

Fawkham Manor, Fawkham

This extraordinary house was designed in 1866 by Edward Buckton Lamb, an eccentric Victorian architect of national importance, for himself. A house designed by a renowned architect for himself is of historic interest and E.B. Lamb was an important figure in the evolution of High-Victorian Gothic architecture.

Edward Buckton Lamb (1805 or 1806 -1869) was an architect whose work aroused strong emotions. He had two main lines of practice: churches and country houses, although he also produced small town halls, corn markets, schools, cottages a London hotel and a consumption hospital. He produced many drawings for Loudon's Encyclopaedia (1833), and published books on Gothic Ornament (1830), Ancient Domestic Architecture (1846), many articles in Architectural Magazine (1834–8) and was also a regular contributor to the main architectural journals such as The Civil Engineer and Architects Journal, The Builder, and The Building News. Lamb was admitted FRIBA in 1837. As Edwards states: "Lamb was a significant voice in the architectural world of Victorian London for over 30 years with many opportunities for his work and ideas to be seen by both his peers and the public. He was always experimenting with his buildings and each new building was determined afresh from his clearly defined principles".

His church architecture was fiercely criticised by The Ecclesiologist and the purists of the Camden Society, due to his refusal to conform to their ideas about the "correct" style. He designed over 30 churches, many of which are listed Grade I or II*, including St Luke's Chapel at Brompton Hospital, St Mary Magdalene with St Martin at Addiscombe, and St Martin's Church at Gospel Oak. A list of some of his Listed buildings is shown below.

Lamb is best known for his churches, but he worked on many houses. Kaufman has demonstrated how Lamb's career depended on the patronage of the landed classes, with his work recommended by one client to another. According to Kauffman, between 1855 and 1866, Lamb worked on no fewer than 22 country house projects, mostly remodelling buildings or adding outbuildings. His best known domestic architecture work was for the Disraelis at Hughenden Manor (1862-63) where he designed the Isaac Disraeli monument (1862) and remodelled and refaced the house, with which Disraeli expressed his delight.

In a lecture of 1949, the architect and critic H.S. Goodhart-Rendel coined the phrase "rogue architect" for Lamb (along with Thomas Harris, John Shaw and J.W. Wild). Sir Nikolaus Pevsner "professed to take a perverse pleasure in his work" which he described as "frantically original" and "mischievous". Kaufmann believes these remarks contain "a strong undercurrent of admiration".

There have been a number of studies of Lamb's life and work over the past fifty years, which have progressively increased in scope and depth, and demonstrate an increasing understanding and appreciation of his work. Later architectural historians such as James Stevens Curl have taken a more balanced view of Lamb as an Eclectic: "The Rogues employed an originality, a bold eclecticism, and a showmanship (perhaps more suited to commercialism) that did not go down well among the arbiters of taste" and he observes that "he seems to have been untouched by more conventional tastes of the time," describing Lamb as an "English Rogue Gothic Revivalist." Gavin Stamp concludes that Lamb was "a child of the picturesque who was yet a highly original planner, who kept more than abreast of fashion by the perverse and original interpretation of High-Victorian Gothic

detail”, but also that his “response to the architectural environment of his day deserves more credit than has usually been granted to him.”

Despite being a busy architect, Lamb only had the opportunity to design an entirely new country house three times: one of these was Fawkham Manor.

Fawkham Manor is a smaller country house which displays many of Lamb’s favoured elements, as would be expected, since he was designing it for himself. These include an asymmetrical plan, projecting oriels, polychromy, dentilled string courses, dramatic chimneys, distinctive local materials (flint) and roof tiles in contrasting bands of colour - Lamb was one of the first architects to experiment with constructional polychromy. Fawkham Manor also features jettied timber and plasterwork which Edwards states was not something that Lamb had employed until then. A design for the house, originally to be called Parkfield House, was exhibited at the Free Architectural Exhibition in 1866.

The building is constructed of flint with red and yellow brick dressings, well described by John Newman: “A fair-sized Victorian mansion, but like an overgrown cottage, with its half-hipped gables, projecting chimney breasts and diagonal oriel. Flint and brick, yellow stock and moulded red, giving a polychromatic display and plenty of notching.” The cottage element is reflected in the first floor interior, where the ceilings project into the roof space and windows are semi-dormers, but the ground floor is rather grander with a generous staircase and a magnificent carved marble fireplace placed directly beneath a window – an architect’s joke that is typical of, though not unique to, E.B. Lamb.

The manor house stands in extensive grounds, adjoining ancient woodland. Not far from the entrance front is a large stable block in matching style, again of flint and brick, which included a staff cottage and flat. These remain, and have been converted to private residences.

A long extension was added in the 1970/80s in the Neo-Georgian style, although with token acknowledgements to Lamb in vari-colour brickwork and striped bands in the roof tiles. Although extended, the original house remains with very few external changes. The oak front door, with brass furniture in the Arts & Crafts style, also survives many years of use as the Outpatients Entrance. Internally, despite the hospital conversion, it is understood that in addition to the staircase and fireplace mentioned above, some other marble fireplaces and carved marble panels survive.

It is said that Lamb ran out of money when the building had reached first-floor level, that his mortgage was foreclosed and the project taken over by the owner of the site, Henry Booth Hohler, who completed it under Lamb’s direction until Lamb died in 1869. It was Hohler who called the house Fawkham Manor and moved in about 1870, he and his heirs becoming squires of Fawkham until the estate was sold in 1949.

Lamb’s extant buildings span 32 years and his architecture steadily developed during this period. Fawkham Manor was designed towards the end of his life and, as Edwards states: “It is a shame that he was unable to complete Fawkham Manor for himself and so end his career on a higher note. The architecture here shows he was still trying out new ideas in his old age with hipped dormers, jettied timber bays on the first storey and oriel windows. There are typical Lamb brick details, colours, string courses, use of local materials, banding of coloured tiles and head details, but in a new, fresh manner.”

Lamb's obituary in The Builder remarks that 'he constantly endeavoured, even at the expense sometimes of beauty, to exhibit originality.' Fawkham Manor is an individual, original building, displaying many of the innovative Gothic Revival 'rogue' features of which Lamb was a leading proponent.

In conclusion, the building has high historic and architectural value: the association of Fawkham Manor with Edward Buckton Lamb demonstrates high historical value, and the building displays quality and originality in its design.

LCE
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BUILDINGS WITH DESIGNS BY LAMB WHICH ARE ALREADY LISTED:

Grade I

St Martin's Church, Gospel Oak Grade I 1379098
Hughenden Manor, now National Trust property Grade I 1125785

Grade II*

St Luke's Chapel, Brompton Hospital Grade II* 1272410
Eye Town Hall Grade II* 1316536
Disraeli Monument, High Wycombe, Bucks Grade II* 1125201
St Mary Magdalene, Addiscombe Grade II* 1358794
Church of St Simon and St Jude, Runnymede, Surrey Grade II* 1028958
Church of All Saints, Long Causeway Grade II* 1315254
Pair of Mausolea, Egham Grade II* 1242772
Former Town Hall, Aylesbury, Grade II* part of 1117935

Grade II

Royal National Hospital and Chest Clinic, Bournemouth Grade II entry number 1108822
Wadhurst Castle Grade II 1028052
South Side (Old Rectory) London Road, Grade II 1124194
Lychgate at the Church of Holy Trinity Grade II List Entry Number: 1124763
Felcourt, The Avenue, Babergh Grade II 1194223
Church School, Great Missenden Grade II 1124764
Lodge of Cambridge General Cemetery Grade II 1126200
Church of St Mary Hambleton, North Yorkshire Grade II 1151336
Church of St Andrew, Blubberhouses, Harrogate, North Yorkshire Grade II 1150451
Church of Saint Paul, Harrogate Grade II 1132072
Church of St Margaret, Leiston Grade II 1287648
Entrance Lodge of Arboretum, Derby Grade II 1215237
Rose Hill House, 86 Rose hill St, Derby Grade II 1396602
Wayland Hall, Watton, Grade II 1076779
Home Lodge, Ellesborough, Wycombe Grade II 1158651
Christ Church, Hartlepool Grade II 1250112

Buildings on the list with part designs by Lamb:

Butleigh Court, Mendip - minor work Grade II 1058743
Uplands Conference Centre, Bucks Grade II forms part of 1417919

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John Newman, *The Buildings of England, West Kent and the Weald*, Yale University Press, 2012, p.245

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