

William Railton (1800-1870)

Architect of St. Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves.

by Tony Jarram.

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Everyone is familiar with Nelson's Column in London's Trafalgar Square.¹ This simple Corinthian column of Dartmouth granite, surmounted by E.H. Baily's statue of the national hero, Admiral Horatio Nelson, was designed by William Railton. This architect was also responsible for more mundane, everyday buildings, chapels, churches, vicarages and lodges, but he could also turn his hand to breath-taking country houses and palaces.



Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square (By Tony Jarram)

Nelson's Column & base was built of Foggintor granite of Permian age from Dartmoor. The statue of Nelson is by E.H. Baily and carved from Craigeith sandstone from near Edinburgh. The bollards, walls and statue plinths are grey Aberdeen granite. The four bronze lions that surround the monument, commonly known as the "Landseer Lions" after the artist who created them. These were, however, not the original ones commissioned. Thomas Milnes had a set made but these were not deemed to be impressive enough. The original lions were bought by Titus Salt and went to his village at Saltaire, Lancashire, where they remain today. Other than sharing the same architect there is a rather nice connection between Nelsons Column and St Paul's Woodhouse Eaves. Titus Salt who bought the original lions was the father of Sir William Salt, his eldest son and heir and who supplied the capital for building

¹ 'Nelson's Column. The Nelson Monument', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1276052>].

the south transept at St Paul's.² Both he and his wife Emma are buried in the churchyard at Woodhouse Eaves.



One of the four “Landseer Lions” (By Tony Jarram)

It was during a boom in the building of parish churches, in the 1830s, that the Leicestershire village of Woodhouse Eaves adopted a plan for a simple chapel, to Railton's design, to be positioned amid the granite and trees of Charnwood Forest above the village. The construction is in granite, slate rubble and dressed stone with a Swithland slate roof. The chancel arch, that replaced the original, is moulded - probably a skill that Railton had learned from the work of William Inwood and later adopted during St Paul's chancel extension by Ewan Christian.

William Railton had been born in Clapham on 14th May 1800.³ He later became a student of the London architect and surveyor William Inwood and attended the Royal Academy schools in 1823.⁴ Inwood's Neoclassical St. Pancras New Church (1819-22) and other London churches must have made an impression on Railton. Inwood's use of terracotta and artificial stone was probably the inspiration for details on later Railton buildings, especially Beaumanor Hall.

In 1825 Railton toured Egypt and Greece and upon his return to England published drawings of the temple of Kardaki on the Island of Corfu. Railton was not only to become a leading architect but he was also a highly skilled artist.

William Railton's London office was situated in the Carlton Chambers (named after the house of the Prince Regent) at No.12 Regent Street in London. Here was a busy community of solicitors and architects. These included the architect David Laing (1774-1856) whose New Customs House in London infamously collapsed in 1825.⁵

² M. Hodge, *St. Pauls Church Woodhouse Eaves. A guide to the Church* (2006) p. 10.

³ 'William Railton', *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Railton].

⁴ 'William Inwood', *Wikipedia* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Inwood].

⁵ 'David Laing (architect)', *Wikipedia* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Laing_\(architect\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Laing_(architect))].

In 1830 came a commission to design a house for Nathaniel Bland in Randells situated in Railton's home county of Surrey (Clapham, Railton's birth place was at this time part of Surrey).⁶ Bland had pulled down the previous house on the site, an ancient manor house on an estate dating from Norman times.



House designed for Nathaniel Bland

In 1833 a commission was given to Railton by the Leicestershire land owner Ambrose March Phillips of Garendon Hall, who, at a young age, had converted to Catholicism. This was for a house, followed later by two lodges and a gate house for Charles Phillips on the Garendon Estate near Loughborough, over the period 1837- 1847 and Mount Saint Bernard Monastery in Charnwood Forest near Whitwick opened in 1844.

The house at Grace Dieu,⁷ now part of a Catholic School, was built in the Tudor Style also adopted for the Mount Saint Bernard Monastery. The Tudor style was adopted by Railton for a number of his buildings.

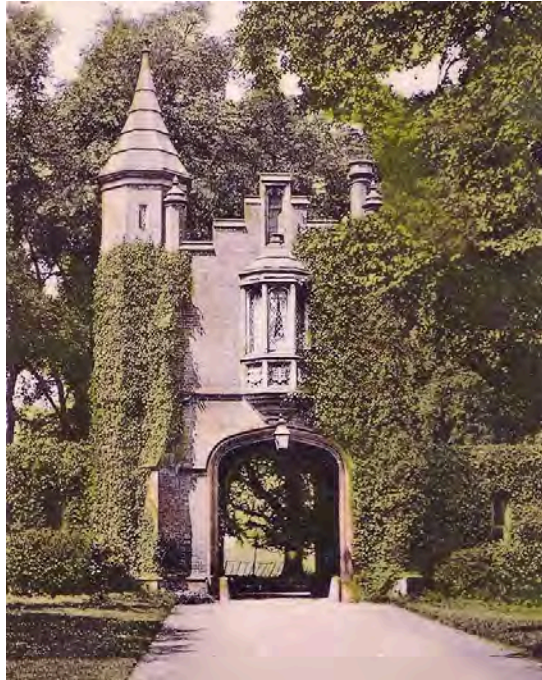


Lodge at Snell's Nook (By Tony Jarram)

⁶ 'William Railton', *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Railton].

⁷ 'Grace Dieu Manor Preparatory School', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1261838>].

The Lodges at Garendon were one for the entrance from a lane from Dishley and Thorpe Acre in one direction and Shepshed in the other. This was known as The Barvarian Gate or the Red Arch. The design had been exhibited at the Royal Academy and was built of red brick, in a Tudor style, with stone dressings and featured a spiral roof, to a stair turret, later replaced with a pyramidal design. The other two lodges were situated on the Loughborough Ashby Road (the present day A512) at Snell's Nook,⁸ and the Loughborough to Derby Road (the present day A6) at Hathern.⁹



Garendon Barvarian Arch (Graham Hulme Collection)

Railton designed his first church or chapel as he described it, at St Peter's Duddon, Cheshire in 1835.¹⁰ It is in the early English style and cost £603 to build (renovations in 2013 cost £95,000). Duddon was followed by two Leicestershire chapels, Copt Oak (St. Peter) and Woodhouse Eaves (St Paul), both almost identical and consecrated within days of each other in 1837.¹¹ These chapel/ churches lie close to the land owned by the Phillips. Traces of the Tudor style, favoured by Railton, can be identified in the vicarage, adjacent to St Paul's in Woodhouse Eaves and it is highly likely that he was also responsible for this building.

⁸ 'Lodge and Archway to North of Site of House, Ashby Road, Garendon Park', *Charnwood Borough Council* [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed_buildings/lodge_to_garendon_park_ashby_road_garendon_park_ashby_road_garendon_park].

⁹ 'Lodge to Garendon Park, Loughborough Road, Hathern (Grade II)', *Charnwood Borough Council* [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed_buildings/lodge_to_garendon_park_loughborough_road_hathern].

¹⁰ J. Buck, 'SJ5164: St Peter's Church, Duddon', *Geograph* [<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3049933>].

¹¹ 'Church of St Peter', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1376012>].



St Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves (By David Morley)

The church of St. Paul's, Woodhouse Eaves was contracted to the local builder William Kirk of Leicester. The main building material was local Charnwood granite rubble. The pointed windows and high pointed roof arches gave it, and its sister church at Copt Oak, a somewhat restrained gothic feel.

It is of significant interest, to note, that in 1836, Ewan Christian (1814-1895) worked briefly with William Railton.¹² Christian was later to carry out modifications to Railton's churches including St Paul's at Woodhouse Eaves where an extended chancel was added in 1871 and the sister church at Copt Oak in 1889. Further major work at St Paul's Woodhouse Eaves occurred in 1880 including a new roof and north and south transepts. The latter works also included the removal of Railton's original west gallery. The builder for the 1871 work was Charles Ashton¹⁸ and the 1880 work being undertaken by the Barrow-on-Soar, Leicestershire, builder Henry Black.

¹² C. Books and A. Saint, *The Victorian Church. Architecture and Society* (Manchester: 1995) p. 167; B. F. L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century. A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (1938).



St Peter Church, Copt Oak (By Tony Jarram)

William Railton had been appointed as architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1838 and held this post until 1848. It is certain that he was very active in this role in not only the re-modelling of churches but also in the building and repair of parsonages and vicarages. It is interesting to note that he was responsible for a major re-seating scheme for St-Mary-in-the Elms in Woodhouse. Ewan Christian succeeded him in the role of Architect to the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1851 until 1898. Christian built a large number of churches and restored a further 350 including St Paul's at Woodhouse Eaves.¹³ Christian's other works included the design of the National Portrait Gallery in London (1890-1895) and restorations to Southwell Minster and Carlisle Cathedral. His masterpiece is thought by many to be St Mark's church in Leicester.

During his time with the Commissioners, Railton added a gallery to another Leicestershire church St Botolph in Shepshed. It might be significant that this medieval church contains memorials to the Garendon family that first bought him into the county.

Railton now turned his hand to buildings of greater complexity with his design for the Bishops Palace at Ripon (1838-1841).¹⁴ The foundation stone was laid in October 1838 and the building was completed by the end of 1841. Railton built a chapel, slightly separate from the Palace, four years later. Whilst the palace was built in Railton's favoured Tudor style the chapel was in the perpendicular style. Both had crenellations. The palace, after a period as a Dr. Barnardo's home was sold and split into residential housing units. The chapel was converted into a two-bedroom house but with the strict condition that it could be converted

¹³ B. F. L Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century. A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (1938).

¹⁴ J. R. Walbran, *The Pictorial Pocket Guide to Ripon and Harrogate* (Ripon: 1847) (Second Edition) p. 51; 'Listed Buildings in Ripon, Harrogate, North Yorkshire', *British Listed Buildings* [<https://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/ripon-harrogate-north-yorkshire#.WlaJEEEx2Viu>].

back into a chapel if required. Commenced during the building at Ripon, was Railton's most famous commission Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London (1839-1842).¹⁵



St Philip and St James, Groby (By Tony Jarram)

During the construction of Nelson's column, Railton designed another Leicestershire Church, St Philip and St James in the village of Groby (c.1840)¹⁶ and undertook the re-modelling of Riseholme House as a palace for the Bishop of Lincoln (1840). The church at Groby was built by Railton for the Earl of Stamford who then lived at Bradgate House. It was deemed that his regular church at Ratby was too far from his home.

Riseholme Hall was built on land purchased by the Chaplin family in 1721 and sold to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1840 (two years after Railton had been appointed as their architect).¹⁷ Riseholme was remodelled as a Bishop's Palace, by Railton, to accommodate John Kaye, the first Bishop of Lincoln to reside there. Edward King was the last bishop to reside there, moving to Old Palace Lincoln in 1887. The Hall is now part of the University of Lincoln.



¹⁵ 'Nelson's Column. The Nelson Monument', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1276052>].

¹⁶ 'Church of St Philip and James', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1115789>].

¹⁷ 'Riseholme Hall', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1115789>].

Riseholme House, remodelled by Railton (University of Lincoln)

Even Railton's more high-profile commissions did not interrupt his church contracts. His next church was the re-building of a London church, St Mary's Bromley by Bow¹⁸ (1842-1843) and the new church of St Bartholomew the Less, Bethnal Green (1844), and the monastery of St. Bernard, previously mentioned. The church at Bromley by Bow was built on the site of the Priory of St. Leonard c.1100. The chapel survived the dissolution and became the Parish church of Bromley in 1536 but was demolished in 1842. As two walls survived and were built into Railton's new design the church did not require a new consecration. The church was damaged by the Luftwaffe in WW2. The demolition was completed by the construction of the approach road to the Blackwall Tunnel. The porch and part of a wall survive off Bromley High Street.

St Bartholomew Bethnal Green was situated in Lamb's Field near to Mile End Railway station and was built in light brick with stone dressings. The bell tower topped with a steeple, built after the church was consecrated is very striking. This church suffered bombing damage in WW2 and did not reopen until 1955. It was converted to flats in the 1990s and is now known as Steeple Court. Railton was also responsible for the nearby school.

His Mount St. Bernard Abbey (begun in 1835),¹⁹ another of this Leicestershire works, mentioned earlier, was short lived, and rebuilt by Pugin, although at least part of one wall survived on another building on the site.²⁰ This was part of a reformatory for boys known as Abbey Grange.²¹

The 1840s was Railton's most prolific period and other commissions included the restoration, in 1839-1840 of the ancient priory church at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire in gothic revival style.²² Work included a roof with tie beams and traceried panels above them and a new porch. Other works were St. Mary, Stafford Street, Wolverhampton (1845)²³; Beaumanor Hall, Leicestershire (1842-1853)²⁴; Holy Trinity, Hoxton (1848)²⁵; Holy Trinity, Meanwood, Yorkshire, (1848-1849) and All Saints, Thorpe Acre, Loughborough, (1845).²⁶

St. Mary Stafford Street, Wolverhampton (1845) was built in white brick in the plain gothic style at the sole expense of a Miss Hinks of Tettenhall Wood. The church had a turreted tower crowned by a short spire. It is possible that Railton also built a vicarage here. The church was closed in 1948 and demolished in 1950. His Holy Trinity (now Holy Trinity with

¹⁸ 'Bromley by Bow's history', *eastlondonhistory.com* [<http://eastlondonhistory.com/2010/11/06/bromley-by-bows-history/>].

¹⁹ 'Our History', *Mount Saint Bernard Abbey* [<http://www.mountsaintbernard.org/our-history/>].

²⁰ 'St Mary's Agricultural Colony (The Reformatory)', *The Charley Heritage Group* [<http://www.charleyheritage.org.uk/ResearchingColony.html>].

²¹ 'Mount St Bernard's Reformatory for Catholic Boys, Whitwick, near Loughborough, Leicestershire', *Children's Homes* [<http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/WhitwickRfy/>].

²² S. Blaxland and R. Roenisch, 'Report on the History of the Gardens at Launde Abbey', *Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust* (2008) [Download from http://www.lrgt.org/reports-papers_12.html]; 'Launde Abbey', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074857>].

²³ W. White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire* (Sheffield: 1851) (Second Edition).

²⁴ P. Drinkall, *A Brief History of Beaumanor Hall and Park* (Leicester: 1978); The Plans for Beaumanor survive at Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office NRA6263 RO misc. Ref. DE4353 and DE5383..

²⁵ 'Church of the Most Holy Trinity with St Mary', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1358578>].

²⁶ 'Church of All Saints, Thorpe Acre Road, Loughborough (Grade II)', *Charnwood Borough Council* [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed_buildings/church_of_all_saints_thorpe_acre_road_loughborough].

St Mary) at Shepherdess Walk in Hoxton is built in the early English style of the 13C. Like St Peter's Woodhouse Eaves it was built with a short chancel.

All Saint's Thorpe Acre (1845) was a replacement for the mediaeval church at nearby Dishley. The church, sadly spoilt by a modern extension, had a combined nave and chancel. The west end contains a bell cote with a single bell. It was beautiful in its simplicity. Interestingly it sits a few hundred yards from the lane that links the village to Garendon Hall. Dishley Grange, the former home of Robert Bakewell, the famous animal breeding pioneer, was also rebuilt in 1845, under the ownership of the Garendon estate owners. It is interesting to speculate if Railton was responsible. Another building that may have been designed by Railton is the much altered Thorpe Acre church hall.



Dishley Grange (By Tony Jarram)

Beaumanor Hall is a wonderful red brick mansion in the Jacobean style with terracotta decoration of the highest quality. It was built for W. Perry Herrick and not finished until three years after its architect had retired. The features inside the building, with the elaborately panelled ceiling (dated 1853), richly carved oak balustrading and staircase hall, almost eclipses the exterior. Other buildings on the site include stables, a clock tower and outhouses c.1842-54. The estimated dates indicate that the work was finished after Railton's retirement in 1850. The bridge and fountain are mid C19 and therefore also fit into the Railton period. Kennel's Cottage is certainly associated with the earlier house but the bridge fits into the Railton timeframe. An earlier house dated back to the C13 with some rebuilding by the Leicestershire architect John Westley was demolished in 1726. Railton, an accomplished artist, painted a picture of the interior of his new Beaumanor and using some artist's licence drew the ventilation vents in a different position so that they were seen in the same view as

the show-piece stairway. Railton exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1829 and 1851 (a year after he had ceased to be an architect).



Beamanor Hall (By Tony Jarram)

During the period of construction of Beamanor Hall it is thought that other Railton buildings were commissioned nearby. The granite and slate rubble Beamanor Hall Lodge (c.1850 or earlier)²⁷ in Woodhouse is almost certainly by Railton and the Swithland Lodge (1847) also known as the North Lodge, an entrance lodge for Swithland Hall, complete with the Danvers/Butler arms is also a highly likely candidate.²⁸ Use of the signature Tudor style favoured by Railton along with the date being significant clues. There is also an additional lodge for Garendon Park at Cow Hill, Shepshed, almost lost in the M1 Junction 23

²⁷ 'Beamanor Hall Lodge', *British Listed Buildings* [<https://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101361130-beamanor-hall-lodge-woodhouse#.WlaMdkx2Viu>].

²⁸ 'Swithland Hall Lodge', *British Listed Buildings* [<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101177966-swithland-hall-lodge-swithland#.Wkva8Ex2v1U>]; 'Swithland Hall Lodge', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1177966>].

constructions, that has Railton features but lacks the quality of the other works and might be a later copy.²⁹ He is known to have carried out alterations to Quorn Court at this time.

Railton is not known to have carried out any commissions after 1850, although he is known to have given some consultancy, especially relating to stained glass windows.³⁰ Railton has been credited with Winscombe Hall in Somerset (1855).³¹ The hall re-modelled and extended c. 1858 until 1871 by William Burges (1827-1881). It seems strange that this work was carried out so soon after the initial building. Railton as the original architect remains in some doubt. William Railton married Amelia Knight in 1860 and he died while on a visit to Brighton in 1877.



William Railton's

signature

Other Sources

Tony Jarram journals and notes collected over a number of years from multiple sources and field visits. (unpublished).

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²⁹ Authors observations.

³⁰ G. K. Brandwood, *Bringing Them to Their Knees. Church Buildings and Restorations in Leicestershire and Rutland, 1800-1914* (Leicester: 2002).

³¹ 'The Hall, Winscombe, England', *Parks & Gardens UK* [<http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/1589?preview=1>]; 'The Hall', *Historic England* [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1229670>]; 'The Hall', *British Listed Buildings* [<https://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101229670-the-hall-winscombe-and-sandford#.WwwkfEgvzIU>].

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