Wait! What? St Philips, Salford, is a Gothic building? Never!

Gothic architecture is often and easily identified by the use of pointed-arch windows, as illustrated by all of my previous posts on Haunt/Visit Manchester, such as Thomas Worthington's Memorial Hall facing Albert Square, here, and Manchester Cathedral, here (**Fig.1**). Classical architecture, on the other hand, is based upon the rules, proportions, orders (columns that come in five different historical forms: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite), and other architectural features, including domes, pediments (triangular shapes found over doorways and supported by columns on buildings' rooflines, as at Lyme Park, just outside Manchester (**Fig.2**), see here. A detailed explanation of the full range of Classical architecture's forms and proportions can be found in Vitruvius' *Ten Books of Architecture* (here).

The Gothic and Classical styles were seen as opposites in the eighteenth century—Alexander Gerard, writing on taste in 1759, considered Classical architecture to be noble, refined, aesthetically pleasing, and the good, or 'correct' taste: Gothic was the complete opposite. It lacked rules, refinement, order, and intelligible ornament. Gothic and Classical architecture, however, were combined, and not just in the hypothetical book illustrations by William Kent, such as *The Redcross Knight Introduced by Duessa to the House of Pride, c.*1730 (**Fig.3**), but in real buildings.

An early mixture of the two styles occurs on the façade of the Elizabethan great house, Wollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire (**Fig.4**) (here). Built by Robert Smythson, it blends both Gothic and Classical ornament, ground plans, and even architectural ideas and conventions. The symmetrical plan is derived from Classical architecture, however the tall, projecting hall with Gothic-type tracery windows (although round headed rather than using the pointed arch), along with the bartizans, speak of English medieval architectural traditions.

As illustrated in **Fig.5**, each level of the exterior is ornamented with Classical columns flattened against the side of the building: these are known as pilasters, and they follow the traditional ordering, working from bottom to top, progressing in decoration and seniority: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

The contrast between these Classical and Gothic elements is stark (**Fig.6**), and this is even more obvious in the Great Hall. The quasi-Classical screen contradicts the Elizabethan reinterpretation of the set-piece of medieval hall architecture: the hammer-beam roof, that I discussed in my last piece for Haunt on the University of Manchester's Whitworth Hall (here).

Such Classical-Gothic hybrids were no flash in the pan. Old St Paul's, London (**Fig.7**), was a large, important church in London that, amongst other things, was heavily involved in the early development of England's national style of Gothic architecture: Perpendicular Gothic that came to dominate church architecture after the 1330s. The gridiron pattern is illustrated particularly well by the windows inserted into Manchester Cathedral here (**Fig.1**).

After the devastating fire of 1666 where most of the by then decaying and neglected structure of the cathedral was destroyed, Sir Christopher Wren changed his plans from

remodelling the pre-fire Gothic structure—a building that Inigo Jones 'restored' and partly Classicised (**Figs 8–9**) in the 1620s. Wren's initial bold, Classical proposals were not received positively by the church, until he produced a design that was familiar and, essentially Gothic—the 'Warrant Design' (here and here) approved officially on 14 May 1675.

The Warrant Design possesses the formal structure and bay system taken from medieval cathedrals, but executed in a Classical guise. In addition, one of the most distinctive structural features of medieval Gothic architecture, the flying buttress, seen for example on the exterior of Amiens Cathedral, France (**Fig.10**), is also incorporated into St Paul's Cathedral, but hidden behind a thoroughly Classical screen wall (**Fig.11**).

For more detail on Wren's designs for St Paul's, London, see the cathedral's website, here.

Wren's office was not only tasked with rebuilding St Paul's Cathedral, but also an incredibly large number of churches also destroyed in 1666 by the fire. A striking feature of these churches is how Gothic towers are effectively made according to the form and language of Classical architecture. At heart, however, they remain steadfastly Gothic in essence. The most obviously Gothic is St Margaret Pattens in the City of London (**Fig.12**).

Note how the form of St Margaret Pattens' tower matches what can be considered a medieval Gothic church tower with steeple. The placement of the louvered windows is the same as that on such medieval towers, and at the corners of the parapet are Classical pyramids set upon acanthus-leaf mouldings (typical of Classical architecture). These imitate the traditional placement of Gothic pinnacles at the outer corners of towers. St Margaret Pattens' tower balustrade is also entirely Classical (rather than a parapet pierces with Gothic tracery or crenulations—or battlements).

Whilst not made in imitation of Salisbury Cathedral's great crossing tower with steeple (**Fig.13**), I hope that you can see the similarities between this medieval tower and Wren's tower for St Margaret Pattens. Even less obviously Gothic towers designed by Wren for his London churches still retain medieval architectural elements. A particularly good example of such buildings towers includes that attached to St Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside (**Fig.14**). Notable Gothic features include the retention of the corner pinnacles, which are less overtly medieval in form: its overall form and structure is Gothic.

So, turning to St Philip's, Salford (**Fig.15**), Grade II* listed by Historic England (list entry number 1386165, here, and listed on 31 January 1952), it seem entirely unreasonable to see this church, designed and built in the Classical style by Sir Robert Smirke in 1825, as Gothic. Its design matches that of St Mary's Church in Bryanston Square, London, and the tower was also used for St Anne's Church, Wandsworth. Smirke was well practised in the Classical style, having designed the British Museum in London, and the Gothic style as well, having designed Lincoln's Crown Court, and remodelled Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire (**Fig.16**).

Although clearly Classical at heart—the tower coming from a semi-circular rotunda-like colonnade, it nevertheless preserves the recognisable iconography of the English medieval parish church with a tall tower emerging from the west front of the building. Like Wren's London churches, the preservation of familiar medieval architectural traditions made in a

different—Classical—style, does not compromise their traditional history and awareness of medieval architectural heritage.