to the City and to the nation’s architectural history.”20 From these quotes it is clear that even though the congregations were shrinking, the churches held more significance as historic icons than they did as functioning churches. The economics related to running a church with a healthy congregation was not a main contributing factor in the reconstruction discussion.

About St. Bride’s specifically, the Commission said, “this church has been seriously damaged, but its magnificent tower survives and its walls can be repaired. Even apart from its great architectural beauty, its close connection with the newspaper world makes its restoration imperative. We recommend that it be restored.”21 They stated that “there is no justification for the destruction of any church which has survived the war substantially intact or capable of reasonable restoration… such unnecessary destruction would be an act of vandalism likely to shock the conscience not only of this country but of the educated world.”22 In addition to the architectural importance, rebuilding the church could have also been seen as a morale booster.

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
for the city and country. Wren, as such a well-known figure in London life, held national significance for the country and reconstructing his buildings would be seen both as patriotic and an encouragement for the city and nation. As noted earlier, the City Churches held more significance as historic icons than they did as functioning churches so it is easily argued that restoring these buildings could have been seen as boosting a general spirit of renewal throughout London. Again a parallel can be drawn with Warsaw as the reconstruction of both the City Churches and the Old Town in Warsaw was done to generate local and national support after World War II.

Another group, the City Churches Society, was formed in February 1942 to discuss “the spiritual... architectural and civic significance of the City Churches.” The Society was formed to “oppose the closing of further London City churches and the eventual abandonment of those which enemy action [had] made temporarily unusable.” The Society was of the opinion that “wherever possible the churches should be rebuilt on their original site.” The Society argued that in “no other city in the world was there so noble a group of late 17th century churches to be found, and that these buildings, together with those of medieval date which escaped the fire of 1666, have made and can continue to make a unique and imperishable contribution to the character and atmosphere of the heart of the Empire.”

The 1943 County of London Plan stated that churches would be an integral part of London’s overall reconstruction and retained whenever possible. The authors, J.H. Forshaw, Architect to the London County Council and Patrick Abercrombie, noted that church congregations were undergoing population shifts, which were reducing congregations and affecting the regrouping of parishes. This regrouping of

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
parishes had little impact on the reconstruction of the City Churches and St. Bride’s, specifically, as even without their parishes the loss of the buildings would be, as mentioned previously, “an irretrievable loss to the City and to the nation’s architectural history.” Both Forshaw and Abercrombie recognized the importance of the church in daily communal life as places of worship and historical association with some being “notable architectural monuments.” The plan mentioned churches specifically “for they form an important element in the appearance of London.” The plan also noted that churches, in addition to museums, public libraries and schools, served a local social life and community need that was necessary for the growth and revitalization of the city.

In 1944 another committee, the Improvements and Town Planning Committee, published a report on the preliminary draft proposals for the post-war reconstruction for London. The main principles specific to the City were as follows: “respect for the City’s traditions and its historical prestige” as well as improving road and traffic conditions, rehabilitation of the city’s commerce, and “preservation of the City’s ancient monuments.” Again, improving roads and traffic is seen in the London rebuilding scheme as it was seen at Plymouth. This approach is significantly different from what was proposed at Plymouth, however, as this plan advocated for the retention of the City Churches for future rebuilding. Their stated intent for the plan was to “see the return of the City at the earliest possible date for those businesses which have been displaced by enemy action, and to assist in every way within our power the rehabilitation of commerce within our walls.”

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29 Forshaw, 140.
31 Ibid.
considered the historic jewels of the day as “the sites of City churches are respected, and where possible, the buildings themselves, whether undamaged or not, [were] given a prominence which they rarely enjoyed in the past.”32 “Their environment,” the proposal stated, “should be redeveloped in a manner sympathetic to and, as far as possible, in scale with them.”33

St. Bride’s Church Rebuilding

In accordance with the various city groups and agencies advocating for the preservation and restoration of City Churches, St. Bride’s was soon in the planning stages of a full restoration scheme. In 1951, the proposed restoration presented by W. Godfrey Allen, was published in *The Builder* (see Image 6). Allen, the surveyor to the fabric of St. Paul’s and twice Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths’ Company, was considered an authority on Wren’s architecture. The London Diocesan Advisory Committee approved plans for the first phase of construction in January 1954.34 By 1951 the church had launched an appeal for funds to restore the church, with hopes of construction beginning by 1953. The aim for Allen was “to restore the church to Wren’s original design, as conjectured.”35 This “conjecture” stipulation ultimately allowed Allen to change various aspects within the church under the guise of improving or finally allowing Wren’s intended design to come to fruition. *The Builder* article stated that Allen proposed to “eliminate the north and south galleries which, in Mr. Allen’s view, were added [by Wren] as afterthoughts.”36 Allen argued that “had Wren intended the galleries, he would have made proper provision of windows on

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33 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
the north and south walls, and the pedestals of the columns would have been carried up to the level of the galleries… instead of rising from the floor to the springing of the arches.” 37 Allen proposed removing the galleries that were “not now required, and restoring the arcading” which would help “achieve once more the spacious proportions of Wren’s design.” 38 The new, collegiate-style seating would allow “a more intimate form of service.” 39 This significant change in seating can be attributed to the Liturgical Movement as the goal of bringing congregation and clergy closer together to form “a more intimate” service was at the heart of Allen’s design.

In 1955 another article was published in The Builder. Allen had continued to refine his first design in an attempt to “bring the restoration closer to Wren’s original plans.” 40 The restoration included items such as a fresco on the east end of the church, which was designed to “give the east end of the church the appearance of an apse instead of a flat wall” (see Images 7 and 8). 41 New black and white marble flooring was installed along with collegiate style seating. The gallery space was still excluded from the restoration plans as they “reduced the light much beloved by Wren.” 42 The two aisles were then used as memorial chapels dedicated to the press “printing and kindred professions and trades” on the north and to Children and Missions Overseas on the south side.

The church Rector and Churchwardens published a small brochure in 1958 about the restoration of the church. “This restoration was a triumph of faith, vision, patience, tenacity and devotion by the friends of St. Bride’s, determined to

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
see the Printer’s Church, sometimes called ‘The Cathedral of Fleet Street,’ take its rightful place as a forum of thought, enlightenment and progress in the heart of newspaperdom.”43 The publication noted that “those who knew Wren’s church prior to the Second World War, with its high-backed fixed pews, its somber railed-off communion tables and tablets, its heavy galleries in the north and south arcades, and its great organ, gallery and vestibule at the west end, will find a great change.”44 The language used in just this one paragraph illustrates the overall attitude at the time of restoration. Wren’s design, although heralded as a masterpiece, was thought to be laden with drawbacks such as “heavy galleries” and “somber” communion tables that could be improved upon, with the help of Allen’s creative interpretation.

A significant discovery followed after excavations lead by Professor Grimes in 1952 and 1953 were completed; over 1,000 years of history was added to St. Bride’s. The church Rector and Churchwardens booklet discussed the excavations that uncovered Roman ruins, mosaics and skeletal remains. “Six inches below the level of Wren’s church,” it explained, “we began to uncover skeletons and lead coffins, most of which had beautifully-engraved inscriptions... We did not know then that nearly 5,000 burials, Roman, Saxon and onwards, had taken place in the area now enclosed by the walls of Wren’s church.”45

The rebuilding work was carried out by Messrs. Norman & Burt of Burgess Hill, who also restored St. Giles, Cripplegate and many other well-known churches and cathedrals. The work was funded with the help of the War Damage Commission and the printing industry. The church restoration was completed in 1957, seventeen years after it was destroyed in December 1940. The official reopening ceremony was held on December 19, 1957. The space below the church is now open as a museum

44 Redpath, 19.
45 Redpath, 6.
detailing the extensive history of the church and excavation finds. A September 1967 meeting of the London Diocesan Advisory Committee approved a “scheme for the re-arrangement and development of the crypts to provide a permanent exhibition of matters of historical interest.”

**Past Interpretation**

Despite Allen’s significant design changes for the church, many critics supported the design and noted its success. The church Rector and Churchwarden booklet calls Allen’s designs “genius” as he was able to create an interior “suitable for present day needs and adaptable for the future.” “Within Wren’s fabric, which he has so faithfully preserved,” they argue “[Allen] created a new interior in the Nave and the Sanctuary—a gem of rare beauty.” They call the reredos a “balanced design” of “rare beauty” that created an “intimate atmosphere of a collegiate church.”

A January 1958 article in *Country Life* comments on Allen’s changes to the building stating, “by making the altar-piece a solid structure the architect has increased the sense of depth behind it which is further enhanced by Mr. Glyn Jones’s trompe l’oeil painting on the east wall.” The author supports the new altar-piece because it has effectively reduced glare which was “so troublesome to those facing it unless the window [was] filled with opaque stained glass” (see Image 9). The article calls the painting on the east end wall, designed to create the illusion of an apse, a “brilliant achievement” as the church now had a “sense of depth and recession behind the high altar much greater than the few feet that in fact separate the east wall from

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47 Redpath, 5.
48 Redpath, 5.
49 Redpath, 20.
the reredos” (see Image 10). These articles depict a general feeling of acceptance towards Allen’s design, despite the fact he altered significant aspects of the design such as the seating.

Not all critics approved of Allen’s design, or at least the claim that it was a restored Wren design. In a 1959 article from The Architect’s Journal, Ian Nairn, a British architectural critic, writes about six Wren churches that had undergone recent restorations including St. Bride’s. His analysis of St. Bride’s is critical of the rearrangement of the seating. He notes that St. Bride’s restoration led to “a new church” and urged users to “not be misled by the talk of redoing Wren’s original intentions: this is a thorough-going and partly successful neo-Wren essay which has happened to use the walls and arcades of a Wren church.”

Nairn talks about Godfrey Allen’s choice to replace the gallery-style seating for college-fashion stalls with “the east end… completely rearranged with a big free-standing altar and a trompe l’oeil painting on the flat wall behind” and calls the stalls “spatially… nonsense.” He remarks that for a longitudinal church, the college stalls “simply get in the way of the rhythm of the arcades with the heavy cornice and the heavier pediments sticking up just where they are least wanted.”

The author criticizes the decision to recreate some kind of old design instead of using Wren’s original arcades “as the basis of a completely new building with modern fittings and a modern roof…”

In 1973 author Dewi Morgan published Phoenix of Fleet Street: 2,000 Years of St. Bride’s in which he describes the reconstruction. Morgan argues that the east wall, “lacking the distance effect created by a chancel” was “abrupt, flat, and uninspiring—

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51 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
while the whole church was cluttered with dark brown pews.” Morgan continues on and critiques the seating. He stated that the “stalls in St. Bride’s are impressive. Their arrangement encourages a feeling of community among the congregation. The arrangement does, however, have one disadvantage, in that the preacher feels he is addressing a row of noses. There is no pulpit in the church and it is difficult to know where one could be put. An amplification system… has therefore proved of especial value.”

The building was listed as a grade I building in January 1950. The English Heritage listing, updated in 1977, called the reconstruction a “near facsimile” yet called the interior “one of Wren’s finest… now obscured by modern joinery.” This update demonstrates the realization and shift in thinking as Allen’s additions are now seen to be “obscuring” Wren’s original design.

The printing and newspaper industry eventually moved out of the area in the 1980s as electronic printing technology began dominating the industry and newspaper owners decided to abandon their cramped and expensive sites for cheaper locations elsewhere in London. However, the “church remains very much a journalism’s parish church, despite the diaspora of the industry away from this district in recent decades.” “What used to be the village of Fleet Street is now deserted,” said Canon David Meara, the vicar of St Bride’s. Meara stated that the church is now a “place of ghosts and memories” but continues to serve as a meeting place for those who still work within the area and for weddings, memorials, and other events.

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56 Morgan, 249.
57 Morgan, 260.
Current Interpretation

Wren’s contribution to London through his church design still dominates current arguments for significance, particularly with St. Bride’s. Allen’s credit for his contributions to the building pale in comparison to the amount of credit that Wren’s receives for the building. The church is still largely known as a Wren design, as opposed to a Wren/Allen design. “This is one of Wren’s most prominent buildings, and it is preserving his legacy as well as the stone of St. Bride’s that we are looking to do,” James Irving, the church’s director of finance, told Reuters. The church’s connection with journalism is also noted, “known as the journalists’ church, St. Bride’s is a poignant reminder of the profession’s connection with Fleet Street.”

A report by “SAVE Britain’s Heritage” was published in May 1994 titled The City Churches Have a Future. The purpose of the publication was to promote current and future use of the City Churches. A series of articles was published in the report. One, by Dr. Giles Worsley argues that the churches’ “significance lies in the fact that they are so untypical” for their association with Sir Christopher Wren, “it is this that makes the 27 churches... among the most architecturally important in the country.”

Despite my surprise that Allen was able to insert a new seating scheme into the church, additional collegiate style side aisle seating was constructed in 2004 after a funding appeal. The seating, the church argued, offered “significantly better views for large congregations while preserving the beautiful character of the church.”

Today, the church is in the midst of a finance campaign to raise money for general exterior maintenance and cleaning of the building (see Images 11 and 12).

The church launched its “Inspire!” fundraising campaign in March 2012 with a goal of raising £2.5 million. As of January 2013 they had raised enough funds for the Churchwardens and the Parochial Church Council to begin preparations for work to begin in spring or summer 2013. An additional £200,000 is being asked to help fund interior cleaning in 2014 (see Image 13). The appeal notes that the church is “one of the finest examples of Christopher Wren’s work which has stood for more than 300 years.” Sir Michael Bear, Master of the Worshipful Company of Paviors, and Late Lord Mayor of London stated “the City landscape is punctuated with historic buildings, many of them churches, a few are fine examples of Wren’s best work. They are the glue that holds the Cityscape together and makes the varied property skyline what it is today.” Nick Ferrari, local journalist and broadcaster stated “St Bride’s is not only a church but a focal point...Fleet Street, the newspaper industry and the broader broadcast and online media business... it is St Bride’s that we journalists return for the celebration of the industry and individual people’s contribution to a free press.”

Conclusion

The combined elements that led to St. Bride’s reconstruction stemmed from its affiliation with Wren and City Churches as well as its association with the printing and journalism industry on Fleet Street. Without these three connections, the church, in an area with many potentially redundant churches, could have easily been torn down.

With all this in mind I look to answer the key questions asked at the beginning of my research. “Is the significance layered onto this site post-war recognized today?” I would argue that it is recognized, but only because of the great excavation discoveries that happened because of the bombing. Otherwise, the site would still only be

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
known for its architect and connection to Fleet Street journalism. The archaeological breakthrough ensured that the post-war history of the site is noted in the overall history of St. Bride’s. Without this discovery that is clearly physical evidence of the post-war reconstruction, Allen’s additions and alternations may have gone virtually unnoticed by future visitors.

Another question: “will the added meaning and significance affect preservation decisions today?” compels a similar response. The added significance from the excavations will certainly affect preservation decisions as the excavation site is currently preserved and being researched under the main sanctuary space of the building. As a physical reminder of the effects of the WWII bombing, the archaeological remains will dictate future preservation decisions as it relates to the museum space underneath the sanctuary. Despite this, the Inspire! campaign that is looking to fund basic maintenance and cleaning of the church still relies on the church’s historical Wren background as the main argument for restoration. Despite this, future preservation decisions will have to be affected by the fact that Wren’s church now has an Allen-designed interior. Future decisions will need to take the new interior, which is now significant in its own right, into account when faced with decisions concerning restoration. I would suggest that, even though the distinction between Wren and Allen is not very clear, that Allen’s design remain a necessary component of St. Bride’s overall design. In addition, I would also suggest that the line between Wren and Allen be more clearly defined so future visitors can more easily understand the layered history of the building.

A final question of if the “ meaning of the reconstruction is relevant today in the shifting of memory from first to second generation” perhaps has a more simple answer of “no.” As the main World War II importance comes from the excavation findings and the fact that the church’s ties with Wren and Fleet Street still dominate most of the church’s publications, it is safe to say that the meaning of the reconstruction, although
it will certainly be mentioned in future history books, will only be noted as a side element among the greater connections the church has ties to.
Image 1: St. Bride’s Interior, 1838
*History Under Fire, 52 Photographs of Air Raid Damage to London Buildings, 1940-41*
Image 2: North side of St Bride’s engraved by W.H. Toms, 1736

Image Courtesy St. Bride’s Church
Image 3: St. Bride’s, post WWII

*History Under Fire, 52 Photographs of Air Raid Damage to London Buildings, 1940-41*
Image 4: St. Bride’s, open air service post WWII
Image Courtesy St. Bride’s Church
Image 5: St. Bride’s, concrete encased columns
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Archives
Image 6: Allen’s Proposed St. Bride’s Restoration Design
"St. Bride’s, Fleet Street: Proposed Restoration." Builder
Image 7 and 8: East end fresco
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 9: St. Bride’s Interior, view to altar, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 10: St. Bride’s Interior, 2013

Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 11: St. Bride’s Exterior, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 13: St. Bride’s Interior, view to entrance from altar, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Coventry Cathedral, Coventry
Introduction

Coventry Cathedral is located in Coventry, England, an industrial center situated in the West Midlands of the country. This cathedral is an example of a site that preserved the church ruins and built a new structure adjacent. Similar to Dresden, Coventry chose to embrace both historic fabric and contemporary design aesthetics in their rebuilding. Coventry has become known throughout the world for its new cathedral design and its dedication to peace and reconciliation. Coventry gained this recognition because it was one of the first cities, outside of London, to experience such an extensive German bombing raid. This raid occurred in November 1940, just over one month before the air raid that damaged St. Bride’s Church in London took place. Coventry was immediately considered an example of recovery and rebuilding and as such, the cathedral project held an immense amount of significance for the city and country. Coventry’s importance greatly surpassed Plymouth’s rebuilding significance as the cathedral became one of the most well-known national and international symbols of hope and recovery.

These ideas of recovery and reconciliation dominated the design for the cathedral from the beginning of the project and are at the heart of the building’s interpretation today. In the upcoming chapter about St. Paul’s, Bow Common a striking comparison between the two churches becomes evident, as both are prime examples of the impact the Liturgical Movement had on church design.

Original Building History

Coventry Cathedral belongs to the Church of England and lies within the Province of Canterbury under the Diocese of Coventry. The original church, the Cathedral Church of St. Michael, was built in the English gothic Perpendicular style during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see Images 1 and 2). The tower was built between 1373 and 1394, and the construction of the spire began in 1432. The
church boasted 125 windows, a pentagonal apse with window tracery as well as a 300-foot tower and spire. The church was seen as an “all familiar… landmark which no one who has seen… could ever forget.”\(^1\) The building was known for its three “magnificent spires” which began to decay so the cathedral underwent a complete restoration between 1885-1890. At the time the building was in a “deplorable condition.”\(^2\) The building was originally designated as a parish church but was later enlarged and gained cathedral status in 1918.

**WWII History**

Coventry was destroyed during an air raid on November 14, 1940 when a German airstrike hit the city and subsequently destroyed St. Michael’s Cathedral. Two-thirds of the medieval city was destroyed or severely damaged in the raid; 568 people died while 863 were severely injured.\(^3\) The next morning the city discovered that only the cathedral tower, spire and exterior walls remained intact (see Images 3 and 4). The town center was reduced to a “charred wilderness of rubble and twisted girders.”\(^4\)

Coventry was one of the first British cities to suffer such sustained bombing after the German air force turned their attention away from London to “the more compact targets of provincial cities.”\(^5\) This single factor affected the rebuilding perhaps more than any other issue at hand. The Coventry Blitz subsequently obtained legendary status as the blitz symbolized Nazi terror that had been ruthlessly and senselessly released upon innocent civilians and their city. Despite later attempts

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\(^2\) “Various.” *Cycling Times*, n. pag. Print.

\(^3\) Ibid.


by historians to create a more “rounded picture, by suggesting that industry was the real target” these concepts continued to surround discussions of the blitz.\textsuperscript{6} This attempt at propaganda propelled the future church design to legendary status before construction even started. London was already in the midst of a blitz that was to last from September 1940 to May 1941, which was also seen as an attempt of destruction for the purpose of crippling local morale, so Coventry’s blitz, also seen as lacking real strategic purpose, used that same idea to pull together local and national support in a “resolve that Nazi Germany must, and would be, beaten.”\textsuperscript{7}

As Coventry was the first city in England to really experience this level of devastation, apart from London, the press covered the event extensively and presented the city as “a monument to German frightfulness.”\textsuperscript{8} The loss of physical fabric to the city, and specifically St. Michael’s Cathedral, was used as propaganda to suggest the vulnerability of the city as well as defiance against Nazi terror. The \textit{Birmingham Gazette} stated “the proud spirit of Coventry Cathedral yesterday stood as a sentinel over the grim scene of destruction below.”\textsuperscript{9}

News coverage about this idea became unnerving for then Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Winston Churchill, as well as the Director of Home Intelligence, Mary Adams. Adams suggested a shift in reporting from destruction to “the future, to rebuilding, reconstruction, replanning” in order to provide “a useful escape from... controversial issues” such as civilian shelters, military strategy or destruction.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{6} Campbell, 7.
\textsuperscript{8} Campbell, 9.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Campbell, 10.
Coventry Reconstruction Plan

To aid in the overall appeal of focusing on the future and reconstruction, the day after the air strike, the Provost of Coventry, Richard Howard, stated that the city and the cathedral would be rebuilt. His speech “ensured that the city and its cathedral became an emblem of all Britain’s bombed cities, and the focus of hopes for the future.” His proposal for rebuilding the church “as a symbol of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, and of hope and forgiveness in the face of war and destruction” gained widespread attention and support. Other leaders in the community included the city engineer, E.H. Ford, who controlled the majority of the new city planning, particularly in terms of the street pattern for the central commercial area and the City Architect, Donald Gibson, who focused on the area around the cathedral where new civic and cultural buildings were to be located.

Both Ford and Gibson presented reconstruction plans to the National Emergency Committee and City Redevelopment Committee in 1941. Gibson’s plan called for reduced traffic from to the city’s main shopping area and a relocated city center, designed to be a grand square (see Image 5). Once again, traffic planning is at the forefront of post-war reconstruction. To the east and west of the square were civic buildings and the commercial center, respectively, with the cathedral sitting in the middle. Ford’s plan, however, did not rethink the street pattern but merely proposed widening the already existing streets. He did, like Gibson, design a “broad vista” between Broadgate and the cathedral but unlike Gibson he envisaged “small squares around the Cathedral and civic offices to the east of the central hilltop.” In January

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13 Campbell, 14.
14 Campbell, 16.
1941 Churchill’s wartime Cabinet met with Lord Reith, the Minister of Works, and Gibson’s plan was selected. Coventry’s Redevelopment Committee approved the plan in March.

Gibson continued to work on the plan and produced a model to present to the public by 1942. His plan, widely published, became an example for the reconstruction of British cities after the war. The plan incorporated radial roads to relieve traffic congestion and also historic buildings that, together with the cathedral ruins, would be preserved and incorporated as “features in open spaces and gardens.” Similar to Plymouth, Gibson’s plan was also traffic driven. Warnings of limited funding along with critics urging modifications to the plan combined to slow the overall reconstruction of the city. Gibson’s plan was also similar to Abercrombie’s plan for London in that traffic congestion and open spaces were the main concerns for both plans. Both the London and Plymouth plans proposed a ring road with connecting radial roads to serve the various precincts of the city.

The gutted St. Michael’s Cathedral held a key position in the publicity surrounding the blitz and the new plan. The cathedral symbolized “the city’s fate as the innocent victim of war” and the tower was intended to “provide a precious historical dimension for an almost entirely modern city.”

A Christmas Day Broadcast from the ruins in 1940 summarized the feelings of the city immediately after the blitz and demonstrates the role the church played in a propaganda campaign for the overall rebuilding of the city and country:

Six weeks ago the enemy came, and hurled down fire and destruction upon our city from the sky, all through the long night. So many lives were lost, so many homes destroyed, and our Cathedral nave and Chancel utterly burnt and brought to the ground. It was ruthless, futile, wicked... What we want to tell the world is this: that with Christ born again in our hearts to-day, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of revenge; we are bracing ourselves

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16 Campbell, 21.
to finish this tremendous job of saving the world from tyranny and cruelty; we are going to try to make a kinder, simpler... sort of world in the days beyond this strife. We are in brave spirits and can wish the Empire a Courageous Christmas.17

Coventry Cathedral and Basil Spence

Provost Howard’s speech soon after the raid concluded by saying “from every citizen and from dwellers far and wide has come the determined cry: ‘We shall build again.’ It will be worth while winning the war if only to rebuild St. Michael’s.”18 In contrast to Howard’s ideas about the future of St. Michael’s, Bishop Gorton and City Architect Gibson both felt that a newly designed church would “better serve the needs of the city, and help attract a young congregation.”19 The two also thought that the ruins should be completely demolished, as a new building would provide a more suitable answer for the new modernist city plan. The ideas from these three would prove to be very influential in the future of the cathedral as it went through multiple design stages, architects and waves of public opinion.

Howard believed that the cathedral had the potential to play an important role in the “moral regeneration of Britain, and reflect more egalitarian conditions.”20 Gorton, likewise, thought of the new cathedral project as an opportunity to explore design solutions that were in line with the Liturgical Movement’s ideas about church planning and function. Both Gorton and Howard “felt that a central altar was desirable,” similar to the St. Paul’s Bow Common designers of Robert Maguire and Keith Murray who were also looking to rethink church function in terms of its design.21 Despite their ideas about space planning, the 1947 specifications for the new

19 Glendinning, 74.
20 Campbell, 22.
21 Campbell, 23.
design recalled traditional ideas about liturgy and church design.

The Cathedral Council, comprised of the Bishop, Assistant Bishop, Provost, honorary and residentiary canons, Archdeacons of Coventry and Warwick, representatives of the diocese and cathedral congregation, met for the first time in March 1941. Two of the most modern thinkers of the group were Provost Howard and Bishop Gorton.

Initially Provost Howard invited Giles Gilbert Scott to design the new cathedral in June 1941. Scott, son and grandson of British architects George Gilbert Scott Junior and George Gilbert Scott respectively, was known for his design of the Liverpool Cathedral and Bankside Power Station (which now houses the Tate Modern art gallery). Scott understood the difficulty facing him with the contrast between the “historical and emotional significance of the ruins.” Contemporary design was also in a state of change and the Cathedral rebuilding was caught between two design schools, one being more traditional and the other looking towards the future with modernist design principles. This theme is also seen in the space planning of the cathedral that was caught between traditional views on liturgy versus contemporary views that aligned with the Liturgical Movement. Scott acknowledged this change and initially recommended an open competition for the new design but instead the Bishop and Cathedral Council, at the urging of Howard, appointed Scott as the architect. Bishop Gorton and City Architect Gibson worked with Scott to create a design that the Cathedral Council approved of in September 1943. Gorton wanted a centrally planned church with new elements such as a Chapel of Christian Unity and a Christian Service Centre. Scott tried to accommodate Gorton’s wishes by designing multiple buildings sitting to the east of the cathedral. Scott’s plan kept the ruined nave to serve as a

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22 Campbell, 22.
23 Campbell, 17.
24 Glendinning, 74.
cloister with the new cathedral sitting across the site. This idea of preserving the ruins will be seen again as part of the final design from Basil Spence. The design was “coolly received, both by the City Council… which was reluctant to yield land to the east and south of the old cathedral, and by the general public, who apparently disliked both the central altar and the treatment of the ruins.”

Scott published this statement to accompany his published design in newspapers in February 1944 (see Image 6):

The purpose of the Cathedral to form a spiritual centre for the city, to bring it into the everyday life of the people and to emphasise the dominance of the spiritual values over the material can only be satisfactorily expressed architecturally if the Cathedral forms the centre and climax of the city’s plan.

Despite the Council’s approval, Bishop Howard did not like the design, which included Gothic details. He thus urged Scott to eliminate the details and make the design more modern to “reinforce the image of a progressive new cathedral.” These changes prompted the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC) to reject the design stating that it had a “lack of unity, both architectural and aesthetic between the interior and exterior.” The City Council then suggested that the Cathedral Council either adopt a new plan or abandon the idea and just have the congregation join with the nearby Holy Trinity Church.

Torn between traditionalists and progressives, Scott resigned in January 1947 saying, “It is unlikely that a modernist or traditional design will ever meet with the approval of all parties… These differences of opinion, and the formation of numerous societies, committees and commissions etc, to give them expression, are characteristic

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25 Campbell, 25.
27 Campbell, Louise. To Build a Cathedral: Coventry Cathedral, 1945-1962, 18.
28 Ibid.
of our time; they harass the unfortunate artist and hamper the production of the work...”

The added significance of the ruins would continue to impact design decisions and as such, the site would never be purely a religious building. The design had to accommodate multiple functions such as a war memorial and the symbol of the recovering city and nation. As a cathedral, the building also had to stand up to increased ceremonial significance, more so than the churches of St. Bride’s Church and St. Paul’s, Bow Common. In contrast to the role of St. Paul’s, Bow Common or St. Bride’s as parish churches, Coventry Cathedral would act as the chief church of the diocese and the base for the Bishop of Coventry and, as such, had a much higher role to play merely within the Church of England structure of worship spaces.

After Scott’s resignation, Lord Harlech created an advisory commission that ultimately suggested an open competition, which had been Scott’s recommendation in the first place. The Coventry Cathedral Reconstruction Fund published Lord Harlech’s Commission Report in 1947. The report discussed four options for the site of the cathedral: move it outside of Coventry, build another cathedral on a different site, move the congregation to Holy Trinity, or build another cathedral on the same site. Their final recommendation was that the new cathedral should be built on the site of the old building. This recommendation was supported by references to “grounds of natural sentiment, tradition, and continuity… but also on a careful review of all the suggestions and considerations.” They stated that the walls were too structurally unstable to allow for reconstruction and should thus be demolished because they did not hold “sufficient architectural merit to justify the complete rebuilding.”

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29 Campbell, Louise. To Build a Cathedral: Coventry Cathedral, 1945-1962, 18.
31 Ibid.
Harlech’s Commission proposed that the tower and spire remain as it was “Coventry’s outstanding landmark” and destroying it “would be both a dereliction of duty and an acquiescence in the destruction wrought on November 14, 1940 by the forces of oppression and evil.” 33

The report encouraged architect selection by open competition and proposed a Building Committee be organized to carry out all the building operations and fundraising. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) protested against the style stipulation because they thought it would “severely inhibit competitors.” 34

To prepare for the competition the Building Committee was renamed the Reconstruction Committee and was comprised of mainly local businessmen and the Provost, and chaired by Colonel Cyril Siddeley. The committee would be in consultation with the Bishop and three architect-assessors who were appointed by the RIBA. In the summer of 1950 the Reconstruction Committee met with the RIBA-chosen competition judges, Edward Maufe (member of the Royal Fine Art Commission), Sir Percy Thomas (member of the Harlech Commission), and Howard Robertson (a recent advisor for the UN headquarters design competition). 35

Finally, in October of 1950, the Reconstruction Committee published their brief and held a design competition for the new cathedral that was open to any qualified architect in the British Commonwealth; style guidelines were not part of the competition brief but they did stipulate that the tower and crypt chapels had to be preserved. The lack of style and material restrictions allowed “the moderns… to enter the fray,” as young architect Colin St. John Wilson wrote in the *Observer* in January 1951. 36

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34 Campbell, 34.
35 Campbell, 41.
36 Glendinning, 75.
The competition brief required seating for 1250 people, space for 150 diocesan clergy and a choir of 40. Also to be included was a pulpit and lectern, a font, a Lady Chapel, a Guild Chapel, a Children’s Chapel, and a Chapel of the Resurrection. Eight “hallowing places” were also to be included as well as a Chapel of Christian Unity, which was to be a separate entity from the rest of the cathedral. A Christian Service Centre was also included in the brief as well as the stipulation that the altar must be sited toward the east end. There were no liturgical requirements in the competition brief apart from the requirement that the altar be placed towards the east end of the building and have an unobstructed view from the congregation.37

The site configuration also played a role on the submitted designs. An L-shaped site to the north of the ruins had been secured by the church in 1948 so the designers had to choose between three options: “building on the site of the old cathedral, squeezing a new cathedral alongside it, or using the land to the north.”38 This left many to configure the new cathedral in a traditional format with a narrow plan divided into nave, choir and sanctuary.

In addition to the competition brief, the Bishop, Provost and Cathedral Chapter as well as the Joint Council of the Coventry Cathedral Christian Service Centre issued a guide to encourage the competitors to reimagine the liturgical requirements of the space and “re-interpret imaginatively the conventional schedule of requirements for the cathedral.”39 In terms of a war memorial, the only stipulations relating to such an idea was for a place to be set aside for the charred cross, cross of nails and altar of rubble from the ruins which as to be placed within the new cathedral.

Eventually 219 drawing sets were submitted and exhibited at the King Henry VIII School in Coventry during July 1951. The assessors felt than none of the

37 Glendinning, 76.
38 Ibid.
submissions were “worthy of being erected” but decided to recommend Basil Spence’s design as the project could not sustain another setback. They felt that Spence’s design “stood a better chance of reconciling the different factions” than a more radical design would.40

Basil Spence was announced as the winner on August 15, 1951. Work officially began on June 8, 1954 (see Images 7 and 8).41 Spence, a Scotland-based architect, was born in India in 1907, trained at Edinburgh College of Art, which is now part of the Edinburgh University School of Architecture, and attended classes under A.E. Richardson at the London University Atelier in 1923. He then worked for Edwin Lutyens’ office from 1929 to 1930 and became an RIBA Recognized Schools silver medalist in 1931. In 1935 Spence became partner at Rowand Anderson Paul and Partners before leaving to serve in World War II. He worked in the Army Camouflage Unit during the war, which is where his ambition of building a cathedral was first articulated.42 Spence became known as an “exhibition architect” after completing designs for the “Britain Can Make It” exhibition, “Enterprise Scotland Exhibition” as well as the “Sea and Ships” Pavilion at the Festival of Britain in 1951, the same year he won the Coventry competition (see Images 9 and 10).43 He opened his own office, Basil Spence & Partners in November 1946.

Spence’s design was commended for “qualities of spirit and imagination of the highest order.”44 Author Louise Campbell noted that the design was able to represent “a middle ground between the traditionalism… and radicalism” and reconcile the “differences between the clergy, the Reconstruction Committee and the architectural

40 Campbell, 66.
41 Campbell, 20.
43 Campbell, Louise. To Build a Cathedral: Coventry Cathedral, 1945-1962, 19.
44 Glendinning, 79.
profession.”

Spence’s design retained almost all of the ruins and placed the new building at a right angle to the ruins (see Image 7). A columned porch connected the two spaces with the column grid continuing down the nave of the new cathedral. A glazed West Screen facade served as the entrance to the new cathedral. The Guild Chapel was placed on the east side with the Chapel of Unity on the west. The interior incorporated triangular recesses that would hold the eight hallowing places. Opposite the West Screen were the High Altar on the east end with three chapels and the Great Tapestry behind it, separated by a wall. The baptistery window was placed across from the Chapel of Unity. The Stone of Bethlehem, the font, sits in front of the window.

After winning the competition Spence continued revising the plan, which included proposals for a more centralized altar, revised materials choices as well as commissioning artists for the various works he had in mind for the space.

Artwork played a great role in the cathedral building. Spence referred to the cathedral as a “casket of jewels” which was integral to the overall design of the building. The Grand Tapestry at the east end of the nave, designed by Graham Sutherland, was one of the most important of the art commissions as it reinforced the “symbolism of sacrifice and resurrection” for the cathedral (see Image 11). Another major piece of artwork was the baptistery window, which would highlight two aspects of the church: “spiritual growth beginning in baptism and the nurturing of unity and reconciliation (see Image 12).” The window was contracted out to John Piper and Patrick Reyntiens, artists who ended up collaborating for three decades after working together at Coventry. John Hutton, who met Spence during World War II while working in the army camouflage unit, created the West Screen. Spence designed the

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45 Ibid.
46 Glendinning, 89.
clear screen with the intent of visually incorporating the ruins with the new cathedral, which could now be seen from the interior of the new building (see Image 13). Alternating rows of saints and angels were engraved into the screen. The screen was transported for installation in September 1961. Another integral piece of artwork was the nave windows. The windows, with their distinctive zigzag formation that points to the high altar, was designed by Lawrence Lee, Geoffrey Clarke and Keith New, all at the Royal College of Art. Lee was the Head of Stained Glass department at the time. A distinctive color progression was incorporated to symbolize life’s evolution from childhood (green) to old age and wisdom (purple) and finally heaven (gold). All ten windows were completed by 1958.48

After initial criticism, Spence refined the design and asked the engineer Ove Arup to serve as his consultant, which was critical in the column and structural design of the building. A major change was the movement of the altar to a more centralized location, as per Bishop Gorton’s request. Spence moved the bishop’s throne and clergy seats around the altar but the Reconstruction Committee eventually rejected the design change. The chairman of the Committee, Ernest Ford, opposed the entire new scheme and wrote that it was “wrong aesthetically, practically, psychologically and traditionally.”49 The proposed centralized location for the altar aligns with the Liturgical Movement principles and is seen at St. Paul’s, Bow Common. This lack of support for such design changes is one of the core reasons why the architect of St. Paul’s, Bow Common regarded Coventry Cathedral’s design as antiquated. Coventry Cathedral, although modern in its materials and outward appearance, was traditional in terms of its space planning and interior layout.

Money for the rebuilding came from the Government’s War Damages

48 Willis, 52.
49 Glendinning, 80.
Commission. In addition to securing donations for the rest of the building campaign, Spence, the Provost and the Bishop’s Chaplain conducted a fundraising tour that helped gain public support and funding for the building. Construction began in June 1954 and the foundation was laid by March 1955 (see Image 8). The new church was consecrated on May 25, 1962.

Past Interpretation

Throughout construction and the following decades, the project went through phases of popularity and criticism. In the 1940s “patriotic commemorative projects” ruled the discussion until the 1950s came and the focus shifted to the “renewal of national architectural and craft traditions.” In the 1960s projects of international reconciliation were heavily debated and such was the climate surrounding Coventry Cathedral. The War Artists Advisory Committee used the ruins for works and the Ministry of Information used them in propaganda films. Because of this, the ruins and Coventry Cathedral became very well known and “acquired enormous significance, locally, nationally and internationally.”

Overall Spence enjoyed mass publicity, as he became one of the few architects to become a household name after he won the Coventry design competition. He was elected RIBA president in 1958, knighted and made a Royal Academician in 1960 and appointed Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy in 1961. He also was awarded the Order of Merit for the competition of the Cathedral.

Once Spence’s design was published it immediately attracted attention and critics from around the country. To some, the design seemed “uncomfortably

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50 Glendinning, 84.
52 Glendinning, 100.
53 Glendinning, 75.
reminiscent” of the exhibition pavilions for which Spence was known while others thought it appeared “disappointingly sober and traditional.”

To present the design to the public and gained support from potential financial donors a 1952 publication titled “The New Coventry Cathedral” broke down the new design into six components. A major component was the retention of the ruins for which it stated,

Almost the whole of the ruins… are to be retained as a memorial shrine and as a vestibule to the new cathedral… these ruins have a powerfully religious effect upon the minds of those who see them. They enshrine a positive truth which speaks impressively from the stones. It is felt that it would be little short of sacrilege to destroy this. The voice of God from the ruins must be allowed to go on speaking indefinitely into the future.

The other components of style, ground plan, exterior, interior and the Chapel of Unity and Christian Service Centre were presented as harmonious elements that would combine to create a building of “tremendous power and clean gracefulness which is characteristic of all our greatest Christian architecture, and though built in a later age and style it will stand in harmony and continuity with the old Cathedral.”

A 1958 publication under the same title included similar information but added a section on “The Beginning of the Building” which places the project within the larger countrywide context by stating, “the Cathedral is not a building which concerns Coventry and Coventry alone. The echo of the bombs which destroyed your city was heard round the world. We cannot tell how many people are waiting in this country and abroad for this church to rise and prove that English traditions live again after the Blitz.” Again, as a national monument, Coventry Cathedral was looked to

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54 Campbell, 67.
56 Ibid.
57 Howard, 25.
for inspiration from the rest of the country. As such, the design was held with great importance.

Public opinion and design taste changed throughout the construction years. The retention of the ruins presented in 1951 was “well suited to the mood of the period” but by 1958 this design idea “had come to seem both romantic and unadventurous” when compared to other building projects of the day.\footnote{Campbell, 254.}


Throughout the construction process two clergymen, architectural writer and priest Peter Hammond and Harold “Bill” Williams, both critiqued the design. Hammond criticized Coventry Cathedral as a “building which contributes nothing to the solution of the real problems of church design and perpetuates a conception of a church which owes far more to the romantic movement than to the New Testament or authentic Christian tradition.”\footnote{Campbell, Louise. Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. 204. Print.} Hammond’s liturgical critique aligned with the St. Paul’s, Bow Common designers, Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, who thought that Coventry’s design failed to really seek a modern design answer to the Liturgical Movement. Coventry’s traditional nave-based design, they thought, did not support new, contemporary ideas of designing around the Eucharist and the increased connection between clergy and congregation, in which a central altar would be most
useful. Another article also criticized the designer for not pushing the design envelope far enough and stated, “before ever an architect was briefed, there should have been more fundamental thinking about current liturgical needs in general and about the particular requirements of a modern cathedral church.” The author continued to describe current liturgical thinking as emphasized in the importance of the Eucharist, “in its simplest architectural terms, flexibility means the provision of plenty of space. And in the context of Eucharist worship, this means plenty of space in the sanctuary with complete freedom for movement all round the altar.” Later critics of the design’s “liturgical inflexibility” stem from a lack of understanding about the cathedral’s role as a “bridge between past and present or its qualities as a great ceremonial space.”

By the consecration date in 1962 people were still divided in opinion. The older generation “paid tribute to the skill and imagination with which the architect had filled the conditions of the brief and responded to the site” while the younger generation was still criticizing the design’s monumental and “hand-crafted appearance.”

In G.E. Kidder Smith’s Book, The New Churches of Europe, published in 1964, the church is commended as having done “more to revitalize the hitherto almost totally reactionary architecture of the Church of England than was ever dreamed possible.” The author continues, stating: “because of the enormous popular success of this new church, the influence of Coventry will radiate throughout the country as a positive and exciting statement of religious building in our time” and that the building “might well go down in history as more notable for its influence than its architectural

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62 Ibid.
63 Campbell, 272.
64 Campbell, 269.
excellence.”

In another article dated 1973, David Pryce-Jones assesses “what has happened to the reputation made with Coventry Cathedral?” He notes, “the controversies around the cathedral have never quite died, though many critics at the time, Lord Clark and J.M. Richards notably among them, have since recanted.” He also states that, “the Poles could reproduce Warsaw just as it had been before the German destruction. Coventry Cathedral was our gesture of defiance, our assertion of the future.” Again, this overarching theme of rebuilding and looking to the future exists across cultures, yet the two cities chose to implement their reconstruction plans very differently as Warsaw rebuilt to historic designs and Coventry created new designs.

During his lecture, “New Buildings in Old Cities” at the University of Southampton in 1973, Basil Spence noted that the most difficult problem an architect could be faced with was “designing a modern building in an ancient city.” Using Coventry as an example, Spence spoke about the issues with designing around a historic cathedral in an old city. He noted that his design proposal for the competition was the only one “that kept the entire ruin as an integral part of the complete building” as “it had to be of our time but one which grew from the old and which would be incomplete without it.” He noted that his design was very controversial at the beginning, drawing 80 percent of the letters from strangers being rude with

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66 Ibid.
68 Pryce-Jones, 35.
69 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
the other 20 percent being “very rude.”\textsuperscript{72} Spence continued to describe his site visit and thinking, “I felt that the open-air cathedral spoke eloquently of the sacrifice, and that it was my duty to design a building... which would stand for the triumph of the Resurrection.”\textsuperscript{73} By the time Spence gave this lecture, 20 years after the conception, he noted a change in public opinion, as the letters he was then getting were “happily very different from the ones I got in the beginning.”\textsuperscript{74}

English Heritage listed the ruined Cathedral Church of St. Michael as a grade I building in February of 1955 and listed the contemporary Coventry Cathedral as a grade I building in March of 1988 (see Images 14 and 15). The listing for the ruin is very brief and describes the history and layout of the church with little mention of its memorial status or its connection with the new cathedral. The listing for the cathedral is much more detailed and describes the design and layout of the church as well as the ruined St. Michael next to it. The listing states that the cathedral was “one of the most important architectural commissions of its date in Britain... the scheme was also notable in its period for the degree to which the bomb damaged shell of the Medieval church of St. Michael was preserved.”\textsuperscript{75}

**Current Interpretation**

Today interpretation surrounding the cathedral mostly focuses on the symbolism of reconciliation and peace as well as the various pieces of artwork within the building. A series of publications available at the cathedral reflect the current interpretation of the site. The 50-year anniversary celebration prompted the printing


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Spence, 10.

of “50: Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future, 1962-2012.” In the Dean’s Welcome of the introductory brochure, he says to the visitor:

Welcome to Coventry Cathedral—a magnificent modern building and treasure house of 20th Century works of art. More than that, this is the home of a lively worshipping community witnessing to the transforming power of Jesus Christ in the heart of a multi-cultural industrial city. Set beside the ruins of the Old Cathedral destroyed by enemy bombing in 1940, the New Cathedral remains a powerful witness to the hope of the resurrection and the importance of reconciliation.

I do hope that as a result of your visit, something of the majesty of Christ in glory and the ministry of peace and reconciliation will stay with you as you journey on.76

The points Reverend John Irvine makes in the brief introduction speak volumes to the interpretation of the site today. The idea of reconciliation, artists who contributed to the cathedral and the World War II destruction are heavily emphasized throughout the brochure. The Dean does not identify the enemy in the brochure but uses the term as a general idea to encourage the church’s overall goal of promoting peace and reconciliation, regardless the enemy’s identification.

In addition to the welcome brochure, the cathedral also offers multiple theme-specific tours. The Reconciliation Ministry Tour is just one example. This brochure states:

Coventry’s old Cathedral was destroyed on 14 November 1940 by German firebombing. Immediately afterwards, Provost Howard, the Cathedral’s most senior clergyman, stated that this Community would forgive and be reconciled to their former enemies, and that the Cathedral would be rebuilt. Today, the Cathedral’s International Centre for Reconciliation supports a worldwide network of over 170 peace ‘centres’—the ‘Community of the Cross of Nails.’77

This brochure, in contrast to the Dean’s welcome introduction, does identify

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the enemy as Germany. These contrasting views on the “enemy” shows that although the enemy, Germany, is still part of the overall history of the church, its role is being reduced to describe enemies in general. This generalization, although it supports the overall goal of the church to promote peace and reconciliation, demonstrates the shift of memory from one generation to the other, as one piece of the history is transformed to help aid a current goal of the church.

Another publication, one for purchase in the visitor’s center, was also printed for the fiftieth anniversary of the Cathedral. The booklet mentions Cathedral’s wave of popularity, which was high right after the consecration in 1962 but waned in the decades after. The cathedral was, however, voted as Britain’s favorite twentieth century building in the 1990s. The booklet points to Howard’s declaration right after the blitz and the Cross of Nails as the two immediate symbols of peace, hope and reconciliation for which the cathedral and Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) is now based. The CCN, based at Coventry Cathedral, is an international ministry that promotes peace, justice and reconciliation around the world.

The church still holds an annual service in November to “commemorate victims of the blitz” which also aims to help “stimulate public interest in the preservation of the remains.” The cathedral hopes to extend this significance to “become a memorial of national and international significance to civilians killed, injured or traumatized by war and violent conflict.”

Recently the church implemented an admission fee for visitors, something new to the site, to help finance the maintenance of the old and new cathedrals. The welcome brochure states that it costs more than £5,000 per day to maintain the site. Although the Cathedral is in good condition today, a current cathedral archivist

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79 Hodge, 9.
supported the visitor admission fee, as they had to maintain two buildings: essentially the new cathedral and the ruins. In addition to the admission price, visitors are also expected to enter the cathedral from a separate entrance at the back of the building. Louise Campbell predicts that future interpretation of the site will shift from an emphasis of a war memorial to the design, architecture and art of the building. This, she argues, will help to attract more visitors as post-war architecture in general is rising in popularity.

Conclusion

In answering the questions posed about the interpretation and significance of churches in England post-World War II, I find that Coventry is unlike any of the sites researched, primarily due to an immense and elevated level of significance integrated into the site. The main reason for this is that Coventry was one of the first cities to experience such a bombing raid outside of London. Coventry, as a cathedral status church, also had the added pressure of responding to the ceremonial needs for the Bishop of Coventry. The cathedral’s popularity, publicity and significance thus increased rapidly and drove it to become one of the country’s most well known post-war sites. This propelled the country to look to Coventry as an example of rebuilding and recovery, and as such, forced the city to undertake the rebuilding of the cathedral very carefully so as to present a strong and clear message of reconciliation and recovery to the rest of the country and world.

Considering this, we ask the question “is the significance layered onto this site post-war recognized today and has it added meaning and significance that may or may not affect preservation decisions today?” The layered significance of the site is certainly recognized today and will arguably continue as both the ruins and cathedral building are maintained. The added significance embedded in the buildings, as essentially the

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80 Campbell, Louise. Personal Interview. 9 Jan 2013.
first example of recovery and rebuilding, ensure that the city and country will work to safeguard the building’s physical fabric as well as its symbolism. The post-war history embedded in the site will continue to be present for decades to come as the ruins serve as a strong physical reminder of the destruction of war. The same physical reminder cannot be seen at either St. Bride’s Church or St. Paul’s, Bow Common for which that section of their history could easily fade into the background of the overall building history.

The question whether the meaning of the reconstruction or reestablishment is relevant today in the shifting of memory from first to second generation is perhaps more difficult to answer. The immense amount of symbolism imbedded in the site will certainly continue to be publicized but perhaps, as Louise Campbell noted, the emphasis will shift from the war memorial and destruction of the city to the architecture and art as premiere examples of post-war cathedral design and artwork. Although I agree that the artwork will gain more recognition as time goes on, I think the building’s first association will always be as a post-war site, especially because the ruins are still intact and an integral part of the site. The fact that the ruins are incorporated with the building will ensure that no matter the future interpretation, the memory of war and destruction will always be physically present to future visitors.
Image 1: St. Michael’s Cathedral, 1824
*Image Courtesy Coventry Cathedral Archives*
Image 2: St. Michael’s Cathedral, nave and apse
*Image Courtesy Coventry Cathedral Archives C. Burkett*
Image 3: St. Michael’s Cathedral, post-WWII bombing
*Image Courtesy Coventry Cathedral Archives*
Image 4: Mother’s Day Service in ruins, 1945

Image Courtesy Coventry Cathedral Archives
Image 5: Proposed Coventry Central Area Reconstruction, 1940

Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain
Image 6: View of proposed cathedral based on Sir Giles Gilbert Scott’s plan, 1944
Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain
Image 7: Plan of Cathedral as built

*Phoenix at Coventry: The Building of a Cathedral*
Image 8: Construction of new cathedral, early 1958

Image Courtesy Coventry Cathedral Archives, A. Cooper
Image 9: The Special Ships Section of the Sea and Ships Pavilion
Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects
Image 10: The Shipbuilding Section of the Sea and Ships Pavilion

Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects
Image 11: Coventry Cathedral, interior, 2013

Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 12: Baptistery Window, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 15: St. Michael’s Ruins, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
St. Paul’s, Bow Common, London
Introduction

St. Paul’s, Bow Common is located in the East End of London, in the borough of Tower Hamlets. This site is an example of a bomb-damaged parish church whose building was razed and a new, contemporary structure built on its site. This post-war rebuilding scheme was also seen at Le Havre in which a modernist plan was constructed essentially on top of the historic site. A combination of factors led to this more radical answer to church reconstruction. London’s city plan focused on economics, housing and traffic control first and left historic churches for later discussion. Once historic, bomb-damaged churches were recognized, the focus was on those in The City borough, the historic core of London; more specifically, the Wren-designed churches like St. Bride’s Church or St. Paul’s Cathedral. This allowed St. Paul’s, Bow Common, a smaller parish church, to design a contemporary structure without as much pressure or criticism from the public as they would have received had they been a church in The City. A strong-willed vicar, Gresham Kirkby, along with young and innovative designers took advantage of these facts and produced arguably the “most influential of modern British churches.”1 Influences from the Liturgical Movement are seen throughout the design, particularly in its centralized altar placement.

Original Building History

St. Paul’s, Bow Common, a Church of England church that is within the Province of Canterbury, lies under the direction of the Diocese of London. The original structure was consecrated in October 1858 to accommodate the growing St. Dunstan’s parish (see Image 1).2 The building was financed by William Cotton

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of Leytonstone, then governor of the Bank of England, and was known as “Cotton’s Church.”

The Victorian-style church, designed by Rhode Hawkins, boasted a large spire and stained glass window on the east façade (see Images 2 and 3). The window was designed by G.E. Street. Hawkins also designed the Churches of St. Michael at Paddington and St. Michael at Exeter. A 1908 pamphlet on the church, published for the church’s fiftieth anniversary, stated that the new district originally contained 1,400 residents with only a few houses and cottages to make up the so-called “Common” land. Most of the land at the time consisted of rhubarb fields. During A.B. Cotton’s tenure as the first vicar for the church, the congregation expanded from 1,400 to 14,000.

**WWII History**

The church was destroyed in the last few months of the London Blitz, in May 1941. The East End “suffered most from aerial bombardment [and] had an air of dereliction.” The area surrounding St. Paul’s, Bow Common, according to the District Surveyors of the Metropolitan Boroughs bomb damage maps, was hit with two VI bombs that left the area seriously damaged. The church itself was listed as “damaged beyond repair” while the buildings to the east of the church were totally destroyed.

The East London borough of Stepney, which later became known as Tower Hamlets in 1965, had a mix of residential and light industry in 1941. The area had been experiencing a population decrease as people were moving to the suburbs which was felt as the congregation of St. Paul’s decreased. Between 1901 and 1938

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5 Ibid.
the population of the area had fallen from 298,600 to 200,500. In 1938 the area was known for its industry and had the second highest number of industrial employees and factories throughout London but the area, as with the rest of London, was experiencing a decentralization of industry to the outer boroughs.

**London Reconstruction Plan**

The County of London plan authors, J.H. Forshaw, Architect to the London County Council, and Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Town Planning at the University College, suggested that the small residential areas of Stepney be rezoned for general business and light industry, which would decrease the population in the area even more. In keeping with their overall London plan to reorganize traffic flow with ring roads that connected various precincts together with radial roads, the Stepney roads were also being redesigned to make room for more industry (see Image 4). Churches then, as part of this development (with the City Churches being the exception), were subject to parish reorganization and demolition due to population shifts, street reorganization, and a decrease in housing. Again, street organization played a large role in the demolition of St. Paul’s, Bow Common as it did in the near demolition of Plymouth’s Charles Church.

The London County Council Architect’s Department circulated a confidential list of damaged buildings that contained “features of Architectural and Historical Interest” after the air raid damage was surveyed. St. Bride’s, the previous case study, was listed and the amount of damage cited as “roof gutted, tower damaged by fire” while St. Paul’s, Bow Common was only listed as “damaged.” Although St. Paul’s appears on this list, the fact that so little detail is given supports the idea that St.

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8 Forshaw, 140.
Bride’s (and the other City Churches’) was seen as superior to smaller, parish churches such as St. Paul’s, Bow Common.

In May 1944, the London Improvements and Town Planning Committee submitted a preliminary draft proposal for post-war reconstruction to the Mayor and Commons of London. Their stated intent for the plan was to “see the return of the City at the earliest possible date of those businesses which have been displaced by enemy action, and to assist in every way within our power the rehabilitation of commerce within our walls.”\textsuperscript{10} The authors referred to Abercrombie’s County of London Plan from 1943.\textsuperscript{11} From this plan we see a focus on the City borough of London, the main historic core of the city, and an emphasis on economics without mention of the historic fabric of the city. The City took precedent and the seemingly smaller matters such as St. Paul’s, Bow Common were not discussed as much. As such, the church could implement more drastic changes without the scrutiny of the public.

In addition to the preliminary draft proposal, the Improvements and Town Planning Committee published a 1950 book titled “The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival.” The Minister of Town and Country Planning compiled a list of historic London monuments and while St. Bride’s Church was on it, St. Paul’s, Bow Common was not. The City Churches were emphasized again in this publication without mention of the smaller churches outside the City area proper.

In addition to reestablishing businesses, housing was a major rebuilding concern. In a letter to the Lord Bishop of London from Ernest Bevin of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, Bevin stated “I quite appreciate your anxiety that damaged churches should be given first aid repairs as quickly as possible... It is the


policy of the Government, however, to give priority to the repair of dwelling houses.\textsuperscript{12}

The interest in rebuilding the economic center and housing for London as well as particular attention in the City area churches combined to take the decisions surrounding St. Paul’s, Bow Common out of the public’s eyes and ears. This in turn allowed the church to take on a much more contemporary approach to rebuilding than has been seen yet in this thesis.

**The New St. Paul’s, Bow Common**

Despite what could be seen as a lack of concern for the churches outside the City area, the congregation at St. Paul’s, Bow Common began to plan for their new future. After the church was bombed, the congregation held a service in the ruins and then used the nearby St. Luke’s Church for additional services.\textsuperscript{13} As part of overall parish reorganization due to population shifts and zoning changes within the borough, St. Luke’s was eventually demolished in 1961 and their parish united with St. Paul’s.

From the war damage maps, we see that St. Luke’s was not as badly damaged as St. Paul’s.\textsuperscript{14} Originally, the London Diocesan Reorganization Committee suggested that St. Paul’s be “restored and retained as [a] Parish Church.”\textsuperscript{15} The Committee was created to redraw parish boundaries and consolidate congregations in areas with war damage, multiple parishes or a declining population. St. Luke’s Church, it was suggested, was to be torn down and the parish joined with St. Paul’s, Bow Common.\textsuperscript{16} Author Gordon Barnes noted “as St. Luke’s had not suffered badly during the war surely it would have

\begin{biblist}
\bibitem{12} London. The Bishop of London’s Commission on the City Churches. *Meeting Minutes, October 7, 1941*. Print.
\bibitem{16} Ibid.
\end{biblist}
been more economical to repair it and to use it as the church of the united benefice of St. Luke with St. Paul instead of building, at great cost, a new church of St. Paul’s a short distance down the Burdett Road.” Despite Gordon’s thoughts, St. Luke’s was eventually torn down and a new building proposed for the site of St. Paul’s.

The record on why this occurred is unclear. Reasons for this site decision may have stemmed from St. Paul’s location on a more prominent street corner and the fact that it had a larger site in general. St. Luke’s Church, like St. Paul’s was not considered one of the more historically significant churches in the area, and with declining population only one parish church was deemed necessary for the area. In addition, the fact that Victorian architecture was not seen as significant at the time could have also contributed to the demolition of St. Paul’s.

The War Damage Commission gave £50,000 for the new building with an additional £8,000 for stained glass specifically. The funds stipulated that the new church had to seat a minimum of 500 people. A self-proclaimed “radical” Vicar, Gersham Kirkby, hired the young architect, Robert Maguire to design the new building. The church was designed in 1956 and began construction at the end of 1958. The building was open for worship by the end of 1959 and consecrated in April 1960.

Kirkby, the parish priest for over 40 years, from 1951-1994, would prove to be influential in the rebuilding of St. Paul’s, Bow Common. In a small publication about Kirkby, Kenneth Leech described him as “post-Vatican 2 before it occurred.” Kirkby was called a “pioneer of liturgical renewal” as he began the design process by asking “What will Christian worship be like in the year 2000, and how can we build a church

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17 Barnes, 105-106.
18 Adler, 17.
to reflect this?”

When Kirkby saw a stone altar and wrought-iron corona designed by Keith Murray and his brother, with drawings from Robert Maguire, at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, he asked Murray to help design the new church building. Kirkby was “ready to experiment in the design of his new church, becoming central in the developing partnership between Murray and Maguire.”

Maguire and Murray would continue to work together and design churches such as St. Matthew’s in Birmingham as well as educational buildings like the student village at the University of Surrey at Guildford.

The Liturgical Movement was at the heart of the new church design as well as Kirkby’s ideas about the role of the building in relation to the congregation. In terms of design the movement sought to bring the priest and congregation physically closer around a centralized altar. The Eucharist celebration was seen as the essential function of the church for which everything else became secondary. This idea prompted the centralized plan on which St. Paul’s design was based. The initial design contained no permanent structures, lecterns, or stalls but instead included easily moveable pew benches that were to surround a raised altar in the middle of the space (see Images 5, 6 and 7).

Maguire was to “design and supervise the contract for building the church” while Murray would design and execute £8,000-worth of glass mosaics, which would be paid for in lieu of the stained glass of the bombed church. Eventually the mosaic was designed and executed by Charles Lutyens instead of Murray. Murray had completed preliminary designs, and contacted the firm of Melloni and Moretti in Murano for glass samples and colors. However, in order to commit more time to his and Maguire’s new practice, Murray proposed that painter Charles Lutyens complete

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21 Leech, 3-6.


23 Adler, 17.
the mosaics instead. The mosaic spans the entire length of the church arcade, approximately 800 square feet, which encloses the main altar space. The mosaic is comprised of ten angels and incorporates representations of the four elements of earth, fire, air and water in the corners.

Advised to tone down his initial design proposal, Maguire submitted a refined design intended to gain approval from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). Once the DAC approved the plans, the budget was decreased from £50,000 to £40,000 because St. Luke’s had been overvalued and was reappraised for a lower real estate value.24 Maguire refined the design even more to fit within the new budget by simplifying the external form and removing the spire, along with other features. Author Robert Gibbon noted that Kirbky “and his people arranged and rearranged the furniture until they had the relationships right.”25 Gibbon found it “incredible that Gresham Kirkby was prepared to fight for a revolutionary design by an unknown architect, getting it past a diocesan establishment which included – on the DAC—such gothicist and classicist stalwarts as W.H. Godfrey and A.E. Richardson.”26

A publication titled “The Churches and War Damage” explained the cost associated with church rebuilding:

In assessing the net cost of a plain substituted church regard must be paid to such factors as obsolescence and redundancy and structural defects in the former building. On the other hand, it has to be borne in mind that the payment may represent the cost of a plainer or in some cases a smaller building in lieu of a former church of superior character and appearance… These churches will be those which, after consultation with a representative body of the denomination concerned and after taking into consideration the

24 Adler, 22.


26 Ibid.
requirements of the public interest… the Commission determine ought to be repaired or rebuilt on the same site.\textsuperscript{27}

In 2009 Maguire reflected on the design and the issues surrounding its confirmation by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC):

Andrew Carden and Emil Godfrey gently but firmly warned me that the DAC contained Prof Corfiato and Sir Albert Richardson—both of them extremely vocal classicist—and Walter Godfrey, father of Emil and a convinced Gothic man, and that the one thing these eminent architects found they could agree on was that new churches had to be in a historic style. ‘You have to take account of them, Bob, otherwise you’re out,’ they said, ‘so decide what it is that’s most important to achieve, and go for it, then wrap it up in something you think they might approve.’ The first design was the result. It was as far as I thought I could go, and the ‘most important’ thing was the plan and the internal relationships it and the section and the overhead lighting would encourage. It was essentially designed as an interior, somewhat but not entirely compromised by the external appearance.\textsuperscript{28}

The basic form of the building is a series of cubes set on top of one another. The base cube serves as circulation space and is divided from the main sanctuary space by columns (see Images 8 and 9). The middle cube fills the space inside the columns with a final cube resting on top, right above the centralized altar. The only elevation in the space is the high altar; everything else is on the same plane so “everything and everyone” is on the same level (see Image 10).\textsuperscript{29} To control costs Maguire and Murray used industrial materials for the new building; purple Uxbridge brick, concrete and exposed rolled steel sections were used extensively throughout the space.

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\textsuperscript{28} Maguire, 21.

\textsuperscript{29} Leech, 6.
Past Interpretation

The church soon became known as the first Anglican church to “wholeheartedly embrace the ideas of the Liturgical Movement.” A 1960 *Architectural Review* article stated that the building was “the most important church built in the 20th century.” The design prompted many publications about the role of the church building and church design in general. In contrast to Coventry Cathedral, the design at St. Paul’s was fully committed to the Liturgical Movement and is exemplified in core layout of the sanctuary with the centralized altar.

In 1960, the year the church was completed, author Peter Hammond wrote that the building was “a church of outstanding promise, which may well prove to be something of a landmark in the recreation of a living tradition of church architecture in this country.”

In G.E. Kidder Smith’s Book, “The New Churches of Europe,” published in 1964, the church is noted as “the Church of England’s first substantial essay into post-war church building, and... its first positive statement of the new Liturgical Movement. It must be judged, therefore, as a pioneer, and a brave and somewhat experimental one at that.” The author criticized the interior space, however, noting that the wall behind the altar, with a small chapel behind it, “serves scarcely more than a service and circulation area that as background detracts from the holiness of the sanctuary.” Kidder also commented that the clear glass in the folded roof plans “does not help—clear glass behind an altar rarely does” as lighting and glare for the congregation could

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30 Bingham, 22.
31 Leech, 6.
32 Gibbon, 14.
34 Ibid.
potentially be an issue.\textsuperscript{35} Despite these notes, the author generally thought that the church exerted a “powerful and salutary influence on British religious architecture.”\textsuperscript{36}

In 1965 Maguire and Murray published Modern Churches of the World in which they selected thirty-nine churches that demonstrated architectural quality, which they define as the “aptness at all levels—a ‘nearness to need’, an appropriate place for the activity the building houses… and a relevance to its environment and the kind of culture of which it is the product.”\textsuperscript{37} Along with their own design at St. Paul’s, the authors include Le Corbusier’s Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France; Auguste Perret’s Notre-Dame du Raincy in Paris, France; and Rudolf Schwarz’s St. Anna in Düren, Germany (see Images 11, 12 and 13).

The authors write this about St. Paul’s, Bow Common:

A church is a place for the assembly of the people of God. It is a holy place, consecrated, set apart for this purpose.’While these two linked ideas were the basis of the design, it was developed to fulfill the special needs of the place and a particular Christian community. The church may be seen as a pattern of relationships, which are significant because of their function in the context of an actual liturgy; a liturgy seen as a movement towards the light. In this church the movement is inwards through the dark porch, past the font, through the procession to the place of the Ministry of the Word—synaxis—into the light of the sanctuary. In this the colonnade, and hanging corona of lights around the sanctuary, and the ciborium define the spaces without preventing free movement between them.\textsuperscript{38}

The duo believed that the church building itself was secondary to its function and use. They claim that contemporary churches, a result of both the Liturgical Movement in the Church and the Modern Movement in architecture, would be only “superficially modern in style, completely lacking the essential character of

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\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Maguire, Robert, and Keith Murray, 90.
the architecture of the Modern Movement” if the designers did not connect the use to its design. The duo was outspoken about other new church designs undergoing construction around the country, particularly Basil Spence’s Coventry Cathedral. They saw Spence’s design as shallow since it combined more traditional church design plans with contemporary design aesthetics. Coventry, Maguire and Murray then contend, was a primary example of a “superficially modern” church that lacked the essential contemporary theological ideas yet used modern design aesthetics to try and label the church an overall modern building. A possible reason for the lack of contemporary liturgical designs at Coventry was the fact that it was a cathedral and had to accommodate more ceremonial events than a parish church such as St. Paul’s did.

A 1989 article argues that St. Paul’s, Bow Common did not reach its full potential due to a “lack of relationship between building and changing circumstances.” A decline in population and changing demographics were to blame for the inconsistency, the author argued. This shift caused the writers to observe, “St. Paul’s seemed destined for gentle obscurity.” However, author Robert Gibbons thought that, despite all those things, “Bow Common [had] a voice that still [deserved] to be heard” when talking about its “ability to raise questions about old ideas and challenge the status quo.” Gibbons states, “the overall effect is of a space that draws the worshippers inwards, a place that helps participation and gives room for prayer.”

41 Gibbon, 14.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
The author does, however, criticize, the placement of the sacrament chapel, on the east wall, which was placed according to parish tradition, but “intrudes too much into the central worship space…”\textsuperscript{45} These smaller altars “seem superfluous” as the main idea within the Liturgical Movement was “one church, one altar.”\textsuperscript{46} Overall, the author seems convinced by the design as he states, “Bow Common shows us the result of a partnership between a priest who saw the liturgy developing and designers who were able to carry out and understand the vision of the parish.”\textsuperscript{47} He predicts that the church would become a pilgrimage church for all who were interested in church design.

The church building was designated as a grade II* listed building in March of 1988. The listing only describes the church’s design and does not mention its role in community recovery as a post-war church. As a grade II* building, the church is already seen as inferior to the other case studies presented in this thesis. As a building of “particular importance,” as opposed to grade I buildings that are of “exceptional interest” and internationally important, St. Paul’s, Bow Common’s significance and future preservation could be at risk as its importance is not as highly celebrated as the other case studies.

Current Interpretation

The building continues to provoke various articles and publications regarding its design and role within the greater London reconstruction. Keith Murray passed away in 2005 and in his obituary he is touted as a church designer who “brought clergy and congregations closer together.”\textsuperscript{48} The author of the obituary notes that St. Paul’s

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Gibbon, 15.
“was then a striking new feature, and the economy of the design, together with the use of industrial materials... contrasted with the new Coventry Cathedral, which Murray and Maguire regarded as essentially medieval in concept.” The author states that “their concern was to enable and encourage people to participate in the service” and recalls that former colleague, the architect Ekkehard Weisner “spoke of the buildings Murray helped to create as proving to be of timeless quality, a gift to the modern world... In their modesty and economy of scale they touch people truly, serving their needs at every level.”

A 2009 publication wrote that the church was “a remarkable structure... often referred to locally as ‘the gate of heaven,’ words which are framed in stone outside the baptistery, and visible from the road.” The church celebrated its Golden Jubilee on April 30, 2010. Maguire sent the following statement in regards to the anniversary celebration:

The general atmosphere in the country at the time was one of reconstruction and hope, but even by those standards the events surrounding the new St. Paul’s were not only more forward-looking but revolutionary and daring. With hindsight, we could even say prophetic. Father Gresham Kirkby was using the old parish hall to experiment with what would then have been considered quite revolutionary ways of Eucharistic worship. Unfettered by any constrictions from higher authority, he could move furniture around or throw it out, and generally exercise a freedom in what he and his adventurous parishioners wanted to do, simply because it was a hall and not a proper church.

We were designing a church for a new vision of Eucharistic worship. New, but in fact ancient and original, the inclusive and also the defining act of unity of the whole People of God, the Christian Church. We were trying to build a church which would encourage true relationships in the liturgy—priest to people, people to one another, priest to God and people to God, the worship of the whole Church together. Encourage but not cause; because it is only people coming together with understanding and faith which bring those relationships to life.

Ibid.

Ibid.

In a 2012 publication about Maguire and Murray, author Gerald Adler states the building was the “most famous and significant parish church to be built in Britain in the latter half of the twentieth century.” Adler observes that the design of St. Paul’s, Bow Common is “a ‘functional’ scheme insofar as it has been designed from the inside out... how people, laity and clergy, actually use the space, and indeed ought to use it in order to relate meaningfully to the life of and in the Church, was the thing which governed its design.” Adler argues that the design “crystallised architectural and theological thinking about the form the church should assume in the post-war era. It was a highly symbolic project, the one which would bring the practice critical acclaim.”

Two members of the congregation, Mary McKenzie and Isabel Rowe moved to the Bow Common area in the early 1950s and began attending the church soon after. They sat down with me to discuss the church’s history and future. Both women confirmed that the design was “quite commended” when it was first released and that it continues to be the center of praise within the community. McKenzie reflected that some members of the congregation “probably wanted something old like before because it was a huge, grand church” yet as time went on those who opposed the new design “grew to love the church.” They spoke of the surrounding community commenting that the building didn’t “look like a proper church” but again, as with the congregation, they eventually, “with the years... have come to love this.”

In regards to the plan of the church, Rowe stated that “people who are used to it very much appreciate the fact that it is all level, it’s immediate, it’s here, and when we go up we all surround it... It’s even, it doesn’t matter where you sit... that’s been part

52 Adler, 1.
53 Adler, 22.
54 Adler, 29.
55 McKenzie, Mary, and Isabel Rowe. Personal Interview. 06 Jan 2013.
of it from the inception.” The two also discussed the side chapels that were originally criticized for interfering with the simplicity of the centralized plan. Both women appreciated the additions and did not feel like they detracted from the main theme of the building. “I feel like they are little, slightly set apart, quiet places but they don’t detract,” McKenzie stated; “they are not intrusive.”

When asked about the shift of memory from older to younger generations the two expressed a feeling of inclusiveness with the younger members of the congregation. Neither of them expressed concern about the building losing its World War II heritage and both were excited that the younger generation would indeed remember the past but create their own future within the church.

**Conclusion**

The elements that led to the construction of the new church building stemmed from a combination of leadership within the church and city planning initiatives that tended to exclude churches in neighborhoods outside the historic City area of London. A strong vicar, Gresham Kirkby took full advantage of these facts and advocated for an innovative and contemporary design that fully expressed new ideas of liturgy (see Images 14 and 15).

With this in mind I ask the question, “is the significance layered onto this site post-war recognized today?” I would argue that it is currently, but that it may wane in the future with the shifting of memory from older to younger generations. As Mary McKenzie and Isabel Rowe confirmed, the younger generation is aware of the past but neither of the two women seemed concerned with the idea that the World War II history may not be at the forefront of younger generations’ minds. I think this emerges from the original fact that the church’s future and decision-making was flexible with the times. The future interpretation will include World War II as it was the inception of
the design process but it will also be flexible to accommodate future generations’ ideas about church design. As the history and significance specific to World War II declines, the church will continue to gain recognition as a work of iconic mid-century work of liturgical design and church architecture.

The last two questions of “will the added meaning and significance affect preservation decisions today” and, “is the meaning of the reconstruction relevant today in the shifting of memory from first to second generation” are more difficult to answer. Since the added significance of the building as a post-war reconstructed church may decline in the future I would argue that future preservation decisions will stem from the fact that it is an architectural icon more than a post-war memorial. The preservation challenge will be to make a stronger connection between the building’s influential modernist design and its significance as a post-war rebuilding project to strengthen the overall argument for preservation.
Image 1: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, pre-WWII

Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common
Image 2: St. Paul’s, Bow Common Interior, c1900
Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common
Image 3: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, interior, pre-WWII
Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common
Image 4: Road plan for part of Stepney
County of London Plan

Image 5: Initial St. Paul's, Bow Common Design
Image Courtesy St. Paul's, Bow Common
Image 6: Initial St. Paul’s, Bow Common Design
*Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common*
Image 7: Initial St. Paul’s, Bow Common Design
*Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common*
Image 8: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, site plan
Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common

Image 9: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, interior, 2013
Image Courtesy St. Paul’s, Bow Common
Image 10: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, interior, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 11: Notre-Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, France
Image 12: Notre-Dame du Raincy, Paris, France
Image Courtesy Mary Ann Sullivan, Bluffton University
Image 13: St. Anna, Düren, Germany
Image Courtesy Moritz Bernoulli
Image 14: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, 2013
Jennifer Whisenhunt
Image 15: St. Paul’s, Bow Common, interior, 2013

Jennifer Whisenhunt
Conclusion
Summary

Similar to the city examples in the European Context chapter, the various rebuilding strategies represented in the four case studies exemplify an overall trend of rebuilding that crosses cultural boundaries. All four of the churches presented in this thesis are products of post-war church interpretation and all were at the mercy of factors outside their immediate control, yet each had a different recovery strategy implemented. Whether by rebuilding to historic designs or constructing a contemporary building on the same site, each case study was looking to aid in the overall recovery of its community. The four sites still maintain a link to their surrounding communities yet each has future preservation issues that are unique to the building and that relate directly back to the preservation and reconstruction process.

Plymouth’s decision was ultimately led by the planning goals of the city but was eventually modified to accommodate public opinion. The combined elements that led to St. Bride’s reconstruction stemmed from its affiliation with Wren and the City Churches as well as its association with the printing and journalism industry of Fleet Street. Coventry, as one of the first cities outside of London to experience extensive German bombing, was immediately considered an example of recovery and rebuilding and as such, the cathedral project held an immense amount of patriotic significance for the city and country. These ideas of recovery and reconciliation dominated the designs for the cathedral and are at the heart of the building’s interpretation today. Finally, St. Paul’s, Bow Common is a product of London’s city plan which excluded non-City Churches from discussion, thus leaving the church, and the strong-willed vicar, Gresham Kirkby, to design a contemporary structure without the added pressure or criticism attached to City Churches. The Liturgical Movement and the conflict between the rebuilding schemes and the proposed modern city reconstruction plans also contributed to the various rebuilding techniques presented in this thesis. Overall
then, church reconstruction, despite the various rebuilding schemes, represented a greater goal (as echoed in the city rebuilding plans like Le Havre or Warsaw) of strength and recovery following the destruction of World War II.

**Potential Preservation Issues**

Plymouth, the least invasive of the rebuilding strategies, preserved the church ruins as a war memorial. In Plymouth, the traffic planning, reconstruction and ultimately the economics surrounding a rebuilt modernist city center were at odds with the idea of preserving Charles Church. Despite this, it was the public’s outcry and ongoing debate about the site that led the City Council to relent and decide to leave the church as a memorial. In this case outside factors such as the city plan were thwarted by public opinion; the public and congregation finally had a say in the future of the church, yet this alternative is perhaps the most unsatisfying of all the case studies as the site is inaccessible to the public today. This very factor, however, could either help or hinder the site’s future preservation; as an inaccessible site the area holds little development potential for future building strategies yet, the fact that people cannot easily visit the site could lead to diminished public appreciation for the ruin, which could itself ultimately lead to the site’s demolition.

At Plymouth, the site is rarely acknowledged or visited by the public, yet, as seen with the fence proposal, any plan that would endanger the ruin is met with public outcry. The main concern for this site then is the future conservation of the ruin. Preservationists need to worry about structural damage and the potential preservation battle when the option to demolish the church becomes cheaper than repairing it. I worry that since the site is not in the public’s everyday consciousness because of its inaccessibility, and the older generation is no longer around to provide for the public memory of the site, it may become easier to raze the ruin and redevelop the whole traffic area immediately surrounding it.
On the other hand, the fact that Charles Church is isolated from the rest of the city could prove to be an advantage when discussions of conservation arise. In a monograph published by the RIBA in association with the Twentieth Century Society, published in 1997, it is noted that churches, “because of their relatively low economic worth and apparent plenitude... are more readily given away.” Charles Church, though, sits on a site that would be more difficult to redevelop as it is surrounded with heavy traffic. Developers would look to other sites for improvement before trying to redevelop the middle of a roundabout. The siting of the church, both its positive and negative attributes, could be what saves or ultimately leads to its destruction. In order to maintain the church’s visibility within the community the first step I would suggest would be to allow greater accessibility to the site, whether by a crosswalk or other type of physical connection. The church, without a real context and interpretation, will only diminish in public opinion and value. Providing a physical link to the site could increase its public visibility, and thus support, which would be beneficial when site becomes at risk for demolition.

The next site on the reconstruction scale would be St. Bride’s Church in London. The combined elements that led to St. Bride’s reconstruction stemmed from its affiliation with Wren and the City Churches as well as its association with the printing and journalism industry of Fleet Street and its location in a historic center. Without these connections, the church, in an area with many potentially redundant churches, could have easily been torn down. Unlike St. Paul’s, Bow Common, St. Bride’s, as part of a larger network of City Churches, almost had its fate decided before the debate even began. The building’s association with a great architect and a thriving industry are what made the restoration of St. Bride’s possible. These same associations will continue to influence the site’s future preservation, as there is little chance

London would allow for a building with such connections to be either demolished or altered beyond recognition.

St. Bride’s current funding appeal, Inspire!, calls upon these associations in order to garner financial support for the continued maintenance and cleaning of the church. As the church does not physically express the post-war interpretation (other than the altered interior that one could easily misjudge as being from Wren’s time) the current and future interpretations of the site will continue to be dominated by the larger associations the church holds. As such, the future of the church is relatively secure if the leadership continues to rely on Wren, the City Churches and Fleet Street for support. The connections have proven valuable in the past and there is no reason to believe that the status will change anytime soon. However, future interpretation of the site, specifically its interior, should make greater mention of Allen’s additions during the post-war rebuilding. The site currently does not acknowledge this addition and the added layer of significance could help garner more support for the building, both financially and publicly.

Coventry Cathedral preserved the ruins and built a contemporary church on the adjacent site. Coventry, as one of the first cities to experience a bombing raid outside of London, was immediately exploited as an example of rebuilding and recovery. As a result, the city was forced to undertake the rebuilding of the cathedral very carefully to present a strong and clear message of reconciliation and recovery to the rest of the country and world. Coventry is now known throughout the world for its new cathedral design and its dedication to peace and reconciliation. These ideas of recovery and reconciliation dominated the designs for the cathedral and are at the heart of the building’s interpretation today. The site, as an international symbol will always be preserved and remembered as part of a post-war rebuilding campaign.

Like St. Bride’s future, Coventry’s future is also relatively secure, but for different reasons. Coventry became known around the country and world for its
message of reconciliation and today, the church heavily relies on these ideas for the current interpretation. Since the ruins are physically incorporated with the site the memory of war and destruction will always be represented to future visitors and will support the ideas of peace, strength and recovery for future generations. Thus, both the ruins and Spence’s building will remain for years to come and will continue to be interpreted as a post-war site of recovery and reconciliation. In addition, the artwork within the cathedral may experience an increase of exposure, though not at the expense of the post-war narrative, which is due to remain because of the ruins’ physical presence.

Finally, St. Paul’s, Bow Common is another church located in London, but not a Christopher Wren City Church. The elements that led to the construction of this new building stemmed from a combination of leadership within the church and city planning initiatives that tended to exclude neighborhoods outside the historic City area. This lack of attention allowed St. Paul’s architects to design a contemporary structure without the added pressure or criticism attached to City Churches. A strong-willed vicar, Gresham Kirkby, along with young and innovative designers took advantage of these facts and produced one of the “most influential of modern British churches.”² The church’s recognition will continue to be rooted in its association with modern architecture as opposed to a post-war rebuilding symbol.

The current and future interpretation of the building will always mention post-war rebuilding as that was the start of the new church’s life, but future preservation issues will stem more from the well-known design of the church than the post-war symbolism aspect. As a result, the building may be subject to risk as design aesthetics and public taste changes. The Twentieth Century Society noted that the churches “are becoming increasingly vulnerable to changes in taste and shortage of money.”³ With a

² Bingham, 22.
³ Bingham, 2.
dwindling congregation, the church’s future lies with modern architecture enthusiasts who will fight against any potential redevelopment plans.

Conclusion

Overall, churches are still an important part of the England community. Forty-five percent of the Grade I listed buildings in England are Church of England church buildings which goes to show the great level of appreciation for the buildings. In addition, the number of visitors is still on the high as St. Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral are all “among the top visitor attractions in the UK.” A March 2013 ChurchCare article states that cathedrals add £350 million per year to the tourism industry of the nation. Janet Gough, Director of Church and Cathedral Buildings for the Church of England stated that the churches and cathedrals tell of “unparalleled glories and a history of architecture” as well as serving the primary function of “worship and mission” and as a center for community use. These numbers tell us that the buildings, as a whole, are still being visited regularly and still serve a need for the local and tourist populations.

With this in mind, it is reasonable to assume that the future of all these churches is safe as, overall, the country values historic church architecture, whether for its architectural or historical value. Each site and surrounding community must always be cognizant of the potential dangers to the site, whether it is the site’s inaccessibility or lack of modern architecture enthusiasts ready to battle for the protection of the church.

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Post-War Rebuilding Timeline
Introduction


European Context


**Charles Church, Plymouth**


____. Barbara. Personal Interview. 11 Jan 2013.


**St. Bride’s Church, London**


Coventry Cathedral, Coventry


Campbell, Louise. Personal Interview. 9 Jan 2013.


“Various.” *Cycling Times,* n. pag. Print.


St. Paul’s, Bow Common, London


McKenzie, Mary, and Isabel Rowe. Personal Interview. 06 Jan 2013.


Conclusion

