

WREN, PEARCE, AND ST MARY'S: INGESTRE PARISH CHURCH AND ITS ROOFS

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This paper was prompted by a survey of the roofs over the nave, aisles and chancel of St Mary's church at Ingestre (Staffordshire) before and during a restoration programme. The survey re-opened the questions of who designed and built the church, and of how the craftsmen involved could be secured to work on the building at a time when the Fire of London had created a high demand for their skills in the capital. Commissioned by Walter Chetwynd, St Mary's was built between 1672 and 1676. A discussion of the circumstantial evidence that Sir Christopher Wren may have been the architect, along with the possibility that Edward Pearce might have been available to control the work on site, reflects some of the complexities of the mid 17th-century building industry. The roof carpentry and metal fixings are described, and the possible layout of the original pews is discussed.

Ingestre Church is approximately five kilometres (three miles) east of Stafford at NGR SJ976246. The numerous country estates that clustered nearby, at the heart of Staffordshire's central lowland, might have been more than incidental to the design of a church in the new classical style at Ingestre in the 17th century, as they provided a pool of nobility and gentry to impress. The church was built adjacent to the client's own Ingestre Hall, whilst Tixall Hall (home of the Astons) was less than two kilometres (one and a quarter miles) to the south, Colwich Hall (for the Wolseleys) was close by to the south-east, Weston Hall (the Staffords), Sandon Park (Gerards), and Chartley (Ferrers) lie further away to the north and east. The nearby Shugborough estate was in the hands of the (then nouveaux riches) Ansons.

Unlike most of Christopher Wren's City churches, Ingestre parish church has largely escaped the deprivations of demolition, structural adaptation at the hands of later architects, and war damage. Arguably, St Mary's exceeds the quality of Wren's early commission at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and is the equal of one of his best works there - Emmanuel College Chapel. What the Ingestre plaster ceilings lack in refinement they gain in unrestrained exuberance, especially in the nave (Fig. 1). The Cambridge chapels were fitted out to suit college life, but they have been subject to alterations, and many of the remaining churches in London have also long lost their original fittings. The nave at Ingestre, however, is 'a room of blissful harmony' (Pevsner 1974, 155), one of the few places left where Restoration architecture, furnishings, and plasterwork can all be seen as a piece in a parish church that has been attributed to Wren. St Mary's has not entirely escaped alteration, as it now houses some later monuments and stained glass - but they are additions rather than subtractions. The height of the pews has been reduced, and additional matching pews have been inserted (see below); some of the plasterwork on the chancel ceiling might have been adapted, and part of the north aisle ceiling had to be reinstated in 1933-34, but the mouldings were made to match the old work (IPF 23 Jan. 1934).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

In 1677 the church comprised a west tower, nave with two aisles, and a chancel (Fig. 2); the vestry in the angle between the chancel and the south aisle (not shown on the plan in this paper) was added in 1908 (LRO, B/C/12/1/258, 14 Feb. 1908). Built of Hollington stone, the church is very compact, appreciated more for the quality of its architecture than its scale. The tower is of three stages, the lowest of which has rusticated corners and a low plinth which is broken by the three-quarter-round Tuscan columns framing the west doorway. The columns carry the triangular pediment, which rises into the second stage, and both the pediment and the clock above it are framed by garlands. The lower moulded string continues as the eaves cornice round the aisles and the chancel, while the upper returns around the eaves of the nave, thereby unifying the entire composition. There is a belfry window with a semi-circular head on each side of the tower, topped by another moulded cornice and an open balustrade with urns at each corner. Four windows on each side of the aisles and one on each side of the chancel all have semi-circular heads rising to foliate volutes, which support the cornice. The east window in the chancel is of three stepped lights with semi-circular heads, the central light breaking into the tympanum. The four windows along each side of the clerestory, and one on each side of the tower, are all circular.



Fig. 1 Detail of nave ceiling

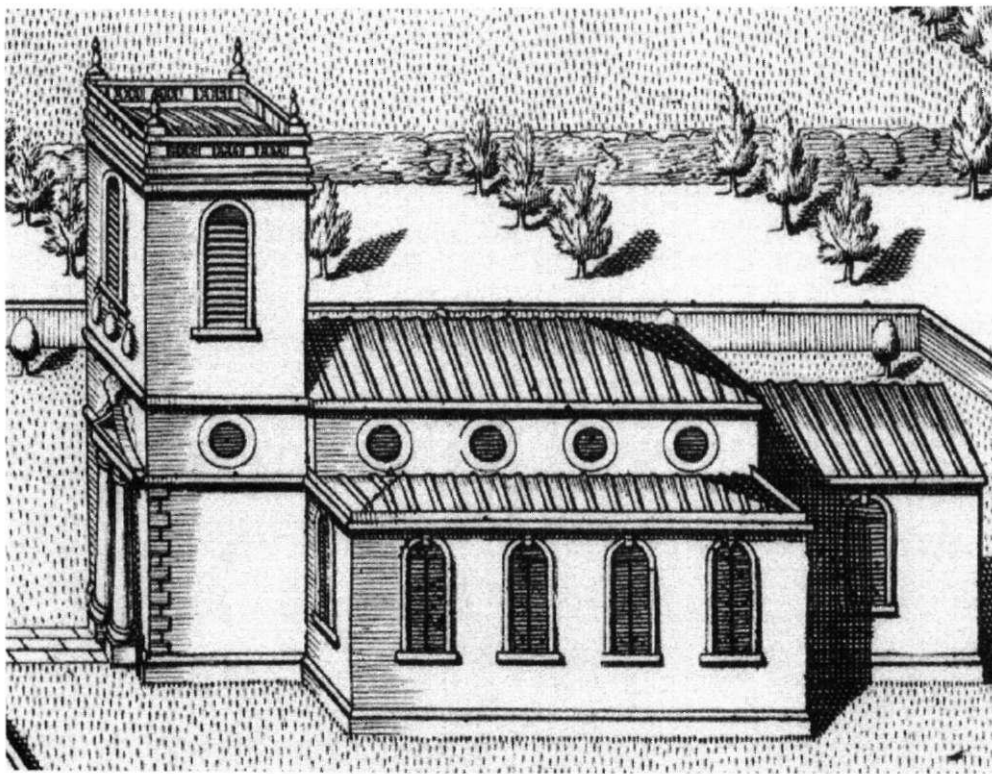


Fig. 2 Enlarged portion from Burghers' print of Ingestre Hall and Church (1686)

Although the tower is square externally, the lobby inside is round, with wooden benches on both sides. In the nave, four Tuscan shafts on tall pedestals are clustered to form the piers that support the four-bay arcade. Above the clerestory windows there is an ornate cornice with festoons nodding towards the three main ceiling panels, which are rectangular at each end and oval at the centre. The semi-circular chancel arch frames a wooden screen with Corinthian columns and an elaborate entablature, topped by a royal coat of arms.

The plan geometry and the overall proportions of Ingestre church are masterly (Figs 2-4). The building was set out on a five-foot interval grid. The outer faces of the north and south walls of the 20-foot-square tower were set on the same grid-lines as the centres of the nave arcades and those of the chancel north and south walls. The nave and its aisles together form a square, the length of the nave being twice its width, and each aisle being half the width of the nave. Measuring from the floor to the middle of the tiebeam, the nave is 30 feet tall - *IV*2 times its width, and in the arcades the tops of the cornices are at half the height of the nave. Each aisle is 20 feet tall - half its length and twice its width. If the thickness of the screen is excluded, and the dimensions are taken to the centre of each wall, the chancel was set out on a grid of 25 by 20 feet.

WHO DESIGNED ST MARY'S CHURCH?

So much has been written about Christopher Wren and his architecture that some might wonder how much more can usefully be said, but the purpose of this part of the paper is to reconsider the possibility of his authorship of the designs for St Mary's church at Ingestre in the light of what is known of its dates of commission, construction, and dedication. In order to add substance to what is already in print, it will not be sufficient merely to proffer another opinion about the marked similarities in the style and proportions of Ingestre with some of Wren's City churches, but while vestry minutes and building accounts provide reliable information on construction programmes, even these leave room for uncertainty about the exact stages reached at any given time. Nevertheless, if questions of authorship and primacy are to be considered, the dates of construction at Ingestre must be set alongside those London churches for which Wren was directly responsible.

In 1942 a set of drawings and photographs was published that illustrated the general character and undoubted quality of St Mary's church, along with some of its fixtures and fittings, and it was argued on stylistic grounds that the building was designed by Wren (Wren Soc 19, 1942, plates 16-23). While few have directly opposed the attribution, levels of confidence vary, and despite its architectural significance no detailed study of the building has appeared in print. In the absence of a contract or building accounts, the attributions to Wren have focused primarily upon the stylistic evidence. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner was sufficiently persuaded of Wren's involvement: 'in the case of St Mary the exquisite quality speaks unequivocally' (1974, 155). Whether by Wren or not, Alec Clifton-Taylor described it as 'the most distinguished country church in England of the late Stuart period' (1974, 31). Similarly, Marcus Whiffen considered that Ingestre church is almost as ornate as the richest of Wren's London churches, and incomparably the most elaborate country church of its time' (1947-8, 15).¹ Sir Howard Colvin listed Ingestre as one of Wren's works, but suggested that 'the church could have been designed by someone else closely connected with Wren's office' (1995, 1092).

Several Staffordshire historians recognised Walter Chetwynd as the benefactor who funded the construction of St Mary's, but few considered who might have been the architect (Harwood 1820, 57; Garner 1844, 111; Masefield 1910, 153). In their passing reference to the church, Michael Greenslade and Denis Stuart followed others who had suggested that Wren was responsible (1984, 47), while Henry Thorold observed more cautiously that 'definite proof is lacking' (1977, 111). Ann Bayliss concluded that Wren's role in St. Mary's might have been very small, if any (1999, 3).

The demolition of the medieval church at Ingestre and the construction of its successor on a different site was promoted and funded by Walter Chetwynd, who endowed the new building with the tithes of Hopton. Born in 1633, Chetwynd married Ann Bagot, the daughter of Sir Edward Bagot of Blithfield, and was MP for Stafford in 1674, 1679 and again in 1685 (SHC 4th series 11, 1982, 38-42). He died in London in 1693 but was buried at Ingestre (SHC new series 12, 1909, 4). Family records were lost during a fire that destroyed most of Ingestre Hall in 1882, and were it not for that event the papers concerning the commissioning and construction of the church might have survived

1 This is a somewhat back-handed compliment, as it might be argued that anything more elaborate was too ornate.

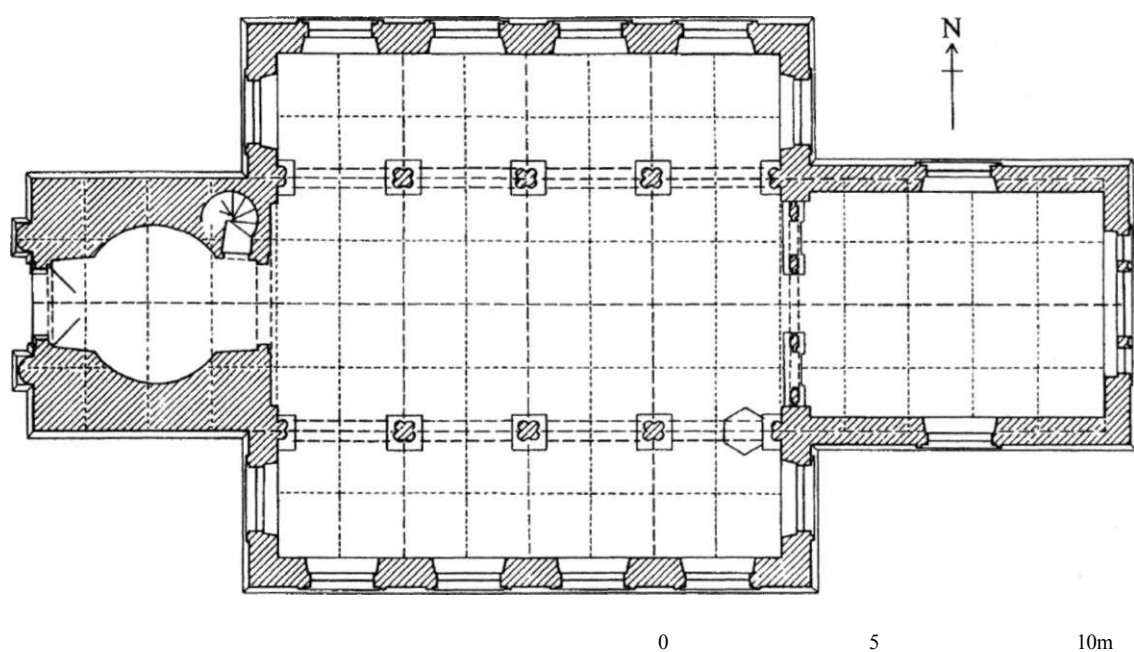


Fig. 3 Plan of church set against a 5 feet interval grid

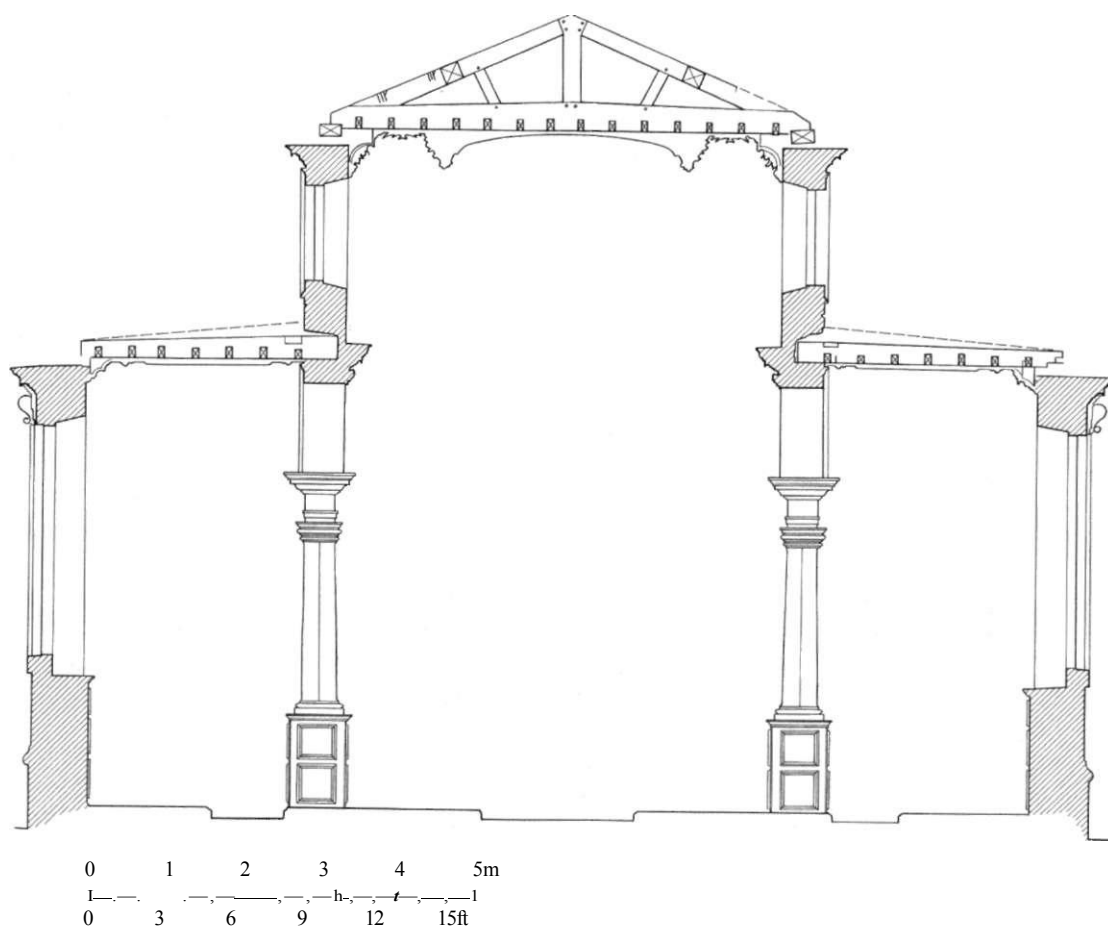


Fig. 4 Section of nave and aisles

(Shaw 1798, vi). It is possible only to speculate as to how Chetwynd might have encountered Wren, or commissioned him to design a Staffordshire church, but the most likely connection was through their mutual acquaintance, the Oxfordshire and Staffordshire historian Dr Robert Plot, whom Chetwynd - an antiquary himself - had encouraged to write his *Natural History of Staffordshire* (Shaw 1798, vi). In Oxford Plot became the first keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, and his first degree was awarded in the same year as Wren secured his doctorate (Foster 1891, 3, 1172; 4, 1684). The two men certainly stayed in touch in London, as for example on 9 October 1677, when Wren's colleague Robert Hooke recorded in his diary - 'Met Dr Plot with him to Sir Chr. Wren' (Wren Soc 29, 1942, 57). Chetwynd was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in January 1678 (SHC new series 12, 1909, 4), when Plot was Secretary and Wren was President (Whiffen 1947-8, 15).

The most convincing source linking Wren with Chetwynd and the design of St Mary's church is an undated elevation drawing inscribed in Wren's hand 'Mr Chetwin's Tower' (V&A E.403-1951).² Although Wren's lantern was never built, the drawing indicates that he had some connection with the church or Chetwynd (Fig. 5). In any case, there are other grounds upon which to base the argument that someone from Wren's practice was responsible for Ingestre. Indeed, when both the stylistic evidence and the timing of the broadly contemporary projects in London and Ingestre are considered in tandem, circumstantial though it is, the weight of evidence suggests that it was Wren, rather than a colleague, who designed St Mary's. The suggestion arises largely out of a comparison of the dates of the known stages of development of St Mary's with those of St Bride Fleet Street, which has strikingly similar arcades and other architectural characteristics (see below).

In 1672 Walter Chetwynd petitioned the archbishop of Canterbury (Gilbert Sheldon) for consent to demolish the old church, which 'stood very incommodiously, and was so ruinous, that it must be better to rebuild, than repair it' (Plot 1686, 297). Chetwynd might have petitioned the archbishop directly rather than addressing his application to the diocesan bishop Thomas Wood as the latter is now notorious for his inattention to his duties (VCH 3, 1970, 61), but he had been made bishop only in the previous year so his laxity might not have been the primary consideration. If Chetwynd had indeed employed Wren as his architect it might have been highly beneficial to petition the archbishop directly as since 1663 the post had been held by Gilbert Sheldon. Sheldon had been master of All Souls, Wren's college at Oxford, before becoming the highly influential dean of the Chapel Royal and bishop of London. One of the archbishop's associates was Wren's uncle, Bishop Matthew Wren, and in the same year as he became Archbishop Sheldon had appointed Christopher to design what is now known as the Sheldonian Theatre (Jardine 2002, 215, 221-2 and *passim*). On 2 May 1672 the archbishop appointed commissioners to advise on the Ingestre petition, and on 22 July they 'judged it rather fit to be pull'd down and wholly demolished, than repaired.' The old church was probably west of the hall (Poole 1976), but the commissioners agreed that the new site to the east proposed by Chetwynd 'was a more fit and congruous place.' He had to wait for the faculty until April 1673, but as Plot recorded, the church was 'wholly finisht' in 1676, and in August 1677 it was consecrated by Bishop Wood. Chetwynd might have waited for the faculty of 1673 before he commissioned a design for the new building, but the rapid progress of the scheme suggests that motivated by the twin desires of removing the church and its congregation from next to his house, and of promoting the new classical style of architecture, he might have secured a set of drawings in or before 1672.

Plot described the church in detail and the print of the church in his book must have been made very soon after its consecration (Fig. 2). It was 'not great, but uniform and elegant; the outwalls being all of squared free-stone, with a well proportioned Tower at the west end, of the same; adorn'd round the top with rail and ballister, and flowerpots at each corner. The Chancel within paved throughout with black and white marble; the Windows illustrated with the Armes and matches of the Chetwynds in painted glass; and the Ceilings with the same in Fretwork' (Plot 1686, plate 26 facing p. 299). Plot described no other Staffordshire church in such detail, but then no other church had been solely funded by the man who was also promoting the author. Although he was generous with praise for the patron he failed to mention the architect, and it has been suggested that the architect's name was omitted from Plot's account because it was partly written by Wren himself (Wren Soc 19, 1942, 57).

One of the underlying reservations about Wren's authorship of the designs for Ingestre arises out of the conviction that he was too pre-occupied with challenges in the capital to be concerned with

2 I am grateful to Marian Owen for this reference.

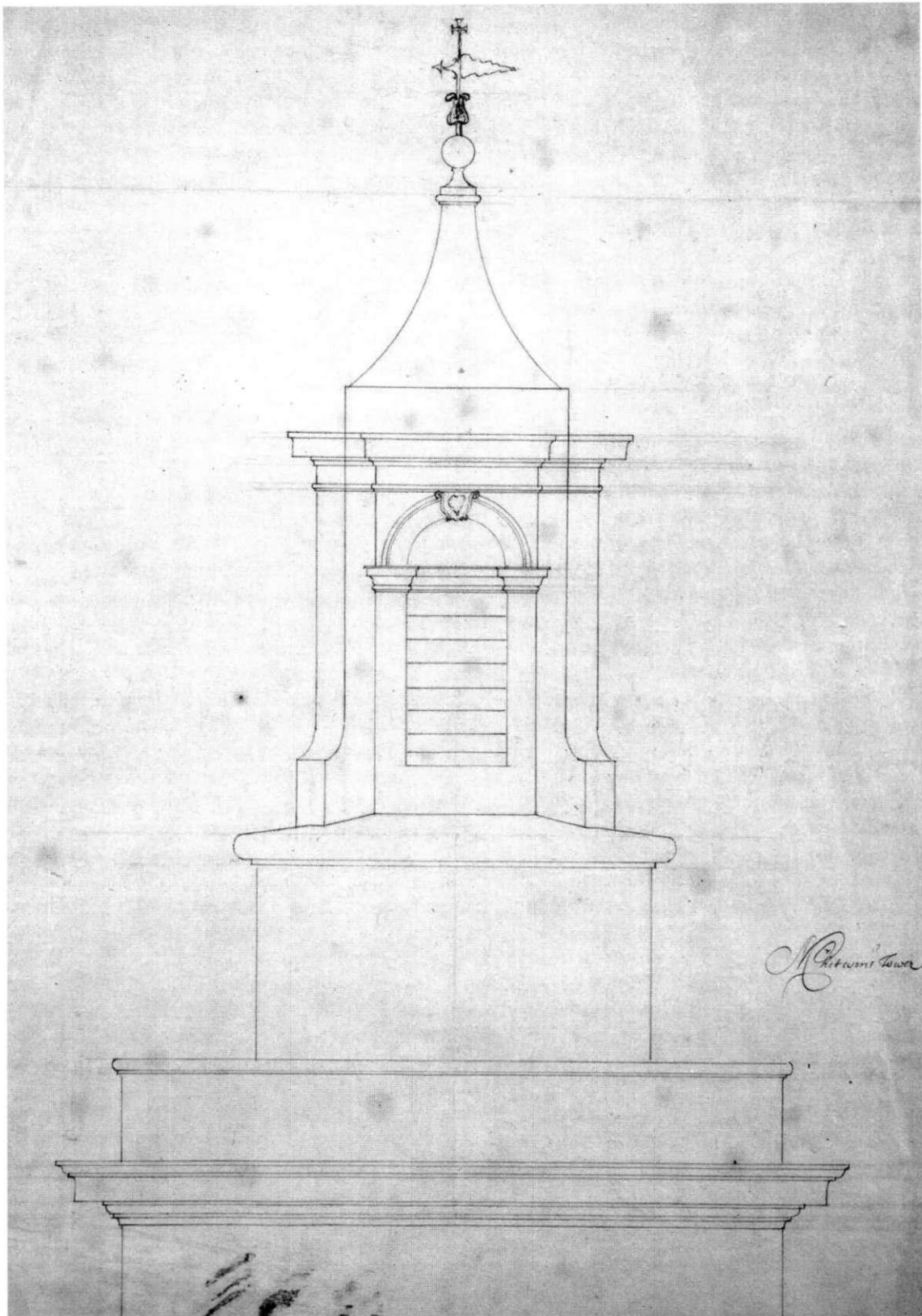


Fig. 5 Drawing of 'Mr Chetwin's tower' (Victoria and Albert Museum)

a church adjoining a provincial country house; but this may derive from a somewhat simplistic view of his profession, and of the building industry in the 17th century. Wren controlled a major architectural practice, and much of what has been attributed to him came from the pens of his colleagues, including Robert Hooke, some of whose drawings were signed by Wren, plausibly to indicate his approval of the work. Moreover, as Sir Howard Colvin has observed, the designing of more than fifty churches was clearly beyond the capacity of one man. In the absence of documentary proof of authorship the designs for Ingestre can be tentatively assigned to a particular individual or practice only if the stylistic evidence is considered in tandem with the known sequence of the various building programmes.

It has been suggested that for the first five years of the London building campaign in the aftermath of the Great Fire the task of designing new churches for the City was divided into areas of responsibility, with Wren's colleagues Hooke and Woodroffe each taking a sector. According to that thesis, a large number of churches in the east and north of the city can be attributed to Hooke, but fewer churches were assigned to Wren because he had so many other duties (Jeffery 1996, 96). Those for which Wren had any direct responsibility include St Mary-le-Bow, where construction began in 1670, and St Bride Fleet Street and St Stephen Walbrook, both begun in 1672 (Jeffery 1996, 222¹, 283¹, 338). The plan of the first of these churches was constrained by its site, while the third incorporated a dome over the nave arcade, but St Bride Fleet Street is a particularly striking parallel with Ingestre.

St Bride and St Mary's Ingestre are almost exactly contemporary, and they contain many strong similarities which can hardly be explained as coincidence. Both churches have a basilican plan, and both have square west towers containing circular lobbies. The north and south walls of both towers are on exactly the centre-line of the nave arcades, and both naves are double the width of the aisles. The nave clerestories are pierced by identical circular windows. The external faces of the walls of both churches are relatively plain, while the interiors are elaborately decorated. The most remarkable similarity, however, is in the design of the piers in the nave arcades. At Ingestre, they are composed of four clustered shafts in Tuscan style, whereas those in St Bride are of paired Tuscan shafts. In both churches, the columns stand on tall bases, and both arcades have round arches as opposed to flat entablatures. More than any other characteristic, it is the design of the piers in the nave arcades that marks out Ingestre as the work of Wren, or of someone directly influenced by him. For the present purpose, some of the published dates for the construction programme at St Bride must be treated with caution. Colvin gives 1671-78 for the main body of the church (1995, 1095), while Whinney suggests 1670-84 for the entire project (1971, 52 and 204). Taken at face value, this would imply that Ingestre was completed before the larger St Bride, where the tower was apparently planned from the outset but not completed until *c.* 1703. The first contract for work on the body of St Bride is dated 25 February 1670/1; the shell was essentially complete by 1674, and the church was reopened for worship in December of that year (Jeffery 1996, 224). Accordingly, it is not simply the employment of particular architectural motifs, or the fine proportions that mark out St Mary's as a Wren church (see below), but also the date of the building work, which was broadly contemporary with St Bride's. Although piers formed out of clustered Doric shafts had already been employed in Holland, Wren was the first to use them in an English church, and the construction of the larger St Bride proceeded just a few months in advance of the work at Ingestre.

Most of the other early City church projects that Wren retained to design himself were not under construction until Ingestre was complete, but they too are useful for stylistic comparison. Each of them has a basilican plan, and the use of small domes at St Mary and St Bride is paralleled at St Andrew Holborn, which was constructed in 1684-86, and in St Clement Danes. The round-headed windows at Ingestre have keystones with scrolls which connect with the eaves, exactly like those at St James Piccadilly (where the foundation stone was laid in April 1676), and St Andrew Holborn (Jeffery 1996, 85, 250). Wren habitually used the Corinthian and Composite orders, and incorporated a moulding across the top of the pilaster shafts, making the zone of the capitals into a continuous false frieze (Downes 1988, 42). He also decorated his false friezes with swags, as on the facade of Emmanuel College, and although this device does not appear on the exterior elevations at Ingestre, it was employed on the chancel screen in the same manner as on the altar screen at St Stephen Walbrook (Jeffery 1996, 159). Kerry Downes has highlighted the way in which weight in many of Wren's buildings was saved by making the external roof and internal wood and plaster vaulting as a single integral construction (1988, 57) - a characteristic of Ingestre that was noted during the repairs that are described below.

If the chronological and stylistic evidence is accepted as evidence that Wren could have been the architect of St Mary's church the extension of that argument is that others of his acquaintance did not design it. Wren's assistant and later colleague Nicholas Hawksmoor drew up an unexecuted scheme for Ingestre Hall in c. 1688 (SRO, D. (W.) 1855/4 and D.1006/1-4); but as he was only about 12 years old when work began on the church he must be ruled out as its architect (Downes 1969, 24-5). Another person who had close connections with Wren, and who worked near Ingestre, was Sir William Wilson, who in 1670 worked as a carver at Sudbury Hall (Derbs.) only 12 miles east of Ingestre and around 1671 executed the Wilbraham monuments in nearby Weston church. His other work in the midlands includes designs for the Free School at Appleby (Leics.) and St Mary's church at Warwick, where he was in competition with Wren. However, not all of Wilson's work was quite in the vanguard of new taste: his mullioned and transomed windows of c. 1694 at Appleby have 'the appearance of a Jacobean structure of the first half of the 17th century' (Colvin 1995, 1063¹). Wilson reputedly carved the 'very bad statue of King Charles IF at Lichfield Cathedral (Shaw 1798, 244), where he also worked on the roofs, employing similar new technology to that at Ingestre (Hewett 1985, 124, 222-3). Although this might mark him out as a local candidate for some kind of role at Ingestre, his other commissions lack the refinement of St Mary's church.

WHO SUPERVISED THE CONSTRUCTION OF ST MARY'S CHURCH?

It is one thing for the circumstantial evidence outlined above to add weight to the argument that Wren, or at least a colleague working under his close supervision, was responsible for the design of St Mary's, but quite another to identify who might have supervised its construction, or executed any of the carvings. As in the City churches, the masonry, the carpentry, the interior fittings, and the plasterwork at Ingestre could have been devised and undertaken by a number of craftsmen. The wood carving at Ingestre has been attributed to Grinling Gibbons,³ but even if he was involved in the work there, he would not have been the project manager. The most plausible candidate for this role was Edward Pearce (or Pierce), who 'was much employed by Sr Chr. Wren in his carvings and designs' (Colvin 1995, 754), and who worked on a tightly knit group of contracts in the immediate area, including his best architectural commission in Lichfield (see below). Pearce might not have designed Ingestre church, and whether he worked there is unproven, but the circumstantial evidence of his involvement as a site manager and carver is worth reviewing, as an early contract there might explain how he came to be employed on others in the vicinity and also it throws light upon the general background against which St Mary's was built. The discussion illustrates, in particular, how ambitious building projects could be undertaken in provincial counties in the face of competition for craftsmen from the City, and, in general, the relative sophistication of the 17th-century building industry.

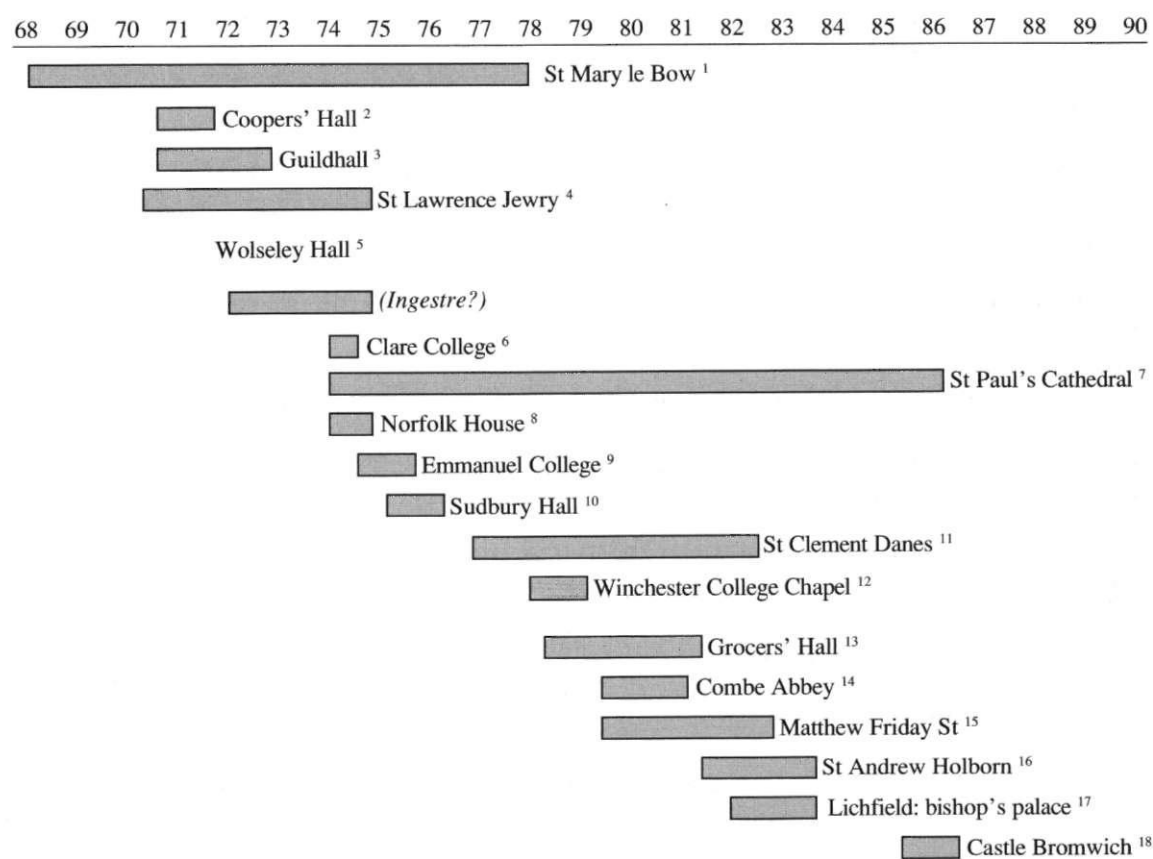
Edward Pearce is remembered primarily for his busts of Oliver Cromwell and Sir Christopher Wren, now in the Ashmolean Museum, that of Wren being described as the best 17th-century sculpture from an English hand (Whinney and Millar 1957, 255). Pearce was internationally regarded, having his portrait, amongst those of Palladio, Raphael, Inigo Jones and others, painted onto the wall of a room in Rome, as described by the writer John Talman.⁴ He has been attributed with carvings in stone of busts, gate piers, garden ornaments and pediments, and in wood of domestic panelling, as well as church fixtures and fittings (Gunnis 1968, 297).

In 1665 Pearce was working as a mason for the architect Sir Roger Pratt at Horseheath (Colvin 1995, 754), and as this took him close to Cambridge it might have been this contract that first brought him to Wren's attention. Although Wren designed the chapel for Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where building work began in 1668, it was Pearce, with John Oliver, who designed the fittings (Downes 1988, 12). Much of the money for the work at Emmanuel College was supplied by its master, William Sancroft, who was also Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, and later Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was Sancroft who appointed Pearce as the architect of the Bishop's Palace in Lichfield (Tringham 1987, 57-63).

3 The suggestion was made in a letter to the Revd A Stanley Towlson, dated 28 March 1955, from Kirkland Bridge Church Restorations Ltd of Heath Street, London (IPF 1953-1959).

4 John Talman (1677-1726) was an antiquary and art collector: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (website text).

The pattern that emerges from a review of his career between 1668 and 1690 (Table 1) shows that while Pearce maintained a close involvement with the rebuilding of the City churches and St Paul's Cathedral, he worked simultaneously on other contracts, and to achieve this he must have directed the work of others. He enjoyed the patronage of a number of influential clients, some of them being prepared to wait upon his expertise, and the records of his work on the Bishop's Palace at Lichfield are particularly helpful as a guide to the way that he could run simultaneous schemes in different places. They are worth summarising as it might reflect general practice in the 17th-century building industry. Pearce visited first Lichfield and Eccleshall (where the bishop had another

Table 1 Pearce's building contracts 1668–90

1 Jeffery (1996), 284; 2 Gunnis (1968), 296; 3 Colvin (1995), 754; 4 Jeffery (1996), 255; 5 Colvin (1995), 754; 6 Willis and Clark i (1886), 104; 7 Wren Soc x, 54; 8 Colvin (1995), 754; 9 Willis and Clark ii (1886), 707; 10 Colvin (1995), 754; 11 Jeffery (1996), 230; 12 Colvin (1995), 754; 13 Gunnis (1968), 296; 14 Colvin (1995), 754; 15 Jeffery (1996), 296; 16 Jeffery (1996), 197–199; 17 Tringham (1987), 57; 18 Gunnis (1968), 296.

residence) from 9-18 September 1685. On 10 April 1686 the Dean of Lichfield wrote of Pearce : 'The year spends, the masons and carpenters are unsatisfied, and all things cool for want of him...' Pearce returned to Lichfield on 4 May, to stay for 28 days, and rapid progress followed. During the course of the two-year project, however, Pearce spent a total of only three months in the area. Most of the construction work was done by others, although he reserved for himself the role of sculptor for the cartouche bearing the diocesan arms in the pediment over the front doorway, for which he charged £20 (Tringham 1987, 57-62). His renown as a sculptor and wood-carver would lead to commissions from the Crown (Colvin 1976, 171; 1982, 147), but probably for most of his career, his primary income was derived from building construction.

The accounts for the rebuilding of St Lawrence Jewry show why Pearce, and presumably others in his situation, found it necessary to run several contracts simultaneously. The accounts tend to be written in blocks all in the same hand, suggesting that a clerk was responsible for recording works reported or invoiced to him. The recorded payments, written in a different hand, and Pearce's acknowledgement of receipt, sometimes in the margin, suggest that he was paid for the work of a team, and that sometimes he was obliged to wait for a considerable time for remuneration. Numerous items totalling several thousand pounds submitted by him from 1675 were not settled until 16 August 1681 - a major financial commitment that was presumably serviced by loans (Guildhall, MS 25539/2, ff. 169b-174a). Plausibly, those shorter-term contracts that he accepted elsewhere would have been necessary to help to pay interest, or otherwise to provide an income during the interim.

The possibility that Pearce might have been employed at Ingestre is admittedly based upon circumstantial evidence, but it is compelling nonetheless. His work at the Guildhall was complete by 1673, after which, apart from the stonemasonry at St Lawrence Jewry and St Mary-le-Bow, there was a gap in the record of his additional contracts until 1676, when Sudbury Hall, Norfolk House, and Emmanuel College were being built. That three-year gap coincides with the period when the church at Ingestre was under construction, and if Pearce worked there it might explain how he obtained so many other subsequent contracts in the area, given that the bulk of his work was in London. The contracts in and around Cambridge no doubt arose out of his work with Pratt and Wren, whilst his work at Combe Abbey (Warws.) and Hampstead Marshall (Berks.) were at the behest of William Winde, who was also acquainted with both Wren and Pratt (Colvin 1995, 1066). Apart from Winchester, most of his other architectural and building contracts were close to Ingestre: Sudbury Hall is only 12 miles to the north-east, and Lichfield is 12 miles to the south-east. Writing of Wolseley Hall, a mere three miles from Ingestre, Plot was fulsome in his praise: 'But of all the Joyners work I met with in this County, there is none comparable to that of the new dining room at Sr Charles Wolseley's ... the carved work whereof is also very good, both done by one Pierce' (1686, 383). It is a pity that, at Wolseley, Plot elected to credit both the client and his joiner, while only the former was mentioned at Ingestre.

The absence of a mason from one contract does not prove his presence on another, but equally, as shown in Table 1, his involvement elsewhere would not demonstrate that Pearce was unavailable for work on St Mary's church. In view of his other projects in the immediate vicinity, some of them obtained in his own right rather than as a sub-contractor, Pearce is the prime candidate as the site manager and as a carver at Ingestre, especially as Wren employed him often. Wren's designs for St Clement Danes are undated, but when the rebuilding programme commenced in 1679 Edward Pearce was listed in the accounts both as a mason and as a carver, then in 1684-86 he worked in the same roles for Wren at St Andrew Holborn, and Pearce was also one of thirteen master-masons employed at St Paul's Cathedral (Jeffery 1996, 198, 229-231, 352). At Ingestre, the stonemasonry, the quality of the garlands, and the superb joinery and carving of the chancel screen and the pulpit, all point to the involvement of someone of Pearce's calibre. Whoever supervised the construction work, it is clear from the above discussion that some of the best 17th-century builders and carvers could manage site-works in various locations, even in the wake of the Fire of London.

THE ROOFS

The catalyst for this paper was a detailed survey of the roof timbers that was primarily intended to inform decisions about repairs and conservation, but the survey also provided opportunities to analyse three types of roof structure over the nave, aisles, and chancel, and to discuss them against the general background of Restoration period carpentry. The nave roof is remarkably similar to that on Wren's model for Pembroke College, Cambridge (Wren Soc 5, 1928, plate xi), and the aisle

roofs bear comparison with parallels in several London churches of the same period. In the chancel roof, the experimental nature of the main trusses and the type of metal fixings employed again point to Wren or someone from his office as the author of the designs.

The roofs remained largely intact until leaks noticed in 1927 led to works under a faculty granted 9 March 1933, and in 1966 further fabric failures were noted. Both episodes of repairs included the replacement of some of the common rafters and other timbers, as described in the full technical report (Meeson 2003). To inform conservation decisions, the roof survey and report included a catalogue of every structural timber, and discriminated between the demonstrably primary elements and the later replacements made during repairs, but in the following analysis, attention is focused mainly upon the substantive surviving portions of the primary roofs.

The nave roof

The four-bay roof of the nave has a pitch of *c.* 22*W*, and measured at eaves level it has an internal length of 11.74m (38ft 6ins) and an internal span of 5.57m (18ft 3ins); it adjoins the tower to the west, but the east end, overlooking the chancel, is hipped (Fig. 6).

Including the moulded cornice, the top of the nave wall along the eaves is *c.* 0.8m wide, but over the chancel-arch it is *c.* 0.9m wide. The construction of the roof commenced with the careful setting out of the wall plates *c.* 0.15m from the inside edges of the walls.⁵ The plates were formed out of short lengths of oak of *c.* 290 x 170mm scantling and laid in flat section; the individual timbers are linked by face-halved scarf joints, pegged through their outer faces. Some of the wall plates have been replaced, but the later timbers are readily distinguishable as they are joined to their counterparts by side-halved scarf joints and fixed with machine-made metal bolts. All of the primary wall plates were laid onto thin timber pads so that their soffits did not sit directly on top of the wall. The pads were used to ensure that the plates were set at the precisely correct level to serve as the horizontal base for the roof-trusses. Therefore, for example, while its top face is horizontal, the soffit of the east wall-plate is 85mm above the top of the wall at its north end, but the gap at its south end is only 58mm (Pl. 5 on Fig. 7).

Once the wall plates were in place, the tiebeams were laid across them and, being tenoned into the faces of the tiebeams at both ends, the ceiling joists were assembled at the same time. Each tiebeam was secured across the wall plates with half-dovetail joints. The four main roof trusses (N3-N6 on Fig 6) include a tiebeam, principals, a king-strut, and raked struts, employing mortice and tenon joints throughout. A high proportion of the primary roof survives, including seven out of the eight side purlins; the majority of these are secured to the principals by central tenons with diminished shoulders, showing that they were assembled in tandem with the principals.

The hipped east bay apparently presented the carpenter with a problem that he was not accustomed to solving. The diagonal hip-ties HT1 and HT2 were individually tenoned into the east face of the tiebeam, to avoid clashing with the mortice for the base of the king-strut (Figs 6 and 7). However, the hip-rafters had to meet at a single point against the king-strut, in line with the ridge. To achieve this, the head of the north-east hip-rafter was made to rest on a bracket attached to the face of the king-strut, and the end of south-east hip-rafter was tenoned into its side. While this produces a neat hip-apex, the hip-rafters do not line up with the hip-ties below (Fig. 6). As a result, the raked struts down from the hip-rafters overlap the sides of the hip-ties, and the tenons that secure them had to be placed precariously close to the hip-tie arises (Fig. 7).

A high proportion of the primary hand-sawn oak common rafters survive, and in the two central bays the carpenters' marks generally correspond, running in sequence from west to east. The original arrangement survives along the apex of the central bays, where there was no ridge-purlin. At the apex, the common rafters are linked by bridled joints; they are fixed to the purlins with unshouldered and unpegged central tenons. In the lower tier, most of the primary common rafters have pegged tenons into the purlins; their feet are lodged across the top faces of the wall-plates, where many are still fastened with small hand-made metal spikes, driven diagonally through their sides. In the hipped bay, all of the rafters above the purlins are tenoned thereto, but their heads are spiked, confirming the method and order of assembly, the main frame being complete before the rafters were added.

The remarkable nave ceiling remains intact because all of the joists are primary and *in situ*. With a few exceptions in the hipped bay, all of the joists are secured to the sides of the tiebeams by

5 For the carpentry terms used in this paper, see Alcock, Barley, Dixon, and Meeson 1999.

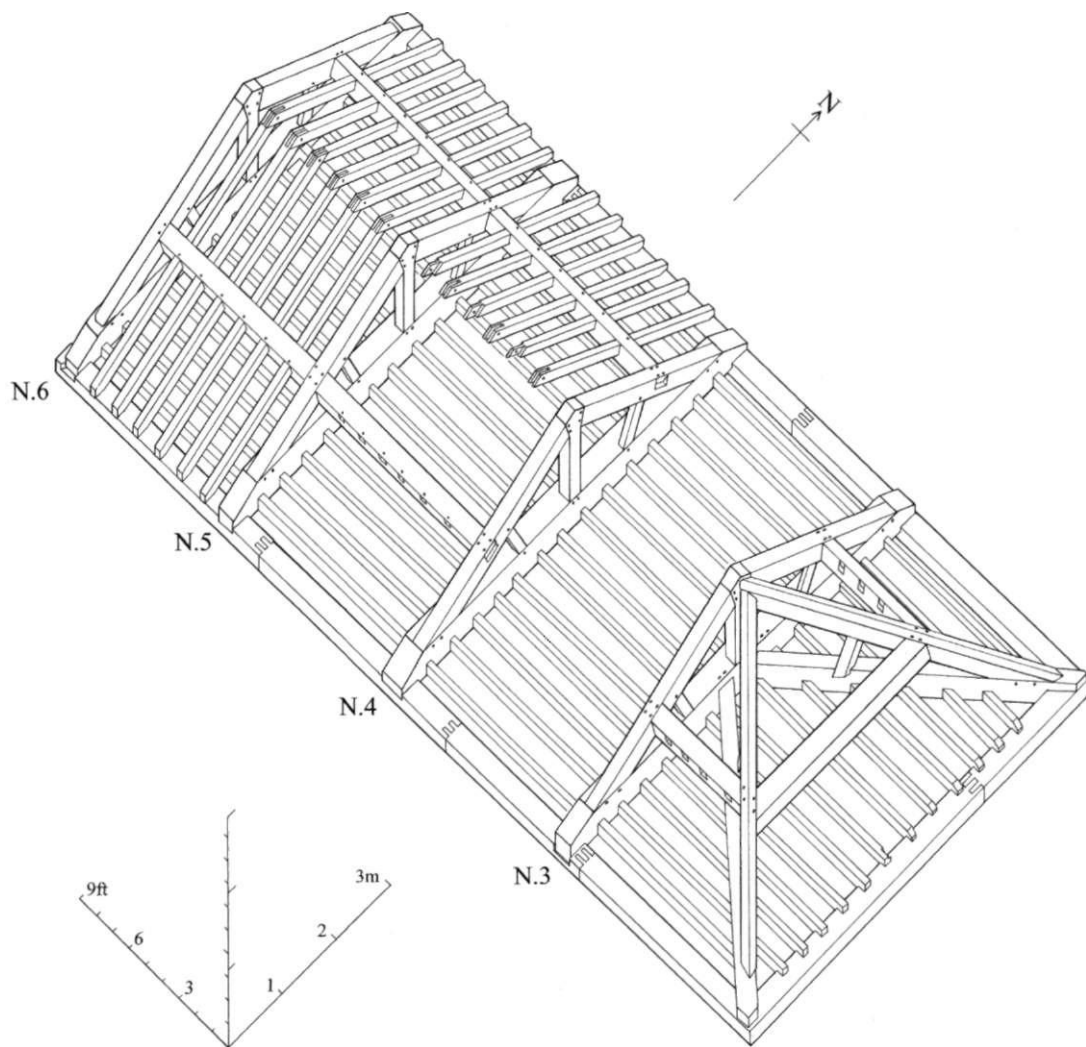


Fig. 6 Axonometric drawing of nave roof timbers

central tenons with diminished shoulders. In the central two bays, the main ceiling feature is suspended from wooden brackets nailed to the joists (Fig. 7). The ceiling cornice is plastered onto laths nailed to shaped wooden brackets which are set at regular intervals around the sides of the nave (Fig 8); the foot of each bracket sits in a groove cut into the top of the wall, while its head is suspended from another timber nailed in turn to the outer joist.

The use of a moulded eaves cornice created a wide top to each wall, which extended well outside the line of the wall plates, leaving space for a low parapet or blocking course (Fig. 8). However, the blocking course recorded during the roof survey was of a different stone from the remainder of the church, and was set out over secondary lead sheeting. Some of the primary rafter feet appeared to be weathered, implying that they had been exposed at some stage, but it was not clear whether that was due to a failure of the original design or a subsequent alteration. The numerous surviving section drawings of roof designs from Wren's practice show that a variety of methods of construction could be employed along the sides of roofs. On the large Trinity College Library roof (Cambridge), the tiebeams stop well short of the eaves parapet to leave room for a gutter, but elsewhere, apparently, they abutted the inside face of the parapet. Other section drawings show the tiebeam stopping short of the outer edge of the eaves, but do not indicate whether a blocking course was intended (Wren Soc 5, 1928; 9, 1932). Burghers' 17th-century illustration of St Mary's church implies that the eaves of the nave and aisles were treated differently from those of the chancel, and that is borne out by the architectural evidence (Figs 8 and 9).

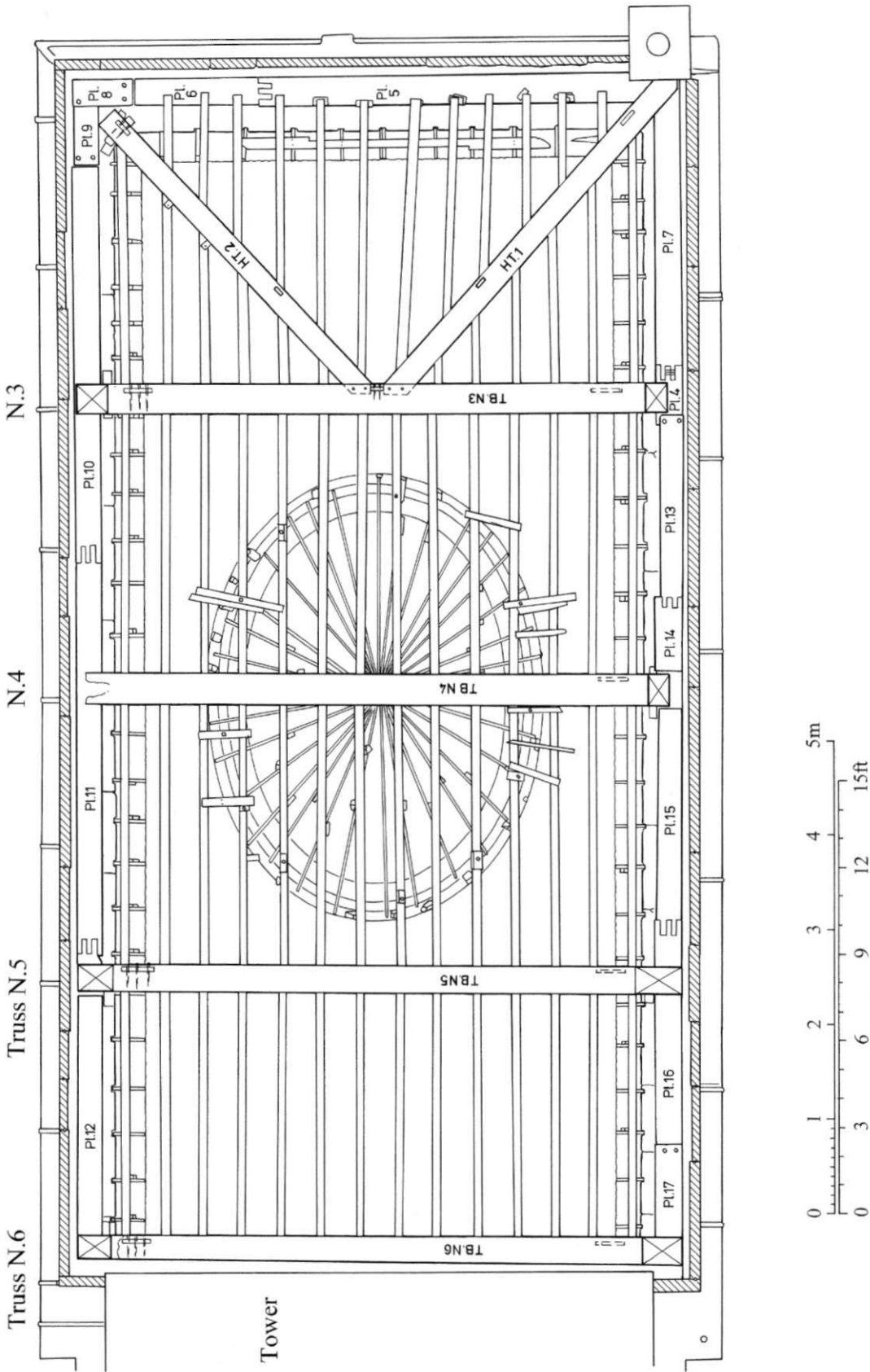


Fig. 7 Plan of nave ceiling timbers

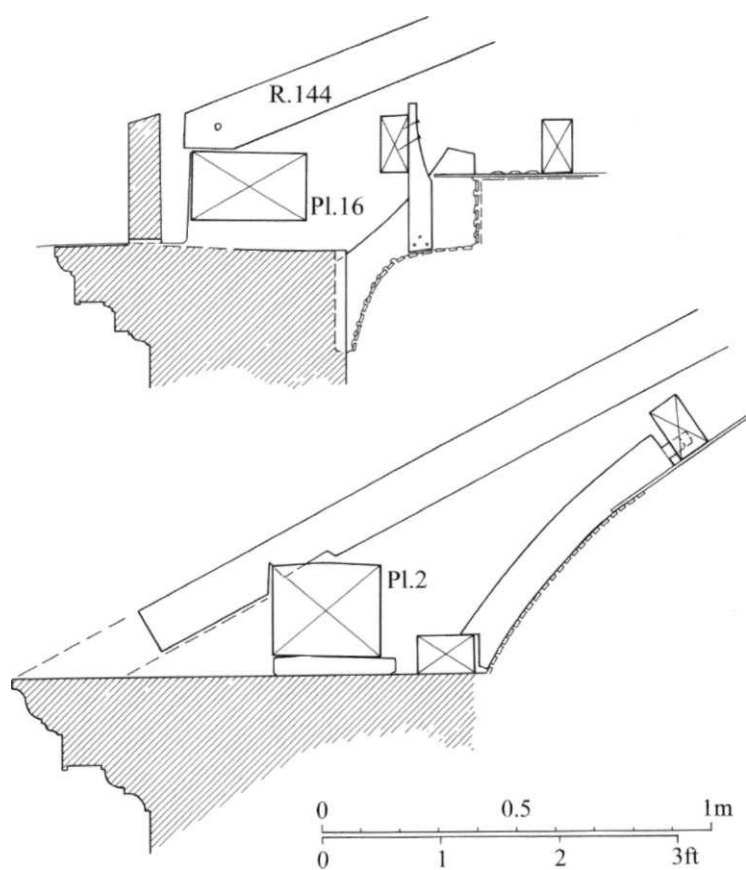


Fig. 8 Nave (above) and chancel (below): eaves and cornice details

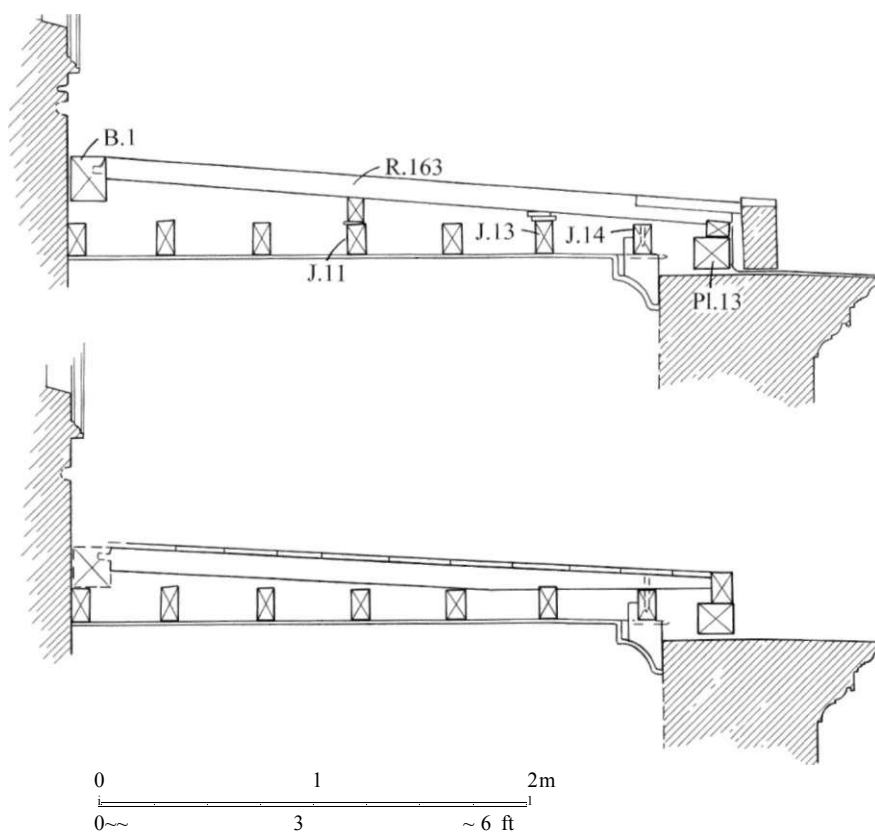


Fig. 9 Section of south aisle roof: as found (above) and as built (below)

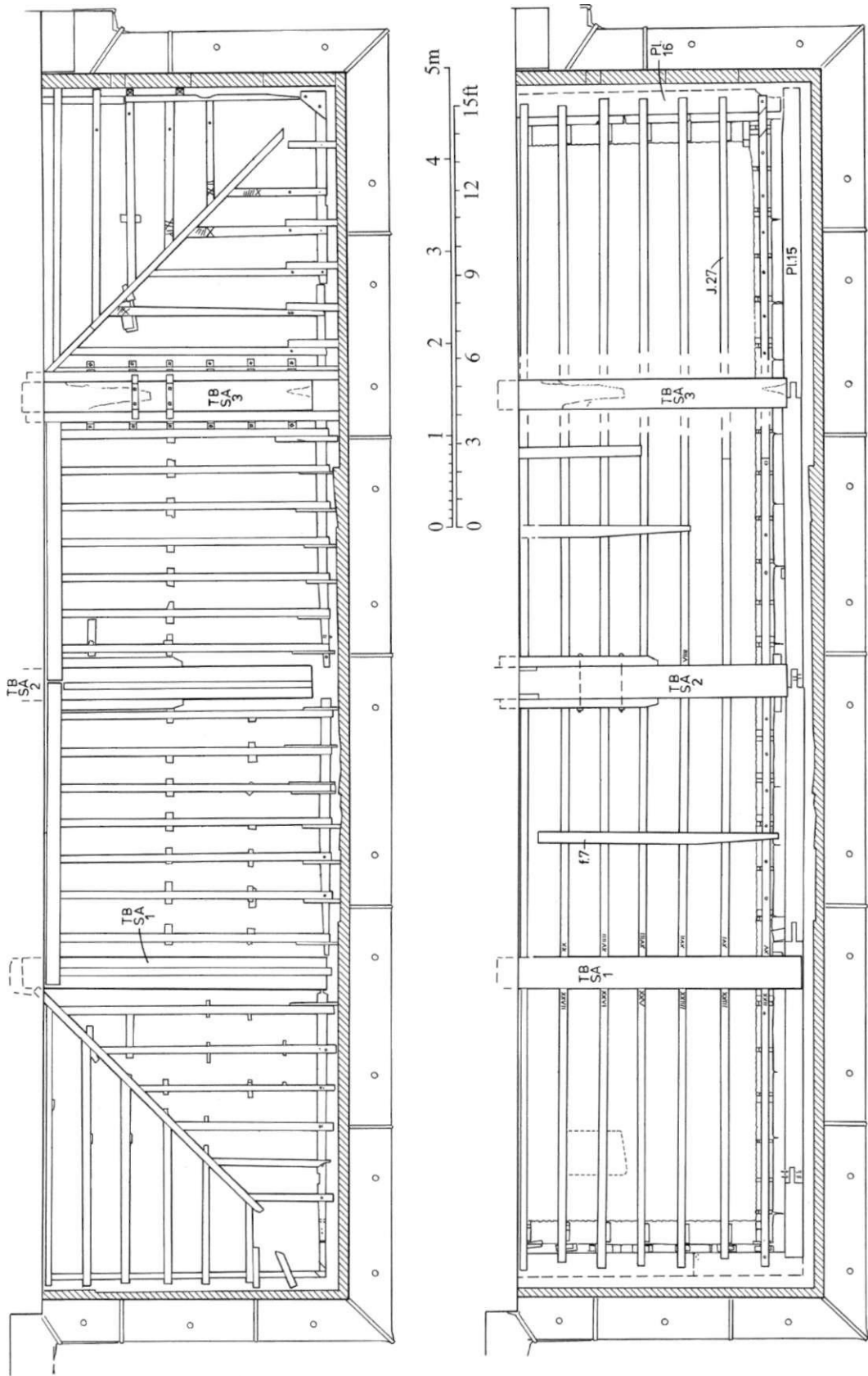


Fig. 10 South aisle roof (*left*, rafters; *right*, ceiling joists)

The aisle roofs

The aisle roofs, with an internal span of only 2.75m, are divided into four bays. Both aisles have retained their primary tiebeams and ceiling joists, but many of the common rafters have been replaced.

The carpentry of the aisle roofs was conditioned by two main constraints. Firstly, in the absence of a tribune, there was only limited space between the top of the nave arcade and the clerestory windows to accommodate the inner end of each roof. Secondly, as an essential element of the overall design, a very low pitch of only c. 3° was necessary for the aisle roofs to remain hidden behind the blocking-course. The carpenters had to fabricate a structure with the minimum possible gap between the ceiling and the roof covering. The main effect of past reconstructions of these roofs had been to increase the void between the ceiling and the outer membrane, but here the original arrangement is interpreted (Fig. 9).

The assembly of the aisle roofs commenced with the emplacement of the wall plates (Fig. 10). Each with a scantling of up to c. 200 x 170mm, the wall plates were scarfed together by double-pegged bare faced tenons; as around the nave, they were supported by timber pads, leaving a gap between their soffits and the top of the walls. After the wall-plates had been assembled, the tiebeams were lifted into place. Most of the tiebeams now have decayed outer ends, but in the north aisle, TBNA 2 still has a half-dovetail on its soffit where it sits across the wall-plate. The inner ends of the tiebeams were set into sockets in the wall near the foot of the clerestory. Because the ceiling joists are secured to the sides of the tiebeams by central shouldered tenons, they must have been assembled at the same time. The joists have laths nailed to their soffits to carry the plaster ceiling below. Shallow housings were cut into the top face of each tiebeam to secure the ends of bearers adjacent to the face of each wall; these bearers would support the inner ends of the common rafters. For the end bays, the housings were cut diagonally to carry substantial hip rafters. It was probably

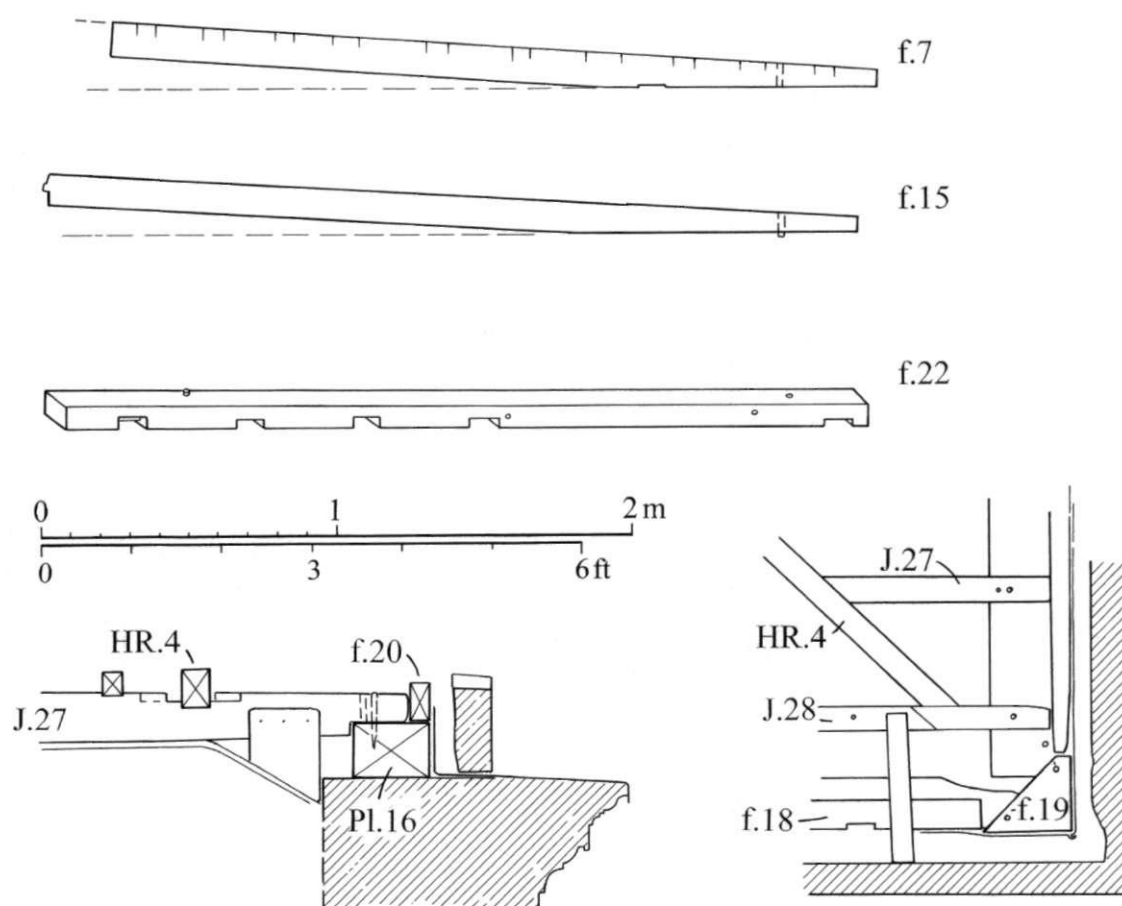


Fig. 11 South aisle roof details

at this stage in the assembly process that the masonry around the tiebeam sockets was made good with rubble and mortar.

Over both aisles, virtually all of the common rafters had been replaced when the roof-pitch was altered, but several of them had been re-used *ex situ*, providing some of the information required to interpret the original form of the roof. Each intact rafter had a shouldered tenon at its inner end. The scantling of each of the former common rafters is reduced towards its outer end, and the angle at which each timber is tapered indicates the original pitch (f 7 and f 15 on Fig. 11). Each primary rafter has a peg-hole c.0.3m from its foot. In each bay, the outermost ceiling joist retained the evenly spaced series of holes that formerly received the pegs through the ends of the rafters. Thus, each outermost ceiling joist also served as a flying plate. The pitch of the roof was so shallow that some of the rafter soffits also sat across one or more of the inner joists (Fig. 9). By this device, part of the load imparted by each rafter was shared by the outer two or three joists, rather than the wall plate, though of course each joist also transferred a load upon the tiebeams. As the top face of each wall plate was below the level of the joist soffits, there would have been a gap between these and the projecting feet of each rafter. Another re-used timber (f 22 on Fig. 11) retained housings at the common rafter intervals; this is interpreted as a kerb, originally spiked onto the top of a wall plate. The kerb closed the gaps between the feet of several rafters, as reconstructed in Fig. 9.

The hipped ends of the roofs differed somewhat from the eaves because the ceiling joists were required to bear on the east and west wall plates. Most of the primary scheme survives at the east end of the south aisle, and this is detailed on Fig. 11; J.27 is lodged and pegged onto Plate 16, and the primary kerb f 20 remains *in situ*, but all of the hip-rafters have been replaced. At the south-east corner, a triangular oak block (f 19) spans the abutment of Plates 15 and 16, and is pegged to each of them. The foot of the primary hip-rafter - the predecessor of HR 4 - was originally lodged on this block.

The *ex-situ* primary rafter f 7 has been shortened, so it has lost its shouldered tenon, but it retains other useful information about the primary roof (Fig. 11). Pairs of nail-holes indicate the widths of the primary wooden boards, providing the evidence for those shown on Fig. 9. Between each pair of nail-holes there is a narrow white line, suggesting that after the boards had been nailed into place, but before the outer lead membrane was added, a protective treatment, possibly lime-based, had been painted onto their outer surface. A high proportion of the rafters now have extension-pieces fastened onto their sides to project the roof out to the blocking-course. As on the nave roof, the blocking-course now stands on lead-work, which is wrapped up the sides of the wall plates.

The chancel roof

Internally, the chancel is approximately 6m long and 5m wide. The west end of the chancel roof stands against the taller nave, while the east end abuts the back of the east gable. Unlike those in the nave and aisles, the chancel ceiling is tunnel-vaulted, demanding a different type of structure, which is of two bays, and assembled with a pitch of *c. 21W*. Although this roof is steeper than that over the aisles, the tunnel-vault below again leaves little space for the supporting frame between the ceiling and the common rafters. The ingenious solution included three transverse trusses in which the main timbers doubled as steeply cambered tiebeams and as principals to carry the purlins; below, they are termed *arch-ties* (Figs 12 and 13).

Along each side of the chancel, the moulded eaves cornice projects out to form a 1.2m-wide top to the wall. As in the nave, the wall plates are carried a few centimetres above the wall by timber pads. There are half-dovetails on the soffits of the arch-ties where they are lodged across the wall plates and each joint is stoutly pegged. Although the internal span of the roof is only five metres, because of the particular shape required for the arch-ties, each of them had to be formed out of two sections of oak. The soffit of each section was curved to the shape of the ceiling, while the upper face was cut to a straight line corresponding with the plane of the roof (Fig. 12). The two lengths of timber were joined together by a splayed scarf joint. Three different types of fasteners were used to fix the timbers together near the centre of the arch (Fig. 14). Firstly, a mortice was cut through both timbers near to the middle of each splay, and a long slip-tenon was driven through the joint, with both ends projecting to receive a face-peg, preventing withdrawal in either direction. Secondly, two metal straps pass down one face of the scarf joint, under the soffit, and up the other side, and each of them is secured by forelock bolts. (Near to the top of each strap, a metal bar passes through the entire assembly, projecting out at both sides, and a hole on each end of the bar coincides with the face of the strap; a metal strip which passes through each hole has twisted ends to prevent with-

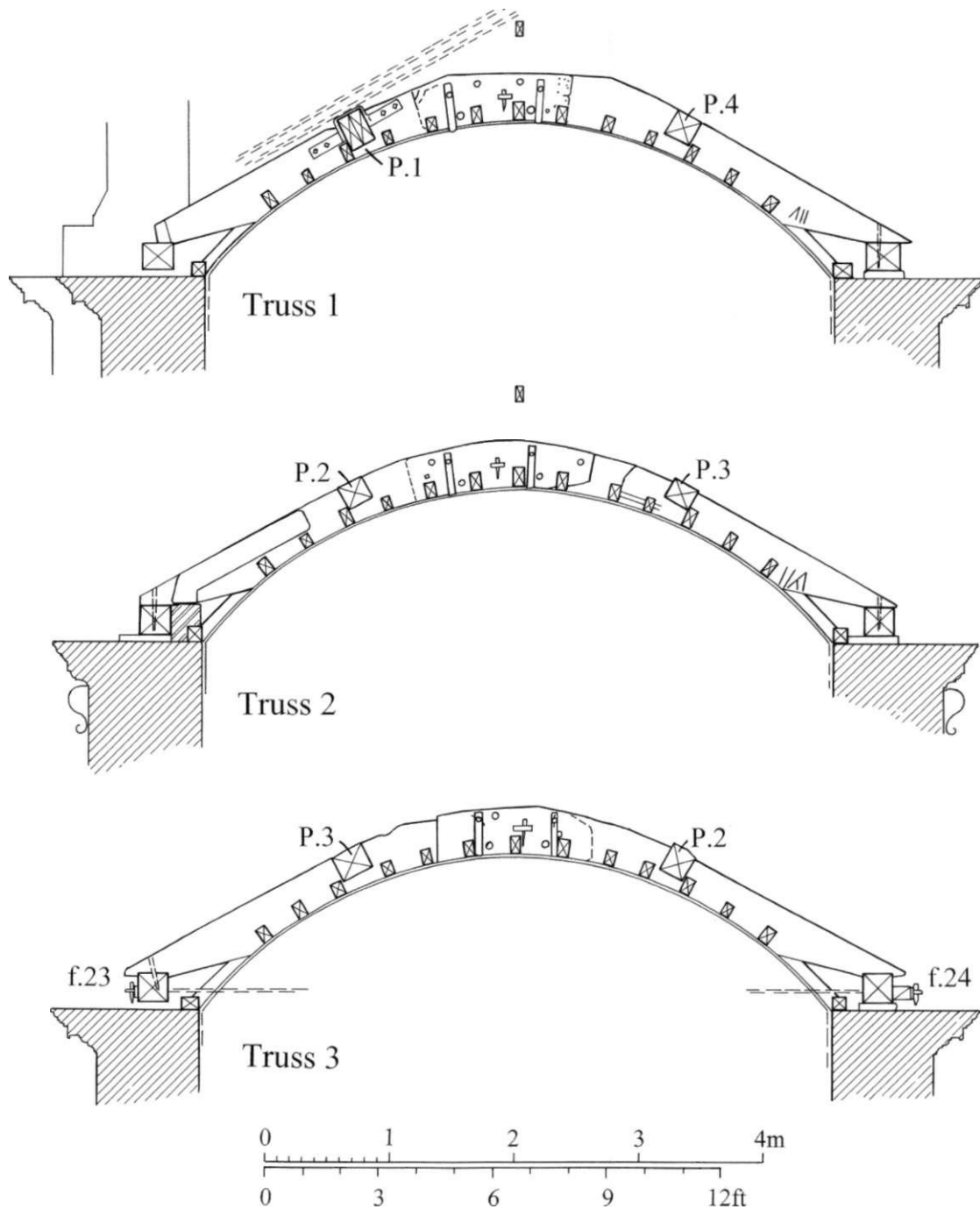


Fig. 12 Arch-tie trusses over the chancel

drawal, creating a blacksmith's version of the through-tenon with face-pegs). Thirdly, four iron bolts were also fixed through the scarf joint.

The straps and bolts are not the only metal employed in this roof. The evidence is equivocal, but because the technology employed is similar to that on the scarf joints the tie-bar through the gable-end truss 3 might also be primary. The east end of the north wall plate is no longer bedded in the rubble and mortar socket that was originally formed around it, but the iron bar that passes through it remains set into the rubble core (Fig. 15). For the bar to be secondary, it would have been necessary to reconstruct the inside face of the gable, and no sign of such an alteration could be detected. On the north side of the roof, the bar passes through an iron washer set against the outer side of the wall plate, and a cotter (a metal face-peg) is fixed through a hole in the end of the bar. The

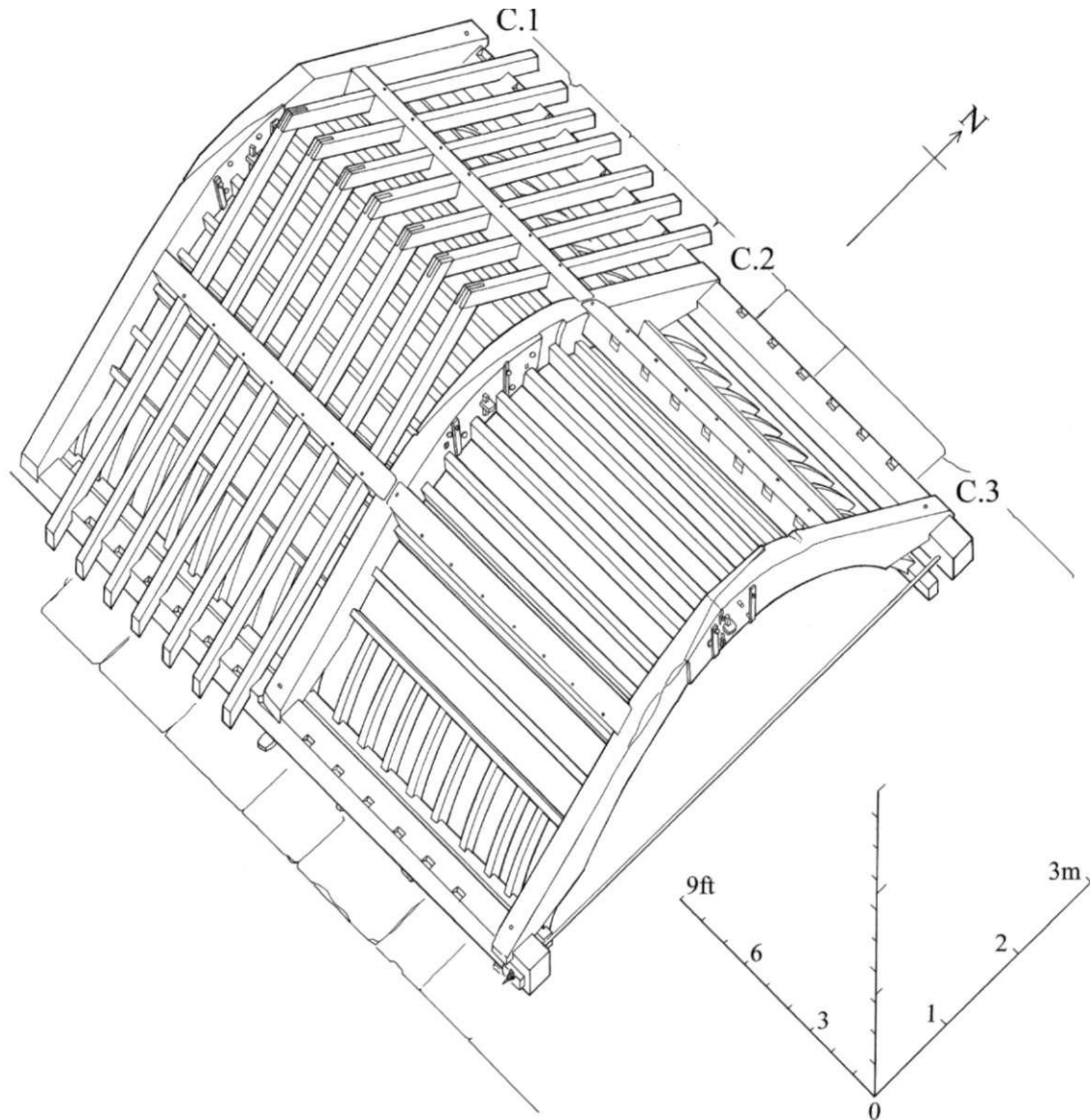


Fig. 13 Axonometric drawing of chancel roof

arrangement would be similar at the other end of the bar on the south side of the roof but for the fact that there is now a softwood block between the side of the wall plate and the fixing-peg (Fig. 16). The wall plates both appear to remain in their intended alignments, so it is unlikely that either of them has moved, so the tie-bar is a primary feature of the roof. The secondary softwood block might replace an oak predecessor; a miscalculation of the distance required between the fixing-holes at each end of the tie-bar would explain the need for the spacing-block.

As central tenons with diminished shoulders were employed at each end of all the ceiling joists, these must have been assembled in tandem with the arch-tie trusses, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, they must all be presumed to be primary. Along each side of the ceiling, a number of curved brackets (eight in each bay) are tenoned into the lowest joist, and birds-mouthed across the arris of an inner-plate (Figs 8 and 13). The employment of birds-mouth joints implies that these supports for the lower portion of the ceiling were designed for insertion after the main frame had been assembled. The outer roof-frame is carried by side-purlins. The purlin on the south side of the west bay is secondary, being comprised of two paired softwood timbers, but the other three are primary. They appear to be tenoned into the arch-ties, but at the central truss, the top face of each purlin extends across the waney edges below.

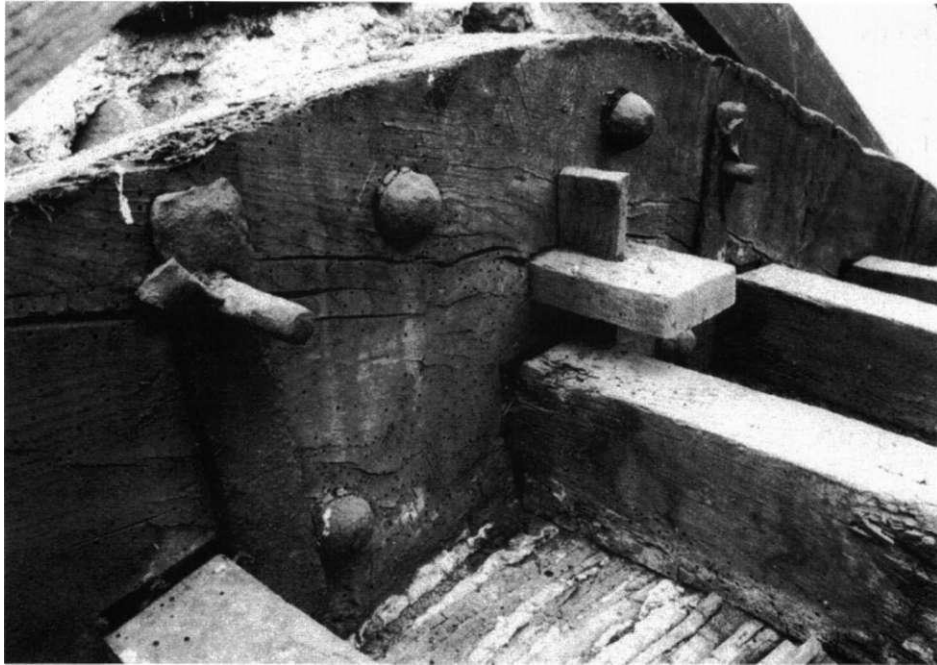


Fig. 14 Chancel truss 3: detail of scarf joint fixings



Fig. 15 North end of tie-bar in chancel east wall

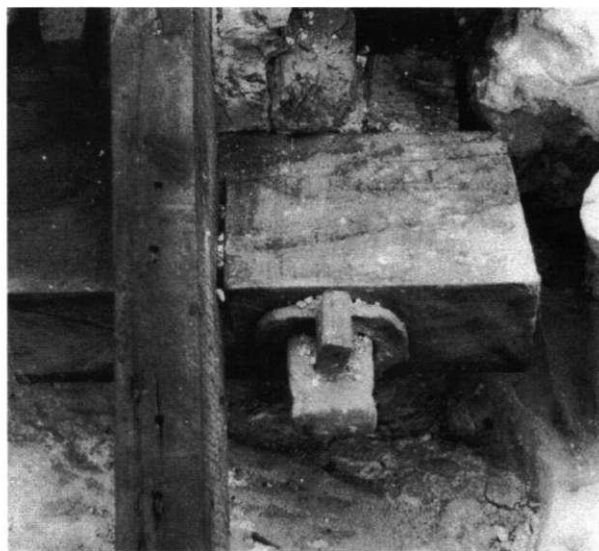


Fig. 16 South end of tie-bar in chancel east wall

Along the north side of the roof, most of the primary rafters remain *in situ*. Originally, there was no ridge-board, and the rafters in the upper tier were linked to their counterparts at the apex by bridled joints; the feet of these rafters have central tenons into un-pegged mortices on the purlins. The lower tier of rafters has pegged central tenons into the purlins, and they are scotched into triangular housings where their feet extend across the wall plates (Figs 8 and 13). In the west bay of the roof, on both the north and the south sides, a number of housings for scotched rafter-feet appear to be unused, but this is tentatively attributed to a setting-out error.

The sides of the primary roof over the chancel were different from those of the nave and aisles (Fig. 8). The feet of the *in situ* primary rafters form a line approximately mid-way between the outer edge of the wall and the side of the wall plate, and in several instances, the end-grain shows signs of weathering. Furthermore, the top of the wall is weathered outside the line of the rafter-feet, implying that it too was exposed to the elements for some time: whether this was by design or through neglect is not clear. Secondary extension-pieces fastened to the feet of the primary rafters now project the roof-slope to the outer edge of the eaves.

THE SEATING IN THE NAVE

Following the completion of the roof restoration project, St Mary's Parochial Church Council considered options for installing a small refreshment counter in the church. This prompted an investigation of the panelling and furnishings in the nave and aisles, leading to the discovery that evidence of the spacing of the box pews has survived the Victorian adaptations. The present arrangement of the pews is largely the result of a scheme of 1886 to increase the seating capacity by adapting and supplementing the box pews, and the resulting seating plan was accurately recorded by T. Harold Hughes (Wren Soc 19, 1942, plate 23). The privately-commissioned St Mary's church might have been intended by Walter Chetwynd as an exemplar of classical architecture, so the realisation that the planning of the old box pews remains open to interpretation has special interest and potential as they were probably designed and fitted from the outset to respect and conform with the plan and proportions of the nave. In marked contrast, 'as completed by Wren and his assistants, the parish churches of the City were bare boxes, without furniture, without fittings ...', the installation of the pews, pulpits, fonts and altar tables being the responsibility of the parishes (Jeffery 1996, 152).

The old box pews at Ingestre were drawn by Buckler in 1841, and useful though the drawing is as a portrayal of the character of the nave, it is technically flawed. The perspective is inaccurate, and apparently after drawing one arcade Buckler shifted his position before drawing the other; the box pews on the south side of the nave were not drawn in their true relationship with the adjoining arcade, and those shown on the north side improbably extend almost as far east as the chancel screen (Fig. 17). Fortunately, slight traces of the locations of the box pews drawn by Buckler can still be discerned in the wooden panelling in both aisles, and this evidence has been used in an attempt to reconstruct as much as possible of the older seating plan (Fig. 18). The wainscoting in each of the aisles is the same height as the flat window sills, c.1.7m above the floor. The top row of wide panels was always above the tops of the box pews, the latter being the same height as the tall plinths in the nave arcades - c. 1.3m (Fig. 17). In the lower portion of the wainscoting the individual panels are supported by alternately wide and narrow muntins. Each wide muntin retains the shadow of



Fig. 17 Buckler's sepia drawing of the nave in 1841

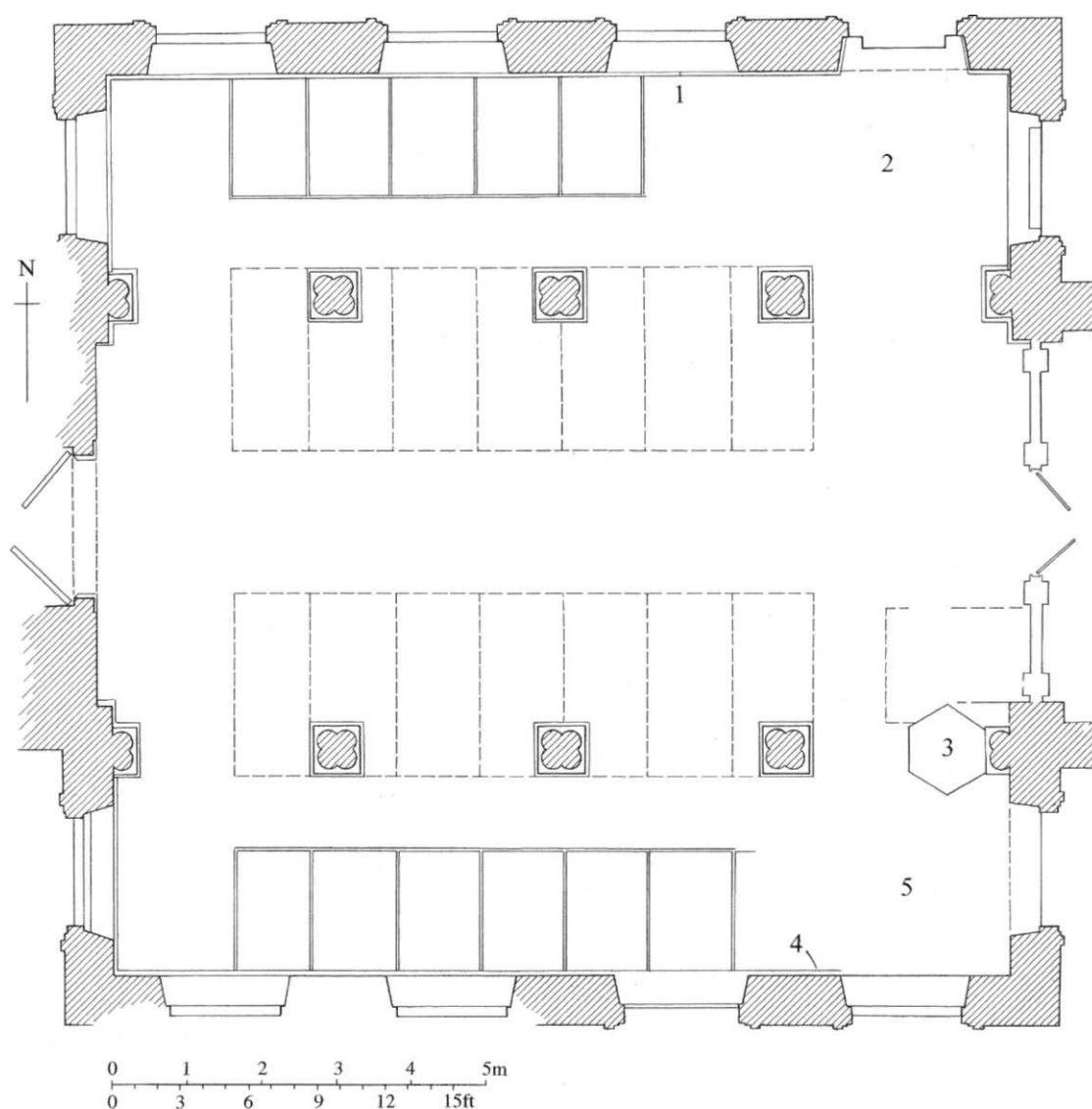


Fig. 18 Partial reconstruction of the original seating plan

one of the partitions that separated the box pews, and the height of the latter can be confirmed by the neat patches in the mouldings. The former box pews that can be confidently identified in the aisles are shown on Fig 18 with solid lines, and based on that evidence the likely plan of the nave seating is adumbrated on the same drawing by broken lines. The drawing suggests that as they were designed and fitted as part of a single building programme the box pews might have been spacious and uniform, leaving ample space for the aisles, and that they were even set out to conform with the spacing of the piers.

The location of the Chetwynd / Talbot family pew and the extent to which it might have affected the overall symmetry of the seating is not clear, especially as Plot's account is ambivalent: 'The *Seats* are also made of the same *Oak*, all of an equal height and goodness through the whole *Church*; the *Lord* himself not sitting in a finer *Seat* (only somewhat larger) than the meanest of his *Tenants*; so humble is this truly *Wise* man, in the midst of all this *magnificence*' (1686, 299). When the monument to Victoria Talbot (died 1856) was inserted into the window at the east end of north wall some of the wainscoting was replaced, removing the evidence of any former pews in that area (east of 1 on Fig. 18). It is plausible that the use of the east end of the north aisle for family monuments arose out of the former existence there of a family pew (at 2 on Fig. 18), from where there would have been a good view of the elaborately-carved pulpit which remains in its original

position (3). The installation of two successive organs (at 5) has probably removed the evidence of former pews from the east end of the south aisle. In the wainscot on the south wall the one remaining ghost of a pew (at 4) belongs to the 19th-century seating scheme. As many as possible of the panels from the old box pews were retained when the nave seating was altered. Rather than simply cutting off their tops, the box pews were reduced in height by removing the bottom panels, thereby conserving much of the original character of the nave and aisles. The new unenclosed benches were placed closer together than the box pews but they were given raked backs, making them more comfortable. New boards fitted to the top of every bench-end retain evidence of the candlesticks that were removed when an early electric lighting scheme was introduced in 1933 (LRO, B/C/12/1/258, 1933).

DISCUSSION

During the course of the 17th century, the vogue for shallow-pitched roofs, particularly those of a wide span, prompted carpenters to respond by moving away from medieval roof-types towards what have been termed 'trussed roofs' or 'trussed-rafter' roofs (Yeomans 1992, 1999). Many carpenters were left to their own ingenuity in the detailing of shallow-pitched roofs with hipped ends, but various types emerged as elegant solutions to the problems. Arguably, the roofs over the nave at Ingestre are typical of their period, and there is no particular reason to attribute them to Wren or his office, even if that over the nave is comparable with his model for the roof of Pembroke College. Equally, if the integration of the ceiling timbers with the outer roof over the aisles and chancel at Ingestre can be likened to parallels in several London churches of the same period that does not identify the designer. Nor does the employment of iron fixings in the chancel roof at Ingestre prove that the technique was specified by someone in Wren's practice. However, Wren's views on the use of iron are well recorded: 'Iron, at all Adventures, is a good Caution; but the Architect should so poise his Work, as if it were not necessary' (Wren Soc 19, 1942, 130). He did not always follow this principle, as has been shown at St Mary-le-Bow, and when occasion demanded he made copious use of iron, especially in the spire of Salisbury Cathedral (Reeves, Simpson, and Spencer, 1992, 380-406). Iron bolts and straps were used in the roof of St Peter's Cornhill (Wren Soc 9, 1932, 60), where the early designs were by Edward Iarman; John Oliver might have played some part, but the later drawings have been attributed to Robert Hooke (Jeffery 1996, 326-9). Some of the roof-timbers at St Benet Paul's Wharf, designed by Robert Hooke, were fastened together by forelock bolts through iron straps, similar to those at Ingestre (RCHME, 1998, 62). Wilson, who as noted above also worked in Wren's office, employed forelock bolts with double washers in the roof of Lichfield Cathedral c. 1661-69. It is unclear how much 17th-century architects involved themselves in the specifics of roof assembly, but the arch-ties and iron fixings in the carpentered frame over the chancel at St Mary's Church show a readiness to innovate in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Copious vestry minutes, building accounts, and drawings survive for the post-fire London churches, yet it is sometimes impossible to determine who designed what. Against that background, and as the documentation for Ingestre is lamentably poor, it is unlikely that proof will be found of Wren's direct hand in the design of the body of St Mary's church, but the circumstantial evidence is strong. Wren's design for a lantern for the church tower might have been made after 1676. Although the execution of the design would have involved the removal of the balustrade, and the cornice moulding on his drawing does not exactly match that on the building, the design does at least suggest that he knew both the building and Chetwynd. As prominent Oxford *alumni*, and later as respectively president and secretary of the Royal Society, Wren and Plot were well acquainted with each other, and Chetwynd was elected shortly after the completion of St Mary's. It is one of the most elegant and refined buildings of its era, replete with Wren's own architectural proportions, devices, and motifs. In particular, the seminal clustered shafts in the nave arcades at Ingestre were under construction at broadly the same time as those designed by Wren in St Bride Fleet Street.

Edward Pearce could have been available for work during the time that St Mary's was under construction. Archbishop Sancroft, Wren, Plot, or any of them, could have prompted Chetwynd to employ Pearce, and a project at Ingestre might have been the catalyst for the later commissions that he undertook in the immediate vicinity, including his best design and build contract at Lichfield, outside the main orbit of his early career in London and near Cambridge. Apart from the stonework, the wooden screen, reredos, and pulpit with tester are supreme exemplars of the period, demanding a sculptor of his calibre.

Following the Fire of London, the Commissioners for rebuilding the City churches only funded the construction of the building carcass so generally the fitting out was the responsibility of the parish, who selected contractors independently. Most of the towers were not constructed until some years after the completion of the main bodies of the churches and the two elements were generally designed by different architects. Such constraints did not apply at Ingestre, with the result that a unified design was achieved in a single building phase. Restless London parishioners demanded numerous alterations to the interiors of many of the churches designed by architects from Wren's practice, and much of what remained was heavily damaged by bombing during the Second World War. In rural Ingestre, St Mary's has been subject to various changes, but its original walls, roofs and ceilings remain largely intact, as do many of the original fittings, making it one of the finest churches of its kind left standing, and there are ample grounds for supposing that the design could have come from Wren's own hand.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Guildhall	Guildhall Library, London
IPF	Ingestre Parish Files
LRO	Lichfield Record Office
SHC	<i>Staffordshire Historical Collections</i>
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, London
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the County of Stafford</i>
Wren Soc	Bolton, AT and Hendry, HD, 1924-43 <i>Wren Society</i> , 20 volumes (Oxford)

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