



LOTTERY FUNDED Information on Cachemaille-Day, 20th century church architect and inspirational architect of St Mary's Church, Becontree

Nugent Francis Cachemaille-Day (NF C-D) is best known for his startling brick expressionistic churches of the early 1930's built when he was in partnership with Herbert Welch and Felix Lander notably St Saviour's Middle Park, Eltham (Grade II*), St Mary, Becontree (Grade II) and St Nicholas, Burnage, Manchester (Grade II*). He started his career as an assistant to Louis de Soissons in the 1920's (then working on Welwyn Garden City) and then the influential church architect Goodhart Rendel, the first person to take a scholarly interest in Victorian neo-Gothic. NF C-D travelled frequently to Continental Europe especially to Germany with his German wife - and was influenced by newly built churches by the likes of Dominikus Boehm and Rudolf Schwarz around Cologne, the Ruhr and wider Rhineland which embraced the latest thinking on liturgical reform and incorporated brought forward or central altars.

NF C-D set up his own practice in about 1935 such were the number of church commissions he was by now obtaining. In the same year as completion of St Winfrid's, Testwood, Southampton (1937), NF C-D also built two of his most significant buildings: the star shaped St Michael and All Angels with centralised altar in Wythenshawe, Manchester (Grade II*) then being developed as the largest Council Estate in Europe and the St Michael's Club House in Elizabeth St, London SW1, opposite Victoria Coach Station. The latter was developed by the nearby church of St Michael's, Chester Square as a gym, club and meeting rooms for the congregation particularly staff in the great town houses of Belgravia as well as the inhabitants of the then poorer streets immediately adjacent. It is a five-storey steel framed brick building with a golden mosaic in the apse of the chapel. This is unlisted, threatened with development proposals and a current cause for concern for the C20 Society. His last 'pre-war' religious building was a rebuild of a West End church, St Anselm's in Davies St, W1 by Thackeray Turner and where NF C-D worshipped himself. It was rebuilt as St Anselm's, Belmont (Harrow) by N F C-D shortly after the war had started but was allowed to go ahead as materials were re-used from the old church and it was finished in 1941.

Rebuilding bombed churches or building churches in new areas of population was not an immediate priority after WWII but gradually new commissions came NF C-D's way, particularly in the Diocese of London. Perhaps the most notable is the Grade II* listed All Saints, Hanworth started in 1952 with a later phase built in 1957 in which he experimented with a centrally placed altar and choir. He also did this at St Richard of Chichester, Three Bridges (part of Crawley New Town) in 1953 but which was demolished in the 1990's, the first major loss of a post-war Anglican church. He also built many churches in the Diocese of Coventry (adding to those built by him there pre-war), Southwark (including his last church

St Philip's, Avondale Square off the Old Kent Road in 1963 with an unusual octagonal form set within a rectangle). His main group of post-war church work was in the LB of Hackney, where was Surveyor to the Archdeaconry, most notably listed Grade II St Michael and All Angels, London Fields (1960). He also built three churches in St Alban's Diocese: Christ Church, Bedford (1956-7) and two in Hatfield, Herts (St Michael and All Angels, and St Mary Magdalene, Hatfield Hyde). His pre-war assistants (Derek) Humphrys and Hurst went onto establish their own practice building many fine churches in the 1950's most notably St Paul's in Harlow Town Centre and in the Southend-on-Sea area, much influenced by NF C-D.

NF C-D was prolific and many of his best churches, particularly the pre-war ones are listed (but by no means all). From the article in Thirties Society Journal no 7 (1991) by his former assistant Anthony Hill he worked well with mostly 'liberal' Anglo-Catholic parishes (but not exclusively – some were evangelical as at Christ Church) for whom he built impressive, well detailed and serviceable churches to tight budgets (he sometimes contributed fittings himself such as the font at All Saints, Hanworth). His work bridges the gap between the pared down neo-gothic of the inter-war period and experiments with centrally planned altars to the final flowering of his bomb replacement churches in East London with their assured plans and often fine fittings in the 'Coventry' style. He eschewed the more advanced liturgical ideas and austerity of Bob Maguire and Keith Murray as expressed at St Paul's, Bow Common but his post-war work pretty much pre-dates their experiments. His early expressionist churches were some of the most startling creations of the 1930's.

The C20 Soc is currently updating the list of places of Christian worship 1914-1990, published in 1998 in our Journal no 3, *the Church*, with funding from English Heritage, including the long entry for NF C-D to ensure that it is accurate and reflects the current listing status of his buildings. This should be completed by the end of 2014.

In the longer term, we are planning to publish with English Heritage a monograph on him in the 'Twentieth Century Architects' series to be authored by Michael Bullen.

Robert Drake

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