

## Pastoral Measure Report: Earley, St Bartholomew

Diocese: Oxford  
County: Berkshire

Dedication: St Bartholomew  
Parish: St Luke with St Bartholomew

Listing: II  
PM: 1921

NGR: SU 73 73  
SMR: None

**Location and setting:** A large urban red-brick Victorian church, quite a prominent local landmark on a street corner in an area of contemporary residential housing (New Town) on the north edge of a small park (Palmer Park) and cemetery. Earley was once a village but is now an eastern suburb of Reading, and London Road along the north side of the church carries quite a lot of traffic. Access is from the west off the quieter St Bartholomew Road.

There has been an influx of Asian immigrants into the area since the 1950's, mainly Muslim. This is reflected in the fact that the church hall adjacent (Grade II, also by Waterhouse, see below) has been converted to a Pakistani community centre. There is a small grassed churchyard on all sides with hard standing for a few cars, enclosed within an iron fence lined with pollarded trees towards the roads. No burials.

**Building history:** The church was built as a daughter church of St Peter's, the construction beginning with the nave in 1879, designed by Alfred Waterhouse. The chapels and chancel were completed to designs by G E Bodley in 1902-5, with subsequent internal elaboration and a north-west porch added in 1920 as a War Memorial by Sir Ninian Comper. The interior was renovated and partly reordered in the mid 1970's.

**Ground plan:** 5-bay aisled nave and 3-bay chancel and north chapel, north-west porch, smaller south porch, south east projecting chapel.

**Dimensions:** Nave 21.5m (65ft) by 8m (25ft).

**Building materials:** Orange brick with grey bands, red brick at the east end, limestone dressings, oak roof decked with clay tiles.

**General description:** This is quite a large and impressive Victorian town church. It is difficult to appreciate the church from the outside, one has to stand on the other side of London Road for the best view from the north-west.

The west front has a tall narrow gable with a twin belcote giving some vertical emphasis. The brickwork is decorated with banding and inset crosses. Focus is provided by the tall stepped triple-lancet west window within a pointed recess, set above a pointed west doorway. The west aisle windows are pairs of simple pointed lancets. There are good lead rainwater goods and hoppers throughout.

The 1920 north porch is a two-storey building in a Tudor style with an elaborate west front. This consists of a four-centred doorway with continuous mouldings rising to an ogee finial, above which is a niche with a stone statue of St Bartholomew flanked by

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shields with symbols of SS Peter and Bartholomew (keys, knives). Two north windows are 3-lights with rounded heads within square-headed frames.



The church seen from the north-east

The aisle and clearstorey windows are also lancets, set in alternate groups of two and three in the aisle bays and paired in the clearstorey. The western two bays of the north aisle are taken up by the porch.

The simplicity and conservatism of the “lancet” nave contrasts starkly with Bodley’s chancel and chapels, which are in an early Perpendicular style. They are also in red brick contrasting with the more orange brick of the older part of the church, and lacks banding and other decorative features.

The east façade of the chancel has an impressive, large 5-light window with Perpendicular tracery and stained glass. There are twin angle buttresses terminating in gablets, and a further such buttress under the window. There is a small slit window high in the gable.

The north chapel has a similar but smaller three-light east window. It protrudes above the aisle at the west end, with two square headed windows, the smaller of which is high in the gable. The north wall is pierced by four lancets, with gabletted buttresses between and angle buttresses of the same type.

The south chapel is a three-bay low block with a flat roof which protrudes beyond the chancel to the east, the walls pierced by 3 two-lights with cusped tracery in square-headed frames with labels over. A small doorway with a pointed head gives access,

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with a hood-mould over. There is a small south porch, again a square plain block with flat roof, adjacent.

The relatively modest exterior does not prepare one for what lies within, though the porch provides a hint. The pride of the church is the Comper furnishings. Before describing these, it is worth mentioning that the wide and just pointed aisle arcades are double chamfered, carried on round polished granite piers with Perpendicular moulded octagonal capitals and bases. The chancel and chapel arches are all in the same style. The archway to the south chapel has been glazed in.

The nave and aisle walls are whitewashed throughout, masking the polychromy of the brickwork. The aisle and clearstorey windows are set within wide depressed recesses. The nave has been re-ordered with catalogue chairs facing towards a nave altar. The organ console sits rather disconsolately in the middle of the nave behind the altar.

Looking east the view is dominated by a large dark oak panelled chancel screen and rood loft with impressive carved rood (by a Herr Zwink of Oberammergau) across the width of the church and of one piece with carved screens between the chancel and side chapels. These were designed by Bodley and made by F R Newbury in 1907. There is a draught lobby in the same style inside the south door.

Beyond the 3-bay screen one can glimpse the chancel, which has an elaborately and freshly painted, slightly pointed barrel-vault ceiling (also in the north chapel), catching the light from the fine east window and preventing the chancel being excessively darkened by the dark oak of the rood loft and furnishings, indeed the contrast is very effective and doubtless intended.



The interior seen from the east

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The chancel floor is of black and white tiles in a chequerboard pattern (also found in the north chapel), with the names of parishioners set into some of the tiles in front of the sanctuary steps. Only one set of stalls is still *in situ*, the others replaced by red upholstered chairs.

The sanctuary is very high Church, with an embroidered dossal curtain and flanking screens with riddel posts (see below), fine 17<sup>th</sup> century (Spanish?) sanctuary lamps (see below) and large dark and gold paschal candlestick holders. The chancel is currently used by the Greek Orthodox community for worship.

The floors are of woodblock with some tiled strips laid in a chevron pattern and carpeting. The nave roof is of oak and of tie-beam construction, the members carved with quatrefoils and carried down to simple moulded corbels.

### **Furnishings and Fittings** (all c 1900 unless otherwise noted)

**Altar:** Oak table flanked by pairs of gilded angels on riddel posts. Oak table in north chapel. Plain catalogue nave altar and south chapel altar, both modern.

**Reredos:** Embroidered gold on red dossal curtain, flanking screens with riddel posts, gilded angels.

**Pulpit:** Large pulpit of dark oak with tester and carved decoration, now hung with icons by the Greek Orthodox community who regularly use the building for worship.

**Lectern:** Portable catalogue reading desk.

**Font:** Octagonal marble font, wooden lid with scrolled ironwork handle. Dedicated 1904.

**Stained glass:** The chancel east window was designed by Bodley, and has the Virgin and child flanked by SS Edward the Confessor, Bartholomew, John the Divine, and by Archbishop Laud, who also appears in another window (see below), denoting his connection with his birthplace Reading.

The east window of the north chapel was designed by Comper and donated by the Rev P N Haines in memory of his mother Agnes Catherine; Christ in Glory flanked by SS Agnes and Catherine.

There are more saints in the aisle windows; Birinus, Aidan and Bertha at the west end in the aisle windows, Edward the Confessor and Archbishop Laud again in the south aisle.

There is a War Memorial window adjacent to the north porch in the north aisle, to "James Benjamin Butler MC ASC, who gave his life in his country's service at sea January 8<sup>th</sup> 1916".

Adjacent to this is a window commemorating the death of Queen Victoria, with the widows SS Edith and Margaret.

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The large west lancets have good quality yellow glass roundels; clear glass roundels elsewhere.

### **Monuments:**

Sanctuary south wall: Stone tablet inscribed “AMDG:

The East window is dedicated in memory of Edward John Norris, Hon Canon of Christ Church, beloved Vicar of this Parish 1890-1929. Who died the 29<sup>th</sup> day of November 1940. He beautified the Sanctuary and multiplied the Vessels of the Temple. May light perpetual shine upon him O Lord”.

Sanctuary pavement. 25 memorial tablets with the following names and dates:

+1920 Christopher Bourne	+1944 Alfred Goodger
+1959 Alys Bourne	+1969 Gladys Grove
+1940 Claudius Dybell	+1971 Norrah Beaumont
+1939 Stanley Victor Hollis	+1971 Mabel Mary Cook
+1905 Blanche Josephine Davis	+1971 William John Goodger
+1944 Ronald John Wilson R.A.F	+1974 James H Dawson Priest
+1918 Septimus James Hawkes	+1981 Susan Jane Carter
+1915 Clifford Salman	+1970 Stanley G. Prior
+1918 Edwin Harry Goddard	+1973 Rowland G.O.Hill
+1940 George Albert Victor Waight	+1973 Eric R.W. Gilmour
+1951 Charles Simmonds	+1973 Walter Henry Cook Priest
+1929 Frederick Ernest Jennings	+1930 Eleanor Lushington Norris
+1979 Evelyn Gertrude Cook	

West of chancel gates. 15 memorial tablets with the following names and dates:

+1973 Nellie Russel	+Walter and Caroline Martin
+1970 Dorothy Humphrey	+1920 Emily King
+1907 Percy Noel Haines	+1972 Arthur Ernest Gregory
+1916 Margaret Isobella Byers	+1975 Dorothy Lawrence
+1969 Lillie Thompson	+1982 Rhoda Edith Walker
+1931 Edmund Charles Clayton-Jones	+1977 Hilda Roberta Beaumont
+1931 and his wife Sarah	+1974 Vera Kathleen Cooper
+1921 Sarah Jane Davis	

Memorial brasses: Vicar’s stall

“Has sedes prebyterorum ex labore atque amore dederunt Gulielmus Henricus Poffley et Gulielmus Clark A.S. MCMV”

South wall

“To the glory of God and in loving memory of George Talbot sometime leader of the singing boys of this Church who departed this life October 4<sup>th</sup> 1897 in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his age. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee and my soul which Thou has redeemed Ps LXXI 23”.

Old children’s corner

“To the glory of God and to the dear memory of Murial Gladys Palmer who fell asleep January 24 1900. Aged 16 years. Also of Mary Palmer mother of the above and

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for 24 years the beloved wife of Henry Palmer, Sidesman and a member of the choir of this church who fell asleep February 22 1902 aged 52 years. Happy and blest are they who have endured for though the body dies the soul shall live for ever”.

By font (by floor to South West of font)

“In honour of our Lord Jesus Christ and in remembrance of a beloved son who departed this life January 10<sup>th</sup> 1904. His parents have caused this Font to be here dedicated”.

By west doors

“The panelling at the west end of this church was given in memory of Ellen Harriot and Minnie Agnes Driscoll 1933”.

North porch

“In loving memory of Leslie Hood Fernie who departed this life in the 7<sup>th</sup> of his age December 19<sup>th</sup> 1899; Christ’s faithful soldier and servant to his life’s end”.

**Bells:** Two small bells

**Organ:** Two manual pipe organ.

**Registers:** Not seen, no details available.

**Other woodwork:** Dark oak choir stalls, now piled up against the wall in the north chapel. 2 dark oak faldstools and Bishop’s chair.

**Communion rails:** Low light wood panelled screen, perhaps post-War. Dark oak kneeling benches.

**War memorials:** See above.

**Miscellanea:** Local embroidery and needlework designed by Comper.

**Bibliography:** Pevsner, N (1966). The Buildings of England: Berkshire.

**State of repair:** Taken from Quinquennial Inspection Report, October 1999 by Andrews and Masters of Reading. The church is generally in good order, with minor decorative and repair works recommended.

### **Other churches in the area:**

St Luke, Reading. A large red-brick Victorian church in the lancet style of the late 1880’s. Aisled nave, transepts, apsidal chancel, belcote. Part of a complex of contemporary buildings on a street corner. Lots of stained glass, including two windows by Kempe. No churchyard. ½ mile west.

St Peter, Church Road, Earley. A large Grade II grey-brick church, 1844 by J Turner. 5-bay nave, aisles under one roof with dormer windows and chancel added 1881, impressive north-west tower with pinnacles. Large church hall and churchyard. ¼ mile south-east.

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**Compiled 8<sup>th</sup> December 2001 by Joseph Elders, the Archaeology Officer of the Council for the Care of Churches after a visit to the site on 8th June 2001.**