

JOHN MOFFAT AND ST PETER'S CHURCH,
LIVERPOOL

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IN 1698 Liverpool successfully promoted a Bill enabling the Corporation to build a new parish church.¹ The Corporation 'Case' for the Bill describes in graphic terms the expanding Liverpool of the closing years of William III's reign.

'It was formerly a small fishing town; but many people coming from London in the time of the Sickness, and after the fire, several ingenious men settled in Liverpool, which encouraged them to trade with the Plantations and other places; which occasioned sundry other tradesmen to come and settle here; which hath so enlarged their trade, that from scarce paying the salary of the Officers of the Customs, it is now the third part of the trade of England and pays upward of £50,000 per annum to the King: And by reason of such increase of inhabitants, many new streets are built and still in building, and many gentlemens sons . . . are put Apprentices in the Town.'

Clause VI of the Act required the Corporation, within fifty days of the 25 June 1699, to obtain an estimate by 'some sufficient person or persons qualified for the same, of the charge for erecting the said new church, and house or houses for the Rector or Rectors,² and grounds for the same, and for providing a clock and four or five bells for the same.'

The Corporation decided to build the church on the Town Commons on the east side of the Pool, the broad tidal creek which followed the course of the present Whitechapel and Paradise Street, before entering the Mersey near Strand Street and Wapping.³ This site, (see Fig. 1) later bounded by Church Street, School Lane, Church Lane and Church Alley, is now occupied by Woolworths and two other stores. An architect was appointed and building started in 1700. The church, which cost about £3,500, was consecrated on 29 June 1704. Its building, an event of great local importance, was not without national significance. Locally it was reputed to be the first new parish church built in

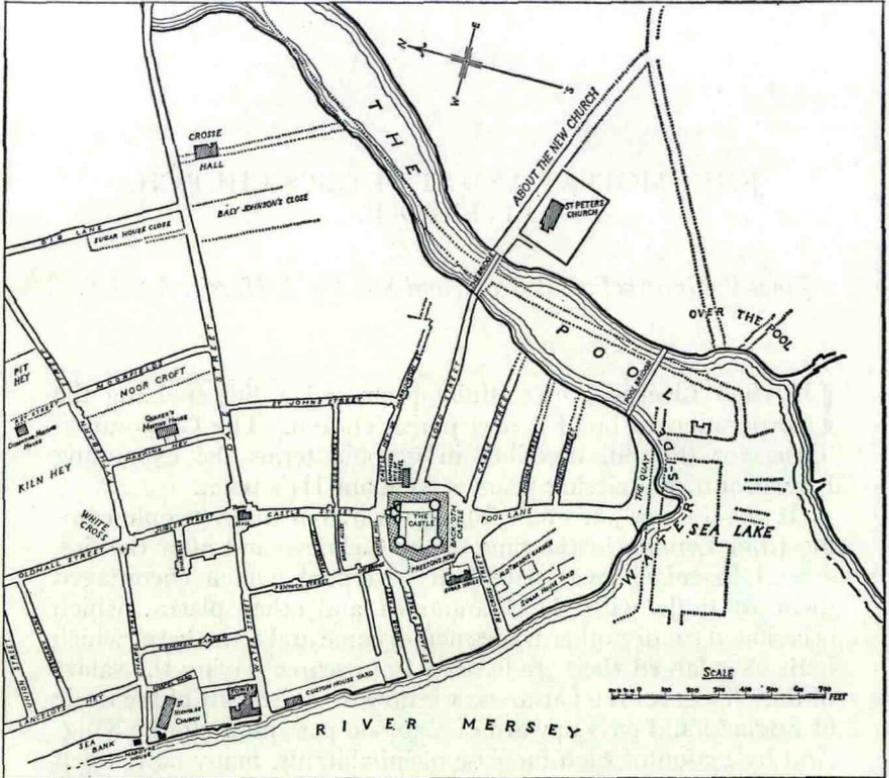


FIGURE I A CONJECTURAL RECONSTRUCTION OF LIVERPOOL FOR THE YEAR 1705.
Redrawn from H. Peet, *Liverpool in the Reign of Queen Anne* (1908)

England since the Reformation—say 1540. Churches at Staunton Harold in Leicestershire and Tunbridge Wells in Kent were of earlier date, but their parish status is in some doubt. Wren's London parish churches, of course, were restorations of churches damaged in the Great Fire of 1666.⁴

In 1699 Liverpool possessed only three buildings with any architectural pretensions—the ancient Chapel of St Nicholas, the 1674 Town Hall with its feeble and ill-proportioned Renaissance details, and the Tower at the foot of Water Street. Despite the claim of the 'Case' that Liverpool ranked third in England's ports, the 1700 Custom House was a cottage at the foot of Water Street.

Until recently the earliest-known architect associated with Liverpool was Thomas Ripley (c.1683–1758), an officer of the Royal Works who designed a new Custom House near Liverpool's first dock in 1719, and may have designed the Bluecoat School

in School Lane. His other works included the Admiralty in Whitehall (1723) and the London Custom House (1718).⁵

The new church was dedicated to St Peter, but who, one wonders, designed it—a question which has exercised the minds of local historians for more than two centuries. All of them, from Enfield in 1773 to Chandler in 1957, did not know the answer, and Picton referred to it in his *Memorials* published in 1875. Even the greatest of local church historians, Henry Peet, who died in 1938, after long and fruitful research in all fields of our local history, and whose works will be cited to the end of time, failed to solve the problem.⁶

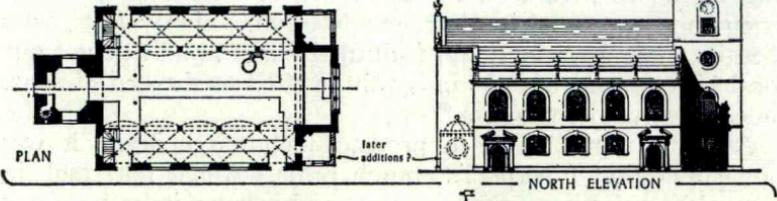
After the long hiatus in provincial church building it was predictable that Liverpool's church project would not result in an architectural gem. 'Nondescript' and a 'poor imitation of St Andrew's, Holborn' were the observations of leading Liverpool critics. Certainly its exterior could be described as homely and friendly rather than as distinguished, and beyond all doubt its designer copied, rather unskilfully, details from Wren's London churches. (See Fig. 2).⁷ Details at St Peter's, i.e. urns, moulded ox-eye windows, and segmental headed windows with keystones are common to many Wren churches. The eight flambeaux with gilded flames which originally surmounted the tower had no obvious precedent on any Wren church, but may have been derived from engravings accessible to the designer of St Peter's. In the situation in which this designer was placed in 1699 it would have been strange indeed if he had not visited London to examine Wren's new and fashionable churches, and looked at all the engravings he could find. Local records reveal that Joseph Eaton and Peter Eaton were in the book-selling business in Liverpool from about 1695 onwards. Their separate firms were of good repute, supplying special books for the Mayor's 'seat in church', and writing, accounting and reading material to the Corporation and the Vestry. Nicholas Blundell attended a sale of their books at Knowsley Hall in 1706, and a two days' auction of Eaton books in Liverpool in 1707. Clearly the Eatons would be able to furnish the civic leader, Thomas Johnson, or his architect, with architectural engravings and books. Joseph Eaton's shop and Johnson's house were both in Water Street, a few yards from the Town Hall.⁸ St Peter's flambeaux and most of the parapet urns were removed during the last century, but four urns survived until the demolition of the church in 1922.

In contrast to the outside, St Peter's Church interior was extremely good, its design, carved woodwork and furnishing being of a high order. It seems probable that the interior plan derived from St James's, Piccadilly, from which the designer of St

COMPARATIVE DRAWINGS - to the same scale

S. PETER : LIVERPOOL

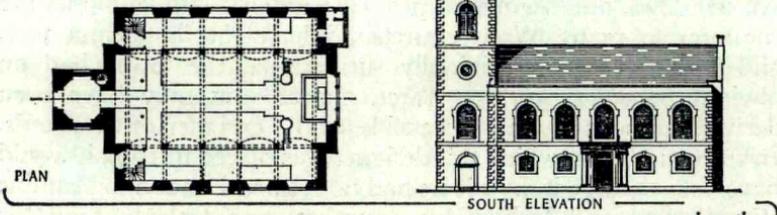
1700-04



S. JAMES : PICCADILLY (WESTMINSTER)

1676-84

Sir Christopher Wren



S. ANDREW : HOLBORN

1684-90

Sir Christopher Wren

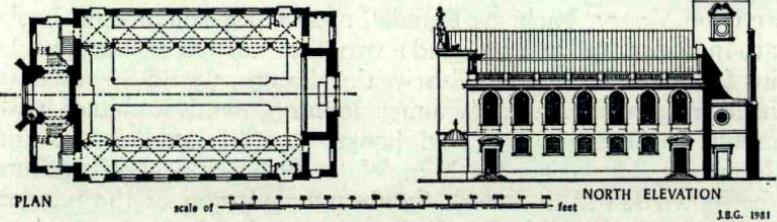


FIGURE 2 COMPARATIVE DRAWINGS: ST PETER'S, LIVERPOOL; ST JAMES', PICCADILLY AND ST ANDREW'S, HOLBORN

J.E.G. 1981

Peter's also appears to have taken ideas for the East Window, the Reredos, Chancel Arch and general layout of pews and galleries. The fine carving and other woodwork at St Peter's were the work of a local craftsman, Richard Prescott. His carving, in the Grinling Gibbons's manner, has been highly acclaimed. Very little is known about him but research is now in progress. He is said to have worked also at St George's, Liverpool, and at Knowsley, almost certainly at Croxteth Hall and Woolton,⁹ and possibly at other notable buildings in south Lancashire and Cheshire. On the demolition of St Peter's the woodwork and furniture were distributed to the Museum and to churches in the diocese, the Reredos and Communion Rails to St Cuthbert's, North Meols, the Pulpit etc. to St Stephen-in-the-Banks, and the marble Font with oak cover is now at St David's, Childwall.

In 1880 when Liverpool became a bishopric, St Peter's was made the pro-cathedral pending the building of the great edifice on St James's Mount; and in 1766 the church was the first medium to bring organised culture to Liverpool. In that year a new organ was built and musical festivals were started. The services of leading singers and instrumentalists were secured and the festivals were highly successful. After more than two centuries St Peter's possessed nearly three hundred register books when it closed its doors to public worship—evidence of the public regard for the Church. It was very popular for baptisms and weddings, and thousands of burials took place in its churchyard. Many people living today, or their parents, were christened or married there; many still living worshipped there. Together with the mellow beauty of the nearby Bluecoat School it provided a peaceful oasis in the heart of the busy city.

Sir James Picton, in his *Liverpool Municipal Records*,¹⁰ describes the building situation in Liverpool in the years leading up to 1704 as a great number of houses, a fish-market in Chapel Street, and St Peter's Church. 'Mostly new built houses of brick and stone' is how Celia Fiennes saw the housing boom here in 1698.¹¹ In south Lancashire, in and about Queen Anne's reign, new buildings, other than medium sized and small houses, include Gateacre Chapel (1700), the north-west front of Croxteth (dated 1702), Rivington Chapel (1703), Key Street Chapel, Liverpool (1706), Woolton Hall (c.1709), St Ann's Church, Manchester (1709-12) and Hale Manor House (refronted c.1710). Except for St Ann's, Manchester, the architects are unknown.

In early 1978 an event occurred producing a glimmer of light piercing the cloud which concealed St Peter's designer. This was the publication of a great new architectural work, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* by Howard Colvin,¹²

in which reference is made to an architect resident in Liverpool in 1704, the year in which St Peter's was still unfinished. The architect's name was John Moffat, and it is probable that he was a native of Dumfriesshire in southern Scotland where the surname is common around the town of Moffat. Could he, one wonders, be one of the 'ingenious men and other tradesmen' who came to Liverpool as the seventeenth century was drawing to its close? History reveals that a certain Scottish reluctance to stay north of the border is no new phenomenon, and the religious strife of 1678-90 in that particular area would be an extra spur. It was clear that in the context of the building of St Peter's, the activities of an architect resident in Liverpool in 1704 must be examined.

Dr Colvin's reference to Moffat and Liverpool was in connection with Moffat's design for a new civic building at Dumfries, the county town. Correspondence and a visit to Dumfries produced information about events linking Liverpool with Dumfries in the period 1699-1704. These events were as follows: about 1699 the Royal Burgh of Dumfries became involved in a financial tangle stemming from the farming of the Scottish Customs and Foreign Excise by the Convention of Royal Burghs. Its unravelling left Dumfries with an unexpected windfall of about £1,100 sterling which the council agreed would not be spent 'without the advice and consent of the majority of the burghesses'.¹³ The money remained in the council's coffers until April 1703 when the impatient burghesses demanded action, and a meeting of the 'most considerable' of them resolved 'with one voice' that 'the town is not at present provided with sufficient prisons, whereby several malefactors guilty of great crimes and others for debt have made their escape, to the dishonour and imminent peril of the burgh; and also that there is not any steeple in the whole town, nor a suitable council-house nor room for the safekeeping of the town's arms and ammunition'. It must be stated here that Scottish town steeples, like English town halls, are important traditional symbols of civic pride. To have no steeple was a civic deprivation, and from the early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth, Scottish architectural history is replete with their erection. From Edinburgh and Glasgow to the smallest burgh town, steeples soar into sky, many designed by such important Scottish architects as Sir William Bruce, William Adam and his son James, and David and Thomas Hamilton.

In May 1703 the Provost of Dumfries was ordered to approach James Smith, one of the greatest of Scottish architects, or 'James Smith his nevv, or any other architect' to design the town steeple which, officially, was to be called the 'Midsteeple,' probably because of its position on an island site in the High Street. The

architects approached declined the commission, perhaps because they were too busy, or because Dumfries was not prepared to pay their fees. It was in October 1703 when the Midsteeple committee of forty-two members reported 'that the committee have heard of one John Moffat, a masterbuilder of Liverpool, recommended, and considering that the best and easiest way will be to agree for the whole work conform to a modall¹⁴ that shall be drawn, and that Bailie Crosbie may probably be in Liverpool shortly, they recommend him to make enquiries about the said John Moffat's skill and his circumstances, and if satisfied to invite John Moffat to come and take a view of the ground and draw a scheme and modall of the designed fabrick, he to have acknowledgement of his trouble whether he be employed or not'. On 13 March 1704 the committee reported that they had engaged John Moffat as their architect, and on the following day they resolved that Moffat, who had now arrived from Liverpool, should go to Glasgow 'for further information as to the scheme and modall'. A committee member accompanied him and forty shillings were advanced for their expenses. Moffat's attention seems to have been directed to Glasgow College which had a steeple. Moffat returned to Dumfries on 3 April and 'laid before the committee his modall of the council-house and steeple, together with several particular accounts of the wood and materials requisite.' The committee accepted his designs and decided to allow the five pounds sterling agreed upon, the charge for his quarters in John Bell's house, and three pounds beside 'for drawing the steeple scheme and in gratification for his coming to Dumfries'. Evidently they were satisfied that they had made the right choice, and in the entry in the Dumfries Treasurer's account Moffat is described as 'Mr. Moffat, architect'.

Moffat returned to his work at Liverpool, and appears to have notified Dumfries that, for some unspecified reason, he was unable to supervise the building of the Midsteeple. Dumfries cast about for a builder to take his place, and after some trouble obtained the services of Tobias Bachup, a masterbuilder of repute. The foundation stone was laid in May 1705 and the building was opened amidst rejoicing in August 1707.

Several questions now arise: the first is why did Moffat, after having his designs accepted and paid for, decline to execute them? The most likely answer would seem to be that he could not spare the time adequately to supervise the Midsteeple project. This situation was not unusual when architects had two or more projects simultaneously in hand, particularly when the sites were widely apart as in this case. Secondly would Dumfries have entrusted the designing of their long-awaited town-hall, offices,

armoury, powder-magazine and prison all surmounted by a prominent tower and steeple—to a designer experienced only in house-building? The answer almost certainly is that they would not be satisfied with such a designer. Thirdly, would Bailie Crosbie and Dumfries be interested in an architect and builder engaged on St Peter's? For at least three reasons they probably would. (1) The skills requisite for St Peter's, especially the tower, were comparable with those for the Midsteeple; (2) St Peter's being both authorised by Parliament and by local repute the first new parish church built since the Reformation, some reflected glory would attach to the Midsteeple; and (3) Moffat was a Scot.

Finally, if Moffat was engaged on St Peter's, would this prevent him from being executant architect at Dumfries? The answer to this is that in May 1704 it would. A Norris (of Speke) letter written by Johnson in October 1703 reveals that the church at that date was far from finished, particularly inside, where paving, woodwork and furnishing were still wanting.¹⁵ When Moffat returned from Dumfries to Liverpool, St Peter's was within two months of its consecration by the Bishop of Chester.¹⁶ One can imagine Moffat, who had been away from Liverpool for at least four weeks, and perhaps recalling two rough passages of 120 miles in March and April in a small vessel, dashing off a letter asking to be excused. Conceivably, also, Thomas Johnson, M.P., may have ordered Moffat to remain in Liverpool.

The stiffest hurdle met by the researchers was the lack of direct documentary evidence linking Moffat with St Peter's. Undoubtedly this was due to the civic practice of dealing with special projects by appointing a sub-committee which recorded its activities in separate minute/account books. Liverpool did this in 1699, in fact Clause XII of the 1699 Act directed that such a book should be kept,¹⁷ and there is also evidence that this book was probably destroyed or lost before 1718. The Dumfries committee also kept a special book; this was lost in the early nineteenth century but found in a private library in 1857. Tantalisingly it has now again been lost, but, by great good fortune, not before the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and other historians, had extracted and printed much valuable information from it. It is on this that the present researchers largely rely, combining with it some stylistic evidence, and entries concerning Moffat in the Liverpool Town Books, the Apprentices Register and church registers; and letters concerning St Peter's in the Norris Papers.

The functions of the buildings being so fundamentally different, one might not expect much similarity between the Midsteeple and St Peter's. But apart from the fact that both are stone buildings,

there are features common to both. There are ox-eye windows to both towers, moulded at St Peter's, now on the Midsteeple unmoulded, though modelled on the reveal; however the Midsteeple has been so restored that the moulding may have been lost except for the keystone. There are semicircular headed windows to both, moulded and with keystones at St Peter's; at the Midsteeple now surrounded with a series of blocks—this too may be a result of restoration. It has not been possible to make a comparison of mouldings, and the validity of this would in any case be open to question since Tobias Bachup executed the Scottish building and probably used his own templates. Comparison of the towers, however, does show similarities; each are in stages divided by string courses and with a larger cornice at the top; and with the ox-eye window in the top stage but one. Each stage appears to be the same size as the one below—there is not for instance the obvious diminishing of stages that can be seen at St Nicholas, Burton-in-Wirral of less than 20 years later. Very close scrutiny does suggest that there is in fact a very slight diminution, no more than perhaps an inch, on each face at each string course on both towers. (As, for St Peter's, this now has to be judged from photographs only, it can only be a tentative opinion.) But the drawing of the steeple of Glasgow College that we have suggests also a tower which does not obviously diminish in stages, and this is said to have been Moffat's source for the Midsteeple. It is in this aspect of the technical expertise of a stonemason who had built towers before that we may still see evidences of Moffat's skill and guiding hand behind the work that Bachup carried out.

The present researchers are of opinion that from the circumstantial and stylistic evidence set out above it may be deduced that, beyond reasonable doubt, John Moffat was the architect and builder of St Peter's Church, Liverpool. The evidence was submitted to Dr Howard Colvin, whose eminence in the field of architectural attribution is unchallenged. In his opinion (and we quote) 'There can be little doubt that John Moffat was involved in the building of the church and in all probability provided the design.'

It seems probable that the lost Dumfries minute book does not mention St Peter's. If it does, it is odd indeed that the three extracts mentioned above do not reveal it. The committee clerk, of course, may not have minuted it as, when writing a true record of the proceedings, its inclusion was not essential. At some date in 1703 between 1 May and 22 October some un-named person recommended 'one John Moffat, a masterbuilder of Liverpool' to the sub-committee, and on the latter date Bailie John Crosbie, a leading member who had business connections with Liverpool,

'and may probably be in Liverpool shortly' was ordered to investigate Moffat. On 13 March 1704 the subcommittee minutes recorded that they had engaged Moffat as 'architect'. Moffat on that day was already in Dumfries. At a meeting between October 1703 and March 1704 Crosbie reported on his vetting of Moffat. It seems likely that at that meeting the clerk omitted to minute a mention of St Peter's. This would not be a reflection on his secretarial proficiency. Bailie Crosbie in his report to the forty-two committee members obviously would refer to St Peter's, but the minute would probably be in the following (or similar) terms: 'That having heard and debated Bailie Crosbie's report on John Moffat of Liverpool, Resolved that the said John Moffat be appointed architect and builder of the Town Hall and Steeple'.

Bailie Crosbie's connection with Liverpool is not surprising as, from an early date, the port had a coastwise trade with Dumfries, its nearest Scottish port. The passage between the ports passes the smaller ports of Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport. Later in the eighteenth century the vessels plying between the ports were owned by one William Crosbie.¹⁸

John Moffat died in 1708 and was buried at St Peter's. He was the first of a local dynasty of masons in stone and marble. His son John (junior), apprenticed seven years to his father and admitted a Freeman of Liverpool in 1713, rebuilt the tower of St Nicholas, Burton-in-Wirral, in 1721, and carved fonts for Holmes Chapel and Church Minshull, and by 1734 was working (?) in Oswestry.¹⁹ George Moffat, a brother or son, married at St Nicholas Church, Liverpool in 1705, was admitted a Freeman of Liverpool on the same day as John (junior) in 1713, and he rebuilt the south wall of St Cuthbert's Church, North Meols, in 1730.²⁰ He may have rebuilt the rest of this church between 1734 and 1739 for he was living four miles away at Scarisbrick in 1734,²¹ and was buried at Halsall in 1742. These two masons seem to have carried on the tradition of travelling freemasons, and it may be that their church commissions stemmed from the elder Moffat's association with St Peter's. The Liverpool Vestry made payments to George Moffat and to other descendants from 1711 to 1798 for mason's work on local churches, and Liverpool's 1790 Directory contains the names of five Moffats, all stone and marble masons.

St Peter's designer is variously described as architect, master-builder, freemason, mason and even stone-cutter. However there is no great significance in this; it implies no discredit to his skill in architecture. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, apart from a few great designers—Wren, Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh, Campbell and of a later generation Adam and others—the vast

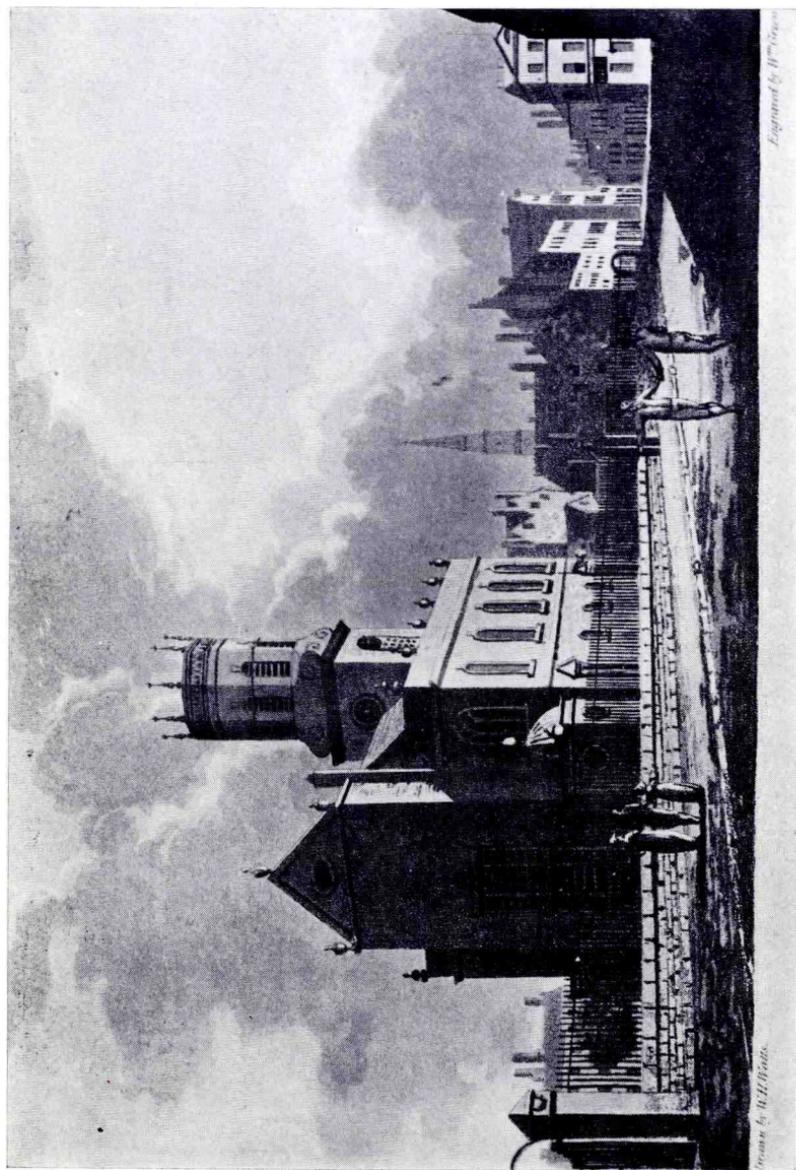


PLATE I. W. H. WATT'S DRAWING OF ST PETER'S, LIVERPOOL, c. 1799.
Liverpool Record Office, Hf.283.1.PET.

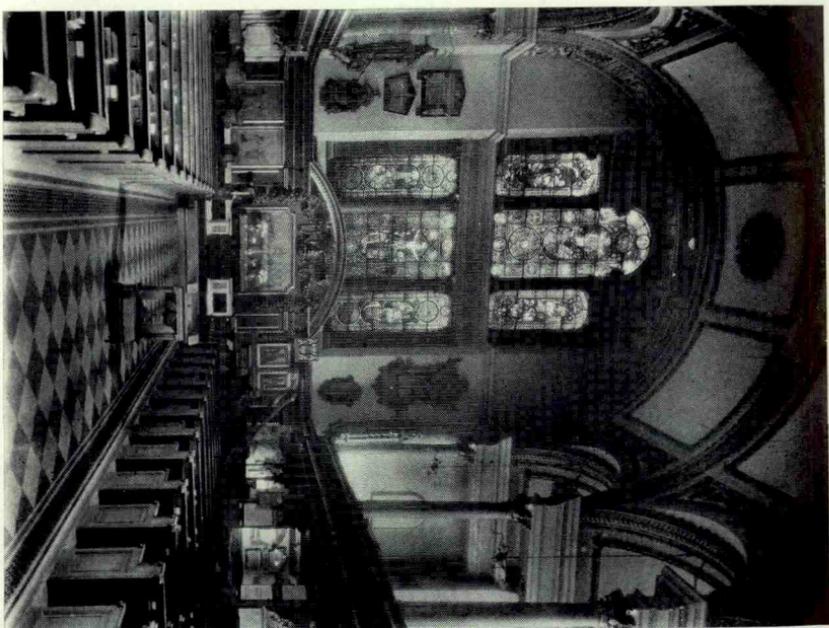
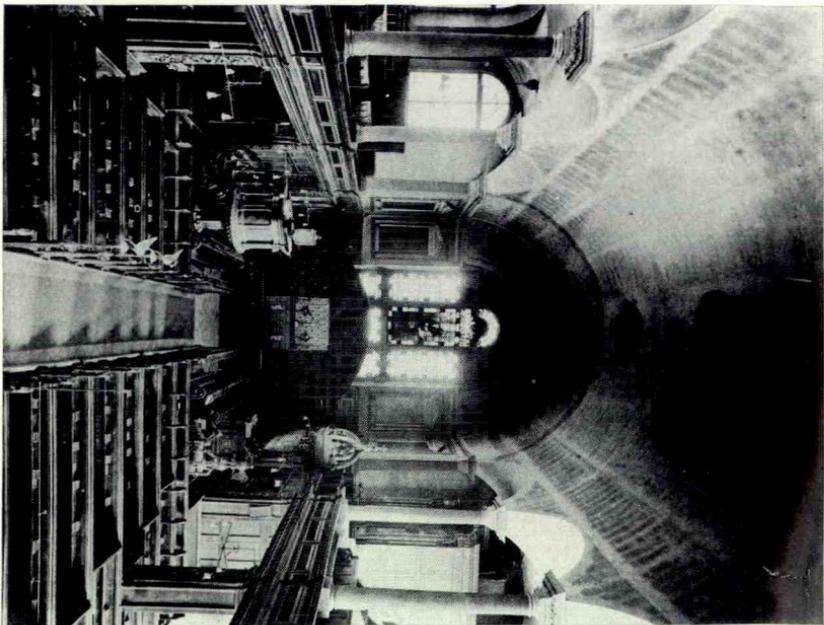


PLATE 2. ST. PETER'S, LIVERPOOL, c. 1913; ST. JAMES'S, PICCADILLY, 1923.
Comparative interiors looking eastwards. St. Peter's, Liverpool R.O. Hf.283.1.per; St. James's photograph reproduced by kind permission of the National Monuments Record.

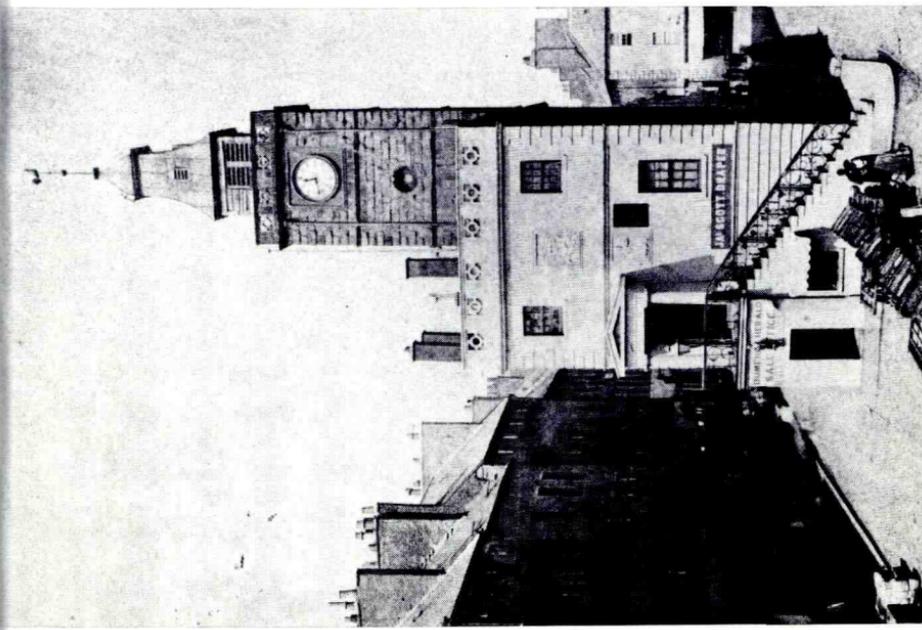
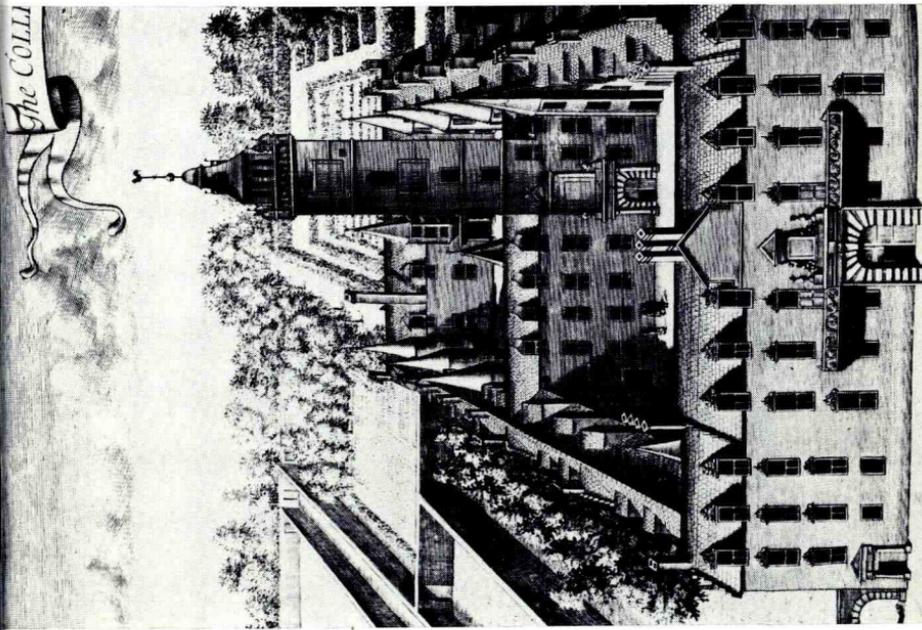


PLATE 3. GLASGOW COLLEGE, 1693; DUMFRIES MIDSTEETPLE, c. 1880.

Glasgow College reproduced from J. A. Slezzer, *Theatrum Scotiae*, by courtesy of Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
Dumfries Midsteeple photograph by courtesy of Nithsdale District Council.

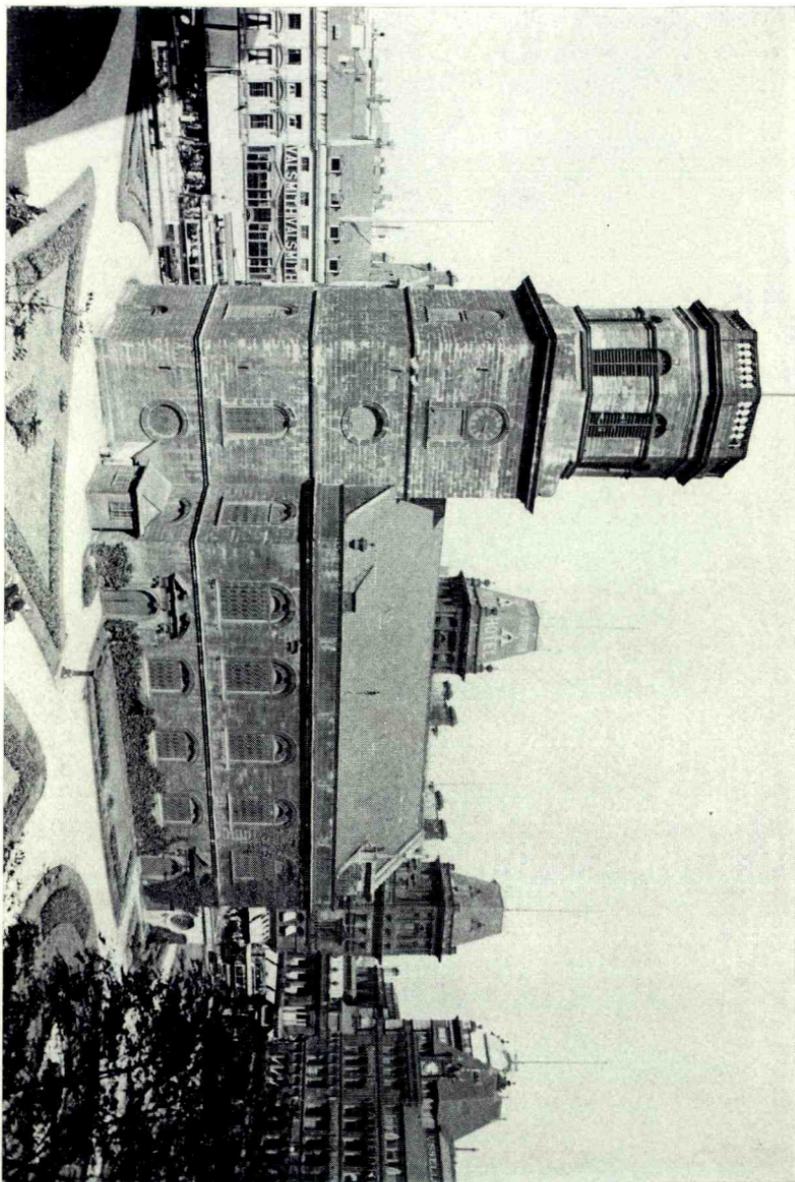


PLATE 4. ST. PETER'S, c. 1910.
Liverpool R.O. Hf. 283.1.PET.

majority of architects played dual roles, combining their designing with mastery of a craft, generally stone-work, but sometimes carpentry, both of which required skills comparable with those of architecture; many a fine building was designed and erected by someone self-described as a 'mason and architect', and the two professions, socially and professionally, were of equal status. An example of this was Francis Smith of Warwick (1672-1738), a designer and/or builder of many houses in fourteen counties. He was both architect and mason-contractor at his finest house, Sutton Scarsdale in Derbyshire, and a year before his death he contracted, with two other architects, to build Oxford's Radcliffe Camera to the designs of James Gibbs. For a thorough understanding of the architect and craftsman relationship one cannot do better than read Chapters I and II of Dr Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary* mentioned above.

Reference must be made to the varying spelling of Moffat's name which passes through Moffit, Moffitt, Morfitt, Murphett, Mortis and many others to (believe it or not) Murphy—in Peet's index. These changes, however, can safely be ignored. Three centuries ago the populace was largely illiterate and communication was mainly by word of mouth. A name was spoken to a semi-literate verger or scribe who wrote it down as he thought it sounded.²² Proper names were the worst sufferers, and even Liverpool was spelt in at least twenty ways before 1800, and the architect-mason who executed Moffat's designs at Dumfries had three spellings for his surname though his signature in 1705 is quite clear.

John Moffat is in the list of 'Famous People—Architects' in the Automobile Association's *Treasures of Britain* (1977).²³ Beyond doubt, however, as a designer he was well down in the third eleven; an inveterate copyist with a modicum of original ideas. Copying, of course, is not necessarily to be deplored, it has long and universally been practised in the arts and professions to their enrichment and is part of their development. At Dumfries the Midsteeple sub-committee sent Moffat to Glasgow to examine Glasgow College and prepare his plans. He stayed there for over two weeks, returning to Dumfries with his designs, based on the College, ready for the committee's consideration.

In Liverpool from the 1670s the accommodation problem at St Nicholas's had apparently been insoluble.²⁴ As civic business, his salt interests and from 1701 his parliamentary duties would frequently draw Johnson to London, he would be familiar with the City churches, and so, as the town's dynamic leader in the St Peter's project, it can be deduced that he accompanied the architect to London to examine Wren's churches. It seems likely

that the London visit was earlier than the Bill promotion in 1698.

It is certain that Johnson, like the Midsteple committee, would make a critical appraisal of Moffat's capabilities before deciding that he was his man for St Peter's. He would no doubt prefer someone experienced in church building, a difficult attainment in a period when, except in London, such building had long been at a standstill. However major restoration work in the relevant period was going on at two south Lancashire parish churches, Huyton in the late seventeenth century—according to Pevsner—and Warrington in 1696–1698.²⁵ In both, the work included the rebuilding of towers, each of which, perhaps significantly, was surmounted with eight finials with vanes. Chronologically Moffat could have been employed as mason or mason-architect at either of these, or at Croxteth where a stone tablet is dated 1687 and a rainwater head 1693.

John Moffat was buried at St Peter's in July 1708, the register entry does not disclose his age. A search for the dates and places of his birth and marriage presents difficulties not yet overcome. Councillors at both Liverpool and Dumfries would be likely to prefer a man of mature years for their important civic projects—traditionally, Thomas Steers was about forty when in 1710 he was chosen to construct Liverpool's first dock, and fifty-five when he submitted designs for St George's Church; and when Dumfries chose Tobias Bachup to build their Midsteple he had been engaged in similar work since 1680 and is thought to have been in his sixties. If Moffat's son John (junior) was admitted a Freeman of Liverpool in 1713 he was likely to have been born about 1692, but in the year before his death Moffat accepted Edward Appleton, son of an innkeeper at Prescot, as an apprentice for a seven year term. The record of the indenture described Moffat as a 'freemason', but the Liverpool Town Books disclose that his petition for civic freedom ran into difficulties. Moffat presented it on 6 November 1700 together with the requisite fee, but for a reason not recorded the Council postponed its decision. On 4 June 1701 Moffat renewed his petition and the Council referred the matter to the Mayor (Richard Norris of Speke) and four months later, on 8 October 1701, Moffat took the oath of a Freeman—the fee was forty shillings. The reason for the delay could have been the petitioner's Scottish nationality. The Mayor had been apprenticed to William Clayton who, with Thomas Johnson, was M.P. for Liverpool in 1701. It may be that the Mayor wished to consult them concerning the validity of Moffat's petition for, although England and Scotland were ruled by the same monarch, they were separate nations until 1707.

It seems possible that Robert Morris (1734–1806), the

American banker who, as Washington's finance minister, was responsible for financing the War of Independence, was a grandson of John Moffat. Morris was born in Liverpool in August 1734 and was baptised at St George's.²⁶ His mother was Elizabeth Moffat. Morris was a natural son. His signature appears on the Declaration of Independence, and U.S.A. historians have stated that he was second only to Washington in contriving the American victory.²⁷

As the first church built in Liverpool for about three centuries, St Peter's was a landmark in the port's development, and its designer is worthy of a mention in local annals. The architectural history of any important building is incomplete if the identity of its architect is unknown.

NOTES

The authors thank Dr Howard Colvin, C.B.E., F.B.A., Hon. F.R.I.B.A., Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, for help and encouragement when they sought his opinion and advice; they are grateful also to the staffs of the Liverpool Record Office and Dumfries Museum. The authors bear sole responsibility for errors.

- 1 10 & 11 Will. III, cap. XXXVI. For the Corporation 'Case', the Molyneux 'Case' and the Act's twenty-three clauses see H. Peet (ed.), *Liverpool Vestry Books 1681-1834* (Liverpool, 1912 and 1915), Vol. 1, appendix B.
- 2 These houses were never built, the rectors being allowed rent in lieu. Peet *op. cit.* Vol. 1, pp. 66, 80.
- 3 There were few, if any, houses east of the Pool in 1704 when St Peter's was consecrated and, until about 1709, most of the congregation could attend only by crossing the stone bridge built in 1672 at the present Lord Street-Whitechapel corner, where the Pool was sixty-seven yards wide. Details of reclamation in R. Stewart-Brown 'The Pool of Liverpool', *THSLC*, 82 (1930).
- 4 St John, Leeds of 1632-4; St Nicholas, Whitehaven 1693; and indeed St James, Piccadilly 1676-84, were among new churches built since 1540, but the local reputation maintained by St Peter's into the twentieth century gives an idea of the isolation in which the designer was working.
- 5 For further details see H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (1978), John Murray.
- 6 In his books and papers Henry Peet displayed meticulous regard for details, but in his *Inventory of the Parish Churches of Liverpool* (1893), *Liverpool in the Reign of Queen Anne* (1908) and *Liverpool Vestry Books* there is no mention of an architect. Moreover in March 1937 A. T. Brown read a paper *How Gothic came back to Liverpool* to the Literary and Philosophical Society (published by the University of Liverpool in 1937). The second paragraph opens 'The very name of the architect of St Peter's is unknown'. Peet did not die until 5 November 1938 and no record of any comment of his on this statement is known to the authors.

- 7 Comparative drawings, sources: St Peter's, Liverpool. Plan from the City Engineer's drawing, August 1919, elevation reconstructed from photographs and drawings Liverpool R.O. Hf.283.1.PET. St James's, Piccadilly, *Wren Society*, ix (1932), pp. 30, 32, xix (1942), plate 13; Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (17th edn 1961), p. 918. St Andrew's, Holborn, *Wren Society* ix (1932), pp. 6, 7.
- 8 H. Peet, *Vestry Books*; H. Peet (ed.), *The earliest registers of the parish of Liverpool (St Nicholas Church)* (1909) and F. Tyrer (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell* (1968) Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 1, pp. 39 *et seq.* have numerous entries relative to the Eatons.
- 9 J. A. Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool* (2nd edn 1875), Vol. 2, p. 155 n. states that Prescott was a *protégé* of Lord Molyneux who gave him land in Lord Street, on which he built a house. The relationship would be one of patron and craftsman not uncommon in that day, e.g. Sir Robert Walpole and carpenter-architect Thomas Ripley. It seems likely, therefore, that Prescott executed the fine wainscotting at Croxteth and Woolton, both Molyneux houses of the Queen Anne period.
- 10 J. A. Picton (ed.), *Selections from the municipal archives and records* (Liverpool, 1883-86), Vol. 1, pp. 290, 314-31 and *passim*.
- 11 Christopher Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), p. 184.
- 12 Dr Colvin's *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* of 1978 is more than a revised and enlarged edition of his *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1660-1840* of 1954, and it is to his inclusion of Scottish architects that the authors are particularly indebted.
- 13 'Dumfriesshire Antiquities', *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (12 April 1886); William McDowall, *History of Dumfries* (Edinburgh, 1867); *The Building of the Dumfries Mid-Steeple*, a pamphlet, unsigned (1865), published by W. R. McDiarmid & Co in Dumfries.
- 14 Archaic term denoting an architectural drawing.
- 15 T. Heywood (ed.), 'The Norris Papers', *Chet. Soc.*, 1st ser. 9 (1846), p. 129.
- 16 H. Peet, *Vestry Books*, Vol. 1, appendix O.
- 17 The Clause enacted that 'all the debts, credits and contracts made and to be made with or by the artificers or workmen... be entered or registered in one or more books to be kept for that purpose'.
- 18 For many years from the 1730s a family of that name were leaders in Liverpool's civic and mercantile affairs.
- 19 L.R.O., Liverpool's Poll-Book, April-May 1734.
- 20 F. H. Cheetham, 'North Meols Church, Lancashire', *THSLC*, 83 (1931).
- 21 L.R.O., Liverpool's first Poll-Book, 1734.
- 22 H. Peet (ed.), *The earliest registers (St Nicholas)*, Introduction pp. x-xi.
- 23 Page 511.
- 24 H. Peet, *Vestry Books*, Vol. 2, Introduction (St Nicholas's Church).
- 25 Warrington Vestry Books in the parish church.
- 26 Facsimile of register in G. Chandler, *Liverpool* (1957), p. 345.
- 27 Life of Morris, and bibliography, in *Dictionary of American Biography* (1928-36).