Getting into a Scrape: The Buckler Dynasty, Lincoln Cathedral and Mid-Victorian Architectural Politics

by JOSHUA MARDELL

In the summer of 1859, what was to become a highly public and acrimonious dispute emerged in the tight-knit and contentious world of mid-Victorian architecture. It concerned the restoration of one of England's greatest medieval buildings and enmeshed a hitherto well-respected architect and antiquary in a controversy that came to involve some of the leading players in his profession. The building was Lincoln Cathedral and the hapless protagonist was John Chessell Buckler (1793–1894), whose family had achieved respect as both architects and topographical artists (Figs 1 and 2). The story charted here concerns the restoration of the cathedral, for which Buckler was architect, and the accusations that he had instigated and was overseeing a destructive process of 'scraping' to give the cathedral a unified aesthetic. This episode was part of the ongoing controversy that had surfaced with James Wyatt's campaign of building restoration at Salisbury Cathedral from 1789.¹

This article will introduce Buckler and his family before chronicling the scandal as it unfolded, considering what Buckler actually did to Lincoln Cathedral and how he responded to the attacks that were made on him. The controversy took place in a context of professional rivalry and can be explained by the contrast between Buckler's approach towards restoration and that of his contemporaries. His understanding of fabric repair drew on his training and outlook as an architectural draughtsman. The charges against him were largely ill-founded, the result of professional anxiety and envy. The episode thus illuminates our understanding of the forces that motivated nine-teenth-century architects and the nature of architectural politics. As more and more buildings came under the scrutiny of would-be restorers, the central question for many was how they were to deal with the monuments of the past. By mid-century, architects and antiquarians had to confront such issues in a more conscious and public way than their predecessors.



Fig. 1. Lincoln Cathedral, view from the south-west, from J. C. Buckler, Views of the Cathedral Churches (London, 1822)

THE BUCKLER DYNASTY

The Buckler architectural dynasty began with John Buckler senior (1770-1851), who made a successful career as an antiquarian draughtsman and was renowned for his topographical views of cathedrals.² As an architect he built several mansions, notably Pool Park in Denbighshire (1826-29), as well as churches, such as St John the Baptist at Pentrobin in Flintshire (1843), early in its adoption of ecclesiological ideas of style and internal decoration. John Chessell Buckler helped establish his own reputation by continuing his father's popular series of prints of English and Welsh cathedrals.³ Their combined industry as antiquarian draughtsmen can be seen in the huge collection of their drawings in the British Library. 4 He soon became one of the rising generation of neo-Gothic architects, as seen at Costessey Hall in Norfolk (begun in 1825), built for the recusant Catholic Stafford-Jerningham family, and his award of second prize (among ninety-seven entrants) for his Tudor Gothic design for the Palace of Westminster competition in 1835. He also contributed to the promotion and development of the Gothic revival through several antiquarian publications, among them A History of the Abbey Church of St Alban (1847). Early in his career, he also published an important work on domestic architecture, An Historical and Descriptive Account of the



Fig. 2. Portrait of John Chessell Buckler by William Riviere, 1872, oil on paper (British Library, Add MS 37120, f. 1)

Royal Palace at Eltham (1828), which was based on youthful notes he had made in 1810.⁵ Many other antiquarian works drew on him as an authority on medieval architecture, including Henry Shaw's Specimens of the Details of Elizabethan Architecture (1836). Buckler remained active as an architect and a topographical draughtsman into his nineties. When he died aged 100 in 1894, his obituary in the Architect and Contract Reporter labelled him, in respect of his archaeological erudition, as the 'great Nestor of English architects'.⁶ Yet the early intellectual capital that he enjoyed became increasingly dissipated as his long career drew to a close, and his work is not well known today, the Lincoln scandal perhaps being a contributing factor. He was succeeded by his son, the Catholic convert Charles Alban Buckler (1824–1905), who is best known for rebuilding Arundel Castle in West Sussex (1874–1901). Charles Alban, however, produced no issue, bringing the dynastic line to an end.

The Bucklers evidently saw themselves as heroic figures in the antiquarian and architectural world, as was suggested by the literal meaning of their surname — a round shield. They may have seen themselves as holding up a figurative buckler in the face of misguided antiquarianism, unnecessary destruction of medieval buildings or unattractive modern professionalism. Characteristic of this outlook is the opener to the family history, *Bucleriana*, compiled by Charles Alban Buckler and published in 1886:

These lowly offspring of the mind A friendly Buckler fain would find; Beneath its shelter let them lie, And then the critics' shaft defy.⁷

John Chessell Buckler was especially conscious of his family's reputation, not least in favouring conservation (as we would now understand it) over restoration, and repair over rebuilding. He was, in fact, one of nineteenth-century architecture's most vocal commentators and critics on the subject of architectural restoration, well known in his time for being opinionated, not to say vainglorious. As the medievalist Catherine M. Antony pointedly remarked in 1927, 'indifference was a fault which could never be laid to his charge'.⁸

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL IN 1859

Buckler had been honorary architect to Lincoln Cathedral since at least 1857.9 He was appointed by the precentor Richard Pretyman Tomline (1793-1866), who along with the chancellor Francis Charles Massingberd (1800-72) and the dean John Giffard Ward (c. 1780-1860) was custodian of the cathedral during the scraping debate. 10 Buckler was probably brought in when the head joiner John Willson and architect Edward James Willson (1787-1854), presumably a relative of the former, died or left the cathedral's employ. 11 The latter is said to have offered 'occasional informal suggestions' on repair work. 12 The Rev. John C. Jackson, an ecclesiologist and the principal of Hackney Collegiate School near London (1853-69), claimed that the cathedral, before Buckler, was in the hands of 'a very respectable land-agent [...] wholly ignorant of architecture, and not up to the situation'. 13 He must have meant Edward Betham, who while receiving a salary for 'planning and valuing Fabrick Estates' is also described in the chapter acts as the 'Surveyor of the Fabric' from 1830.¹⁴ Betham, presumably alluding to Buckler, commented in 1861 that 'on particular occasions the opinion and advice of one of the most eminent architects of the period have from time to time been resorted to'.15 Another principal figure involved with the fabric's maintenance was William Sandall, who first came to the cathedral as a journeyman mason in 1841, progressing to mason by 1859.¹⁶ It was standard practice at Lincoln that the surveyor-architect supervised repairs from a distance and that the workmen used their discretion on fabric repair in their absence, a matter of considerable significance to Buckler's story. As Buckler claimed, his 'honorary' position meant he had 'no power to interfere with the established custom of carrying on the repairs', apart from 'readily giving sanction to the system adopted'.¹⁷ He remained in the Lincoln post until 1870, when he was succeeded by John Loughborough Pearson (1817–97).

In 1859, Lincoln Cathedral was largely as it is today, although its condition was fast deteriorating. Founded under Bishop Remigius de Fécamp in the mid-1070s, it was consecrated in 1092. What remains of this Romanesque building are the three central portals of the west front, which was widened during the thirteenth century in the Early English style. The treatment of this great façade in the early nineteenth century (Fig. 3) was to be a central element in the Buckler controversy. Already by the eighteenth century, the



Fig. 3. Lincoln Cathedral, west front, photograph by Francis Frith, 1850–70 (Victoria and Albert Museum, E.208:1934–1994)

west front had been the subject of much-needed restoration. James Essex of Cambridge (1722–84) was the superintendent of work conducted between 1761 and 1784, which included adding tall pinnacles to the central tower, as well as substantial interventions on the west front from 1778 onwards. ¹⁹ Much of this work was documented by Buckler. As Thomas Cocke has explained, Essex renewed the parapets and gables and replaced various decorative details. ²⁰ In addition, he substituted the carved pillars that flanked the portals with plain ones, refaced the lower parts of the piers between them, and replaced some beakhead carvings and moulded column bases. ²¹

Buckler's sketchbooks include two measured sketches from 1860 detailing Essex's interventions to the 'pronaos', or west front (Fig. 4). One of his annotations draws attention in his typically archaic prose to the previous architect's shortcomings:

ye junctions [...] of ye 13th cent. work with ye Norman is distinctly marked all ye way up — Before Essex smothered ye old work — ye junction of ye 14C work with ye Norman took place, or was distinct to view by ye side of ye beautiful arch wh crossed ye pronaos facing ye N: aisle.²²

In other words, Buckler was attempting to reconstruct a clear stratigraphy in the pronaos between the Norman and Gothic work that Essex had obscured in favour of a more harmonious visual appearance.

Buckler was keen to stress that the cathedral had a complex history of repairs, which in many places was hard to discern, and he worried that casual or ill-informed viewers might mistake earlier, heavy-handed interventions for his own. He attributed most of the previous repair work to Essex, using his name, as Cocke has put it, 'as a catch-all for any post-medieval interventions'. Essex had in fact rarely visited the cathedral, and many decisions from his time would have been made by his clerk of works Thomas Lumby and mason James Pink, who died after the restoration to the west front was begun. Yet the survival of much of this eighteenth-century repair work at Lincoln is testament to Buckler's own light-handed approach to restoration; Essex's work at Ely, by contrast, scarcely survived the nineteenth-century restorations of George Gilbert Scott (1811–78).²⁴

By 1859, Buckler had completed a long-term programme of external restoration on the cathedral's south-east corner (possibly including the south porch). ²⁵ Efforts were now to be focused on the west front. Over centuries, the build-up of 'scum' or surface patina, which Buckler characterised as 'an inimitable hue, permanent, indurated, and lustrous', had left the thirteenth-century masonry of the front's towers grey and that of the Norman pronaos between them black. ²⁶ Some sense of this darkening is conveyed in a photograph by Roger Fenton from the 1850s (Fig. 5). To remedy the disfigurement, it was standard practice to carry out a process of 'scraping'. The process generally meant removing the outer layer of stone to achieve a new, smooth surface, but eradicating the marks of tooling and the patina of age in the process or, worse, exposing the softer centre of the stone and hastening decay. Complaints about such work were already emerging in the 1840s and 1850s. To John Ruskin (1819–1900), this was 'the most dreadful fate which could befall any building'. ²⁷ It was precisely what Buckler was attacked for doing. Accusations against him, as well as the dean and chapter, also involved speculations

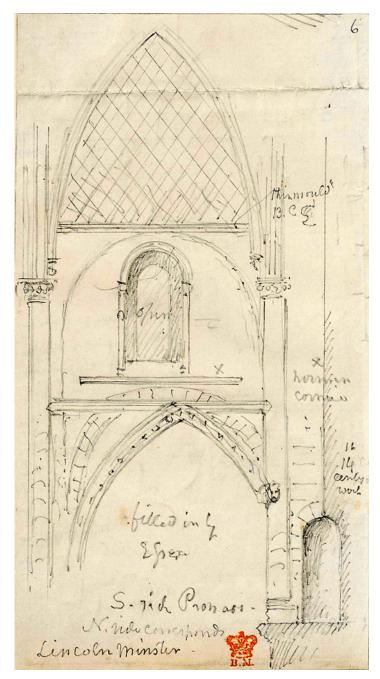


Fig. 4. Lincoln Cathedral, Romanesque 'pronaos', measured elevation drawing by John Chessell Buckler annotated with comments on James Essex's interventions, 1860 (British Library, Add MS 36417, f. 6)

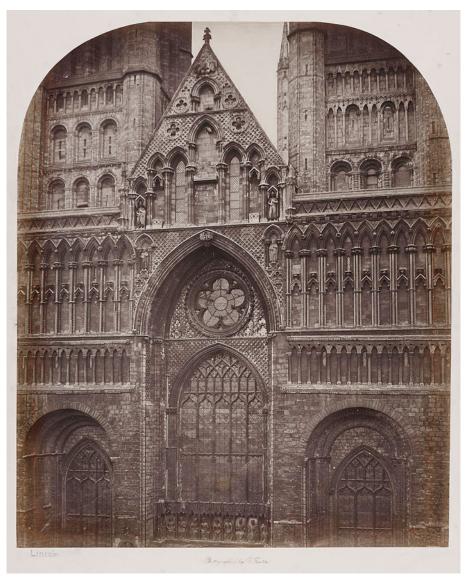


Fig. 5. Lincoln Cathedral, west front, photograph by Roger Fenton, c. 1856 (Victoria and Albert Museum, RPS.4492–2018)

about the removal of carved-stone mouldings and sculptures, in particular the beakhead and chevron mouldings and other ornaments on the jambs of the Norman portal, as well as images and figures, including the gallery of kings above the great west door (Fig. 6).

Exactly what Buckler did and where is hard to establish, as the records of the cathedral fabric fund, including the audits from 1859 to 1866, offer remarkably little precise information. This ambiguity also existed during the scandal, which was

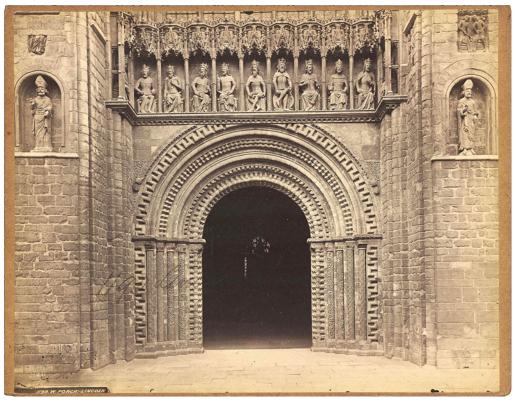


Fig. 6. Lincoln Cathedral, west door, photograph by Francis Frith, 1850–70 (Victoria and Albert Museum, E.208:1939–1994)

exacerbated by speculation about the precise nature of Buckler's involvement with the work. Although the *Stamford Mercury* had noted Buckler's employment in April 1859, the same newspaper claimed in August 1861 that the dean and chapter employed 'no architect whatever to watch the works', thereby leaving the cathedral 'to whistle its lament to the winds'. A belief that no overseeing architect was involved, and the assumption that the cathedral's fabric was in the care of the clergy, masons and local surveyors alone, inevitably led to complaints. As late as 1865, Reverend Jackson communicated to the Ecclesiological Society a vague report 'that Mr. Buckler of Oxford [...] has had some sort of connexion with the cathedral'. Such ambiguity could indicate that Buckler was rarely on site to oversee work.

Whatever the case, Buckler and the on-site masons appear to have taken a restrained, non-interventionist approach to fabric repair. Although Sandall was criticised in the press for being heavy-handed as mason, he defended himself in 1861 by describing the process he actually followed.

A scum collects on the surface of the stone, and this we wash and scrape off, but the surface of the stone is not injured; it is quite impossible to scrape it away without violence. As to

working or chipping away the stone, no practical man would ever think of doing any thing of the kind 31

Clearly the masons felt that they knew their job and got on with it.³² Buckler later claimed — perhaps hiding behind the clergy's bad reputation — that Sandall's heavy-handedness was encouraged by the 'watchful eye' of the then-deceased precentor Tomline, who had observed the restoration with 'jealous carefulness'.³³ In his book on his restoration of the cathedral (discussed below), Buckler confirmed Sandall's description of the technique that the masons were to follow.³⁴ As he explained,

the whole of the plain masonry is to be carefully cleansed in the manner already adopted, and by the same processes; namely, by washing the wall repeatedly with pure water, and then removing the 'scum', without in the least degree disturbing the surface of the stone.³⁵

Buckler's description seems intentionally vague, avoiding any mention of 'violence', no matter how innocuous. Nor did he specify the type or size of the instrument to be used for removing the 'scum'. Nevertheless, Sandall's testimony, corroborated by Buckler, suggests that while some scraping was taking place, its extent and damaging effects were subsequently exaggerated.

'SCRAPING' ATTACKS AND EARLY DEFENCES

The catalyst for the 'scraping' attacks appears to have been a letter of 1 July 1859 from George Gilbert Scott to the cathedral's dean, which Buckler subsequently published.³⁶ In his letter, Scott mentioned that he had been made aware of apparent scraping at the cathedral several years before, but had been reluctant to interfere, confident that the practice would cease in line with a changing culture of restoration. When he heard that the 'destructive process' was continuing, however, he decided to intervene, alarmed by the approach being adopted on 'that gem of English art, the south-eastern ['Judgement'] portal', dating to 1260.³⁷ He then cautioned the dean about conventional restoration in the past, which entailed removing the ancient fabric and bringing the building back to the appearance of a new structure'. 38 Imploring the dean to cease restoration of this kind, he described his own preferred method by quoting from his book A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches (1850), asserting that 'even one or two old bemossed stones, in a window or cornice, give value and truthfulness to the work'.39 He later claimed not to have had any further involvement in the issue until the summer of 1861; nor was he aware of Buckler's connection with the cathedral until several years later.40

Scott's 1859 missive, as he hinted to the dean, was in tune with broad changes in the perception of restoration. As Chris Miele has argued, for many early Victorian architects the authenticity of an ancient artefact 'was a function of the design carved into the stone, not of the substance of the stone itself'.⁴¹ However, from around 1860, wholesale and extensive reconstruction was moderated by a growing appreciation of the intrinsic value of original fabric and its patina, a decisive change of emphasis from form to materiality.⁴² Characterised by Miele as a 'change in sensibility', this shift from 'the speculative reconstruction and large-scale rebuilding' in the 1840s to a lighter approach resulted from a growing appreciation of weathered surfaces, as admired especially by

Ruskin.⁴³ Ruskin had a say in the Buckler controversy, mentioning it in 1861 and arguing that modern architects had hitherto misunderstood the thirteenth century 'in tracing out certain lines and figures' rather than seeking out the 'precious treasures' that were the marks of 'real tenderness' and 'human skill'.⁴⁴ Seminal to this turn of sensibility were the 1859 restoration of Waltham Abbey in Essex by William Burges (1827–81) and the careful 1860 restoration of Stone church near Dartford in Kent by George Edmund Street (1824–81).⁴⁵ Both projects were notable for their restraint, the restorers shunning the temptation to replace old parts, deemed to be incongruous with a church's dominant style, with new work.

It was within this context that the Lincoln scandal exploded. The case was reported widely, over half a decade, in *The Times*, the *Builder*, the *Building News*, the *Lincoln*, *Rutland and Stamford Mercury* (usually referred to as the *Stamford Mercury*) and, most importantly, the *Ecclesiologist*. ⁴⁶ In the spring of 1859, the *Stamford Mercury* talked admiringly of 'Mr. Buckler, the celebrated Gothic architect, who revives the original beauty of our grand old cathedral structures with masterly faithfulness and exquisite skill'. ⁴⁷ Yet the same newspaper, without mentioning Buckler, had replaced its admiration with disdain by the summer of 1861, when it published a brief summary of the twenty-second anniversary meeting of the Ecclesiological Society, which led to scraping accusations erupting publicly. ⁴⁸

This meeting on 13 June was later described by the Ecclesiologist. Alexander Beresford Hope (1820–87) took the chair, with Benjamin Webb (1819–85) as secretary. Those in attendance included the Lincoln antiquary Sir Charles Anderson (1804–91), the Rev. John Jackson, the architects Scott, Street and William White (1825–1900), the writer and publisher John Henry Parker (1806–84), the cleric and ecclesiologist John Mason Neale (1818-66) and Ruskin. With 'conservatism' firmly on the agenda, Anderson took the first opportunity to raise concerns about the restoration of Lincoln Cathedral, fearing that the 'scraping' perceived to be taking place there would soon move from the Gothic fabric of the building to the Norman parts of the west front.⁴⁹ By this time, Scott had made his visit to the cathedral. As the Ecclesiologist paraphrased, he 'found that the work was very much over-done and that harm had ensued', adding that the 'colour given to the cathedral was frightful' and that the work had 'destroyed its beauty in point of colour'.⁵⁰ The correspondent further recorded that 'Mr J. H. Parker deprecated any scraping of the work at Lincoln cathedral — (hear, hear) — or any other improper interference with it'.51 Street voiced his own fears that restorers were tooling over medieval work 'with very bad effect'.⁵²

Attracting professional support from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), not long before this body published its own anti-renewal guidance, the *Ecclesiologist* described the saga in its August 1861 issue as that of the RIBA and the Ecclesiological Society 'versus the Lincoln Cathedral chapter'.⁵³ The magazine, however, sought to remain neutral, or perhaps to play both sides. Inflaming the controversy, it printed an anonymous poem in the same edition titled 'Lincoln Minster and the Lay of Lincoln'. Aside from its ecclesiastical inferences, the word 'lay' neatly referred both to a form of narrative poem, often with a heightened sense of saga, and to architectural 'lay' figures of questionable knowledge. The poem opens by dismissing the ecclesiological clique's putative expertise, and their willingness to stand (often blindly) behind their leaders:

Some gentlemen and architects, who live at home at ease, Meet once or twice a year to talk about Ecclesiology; and sit in grave assembly Sessional, While amateurs applaud and echo some Professional.⁵⁴

Although anonymous, the bard must have been Buckler, as the language bears considerable similarities to his rhetorical style.⁵⁵ Scott himself surmised as much in 1866: the 'exquisite poem must have been from none other than the tasteful pen of Mr. Buckler himself',⁵⁶

After this dramatic start came nearly three years of calm, but disquiet soon resurfaced. In August 1864, the architect E. W. Godwin (1833–86), a proponent of Ruskinian principles, resurrected the issue in *The Times*, objecting to the restorers' 'destruction of art detail and architectural history' on Lincoln Cathedral's west front.⁵⁷ Around the same time, Scott made another visit to the cathedral, at the invitation of the precentor, while on a sketching tour of Lincolnshire. Observing the condition of the fabric on the west front, he presented his views to the cathedral authorities on the process of cleaning by 'scraping'. As he later recalled:

The precentor at once explained that [...] no iron tool was made use of in the process, and, sending for the senior mason, told him to show me what implement he made use of [...] When he returned [he was holding] to the precentor's evident astonishment [...] a tool of the form of a small crowbar, or elongated chisel, some two or two-and-a-half feet long, and about half an inch in diameter with a very sharp chisel edge.⁵⁸

Buckler later zealously defended himself against having overseen any process analogous to 'scraping'. He was convinced that a cabal was being led against him by Scott, which accounts for his scathing riposte:

Mr. G. G. Scott's examination of the workman's tools, calls to mind an anecdote of the artist who was discovered peeping into Turner's colour box, when re-touching a picture at the Academy. The great artist observed, 'Sir, it is not in the box'. Large or small, for the tools are of all sizes, — what are they compared with the crowbars and pickaxes, the instruments with which Mr. Scott restores ancient Churches?⁵⁹

Buckler's defence was to villainise the accuser and turn him into a perpetrator of this same practice.

Further criticism of the dean and chapter appeared in early January 1865, in a letter to the *Stamford Mercury* from a correspondent adopting the nom de plume 'Preservando'.⁶⁰ Here, for the first time, specific mention of Buckler's involvement was made. Referring — presumably ironically — to the 'great works Mr. Buckler has accomplished', the author questioned 'how often he has been at Lincoln to superintend the works which are said to be under his guidance [... and] how often he has ever mounted the scaffold for to see what is really done?'⁶¹

As a response to 'Preservando', the dean and chapter sent a letter to the *Builder*, which was published soon after.⁶² They maintained that the work should continue under Buckler and explained that they were in the process of collecting remains of the original Norman colonettes removed earlier in the century, so as to 'copy them in the minutest details in Lincoln stone'; these shafts survive today in the cathedral's lapidarium.

They also claimed only to be replacing those parts of the Norman doorways where the fabric was 'absolutely perishing from age'. However, the question remained over whether the cathedral would remain a patchwork, with the replacement stone lacking the 'scum' of the old, or whether the 'scum' should be removed from the older work. In response, the chapter again described and defended the method of repair:

all that is done at Lincoln is to remove the black sooty matter by which this surface [of Lincoln oolite] is overlaid. This is done by first wetting the stone with water from a brush, and then taking off the black with a small tool, without either mallet or hammer, leaving the tool marks of the old Norman workmen. Not even this process, it is said, has been or will be applied to the Norman carvings.⁶³

These repeated assurances seemed to do no good, and the controversy continued to do the rounds.⁶⁴ Discontent was voiced in March 1865 by the *Building News*. Under the title 'Vandalism in Cathedrals', the periodical expressed incredulity that the scraping at Lincoln went on 'in spite of all remonstrance', adding that the cathedral 'deserves better than to be entrusted to an authority with the powers of an autocrat and the propensities of a charwoman'.⁶⁵

The following months brought several defences of the Lincoln chapter, including one in May 1865 from the well-known Cambridge antiquary the Rev. George Williams (1814–78). 66 After a recent visit to Lincoln, he concluded that the restoration programme was of a conservative nature and Buckler's supervision worthy of the task. He then offered his own supposedly objective account of the fabric's condition and the methods that had been used. He noted that the substitution (early in the nineteenth century) of a soft Yorkshire stone for the locally quarried onlite on the decayed Norman doorways had hastened their decay; that fragments of the original Norman colonettes were being collected to provide models for the new work; that ornaments retaining any patterns of the original sculpture were being left untouched; that the build-up of a thick layer of 'scum' had both concealed the sculptural decorations and obliterated many of the original tool marks; that the discrepancy between old and new masonry was severe and the two needed to be brought together; and that, in the careful process of 'scum' removal, the medieval workmanship could now sometimes be seen.

Williams's defence did little to calm the storm, however, and the ecclesiologists raised the issue once more at their twenty-sixth anniversary meeting on 14 June 1865. Anderson, Street and White brought the saga to a head and their responses were recorded in the minutes published in the August edition of the *Ecclesiologist*, including the following contribution made by Street:

If it is the case that they are tooling the stones all over at Lincoln in order to get a uniform surface, he [Street] did not know what was too strong to say—one could only hope to get the Dean and Chapter there, and tool them all over. (Laughter and applause).⁶⁷

Street, supported by White, believed that a patchwork appearance was actually desirable, which made any 'cleaning' redundant. White (who had been a close friend of Street in the office of Scott and Moffatt) added that the process at Lincoln was 'one of the most dangerous and destructive elements in church restoration' and that 'no tool,

no scraper, no instrument whatever, ought to be used $[\dots]$ harder than a common clothes-brush'.⁶⁸

Massingberd, the cathedral's chancellor, stepped in to defend the dean and chapter in the following October instalment of the Ecclesiologist. 69 He feared that a completely noninterventionist approach would allow the building to crumble, and he therefore supported the current approach of carefully removing crumbling stonework and replacing it with fine imitations. He also insisted that restorations had been carried out under 'the advice of a responsible architect', with the Norman relief sculpture remaining 'almost untouched'. The 'scum' on the west front was likewise being carefully removed from old stone 'by a small instrument about three inches long, used by the hand, without a mallet, and with the aid of water'. To In the same issue, the Rev. John Jackson also offered qualified support for the continuing restoration, following a recent visit to Lincoln. He admitted that he may have previously been 'instrumental in giving a stronger colouring to some of the remarks made than is altogether warranted by the circumstances'.71 He then praised the dean and chapter for basic weatherproofing and for replacing irretrievably decayed stone or badly crafted stone of recent date. He added, however, that 'there we must stop' because 'scraping of any sort should have been wholly dispensed with; no piece of carved stone should have been discarded unless utterly perished'.⁷²

In October, the Building News weighed in with a rejoinder to Massingberd. It was moot, argued the journal, whether a tool used for repairs measured only some two or three inches in length, since 'a boy with a small file would be able to destroy the surface of the most beautiful stone carving in the cathedral'.⁷³ The Ecclesiologist echoed this sentiment in its own response that month.⁷⁴ Street advanced more forceful arguments in a lengthy letter published in the Ecclesiologist's December edition, following a visit to the cathedral. Although he had hoped to exonerate the dean and chapter, the visit confirmed his worst fears. 75 He first dismissed the cleaning as redundant, not only because Lincoln stone was hard and resilient, but because it would be covered again by lichen in a few years. He admitted that some stonework may have required renewal, while commending the replacement of modern shafts with new ones based on medieval examples.⁷⁶ On balance, however, Street thought that the restoration was inadequate if not destructive. The masons' tools had left the ancient stonework disfigured with arbitrary and irregular furrows, and the carved figures and foliage decoration on the west front had been subjected to a 'long catalogue of errors'.⁷⁷ In fact, he maintained, most of the enrichments, including the statues of kings, had been destroyed by extensive recutting. His conclusion was that the workmen were 'not sufficiently skilled, or not sufficiently superintended'. 78 Similar accusations continued to be made well into 1866, including the final grim words on the matter that December from the Ecclesiologist, which declared Buckler to be 'utterly unqualified for the task of restoring Lincoln'. 79

UNFOUNDED ACCUSATIONS?

Despite these published testimonies, what Buckler actually did at Lincoln Cathedral remains unclear. His internal repairs and enrichments were uncontroversial. They included adding a canopy and crockets to the medieval east wall of the choir screen

behind Essex's reredos. ⁸⁰ As part of this remodelling, Buckler added Decorated tracery to the screen and pierced the reredos to make it easier to see the east window beyond. ⁸¹ He also relaid the floor of the sanctuary in front of the screen and either side of the altar, arranging the Minton tiles and marble to resemble Cosmati work. ⁸² As for Buckler's other work on the cathedral, it is difficult to find evidence of anything very substantial. In 1863, proposed works were itemised in a fabric fund audit, when it was resolved 'that the following sums be expended on the restoration of the cathedral during the ensuing year, namely £250 for the repairs to the roof of the southern aisle and, £350 for the central arch of the west front, as well as £20 for the buttresses and £50 for the cloister ceiling'. ⁸³ None of these sums is large compared to other restorations at the time, or to those planned for the cathedral in the 1870s and 1880s (discussed below). Thomas Cocke has appraised the work carried out during Buckler's time in detail:

The recesses at the north and south ends of the Romanesque west front which corresponded with the great portals were unblocked, the plain pilasters inserted by Essex or his successors were replaced in the north and south portals with carved ones, and the missing pillars supplied in the outer order of the central doorway. As to the carving [...] no capital was replaced, but they were scraped clean to a degree considered by Street to be as bad as recutting. The chevron and the beakhead in the arches were largely replaced as a 'severe but necessary measure' and Buckler admitted that 'numerous blocks in consecutive orders have been taken away and replaced', in spite of his claim that he left alone even the eighteenth-century repairs.⁸⁴

In addition, then, to his sensitive undoing of post-medieval reparation, Buckler's work largely continued the routine repairs carried out since the mid-eighteenth century, which Cocke has described as merely cleaning and polishing. These routine repairs, however, were receiving external scrutiny perhaps for the first time, and were regarded as insensitive or worse.⁸⁵

That Buckler's approach was, in his own words, 'conscientious preservation' rather than 'destructive' restoration stands. Received the interest their estates following Buckler's retirement in 1870. Francis Hill has noted, the commissioners judged the cathedral to be 'in such a satisfactory state of repair that the comparatively small sum of £20,000 was allotted for the repair and improvement of the fabric'. Buckler's successor, Pearson, gave a higher estimate in 1885 for the cost of necessary repairs — 'at not less than £70,470' — but this sum did not necessarily rebuke Buckler's work either. Indeed, a recent assessment by the cathedral's current architect, Nicholas Rank, goes further in exonerating Buckler of 'scraping' in any extreme form. In quantity and intensity, the attacks against Buckler's methods appear greatly disproportionate to the work that took place.

BUCKLER'S INTEMPERATE BOOK

The Bucklers rallied to defend the family name. In the August 1865 issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Charles Alban Buckler confronted 'the ignorant and invidious aspersions and misstatements' coming from the Ecclesiological Society related to the

Lincoln restoration, writing that the 'very persons who speak and write most pathetically, and with assumed disinterestedness, about hoar antiquity and "bemossed stones" [...] have proved by deeds which belie their words to be the most unscrupulous and destructive of innovators'. Buckler himself, who was never supine in the face of an injustice, went a large step further in 1866 by issuing an entire book on the scandal, titled *A Description and Defence of the Restorations of the Exterior of Lincoln Cathedral: With a Comparative Examination of the Restorations of Other Cathedrals, Parish Churches, &c.* Parish Churches, Buckler on the costs were met by the Lincoln Cathedral chapter. An angry defence of his actions, running to 282 unillustrated pages, the work was also a polemic against what Buckler called 'architectural innovation' or 'the destructive method' of restoration. It has an epistolary composition that draws copiously on letters between Scott, Buckler and the dean and chapter. In the preface, Buckler outlined his primary motives as

the vindication of the writer as director and constant superintendent of the *restorations* in question; and, the consideration of the works performed under this same designation in other places, by those very persons who have made themselves most conspicuous in censuring the proceedings adopted at Lincoln.⁹⁴

As he informed the reader, Buckler had prepared the defence in 1859 (following Scott's first letter to the dean), but had laid it aside in the hope that Scott would drop his charges.

Buckler expected his book would provoke outrage. Writing in March 1866 to his confidant, the Rev. William Dyke (fellow and later vice-principal of Jesus College, Oxford), he declared that he was ready to publish his manuscript 'without the dread of the score of angry critics by whom I shall be assailed, but assailed by them he most certainly was.⁹⁵ One damning response to the book appeared in the Building News, arguing that it was 'really a most virulent, blind, and furious attack upon ecclesiologists in general and Mr G G Scott in particular [... with] almost profanity of language .96 The review of the book in the Ecclesiologist opened with the regret that 'we cannot congratulate the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln upon their defender' and concluded that 'we have never, to our recollection, had to get through so irksome, vulgar, prejudiced, and in every way unsatisfactory a book' 97 The Ecclesiological Society defended its own, strenuously denying Buckler's accusation that it was 'entirely careless of antiquity' 98 The Saturday Review, established by Beresford Hope in 1855 and loyal to Scott, was likewise scathing. 99 It called Buckler's criticisms of Scott an appeal to hypocrisy; and, on the issue of patina, it claimed that while to Buckler the 'scum' was 'nothing but an external coating of dirt and smoke', to Street and others it was 'the very true original surface itself, blackened and lichened over by nature's kindly hand' 100 The Athenæum gave a more balanced account and, although it ultimately sided with Buckler's detractors, raised the interesting point that the controversy was not only acrimonious but novel: 'Rare is it that one member of this profession comments on the acts of another [...] Etiquette has generally mastered love for Art, and wrecking gone unheeded.'101 The Buckler scandal, it suggested, had changed the nature of architectural debate for the better.

Support for Buckler was more limited. The *Anti-Teapot Review* and *Union Review: A Magazine of Catholic Literature and Art* were two of Buckler's few steadfast champions. ¹⁰² The short-lived Anti-Teapot Society had been founded to stand against 'Pharisaism', or hypocrisy, the name referring to a belief that such discussions were prone to take place at the tea parties popular with dissenters. ¹⁰³ The *Anti-Teapot Review* declared that a 'great injustice has been committed by certain architectural and ecclesiological busybodies against the dean and chapter of Lincoln'. ¹⁰⁴ Observing that the west front was still so deeply coloured that 'strangers can scarcely be persuaded that anything has been done to it', it argued that the cathedral officials had authorised the best means of restoration. ¹⁰⁵ The *Union Review* was adamant that

the actual process of cleansing the ancient masonry of the Minster and the chipping and scraping imagined and described, the one by the author, the other by his opponents, are at complete variance [...] The surface of the stonework has not been disturbed and its features remain unchanged [...] Ancient architecture could find no truer advocate than the author of this work [... but] it would seem that the advocates of scum and soot are unwilling to be convinced. 106

Both magazines were evidently baffled by the accusations of Bucklers' critics.

Buckler's *Description and Defence*, despite its many longueurs, is a work of passionate invective, incautious criticism and hyper-emotionality.¹⁰⁷ As such, it forms part of an enduring tradition of the architectural protest book, one followed into the twentieth century in such works as Colin Amery's and Dan Cruickshank's no less bellicose *The Rape of Britain* (1975).¹⁰⁸ An earlier work by Buckler, comparable in tone, was his strongly worded pamphlet aimed at preventing the demolition of the Old Quadrangle of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1823.¹⁰⁹ The outrage voiced by Buckler and others mostly saved the cloister of the north range from destruction, with the demolished parts quickly rebuilt in a manner advocated by Buckler and his father.¹¹⁰ Yet, while the language of protest may have served its purpose well at the time of the Magdalen scandal, it did little to aid its author's cause in 1866. This time, it was his name and reputation rather than architecture that Buckler sought to defend.

Buckler's book was preoccupied with Scott, treating the latter's criticism as a personal attack. As Scott quipped, 'my name appears to be the *catchword* throughout his volume'.¹¹¹ Buckler adopted a rhetorical style of jocund malice, for example, by ironically likening Scott's sentimentality to the emotional outpourings of Goethe's romantic hero Werther:

If Mr. G. G. Scott, like James Wyatt, had never boasted of his loves [...] if he had ignored architectural antiquities [...] he might have escaped the severity of censure [...] but [...] after pouring out all the sorrows of Wert[h]er in behalf of the Minster, he turns aside, and commends, it may be, another bay of some Cathedral to the tender mercies of [Scott] the despoiler. 112

Ultimately, Scott would be judged by history more harshly than Buckler, his reputation being especially damaged by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). He was no stranger to contemporary criticism, even from the Ecclesiological Society; but at the time of the Lincoln saga he was one of the society's heroes. 113 Moreover, Buckler's

vitriolic attacks on Scott in his book were not limited to the Lincoln controversy, but also cited several instances of 'havoc' for which Buckler held Scott responsible. He drew attention, for example, to Scott's restoration of the fourteenth-century chantry chapel of St Mary the Virgin on Wakefield Bridge in Yorkshire, going into this matter at some length. A competition had been advertised by the Yorkshire Architectural Society in 1843 for designs to bring the chapel back into church use. Buckler had proposed a conservative restoration, but Scott, who won the commission, replaced the original fabric wholesale in 1847, using a perishable Caen stone. Buckler, in his Description and Defence, not only chronicled Scott's malpractices, but set out his own superior antiquarian credentials for restoring the chapel, having collected archaeological memoranda on it for thirty years. 115

All of the charges made by Buckler in reference to Scott's work were duly answered by Scott himself in the pages of the *Ecclesiologist*. Scott admitted instances where he had failed, for various reasons, to carry out restorations according to the new conservative model, identifying early contradictions between his practice and his preaching. As regards the Wakefield commission, for instance, he commented that 'the importance of retaining the *ipsissimi lapides* [the very stones themselves] had not then been duly appreciated', and so stonework in advanced decay was renewed. He also added that, should Buckler's account of his undertakings at Lincoln be true, then he could scarcely object to them. He was thus surprisingly forgiving of Buckler, hoping that some good could still come of the controversy, since it had provoked a widespread debate about restoration.

As for Buckler's other detractors, only Street is mentioned in the book and only briefly. In this notable passage, Buckler criticised the restoration of the medieval church of St James at Cowley in Oxfordshire, which Street largely rebuilt in 1862–65. Throwing Street's criticisms back at him, Buckler wrote that 'he who tosses ancient architecture to the right and to the left, and maltreats and disfigures with architectural coxcombery the remains he spares, must needs exhibit his ecclesiological veracity at Lincoln'. Part of his reticence to say any more about Street is explained by a remark to Dyke: 'I intend to be severe, but do not wish to approach the Vulgarity of Street.' Otherwise, Buckler's reserve is difficult to account for, since Street was an intimate member of the ecclesiological clique and a favourite of the society's leading light Benjamin Webb — although it may be that Buckler considered it sufficient to aim his vitriol at his long-term antagonist Scott.

PROFESSIONAL RIVALRIES

The severity of the attacks that Buckler faced over his repair work at Lincoln Cathedral can be explained by noting an essential difference between him and many of his critics. Buckler was a late Georgian proponent of the Gothic rather than a Victorian one, much less a 'High Victorian'. He generally built in the Gothic revival style from a conservative antiquarian perspective. His traditionalism extended to his restoration work, which was usually diligent but muted in its execution. In this regard, too, he was aloof from the work of the fashionable mainstream of the profession. He may, therefore, have felt a sense of estrangement, exacerbated by the increasingly archaic appellation 'antiquary' with which he was firmly associated. He was an outsider, forced to confront the

challenge posed by the rise of High Victorianism and the professionalisation of architecture, tendencies that went against traditional antiquarianism. Embedded within the debates about 'scraping' was a notion of the old guard typified by Buckler's generation, which sought to defend the judgement of the individual relying on experience. By midcentury, however, a younger generation of architects was beginning to engage with the emerging codification of the profession that would follow.

Indicative of this divide is William Morris. His view of Buckler was formed as an undergraduate at Exeter College, Oxford, where he witnessed Buckler's restoration of the pinnacles of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford (1848-52). As Morris's biographer John William Mackail put it in 1891, Morris pigeonholed Buckler at the time as having belonged to the previous 'Gothic generation' or the 'second period of Gothic knowledge', which he held in 'profound contempt'. 122 Before mid-century, however, the position of Buckler and his family had been very different. In fact, John Buckler senior had been closely associated with an early preservationist faction within the Society of Antiquaries, which was led by the architect-draughtsman John Carter (1748–1817) and the veteran antiquary and former society director Richard Gough (1735-1809). This faction helped develop a new, scientific form of what we would now call medieval archaeology while fighting against the contemporary craze for 'innovations' in restoration work that were spearheaded in the 1790s by James Wyatt. 123 John Chessell Buckler later declared himself an 'antiquary of the school of Carter'. 124 But now he was being accused, much like Wyatt had been, of 'having the hand of the spoiler about him'. 125 The scandal at Lincoln, therefore, marked a serious turn in the fortunes of the Buckler dynasty. In short, a professional gulf between Buckler and his adversaries underpinned the scraping controversy. This was also reflected in a difference in philosophical approach towards restoration.

BUCKLER'S RESTORATION PHILOSOPHY

Beyond Lincoln, Buckler's restoration works were generally on the 'conservative' end of the spectrum, to use a term employed in a debate held at the Ecclesiological Society in 1847. 126 His experience was largely one of success. One of his first projects was the remodelling of the early fifteenth-century chancel at Adderbury church in Oxfordshire (1834). Of the restored east window, Buckler's contemporary E. A. Freeman said that 'nothing can be more creditable to the restorers'. 127 Buckler also enjoyed the early favour of the ecclesiologist John Mason Neale when he assisted him on the restoration of the church of St Nicholas at Old Shoreham in Sussex (1838).¹²⁸ The Ecclesiological Society itself approved of his work on St Mary's at Iffley in Oxfordshire (1856-58), even though he uncharacteristically replaced the then existing Perpendicular window on the west front with a Norman oculus, based on surviving traces. 129 His retention, during his restoration of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford, of the statues at the bases of the pinnacles would even succeed in pleasing the SPAB four decades later. 130 He displayed a similarly conservative approach during his restoration of Brockhampton Manor, Herefordshire, a timber-framed building dating mostly to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries, with which he was involved from 1866 or before. As was usual, he set out clear objectives for the work, resolving that 'at Brockhampton it was

an indispensable requisite that nothing on the plea of amendment should be derogatory to the antiquity of the place'. 131

Also illustrative of Buckler's approach is the subtle repair work he undertook at Brasenose, Jesus, Magdalen and Oriel Colleges in Oxford, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s. ¹³² For example, at Oriel, where he restored the exteriors of the chapel and hall (1852), he specifically advised the fellows against a 'scraping' approach. ¹³³ It was as though, like medieval masons working on cathedrals over centuries, he conceived of his role as contributing to a broader tradition of maintenance, seeking to preserve harmony over time through quiet repair work rather than by adding new work and bringing about chronological disjuncture — as was likely the case at Lincoln Cathedral too. ¹³⁴ As the unnamed bard, speaking for Buckler, puts it in 'The Lay of Lincoln':

Shade of Remigius! Pardon me the crime Of owning submissive reverence to time. 135

As regards his interventions at Lincoln, Buckler claimed that they 'seek not applause', adding that they were 'doing good to the fabric; making it, as far as they extend, such as it once was'. 136

In his book, under the heading 'Restoration by Repair', Buckler described his 'honest, wholesome restoration' of the decayed features of the cathedral, claiming that his ambition was 'to maintain the character of the ancient detail, wherever necessity obliges its renewal'. In this respect, his project had a didactic dimension comparable to Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's interests in restoring Gothic buildings to show their histories of construction; for, in Buckler's view, Lincoln Cathedral 'relates its periodical changes circumstantially; its accessions of strength, of adornment, of usefulness, all are explained and illustrated in due order'. Yet his account is far from limpid. Elsewhere he argued that 'age has given an air — an aspect — to ancient buildings, which add indescribably to the interest which their origin and their architecture forcibly excite'. That 'aspect' is not defined, but it is still clear that he felt a building's patina should not obscure its architectural history.

It is useful to draw an analogy between Buckler's approaches to fabric restoration and topographical draughtsmanship. After all, Buckler learned his trade in an age when, as Giles Worsley put it, 'the connection between the topographical artist and the architect was close, with the one slipping easily into the role of the other'. ¹⁴⁰ In the monumental view of Lincoln Cathedral from the south-west, which is characteristic of Buckler's topographical prints (Fig. 1), the subject is almost autonomous, extending up to the plate mark. Whereas the figures and landscape are made to appear inessential, architectural details are all carefully delineated. Buckler, as a scion of John Carter, inherited an approach to topographical drawing that thus aimed to provide an empirical record of a building, delineating both its details and its historical layers.

Insight into the specifics of such an approach can be gleaned from Ruskin's essay 'Of Turnerian Topography', published in his *Modern Painters* (1856).¹⁴¹ Writing in the 1850s but looking back on past tradition, Ruskin outlined three approaches to topographical art: the first involving a priori knowledge and the other two, which he was more concerned with, being the 'simple' and the 'Turnerian'. These latter two approaches, he

argued, were different in their representations of 'facts'. He argued that the former favoured the primacy of the outward eye, whereas the latter gave primacy to the inward eye, and he further contended that there was a pristine subjectivity out of which a so-called 'Turnerian' topographical image emerged, which can be better understood as the outcome of the artist's mind rather than the more traditional kind of image still being produced by others — who would include Buckler. If we view the 'simple' approach as akin to Buckler's (in a tradition of record-making going back to William Stukeley), in the eyes of Ruskin it lacked 'soul'.

It may therefore be that, under Buckler's supervision, the west front of Lincoln Cathedral was being conceived in a manner akin to a frozen pictorial representation, rather than as part of a 'living' tradition. The problem with the sentimentality that Buckler crudely caricatured in Scott's work lay not only in a belief in its hypocrisy. It also encapsulated Buckler's unease about the very notion of so-called 'pleasing decay'. A restoration approach that favoured the retention of patina and crumbling fabric could obfuscate edges and details, or even the 'lines and figures' that Ruskin had alluded to, and confuse the archaeological record. Thus, as Julian Munby has shown, Buckler was chiefly motivated in his drawings by record-making, and a corresponding concern would appear to underpin his restoration work. If In fact, this very position comes to light in the 'Lay of Lincoln', in a mocking jibe at the Ruskinian mindset:

And as for those Capitulars, who call themselves Trustees
Or guardians of the fabric, I'll give them if they please
A motto for their guidance, cheaper far and easier,
'Floreat Rubigo, ruat h[a]ec ecclesia' ['let mildew flourish, let this church collapse']. 143

John Chessell Buckler wanted to see the details, not a vague overall patina. The Lincoln episode epitomised the Ruskinian conflict between the 'simple' topographical position (upheld by the Bucklers) and the 'Turnerian' outlook (embraced by their detractors). Individual positions could be more nuanced than either conservative or destructive, but the two parties still disagreed on their interpretation of sensitive repair in line with contrasting philosophical positions.

Buckler neatly summarised his championing of the 'archaeological record' in his book:

There can be no doubt [...] that nothing modern interrupts the general aspect [...] The eye is not cheated with new work vainly made to appear, all at once, like old. The few introductions which have been made of new stone are distinguishable [...] the evidence is ever present [...] and no amount of invective, no ingenuity of animadversion, can affix a counterfeit mark to the genuine productions of antiquity.¹⁴⁴

The notion of 'honest' repair, or light restoration, therefore, was adopted — or at least intended — a decade before the SPAB produced its manifesto.

CONCLUSION

The ecclesiologists sought to challenge 'conservative' repair with new vigour at exactly the moment that Buckler was overseeing Lincoln Cathedral's restoration. His activities there provided a perfect opportunity to conduct a case study of and publicise their opposition to such an approach — with Buckler being cast as the unwitting scapegoat. In seeking to uphold his antiquarian reputation, Buckler himself determined to play hero to a villain, namely Scott the pseudo-restorer, by claiming a superior knowledge. As the *Ecclesiologist* put it in a barbed manner:

In his opinion Mr. Scott seems to be a mere ignoramus — so beneath [Buckler's] notice that he will not, in fact, 'condescend' to discuss antiquarian matters with him [...] We are not surprised so much at this sort of thing, because each of the architects of Mr. Buckler's date and calibre always esteemed himself as the man of the day [...] But then Mr. Buckler is really the only architect remaining who knows anything [... having] ridiculous pretensions to a monopoly of art-knowledge. 145

The Lincoln saga shows how professional reputation rested on tangential issues, such as the temperaments of the acrimonious and proud Buckler and the lofty and ambitious Scott. Buckler was blackballed by a self-identifying professional clique, keen to boost their own reputations and gain the favour of patronage. As the *Union Review* put it in its defence of Buckler in 1866, 'many architects, no doubt, are willing to eat dirt in the most grovelling manner for the patronage of an ecclesiological clique of some influence and great determination'.¹⁴⁶

The professional testimony of so many architects regarding Lincoln Cathedral should not be ignored. There may, indeed, have been some obtrusive 'scraping' there, perhaps leaving marks of modern tooling, which was at variance with Buckler's own vague claims. Even so, the Lincoln scandal probably began in the ambiguous circumstances about what was actually happening at the cathedral: the assumed lack of employment of a professional architect, the meddling of certain perhaps overzealous masons, an uneasiness about repair treatments, and some confusion in the archaeological reading of repairs carried out by Essex, Betham, Willson and others. Although both sides ultimately subscribed to similar views on cathedral restoration, the Ecclesiological Society sought to preserve the power and status of its clique of members from a threatening outsider with claims to a deeper-rooted antiquarian pedigree. They were, after all, self-conscious about their posterity, and certain that the society should not be forgotten in the 'artistic history of the nineteenth century'. 147

Although Buckler wrote his *Description and Defence* as a forlorn attempt to uphold his family's reputation, he was also, as Gavin Stamp suggested, 'motivated largely by professional jealousy'.¹⁴⁸ Scott's practice was associated with no fewer than thirty cathedrals, so perhaps Buckler had hoped to secure an important commission as a surveyor of his own by publishing, with his son Charles Alban, *A History of the Architecture of the Abbey Church of St Alban* (1847).¹⁴⁹ If so, his hopes were dashed when Scott was appointed surveyor of St Albans Abbey Church (later cathedral) in 1856. It was a jealous and greedy Scott whom the bard depicted in his poem:

Now as to this Cathedral, I suppose you've all been told of it I have for many years been trying to get hold of it. 150

This acidic attack on Scott, Stamp argued, foresaw the 'more objective and damaging attacks' on Scott's restoration work that surfaced following the establishment of the

SPAB.¹⁵¹ Yet, ironically, in the 1860s Scott was adopting an anti-scrape position and beginning to act as prophet to the 'Anti-Scrape' movement. Buckler's book, a paragon of the polemical tradition in conservation, should also be seen as part of the prehistory of the SPAB. The society's nickname 'Anti-Scrape' may even have emerged from the Lincoln controversy.

In exonerating Buckler, Nicholas Rank is of the opinion that Scott and others 'who criticised Buckler's work were ignorant of what was really happening'. ¹⁵² Already in 1866, the Rev. John Jackson admitted that 'several of the speakers exaggerated the case considerably against the restorers', and even Scott confessed that the affair had 'no doubt been, in some instances, exaggerated and erroneous in point of detail' by his side. ¹⁵³ The evidence does not suggest a simplistic vindication, but rather that the charges against Buckler should in part be alleviated. As for Buckler, when he was replaced as honorary cathedral architect in 1870 by Pearson, this change of hands was approved by none other than the latter's good friend Scott. ¹⁵⁴ Buckler voiced his disappointment, suggesting he had wished to stay in the post and adding that 'I shall continue to regret that the last active days of my life are not to be employed in [the cathedral's] service'. ¹⁵⁵ We are forced to conclude, therefore, as the *Ecclesiologist* put it ironically in December 1866, that 'poor Mr. Buckler is the innocent victim of malice and envy'. ¹⁵⁶

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following people for their help and generosity in shaping and strengthening this article: Carol and Nicholas Bennett, Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Jane Cowan, Peter Howell, David Jefferson, Julian Munby, Nicholas Rank and Julia Skinner. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Geoff Brandwood, Anthony Gerbino and David Hemsoll at *Architectural History*, whose patient support and advice enabled me to greatly improve it. Above all, I thank my thesis supervisors, Martin Bressani, Laurent Stalder and Geoffrey Tyack, and my friends and former colleagues at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zurich.

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ABSTRACT

Between 1859 and 1866, John Chessell Buckler (1793–1894) was accused, as architect to Lincoln Cathedral, of overseeing a process of 'scraping' the exterior stonework of the building during its restoration. The controversy involved the leading architectural bodies of the time, with professional journals and both national and local newspapers reporting on it over the course of half a decade. In his defence, Buckler published an angry book that, rather than exonerating the author, offended many members of the architectural profession, particularly George Gilbert Scott and the Ecclesiological Society. The dispute took place during a conservative shift in attitude to the repair of historic buildings. This essay attempts to clarify what Buckler did, what was at

stake for his detractors, and what the 'scraping' scandal reveals about the political atmosphere of nineteenth-century British architectural culture.

NOTES

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- 2 For the Bucklers, see also Geoffrey Tyack, 'Buckler, John (1770–1851), artist and architect', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, oxforddnb.com/view/article/3863 (accessed on 21 July 2020).
- 3 These were brought together in John Chessell Buckler, Views of the Cathedral Churches of England and Wales (London, 1822).
- 4 See, principally, London, British Library [hereafter BL], Add MS 36356–443, Add MS 36979–80 and Add MS 37120–46. For an introduction to their vast collection, see Joshua Mardell, 'The Buckler Topographical Collection: A Dynastical Reading' (British Library, 2017), bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/a-dynastical-reading-of-the-buckler-topographical-collection (accessed on 14 July 2020).
 - 5 BL, Add MS 36416, ff. 28-67.
 - 6 Architect and Contract Reporter, 51 (1894), p. 44.
 - 7 Charles Alban Buckler, Bucleriana: Notices of the Family of Buckler (London, 1886), [n.p.].
 - 8 Catherine M. Antony, Father Reginald Buckler, O.P. (London, 1927), p. 4.
- 9 Lincolnshire Archives [catalogued under the former name Lincolnshire Archives Office, hereafter LAO], Dean and Chapter [hereafter D&C] Bj/1/19, Cathedral Chapter Accounts, 1857–58.
- 10 A continuation of a long-lasting family beneficence, Tomline's father, George Pretyman Tomline, as Bishop of Lincoln, having been a patron of John Buckler senior's antiquarian work and a distributor of his prints of the cathedral
- 11 LAO, D&C Bj/1/19, Cathedral Chapter Accounts, 1857–58. These accounts include the last record of payment made to Willson.
- 12 Paul Waterhouse, rev. Helene Furjań, 'Willson, Edward James (1787–1854)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29612 (accessed on 20 March 2020).
- 13 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), p. 801.
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- 15 Stamford Mercury, 12 July 1861, p. 5.
- 16 LAO, D&C Bj/1/19, Cathedral Chapter Accounts, 1851–52/1859–60. My thanks to Carol Bennett for this information.
- 17 John Chessell Buckler, A Description and Defence of the Restorations of the Exterior of Lincoln Cathedral with a Comparative Examination of the Restorations of Other Cathedrals, Parish Churches, &c. (Oxford and Lincoln, 1866), pp. 19–20.
- 18 Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (New Haven and London, 2002), p. 462.
- 19 Historic England listing, 'Cathedral Church of St Mary and Cloisters and Chapter House and Libraries', historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1388680 (accessed on 2 August 2018).
- 20 Thomas Cocke, 'Tact with Medieval Architecture: 18th-Century Cathedral Restoration at Lincoln', Country Life, 162 (1977), pp. 1724–26 (p. 1725).
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- 23 Thomas Cocke, 'Lincoln Cathedral: The West Front and the Romanesque Reliefs Post-Medieval Perceptions', in *The Lincoln Symposium Papers: The Romanesque Frieze and its Spectator*, ed. Deborah Kahn (London, 1992), p. 164.
- 24 Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire* (New Haven and London, 2014), p. 482.
- 25 Sandall's testimony regarding the completion of this work is recorded in a letter by Buckler to the dean of 20 January 1861, published in Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 24.
- 26 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 214.

- 27 John Summerson, 'Ruskin, Morris, and the "Anti-Scrape" Philosophy', in *Historic Preservation Today: Essays Presented to the Seminar on Preservation and Restoration* (Charlottesville, VA, 1970), p. 27.
- 28 Stamford Mercury, 8 April 1859 and 5 July 1861; and quoted in the Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 223, emphasis in original.
- 29 Contributors to the *Builder* (18 August 1866, p. 618) stated that, once they had learned that a well-known architect was involved, they became reluctant to publish further criticisms. Their decision was criticised in the *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (October 1866, p. 283), which accused the *Builder's* contributors of having 'sheltered themselves under the convenient assertion that the architect employed *must know* best', emphasis in original.
- 30 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), p. 301.
- 31 Sandall quoted by Buckler in a letter to the dean of 20 January 1861, published in Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 24.
- 32 LAO, D&C Bj/1/20 (information from Carol Bennett). Even Pearson, when he succeeded Buckler at Lincoln, entrusted the restoration of the exterior of the Angel Choir to Robert Hague, who had joined Sandall as mason in 1865/66.
- 33 Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 26; Chris Miele, 'Their Interest and Habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837–77', in *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (Manchester, 1995), pp. 151–72 (p. 153).
- 34 Buckler, Description and Defence, pp. 108–15.
- 35 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 109.
- 36 Letter from George Gilbert Scott to John Giffard Ward, 1 July 1859, in Buckler, *Description and Defence*, pp. 9–12. In his reply to Scott of 22 July 1859, the dean wrote that he had communicated the letter to the parties concerned, which presumably explains how Buckler got hold of it (Buckler, *Description and Defence*, pp. 12–13). According to Buckler, there were at least two further letters from Scott to the chapter, in December 1860 and on 29 September 1864, although neither was published by him. Buckler did, however, publish his (presumably unexpurgated) letter to the precentor responding to Scott's missive (Buckler, *Description and Defence*, pp. 93–106) and Scott eventually published his September 1864 letter in the *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (October 1866), pp. 294–95.
- 37 Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 11. Pevsner and Harris (*Lincolnshire*, p. 468) wrote that the portal had been 'over-restored', but did not give details or speculate on the date of the restoration.
- 38 Buckler, *Description and Defence*, pp. 9–10; Buckler added that John Carter and others had earlier opposed such an approach.
- 39 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 10; George Gilbert Scott, A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches (Oxford, 1850), pp. 126–27.
- 40 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), pp. 291-92.
- 41 Chris Miele, 'The Gothic Revival and Gothic Architecture: The Restoration of Medieval Churches in Victorian Britain' (doctoral thesis, New York University, 1991), p. 25.
- 42 Miele, 'Their Interest and Habit', p. 159; Miles Glendinning, The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation Antiquity to Modernity (London, 2013), pp. 119–28; Martin Briggs, Goths and Vandals: A Study of the Destruction, Neglect, and Preservation of Historical Buildings in England (London, 1952), pp. 203–19.
- 43 Miele, 'Their Interest and Habit', p. 159.
- 44 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 256.
- 45 Miele, 'Their Interest and Habit', p. 159. Also Chris Miele, 'Re-Presenting the Church Militant: The Camden Society, Church Restoration and the Gothic Sign', in 'A Church as It Should Be': The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence, ed. Christopher Webster and John Elliot (Stamford, 2000), pp. 257–94 (p. 293); George Edmund Street, 'Some Account of the Church of St Mary, Stone, near Dartford', Archaeologia Cantiana, 3 (1860); Gentleman's Magazine, 209 (July 1860), p. 50.
- 46 The scandal was also reported in other publications such as the Irish Builder and Engineer.
- 47 Stamford Mercury, 8 April 1859.
- 48 Stamford Mercury, 28 June 1861.
- 49 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 246.
- 50 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 246.
- 51 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 247.
- 52 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 247.
- 53 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 228. Royal Institute of British Architects, General Advice to Promoters on the Restoration of Ancient Buildings (London, 1865).
- 54 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 223.

- 55 Writing as 'An Architectural Antiquary' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the 1830s, Buckler sustained the better-known polemics of his friend and mentor John Carter, who had adopted the alias 'An Architect'. Buckler later took up a similar tone in the *Gentleman's Magazine* when adopting the nom de plume 'The Minimist'. Many of Buckler's polemical writings are grouped in a folio titled 'Printed Tracts on Architecture' at BL, Add MS 27773.
- 56 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 290.
- 57 The Times, 17 August 1864. Another letter two days later (19 August) from the Rev. John C. Jackson entreats the editor 'to do your best to stay the ravages that the ignorance of those employed on that most glorious building are inflicting upon it'.
- 58 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 292.
- 59 Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 98. As Scott put it, 'Mr. Buckler [...] seems to have thought it expedient to act on Dr. Johnson's maxim, that you should never admit an opponent in an argument to be a respectable man': *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (October 1866), p. 291.
- 60 Stamford Mercury, 6 January 1865, p. 27.
- 61 Stamford Mercury, 6 January 1865, p. 27.
- 62 Builder, 14 January 1865, p. 33.
- 63 Builder, 14 January 1865, p. 33.
- 64 See, for example, Building News, 10 March 1865, p. 175.
- 65 Building News, 17 March 1865, p. 175.
- 66 Stamford Mercury, 19 May 1865, p. 5.
- 67 Ecclesiologist, 23 (August 1865), p. 242.
- 68 Ecclesiologist, 23 (August 1865), p. 249.
- 69 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), pp. 298–300. Massingberd also confirmed that colonettes believed to be Norman had in fact been modern replacements made 'some eighty or fifty years ago' (p. 299). His letter is dated 26 June 1865, and so he benefited from seeing a report of the anniversary meeting in the Lincolnshire Chronicle.
- 70 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), pp. 299-300.
- 71 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), p. 300.
- 72 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), p. 300, emphasis in original.
- 73 Building News, 6 October 1865, p. 691.
- 74 Ecclesiologist, 23 (October 1865), p. 305.
- 75 Letter from George Edmund Street to the editor, 17 October 1865, printed in the *Ecclesiologist*, 23 (December 1865), pp. 319–24.
- 76 Ecclesiologist, 23 (December 1865), p. 323. As Street put it: 'for myself I feel jealous of any removal of old work, but as long as it is of that which can be accurately reproduced by skillful masons, of course, such an objection is only a sentimental one'.
- 77 Ecclesiologist, 23 (December 1865), p. 323.
- 78 Ecclesiologist, 23 (December 1865), p. 323.
- 79 Ecclesiologist, 24 (December 1866), p. 370. In August, the Building News had declared that 'we have had quite enough of this personal controversy' (31 August 1866, p. 573). In the same journal the following summer (19 July 1867, p. 494), the Rev. John Jackson called out acts of 'indignant remonstrance' against Gloucester and Exeter cathedrals, arguing that although 'Lincoln was the silliest instance of destruction [...] it was by no means the most wicked'. The Illustrated London News reported on 19 October 1867 (p. 422) that the scraping of Lincoln's exterior stonework had completely ceased.
- 80 Carol Bennett, pers. comm., 19 July 2019.
- 81 Carol Bennett, pers. comm., 19 July 2019.
- 82 Carol Bennett, pers. comm., 19 July 2019; LAO, D&C Bj/1/19, Audit 1858–59; Stamford Mercury, 8 April 1859.
- 83 LAO, D&C A/3/18, Audit 1863.
- 84 Cocke, 'Lincoln Cathedral', p. 165. The removal of unspecified twelfth-century fabric from the jambs of the northern portal of the west front was, Buckler insisted, 'kept within the utmost limit of absolute necessity': Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 213.
- 85 Thomas Cocke, 'James Essex, Cathedral Restorer', Architectural History, 18 (1975), pp. 12–22 (p. 14).
- 86 Buckler, Description and Defence, pp. 265 and 1.
- 87 Francis Hill, Victorian Lincoln (Cambridge, 1974), p. 267.
- 88 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, p. 267.
- 89 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, p. 284.

- 90 Nicholas Rank, pers. comm., 6 October 2016: 'We do not have evidence of the "scraping" that Buckler was accused of. The medieval stones do show a considerable amount of tooling in places and we still have a lot of Roman cement [a hard render used for external walls since the turn of the nineteenth century] which predates Buckler and [which] would have been removed if he was too rigorous in his work. Unlike Durham where the faces of stones were cut back, we do not have any evidence that the stone face has been recessed. Where the main face of ashlar joins mouldings etc., the line of the stone appears true and correct. Lincoln limestone easily blackens in the atmosphere. We are cleaning the cathedral now and I guess that what Buckler was doing was much the same.'
- 91 Charles Alban Buckler, letter of 11 July 1865 headed 'Restoration, Conservative and Destructive', Gentleman's Magazine, 219 (August 1865), p. 214. Charles Alban Buckler's name appears once in the Chapter Accounts of 1857–58 (LAO D&C Bj/1/19), under 'Sundry Payments', where he is awarded £5 from the precentor for unknown services.
- 92 LAO, MISC DON 335-3, letter from John Chessell Buckler to William Dyke, n.d. (probably 26 March 1866).
- 93 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 1.
- 94 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. vi, emphasis in original.
- 95 LAO, MISC DON 335-2, letter from Buckler to Dyke, 26 March 1866, emphasis in original.
- 96 Building News, 24 August 1866, p. 557.
- 97 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 290.
- 98 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 284.
- 99 Merle Mowbray Bevington, *The Saturday Review*, 1855–1868: Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England (New York, 1941). While the Review had ridiculed Scott's Italian Renaissance designs for the new Government Offices, loyalty to the architect led it ultimately to approve them.
- 100 Saturday Review, 22, 1 September 1866, p. 282.
- 101 Athenæum, 26 January 1867, p. 117.
- 102 Anti-Teapot Review, 11 (November 1866), pp. 225-26; Union Review, 4 (December 1866), pp. 674-76.
- 103 Arthur Reade, Tea and Tea-Drinking (London, 1884), p. 121.
- 104 Anti-Teapot Review, 11 (November 1866), p. 225.
- 105 Anti-Teapot Review, 1 (May 1864), p. 225.
- 106 Union Review, 4 (December 1866), pp. 675-76.
- 107 Pamela Z. Blum, The Salisbury Chapter-House and its Old Testament Cycle: An Archaeological and Iconographical Study (New Haven, 1978), p. 73.
- 108 Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank, The Rape of Britain (London, 1975).
- 109 John Chessell Buckler, Observations on the Original Architecture of Saint Mary Magdalen College, Oxford (London, 1823).
- 110 Howard Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (London, 1983), pp. 78–104; Robin Darwall-Smith, 'The Demolition of the North Side of the Cloisters, or: Martin Routh the Dangerous Innovator', *Magdalen College Record* (2005), pp. 96–108.

 111 *Ecclesiologist*, 24 (October 1866), p. 291, emphasis in original. Buckler must have been further vexed that Scott had been asked by the Lincoln Diocesan Architectural Society to design a new cathedral pulpit (1863–64).

 112 Buckler, *Description and Defence*, p. 19.
- 113 Gavin Stamp, 'Sir Gilbert Scott: Eminent Victorian', in *Sir George Gilbert Scott 1811–1878: An Architect and his Influence*, ed. Paul Barnwell, Geoffrey Tyack and William Whyte (Donington, 2014), pp. 1–21 (p. 2). George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, ed. Gavin Stamp (Stamford, 1995), pp. 135–46. Gavin Stamp, 'George Gilbert Scott and the Cambridge Camden Society', in '*A Church as it Should Be*', ed. Webster and Elliott, pp. 173–89.
- 114 The possibility of retaining the entire fabric is doubtful, however. According to Pevsner, the façade 'had to be rebuilt entirely': Nikolaus Pevsner, *Yorkshire: The West Riding* (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 530.
- 115 John Chessell Buckler and Charles Buckler, Remarks upon Wayside Chapels with Observations on the Architecture and Present State of the Chantry on Wakefield Bridge (Oxford, 1843).
- 116 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 299.
- 117 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 299.
- 118 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 266.
- 119 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 262
- 120 LAO, MISC DON 335-2, letter from Buckler to Dyke, 26 March 1865, emphasis in original.
- 121 Joshua Mardell, 'Fidelis ad Mortem: John Chessell Buckler, an Oxford College Architect', Oxoniensia, 83 (2018), pp. 73–92.
- 122 John William Mackail, The Life of William Morris (London, 1950), p. 301.

- 123 Noah Heringman, Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History, and Knowledge Work (Oxford, 2013), pp. 231–80. Joan Evans, A History of the Society of Antiquaries (Oxford, 1956), p. 214.
- 124 Oxford, Magdalen College Archive, John Chessell Buckler, 'Rough Notes Concerning the History of the Hospital of St John the Baptist' (facsimile of BL, Add MS 27963, 1858), p. 141.
- 125 Saturday Review, 1 September 1866, p. 282.
- 126 As recorded in the *Ecclesiologist*, 4 (June 1847), pp. 237–40.
- 127 Edward Augustus Freeman, An Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England (Oxford and London, 1851), quoted in John Harvey, The Perpendicular Style, 1330–1485 (London, 1978), p. 20.
- 128 John Mason Neale, 'An Account of the Late Restoration of St Nicholas, Old Shoreham, Sussex', Transactions of the Cambridge Camden Society, 1 (1839–41), pp. 28–40.
- 129 Geoffrey Tyack, 'The Restoration of Iffley Parish Church', Oxoniensia, 68 (2003), pp. 313-59.
- 130 The Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume IV: 1893–1896, ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton, 1996), pp. 50–52, notes 2–12.
- 131 BL, Add MS 36415, ff. 42-52, n.d. (c. 1871).
- 132 Buckler's work at all four colleges is examined in detail in Mardell, 'Fidelis ad Mortem'.
- 133 Oxford, Oriel College, FB 1 A1/1, J. C. Buckler, 'Report of a Survey of the Present State of Oriel College, Oxford', January 1852, p. 3.
- 134 Marvin Trachtenberg, Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion (New Haven and London, 2010); Manuel J. Martín-Hernández, 'Time and Authenticity', Future Anterior, 11 (2014), pp. 41–47.
- 135 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 225. 136 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 37.
- 137 Buckler, Description and Defence, pp. 84-85.
- 138 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 133.
- 139 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 76.
- 140 Giles Worsley, Architectural Drawings of the Regency Period, 1790–1837 (London, 1991), p. 73.
- 141 John Ruskin, 'Of Turnerian Topography', Modern Painters, II, in The Works of John Ruskin: Volume 4, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1906), pp. 27–47.
- 142 Julian Munby, 'J. C. Buckler, Tackley's Inn and Three Medieval Houses in Oxford', Oxoniensia, 43 (1978), pp. 123–69.
- 143 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 225.
- 144 Buckler, Description and Defence, p. 245.
- 145 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), p. 103.
- 146 Quoted in the Ecclesiologist, 24 (December 1866), p. 370.
- 147 Ecclesiologist, 19 (August 1861), p. 237.
- 148 Stamp, 'George Gilbert Scott and the Cambridge Camden Society', p. 186.
- 149 John Chessell Buckler and Charles Alban Buckler, A History of the Architecture of the Abbey Church of St Alban (London, 1847).
- 150 Ecclesiologist, 21 (August 1863), p. 224.
- 151 Stamp, 'George Gilbert Scott and the Cambridge Camden Society', p. 186.
- 152 Nicholas Rank, pers. comm., 6 October 2016.
- 153 Ecclesiologist, 24 (October 1866), pp. 302 and 291.
- 154 Anthony Quiney, John Loughborough Pearson (New Haven and London, 1979), p. 128.
- 155 LAO, D&C A.3.18, p. 312, letter from John Chessell Buckler to the dean and chapter, recorded in the minutes, 18 July 1870.
- 156 Ecclesiologist, 24 (December 1866), p. 370.