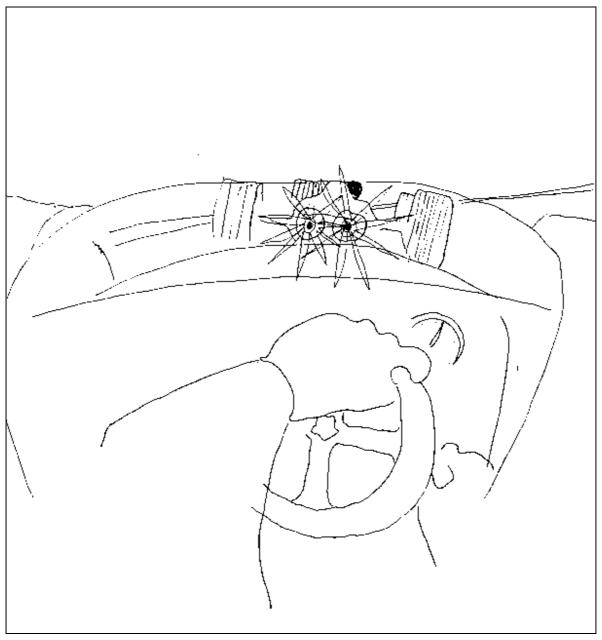
Sam Scorer

A lesser known architect of the twentieth century

Karolina Szynalska

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In the papers about old streets
And split level shopping, but some
Have always been left so far;
And when the old part retreats
As the bleak high-risers come
We can always escape in the car.
From 'Going, Going' by Philip Larkin (1972)

Scorer's sketch form Sheila Bartl's collection.

In J.G. Ballard's opinion 'It seems (...) that we have to regard everything in the world around us as fictional, as if we were living in an enormous novel'. A short film for the BBC from 1971 features his monologue. While he drives through a concrete landscape, he gives a description of what has become one of the significant motives in English fiction writing:

I think the key image of the 20th century is the man in the motor car. It sums up everything: the elements of speed, drama, aggression, the junction of advertising and consumer goods with the technological landscape; the sense of violence and desire, power and energy; the shared experience of moving together through an elaborately signalled landscape. We spend a substantial part of our lives in the motor car, and the experience of driving condenses many of the experiences of being a human being in the 1970s, the marriage of the physical aspects of ourselves with the imaginative and technological aspects of our lives. I think the 20th century reaches its highest expression on the highway. Everything is there: the speed and violence of our age; the strange love affair with the machine.

The technological and elaborately signalled landscape does not extend endlessly, nor does the pessimism. In spite of the dystopian visions in Ballard's novels or Philip Larkin's poem 'Going, Going', 'when (...) the bleak high-risers come / We can always escape in the car' to 'The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,/ The guildhalls, the carved choirs'.

A provincial scene may feature a sunny day in 1971. A bird's eye view. The landscape consists of small villages scattered around green fields. An almost empty A 57 road crosses the Fossdyke canal. In the passengers' seat of the brightly coloured E-type Jaguar there is an attractive woman. She smiles looking at the big horizon. A man in a flamboyant shirt is in the drivers' seat. When the car reaches the A1, it suddenly speeds up on an empty road. Shortly after the car stops at a motor car filling station. The man leaves the car. He is six feet tall and sports a comb over. Above his head an impressive and peculiar canopy has the shape of butterfly, it is a thin concrete shell supported on two sides.



Markham Moor filling station.

In March 2003 the Highway Agency will propose some improvements at Markham Moor, Nottinghamshire, the junction of the A1 and A57. They will aim to solve congestion, increase safety and demolish the canopy that no longer shelters a petrol station, but only a container built in the 1980s housing a Little Chef restaurant. In March 2005 campaigners from 'across the country' (LCL, Lincolnshire Echo, 2004) will win the fight to save the structure from demolition. The roof will be listed Grade II by English Heritage and the entire building will become, ironically, 'Britain's only architecturally important Little Chef', a seemingly impossible contradiction. It means it will be 'nationally important and of special interest' (English Heritage). Counter staff will keep copies of the obituary of the man in the flamboyant shirt.

A building might be listed if it has fulfilled its original brief, it is designed with flair, sensitivity and attention to detail, and it offers technological innovation as well as design finesse, if a clear idea worked all the way through with a consistency of quality down to every detail (Hardwood, 2000:4). It has a statutory protection; a listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without special permission from the local planning authority. There are estimated 374,081 listed buildings in England. The total number of post-war listed buildings is calculated to be 0.2% (English Heritage).



Memorial plaque on the building at the Brayford Pool, Lincoln.

'My God, how does one write a

biography?' Virginia Woolf asked herself this question in 1938, when she was commissioned to write the Life of her friend, Roger Fry, and Hermione Lee used the same question when she began her biography of Virginia Woolf in 1996 (Lee, 2009:122). Biography is one of the most popular, best-selling, and widely-read of literary genres. Like any literary form it has its conventions, it blurs the place where history becomes fiction. Any biographical narrative is artificial, because it involves selection and shaping, but different biographers will apply various levels of confidence in their interpretation. The forms characteristics can be magnified by using fictional narratives, playing with point of view and ordering events, chronologically or by themes, and as a result become mythical.

In 1971 Hugh Segar Scorer, aka Sam Scorer, who is the subject of this particular biography, and the driver of the E-type, delivered a lecture titled 'Some lesser-known architects of the nineteenth century' to the East Midlands Centre of the Royal Society of Arts at the Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham. The paper was dedicated to lives and works of two provincial architects: Lincoln-based William Watkins, a master of terracotta elevations, and Samuel Sanders Teulon, who designed the Buxton Memorial

Fountain in Victoria Tower Gardens, London as well as a number of buildings in Lincolnshire. It was subsequently published in the *Journal of Royal Society of Arts* (1971) and *Architecture East Midlands* (1973). He began: 'I must open with a disclaimer and an apology. I am neither a writer nor an historian, but an architect. There are great gaps in my powers of description'.

'Some lesser-known architects of the nineteenth century', an introduction to a pamphlet about William Watkins and his son; a co-authored monograph about a provincial architect 'Fowler of Louth'; a handful of articles about urban issues in Lincoln and student journal entries, are the only published legacy of Scorer.

May I open with a disclaimer and an

apology and paraphrase Scorer? I am neither a writer nor an historian, but an architect. There are great gaps in my powers of description.

Sam Scorer spent most of his life in a city which can claim to have missed the Trent, the Railway, the A1, the M1, the 60s and the Archbishopric. However he missed little in his architectural and social quest, except perhaps a reputation. He seems to be invisible in architectural history. To the best of my knowledge nothing comprehensive, either locally or nationally, has been written or published about Sam Scorer or his legacy. The author's enquiry starts from an eponymous local gallery and an unusual looking concrete building at the Brayford Pool in Lincoln. The structure is covered with a butterfly like roof supported by a V-shape central

column and has an art-deco green plaque commemorating its author (1923-2003).

If one begins the search for Sam Scorer with the first edition to Pevsner's guide to Lincolnshire (1964) one will find two entries listed under his name in the Index of Artists; a building designed in 1958 and a mysterious page 767. The listed construction is '[a]n interesting structure with fifteen concrete mushroom pillars. Hence the roof comes forward in lobes' (359). The described site is located in the middle of the moon-like industrial landscape of the Scunthorpe steel works. The building disappeared a long time ago and the second entry leads to a page with no content.

During his life Scorer was a member of the Lincolnshire
Association Executive Committee, the International Association for
Shell Structures, the Victorian Society, the Lincoln Car Club, the
Escalator Housing Society, the Lincolnshire Artist Society, the
Lincoln Civic Trust, the Newark Civic Trust, he was a vice
chairman of the Concrete Society (East Midlands Branch), a
member of the Labour Party and a City Sheriff. But the only
information catalogued in the Lincoln City Archives under the
name of Scorer, apart from solicitors files and document referring to
a noble past of his family, is a letter of complaint about the
architect's behaviour dated 1997 at the meeting regarding the
Manton Parish Church. The correspondence is from an individual to
the Diocesan Office. In the opinion of the complainant Mr. Scorer
was not officially invited (but the archdeacon asked him to attend
on the behalf of the Diocesan Advisory Committee). His attitude

was arrogant, he dominated the meeting, he was accused of providing misleading information, not consulting the previous report, influencing an independent surveyor and being very unfair to the provincial architect employed by the parish. His views were 'idealistic, but not practical'. It is difficult to judge whether the complaint has any merit. In the report Scorer apparently coloured, written by an independent consultant with regard to the condition of the redundant church, there are no recommendations made or decisions undertaken. Nothing seems out of ordinary or suspicious, apart from that this is the only directly available file referring to Scorer in the Lincolnshire Archives.

The biographical file in the City Library consists entirely of articles published by a provincial daily newspaper, the *Lincolnshire Echo*, with titles like 'Why Sam's roof is key ingredient for sizzling success' or 'Why heritage buffs want to save this Little Chef...'. The London RIBA Library collection also holds Scorer's biographical file and journals with a modest amount of articles describing his work from early 1950s until the 1970s. From the biographical file one can learn that Scorer admired 'Corbusier, Picasso, Brunel, Jim Clark, Elisabeth Taylor, Freud and Marilyn Monroe, who said "money is on the way out"'. The journal articles focus on technical aspects of the structures and architectural details; one of them is an insulting letter published in *The Architect and Building News* (1963) referring to a church built in 1963:

Sir – I am sure that the design of this church will shock most ordinary people. Did the architect have his inspiration on

wet Monday after an acute attack of indigestion? But perhaps having seen TV pictures of hurricane damage in America he seized his set-squares and compasses and exclaimed Archimedes-like 'I've got it'. In short is this architect cocking a snook at traditional architecture and intentionally initiating the new 'typhoon' period – at the expense of his Lincoln victims?

There is no mention of Scorer in the issue of the 1996 *Proceedings* of the Institute of the Structural Engineers dedicated to history of concrete shells and containing in depth analysis and historical papers about hypars. This is surprising since probably no other architect built so many of them and the author of 'Concrete shell roof, 1945-1965', R.D. Anchor, must have met Scorer at one of the conferences about concrete shells that both of them had attended*. The Times, Architects' Journal and RIBA Journal published obituaries in 2003. Two of his buildings are illustrated in 'England A Guide to Post-war Listed Buildings' from 2003 by Elain Harwood[†], Senior Architectural Investigator for English Heritage. Andrew Saint in 'Some thoughts about the architectural use of concrete' (AA files, 1991b) describes a post-war interest in shells and the admiration Candela received in Britain in the 1950s. He asserts: 'Perhaps the first hyperbolic paraboloid building in Britain was a small timber carpet-weaving shed built in 1957 for the Wilton Royal Carpet Company to Robert Townsend's design' (13). It was

*

^{*} Evidence in the Scorer's archives. The both seem they have attended conference in Brussels (1961) and in Warsaw (1963)

[†] They are St John the Baptist and the garage in Lincoln. The third building was listed after the book was published

timber that pioneered the hp roof in Britain, not concrete (Booth, 1997:68), but it is surprising that Saint uses an illustration of a timber example without any explanation in a paper about the history of concrete structures. I assume this is because he might not have known that between then and 1963 Sam Scorer designed and built four concrete hyperbolic paraboloid shell roofs around the East Midlands and designed an unexecuted fifth one in Welwyn Garden City.

Possibly the first concrete hyperbolic paraboloid in the UK was incorporated into the tank tower that sits awkwardly on the corner of the of five storey Charnos lingerie factory block in Ilkeston before 1959. The building was designed by the partnership of Denis Clark Hall, Sam Scorer and Roy Bright. The tower is supported on four columns and cased with western cedar. It was only an experimental shell, experience of which was to be used on subsequent proposals. The article which features the building from *Architectural Review* (1959) does not mention the technical

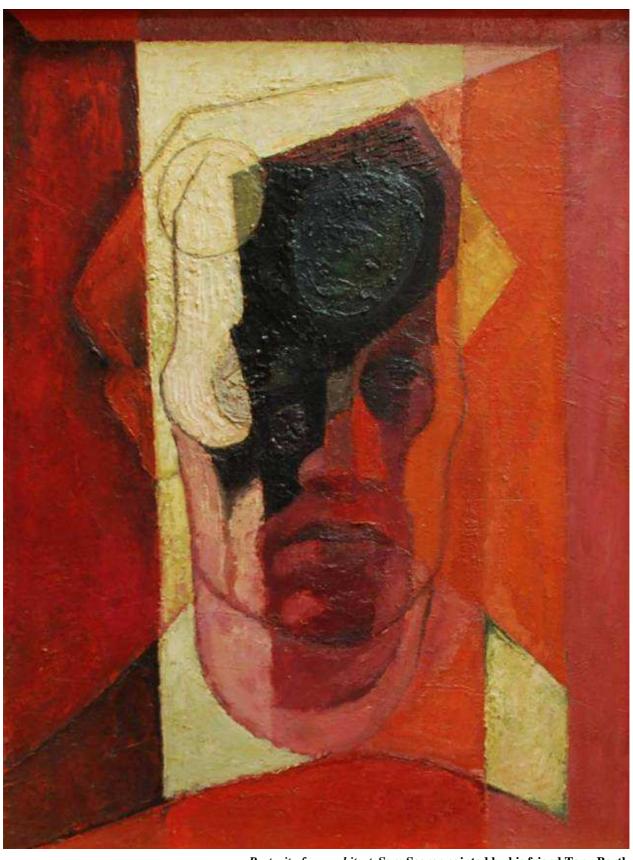
Scorer seemed to be an intriguing figure. Mystery is the promise of an exciting story to be discovered and to be written. The novelty of a subject that no one has undertaken before was tempting. The prospect of searching primary sources and recording recollections rather than dwelling on already digested material in secondary sources was very motivating. He was one of the leading builders of hyperbolic paraboloids, structures which for ten years were incredibly fashionable. Over his career the multitude of his



Probably the first hyperbolic paraboloid in the UK. This photograph was found in Scorer's archive at Wood Enderby.

innovation.

architectural styles is unusual and puzzling. There is a great discrepancy between the assumed importance of the listed buildings, architectural precedence, and the conspicuous absence of data about their author. Rather than writing about Sam Scorer the author realised that this story had to be about writing the story of Sam Scorer.



Portrait of an architect. Sam Scorer painted by his friend Tony Bartl, who studied in Prague under Oskar Kokoschka in 1939.

Purchased by the Usher Gallery in Lincoln in 1960.

Hugh Segar Scorer was born in Lincoln on

2 March 1923, but was known as Sam among his family after his older brother nicknamed him Samson. As an adult he changed his name to Sam by deed poll. The Scorer family had been important in the city, there is even a street bearing their name down the Sincil Bank. In every generation of the family there were unconventional solicitors and teachers. Sam's father was a clerk to Lindsey County Council. He was short and his limbs were misshaped. Sam's mother was a lecturer at the Teacher Training College and before agreeing to marriage she asked her prospective husband to undergo a health check; to ensure that his condition was not heritable. The disability of Scorer's father was confirmed to be a result of a difficult birth and the couple subsequently had five very tall and eccentric children. Sam was the youngest.

He attended Repton School in Derbyshire, where he regularly won the drawing prize, and became head boy. In 1941 he won both a scholarship to the Slade School of Art and entry to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to read Mechanical Sciences. He chose the latter, but spent most of his time painting. During the cold winter of 1941-42 Scorer's student bedroom became something of a studio, with William Cooper, a painter and Sandy Wilson (later Sir Colin St John Wilson, the architect of the British

Library) they prepared to mount an exhibition of contemporary art in Cambridge, at Heffers Gallery which remained open throughout the war and had just hosted the first exhibition in England of Oscar Kokoschka, a refugee painter from Prague*. Louis Clark, the Director of Fitzwilliam, helped the three undergraduates Scorer, Wilson and Cooper to arrange the exhibition. Wilson painted a copy of El Greco's Agony in the Garden and another hectic Expressionist canvas entitled *The Rape*, from Cézanne's. Clark didn't approve and Wilson promptly staged a walk-out with his works, expecting his co-exhibitors to follow; instead, they seized the prime exhibition spaces. The show was well reviewed locally[†]. The Cambridge Review gave the exhibition an encouraging write-up and posed the question as to where the young artists' talents might take them. In the book referring to this event, Corpus within living memory – life in a Cambridge College (Bury & Winter, 2004:72) the author of the paragraph, William Cooper writes: '60 years later one of the them is a Royal Academician and another an Academician of the Royal West of England Academy'. Scorer is not mentioned.

After completing his studies at Cambridge, Scorer volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm. While training in Canada he met his wife, Anna Humphrey. They got married after only six weeks and their first child was born in 1946. Scorer served as a fighter pilot until 1945, when he was invalided out after a serious plane

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THREE UNDERGRADUATIS

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Copy of the poster from Sheila Bartl's collection.

^{*} The events in Cambridge from Bury & Winter, 2004:72 and Menin & Kite, 2005:20-23

[†] Colin St John Wilson, letter to his parents, 22 February1942, Wilson archive quoted in Menin & Kite, 2005:20

crash which occurred as he attempted to land on a moving aircraft carrier in the Baltic Sea.

Scorer decided to train as an architect. In 1946, along with his friend Sandy Wilson, he decided to register at the Architectural Association, not only the most progressive architecture school in Britain at the time, but also 'something of a hub' (Menin & Kite, pp.23) with a permeating atmosphere of the 'Brave New World' (Bottoms, 2008). Whilst Scorer was accepted into the second year, Wilson was rejected due to his 'weak Cambridge portfolio' and went to study at the Bartlett (Menin & Kite, 2005:23).

Scorer became a member of the editorial board of PLAN, a radical, socialist student journal of 'ambition and anxiety', a handsome Scorer features prominently in a photograph of the editorial board that appeared in the Architects' Journal (1947). At the time architecture was strongly aligned with sociology and it was an unquestionable belief that new planning and architecture could solve social problems and lead to a betterment of the society. The journal expressed young upper middle-class liberals' opinions about how the working classes should live, plan and build. There is evidence, however, of tension between professional self-interest and the common good. Although the young soon to-be-architects yearned for a society where men in white overalls would bolt together exquisite prefabricated Modernist buildings, every building would still be individually designed by architects (Fenton, 2007:174-190). In the second number of PLAN (1948), Scorer used a review of a book about the Lincoln Cathedral to give a statement

about the architect's obligations. This is perhaps the only manifesto he wrote during his entire career.

We shall never get more than a minimum standard, bye-law, packing case jumble sale architecture unless there is an educated appreciation and demand. It is the duty of architects and architectural critics to create this demand.

(36)



Left: PLAN Editors. Photograph published in the *Architects' Journal*.

Below: Scorer at the AA. Photograph from Edward Bottom's, AA Archivist, presentation at the Joint AA/RIBA Symposium.



Later in his career he was responsible for creating demand for striking, conspicuous sophisticated architecture as well as some fitfor-purpose cheap housing, barns and industrial minimum-standard buildings.

After graduating with an Honours degree in 1949, Scorer worked for a year as an assistant to George Grey Wornum, who had designed the RIBA building in Portland Place and was the winner of the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture in 1952. A year later he was invited to work with Denis Clarke Hall, who was a 20

distinguished architect, the winner of the News Chronicle School competition at Richmond in 1936 and in 1950 he acted as an assessor for the Hunstanton School competition, won by Alison and Peter Smithson. This choice caused sensation in the architectural world and shortly after Denis Clarke Hall was himself commissioned to design a couple of schools around the country. He was teaching at the AA, and was interested in Scorer's student thesis which was about tall buildings. Clarke Hall had been commissioned to design a tall building block for St Pancras (1949-1955) and having never built a tall building, he employed a bright student interested and theoretically knowledgeable in the subject. The Judd Street project is an early example of unusual shape 'point' block, a tower with flats grouped around a service and circulation core and represented a solution used for tight sites (Pevsner & Cherry, 1999:73). Clark Hall regarded Scorer as a gifted designer and just three years after he employed him as an assistant, in 1954 he opened an office with Scorer in Lincoln and invited him to become his partner. When Scorer returned to Lincoln from London in 1954 he was promptly approached by the Freemasons. If Scorer were to join the brotherhood, they promised he would never be short of work. Scorer declined; if this was the only way to secure steady work, he would rather not do architecture at all. The arrangement with Clarke Hall proved to be nevertheless successful. Scorer managed to acquire lots of work from different clients, such as Diocesan Board of Education, councils from Lindsey, North Riding, Essex, Glamorgan, Surrey and others.

Between 1954 and 1963, when concrete shell roofs were used widely as a method of roofing over comparatively routine buildings and steel was only available through a rationing system devised by government (Anchor, 1996:381-389), Scorer designed the buildings, that have since been recognized as of national importance and of special interest: the Markham Moor petrol station (now the Little Chef), the garage and car showroom on the Brayford Pool (subsequently used as a library and later restaurants) and the St. John the Baptist church on the Ermine Estate in Lincoln. All the buildings have hyperbolic paraboloid roofs in various combinations and all of them were designed in consultation with one structural engineer, London based Hajnal Konyi, a Hungarian refugee, a Hampstead neighbour of Ove Arup (Jones, 2006:69). Scorer described him as 'the loveliest of building operatives; 'affectionately admired as "that Honjie Konjie" – a phenomenon who treated a groping inquiry into the mysteries of their trade with a reply which illuminated the job like a magnesium flare' (1973:18). He had a special interest in concrete shells, particularly hypars, a form that could be taken to symbolize or summarize the post-war excitements of engineering (Boyd, 1958:295), 'Fashionable Yet Functional' (The Times, Nov 02, 1962:8), 'fantastically functional' (Church Building, 1963:3), 'purely functional' (Lincolnshire Echo in LCL) and 'economical to erect, flexible in use and sculpturally exciting' (The Times, 1969:V). Hypars offered a tangible sense of lightness and gave an impression of hovering in space and contradicting laws of gravity. They

embodied the ideals of engineering: lightness through efficiency. The geometry and construction calculations were relatively comprehensible*.

When the new garage for Lincolnshire Motor Company Showrooms was being built it caused a sensation. In 1959 this was the largest hyperbolic paraboloid to have been built in the UK, perhaps until the Commonwealth Institute was built in Kensington in 1962. It was reported that the construction was of reinforced concrete, which was chosen for its economy, durability and fireproof qualities. The local newspaper, the *Lincolnshire Echo*, received a number of telephone calls from passers-by informing them that the roof had subsided in the middle and was about to collapse. The building consists of four concrete hyperbolic paraboloid shells, separated by a roof-light running along the entire depth of the building. It was described in Architectural Review (1960:349-350), Concrete Quarterly (1960:11-12) and discussed at technical conferences. Concrete Quarterly reported 'we have watched with enthusiasm what Candela has done with this form of structure in Mexico; it is encouraging to discover that architects and engineers in Britain are gradually dispelling the fogs of our own innate conservatism towards design, which still linger in patches here and there.' The roof covered a large uninterrupted floor space 29m by 32.5m and consisted of four 65mm thin shells arranged so that their highest points are at the centre and the four corners of the garage. At the southern corner of the site there was a

They must be always continuously loaded, double curved and supported at the edges.

circular showroom containing a turntable, with the board room and Managing Director's office on the first floor.

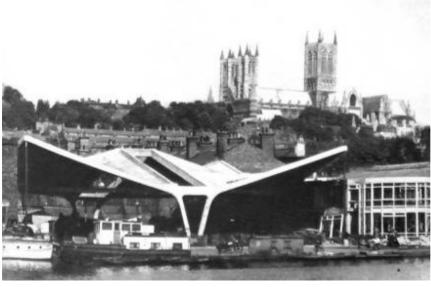
Locally still admired the St. John the Baptist was commissioned by father John Hodgkinson over a cup of tea he shared one afternoon with Scorer's father. It is the subject of the previously cited insulting letter. After the completion it was named as the 'Church of tomorrow' and according to the Telegraph (2004:13-16) it is one of 100 most loved churches in the UK. It was



Top left: Scorer's sketch from Sheila Bartl's collection.

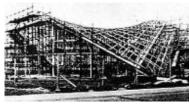
Bottom left: Brayford Pool garage during construction from *Concrete Quarterly*.

Below: Open plan garage interior from *Reinforced Concrete Review*.





the first church in Lincolnshire to break the tradition of the Gothic revival (Pevsner, 1989:71). It is a major contribution to church architecture of the second half of the 20th century. Its importance lies in combining innovative minimalist architectural thinking with advanced liturgical planning; flexible uninterrupted *functional* open plan. The parish had '*precious little money but plenty of determination*' (Hodgkinson). A big part of a budget was raised by the effort of parishioners and by donations and some works were executed by worshippers.











Top left: The shell roof structure had to be made in wood before being cast in concrete and the temporary timber was self-supported on a forest of scaffolding. Photograph in Chatburn, 1990.

Middle left: St John the Baptist during construction. Photograph from a newspaper cutting from the church archive.

Bottom left: Lincoln's church of tomorrow. Postcard from the church archive.

Above: The parishioners were taking part in the construction process. Photograph from the church archive.

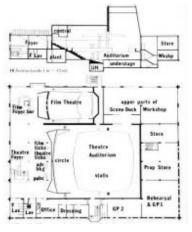
After these impressive successes Sam Scorer and Hajnal Konyi were appointed for a project for 'one of the most modern and progressive theatres in Europe' (Watkins, 1972:IV). The client was the Theatre Association, and they commissioned a feasibility study report in September 1970. The Feasibility Committee reported seven months later, recommending a new theatre complex in Lincoln and the setting up of a new theatre. The committee added, not unexpectedly, that the project would need the support of the local authorities. Consequently the Lincoln New Theatre Trust was established and the Earl of Ancaster became patron of the trust. After six months they produced proposals for an auditorium with a seating capacity of up to around 450, capable of housing both traditional and modern drama. In addition a separate 200-seat auditorium was planned, intended primarily for use as a film theatre. The British Film Institute has been advising on this, and the project was to 'give Lincoln the chance to see the type of films now shown in the National Film Theatre in London' (ibid.).

Left: Proposed Lincoln theatre published in the *Architects' Journal*

Below:

The long section through the theatre auditorium and plan

Proposed Lincoln theatre auditorium. Photograph from the archive at Wood Enderby.





The impressive structure was to also contain a restaurant and a bar overlooking the waters of Brayford Pool.

Lincoln Corporation, Lindsey County Council and Kevesten County Council had agreed to support the venture, and there were promises of help from the Arts Council and the British Film Institute. Individual contributions exceeded £10.000. In May 1972, with the 75% of the necessary funds already secured, the project looked as though it would 'definitely go ahead'. It should have started early in 1973. But at that time Britain went into a recession and suffered an energy crisis, big changes in local government also occurred after the election in 1972 and a by-election in 1973. The project suddenly lost the support of the City Council and it was entirely rejected. If built, it would have been the biggest and the most prestigious scheme in Scorer's career. The sequence of sad events continued. In 1973 Hajnal Konyi died; Clarke Hall closed his London office and retired. Scorer stayed in Lincoln and took over the practice.

While working on Modernist buildings throughout his career, Scorer was also a member of the Victorian Society. He was the inspiration behind the East Midlands Group of the Society and served as its first chairman. He was remembered for his enthusiasm, great knowledge and chairing annual meeting in motorbike leathers (Wells, 2003). He also worked on the conservation of the Lincoln Cathedral and other monuments. He protested against the demolition of Royal Insurance Building in Silver Street in Lincoln as actively as he did about speed limits (RL).

Victorian architecture was unfashionable in mid 20th century and denigrated especially by Modernists. The conservation movement was very much a reactionary response to the heroic and brutal Modernism, the Victorian buildings were being demolished to make way for the concrete blocks. It is a paradox that an ultramodernist was also passionate about Victorian architecture. No other known hero of modernism was ever interested in the eclectic past. Whether Scorer's interest was a result of opposing the fashionable architectural values and aesthetics, curiosity in Victorian license and exuberance or other reasons, from the 1970s his projects became increasingly idiosyncratic, imaginative and full of historical allusions.

Thoughtfully detailed architecture to an allegorical programme remains largely obscure to the uninitiated observer. The Southern Outfall Pumping Station is located in Cleethorpes, next to colourful sheds and a tea room for the Victorian mini-railway. Completed in 1987, it is supposedly a temple of Amon, god of ammonia, an intermediate by-product of the decomposition of the pumping station content. This classical utility shed in deep purple engineering brick is divided into bays by tapering paired pilasters with chamfered angles. Above the ornamental concrete 'capitals' and 'cornice' there is a busy frieze of undulating brickwork in an abstract pattern which was inspired by waves braking on the near by beach. The low hipped roof is surmounted by two glazed lanterns and a tall ventilator. Another interesting eccentricity is a Roman villa in Lincoln, built for a solicitor friend, a man who often

A1. The owner became inspired after holidays abroad. The symmetry of the house designed around an atrium is broken with a triple garage attached on one side. The low pitch roof is complicated and flamboyant rain water pipes are part of the whole refined construct.

In 2000 Scorer founded and funded The Gallery, now the Sam Scorer Gallery, at 5 Drury Lane, Lincoln. Realising that the Tate Gallery had a great many good paintings in storage, Scorer borrowed a selection from them for his first exhibition, The Tate Unseen. The Gallery, which costs little to hire and charges modest commissions on sales, has been filled with exhibitions of provincial artists ever since.



Aerial view of Lincoln. Photograph found in Scorer's archive at Wood Enderby. At the bottom left of the photograph is the Brayford Pool and the Lincolnshire Motor Company Showrooms. In 1973-4 Scorer built the Lucy Tower car-park to the right of it. The theatre was to take the next plot.

When English Heritage listed one of Scorer's 1959 hyperbolic paraboloid buildings, the then Arts Minister Alan Howarth described him as 'a pioneer in the use of this type of roof construction and a figure of national significance' (RL). It is a surprise to some that Scorer having had every opportunity to become nationally or even internationally famous, never chose to profit from it.

Perhaps he could not be famous because

he was provincial. There is a prevailing attitude that if an architect is not based in one of the UK's major cities, he is second-rate and provincial. Provincial is synonymous with unfashionable and unsophisticated. The assumption is that one works in London or, if not, it means that one is not smart enough or lacking in talent and ambition. There are many monographs about obscure architects from the 19th century, but subject of provincial architecture in twentieth century rarely gets any attention. Kevin Drayton (a proud architect from Huddersfield) in an article in *Blueprint* (2002) challenges this condescending attitude. He argues that architects should be judged for their proficiency not their address. He writes the postcode discrimination has been practiced for decades by credit and insurance companies. The dichotomy of provincial and non-

provincial, however, is not a new phenomenon. In 1860s Viollet-le-Duc in 'On Principles and Branches of Knowledge with which Architects Should be Acquainted' articulated his prejudice against the provincial:

[In] some large cities we see in our own day public and private buildings erected, whose execution is good, and in which we recognize the presence of considerable knowledge and the successful solution of certain problems of the art, it must be admitted that in the provinces and small towns many are constructed in defiance of the most elementary principles of Architecture. (...) Architects whose duty it is to examine the various designs for buildings destined to be executed in the departments, will bear witness that I am not exaggerating in saying that, out of twenty of these designs, one may be tolerable, one-half are below mediocrity, and the other half exhibit an utter ignorance, I will not say of art, but of the ordinary methods of building. (382)

To argue the opposite, in the UK no less than in France, is to confront a century of prejudice. A 'major provincial architect' is often understood as oxymoron.

Perhaps Scorer remains unrecognised

because he did not write. In Scorer's archive there are

over 800 projects he designed. His son described him as

'indefatigable' (LCL, Lincolnshire Echo, 2003). In comparison,

Alison and Peter Smithson's output of 50 years of practice consists

of a dozen buildings, a couple of exhibitions, an annual Christmas card and about a million words (Rattray 2005:5).

In 1951 they entered a design competition for Coventry

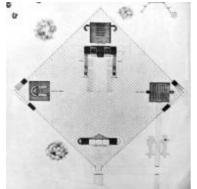
Cathedral. The proposed scheme was an enormous open plan space
covered with flat hyperbolic paraboloid, a form, according to

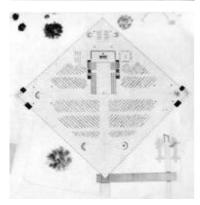
Smithsons, 'quite unsuitable for a church unless handled in a very
special way' (Church Building, 1963:3). In the post-war period,
concrete shell roof buildings were fashionable. No self-respecting
architect would be without one. In the exhaustive Architects'

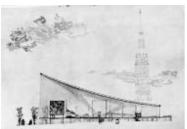
Report they explained how function (the word 'function is in Italics
in the original text) determined the choice of structure and their
intentions:

It is hoped by the competitors that the building of this cathedral will finally explode the fallacy that Modern Architecture is incapable of expressing abstract ideas and will prove that only Modern Architecture is capable of creating a symbol of the dogmatic truths of the Christian faith and 'thrusting them at the man who comes in from the street' with the dynamism that so great a Faith demands. (12)

The Smithsons, known as much for their writing and lectures as their buildings, never built a hypar. Scorer on the other hand, who wrote nothing about himself or his practice, built four. The Smithson's argued convincingly about the intentions, beliefs and a relation between the anticlastic shell and contemporary theories. Scorer, on contrary, before developing an interest in 19th century







Smithsons' drawings for the Coventry Cathedral competition (1951). Open plan contains functional elevated enclosures.

provincial architects, was an author of technical literature concerning the form of hyperbolic paraboloid shell roof and their buildability.

The author of the chapter 'What is it about the Smithsons?' Charles Rattay, states the Smithson's were the Smithsons' favourite subject and predictably they thought they were very good indeed (6). He tries to explain the puzzle why so many should have shared their self-estimation in spite of relatively modest accomplishments, and reflects on the discrepancy between consistent celebrity and inconsistent achievements. What the Smithsons intuitively demonstrated and Scorer actively avoided was expressed by Philip Larkin:

The Golden rule in any art is: keep in there punching. For the public is not so much endlessly gullible as endlessly hopeful: after twenty years, after forty years even, it still half expects your next book or film or play to reproduce that first fine careless rapture, however clearly you have demonstrated that whatever talent you once possessed has long since degenerated into repetition, platitude or frivolity. (1983:306)

It is a cruel, but convincing observation. The major factor is the belief, self-confidence in celebrating and explaining their own work and intentions, and a great propensity to write. Self-delusion and a concern with fitting into the historical continuity expressed via medium of propaganda.

Hegel spoke of fame as a 'reward' for the men whose deeds are recorded in our history books. Perhaps all creative professionals have in common the need to be valued for what they leave behind. The fame offers some level of immortality. Most architects have a keen appetite for recognition and they want to be rewarded. This is for both commercial reasons and a drive to express some sort of artistry. Today, just as 50 years ago, in the media there is little room for the level of analysis of a building that would gratify architects or discuss merits. The media is compelled to cover the latest trends, what is considered to be fashionable. Laura Iloniemi (2005), a specialist in architectural PR, thinks 'It's not about the work...':

it's more about creating characters for media from within and out to play with, about fabricating dreams and selling these, about selling art and culture, about ego and a strong desire, whether merited or not, for recognition. Surprisingly, media aside, it's not really so much about dollars and cents. No wonder people shy away from talking about publicity and wanting it. Looking at it like this, it appears to be more shameful than making money. (210)

She asserts 'Loud seems universally good', even though this is ironic, it does not lack seriousness. Then she identifies two reasons why good work goes amiss and never reaches the opinion makers. Either it is because of badly managed practices unable to deliver information to appropriate people or bodies on time. They do not produce text or images that put their ideas clearly and in a good light because (1) an absence of skill in communications and/or (2) a

paucity of time given to getting favourable information across about the work (202-203). Or it is because the architect may not be interested in promotion. Iloniemi writes that publicity is perhaps not as important for business reasons as it is for reasons of ego (208). This makes the whole topic of exposure all the more uncomfortable.

Perhaps Scorer simply did not care about

publicity or about what someone might think about him or his work during his life time. He did not use his relationship with Concrete and Cement Association, which had an office next door to his practice in Lincoln, his position of a president of the Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln Society of Architects or the *Architecture East Midlands* magazine he was largely responsible for, as organs for his personal propaganda campaign.

Fame is to be well known, widely recognized, an object of public interest. Someone can be famous within a restricted domain, within a given profession, but this should not be confused with professional success, esteem or distinction. Success does not entail fame, nor, for that matter, does fame entail success.

Perhaps Scorer is invisible by a conscious

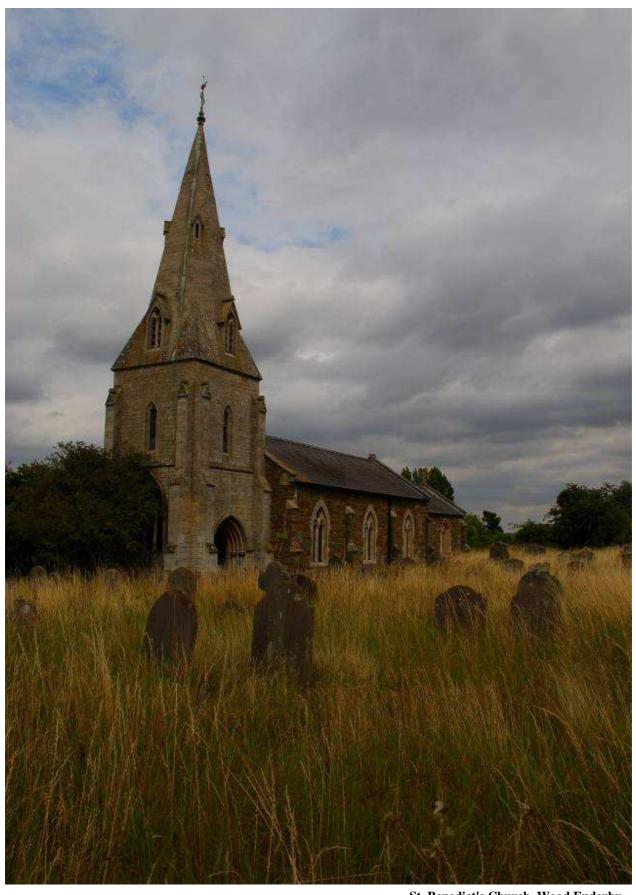
choice. In his paper about the lesser-known architects he compares big name architects with the provincial ones. He makes links and compares 19th century church buildings with post-war school building programme. He describes an episode from the mid 1850s in which George Gilbert Scott was commissioned to rebuild the collapsed spire of St. Vincent's in Caythorpe – a village a few

miles south of Lincoln. The 'knowledgeable' Scott reduces both the entasis and the overall height by some 6 feet. His work is described locally with some disappointment as – 'nearly equal to the old work and giving great satisfaction to some'. The associated Architectural Societies comments:

We make these observations with some reluctance as was the Architect employed, whose name most deservedly stands among the highest of his professional brotherhood. But in consequence of the extent of his labour, smaller works comparatively speaking may not perhaps always meet with that amount of study and attention which they would receive from our local architects, several of whom would have been fully competent to have carried out the works at Caythorpe in a perfectly competent manner, including rebuilding the spire to its original instead of new form.

Scorer describes Scott: 'Here is the bright young London architect showing the provincials "what's what" '.

Scorer's friends would say it was not in his character to care about recognition. In one of the box files in his last business partner office there is photograph of Scorer shaking hands with the Prince of Wales at the opening of the Welding Institute in Abington, near Cambridge. The file contains miscellaneous papers, which are of no significance. Scorer might not have cared about the evidence of acknowledgment, but he was definitely concerned about the evidence of his work.



St. Benedict's Church, Wood Enderby.

Sam Scorer's archive is stored in the redundant St. Benedict's church in Wood

Enderby, which he acquired in 1976 when the demolition of the building was being proposed. He also encouraged his friends to buy some other redundant churches and save them from demolition, but most of them were not that eccentric. Scorer christened this deconsecrated building the Architectural Heritage Centre. It is located on the southern edge of the Wolds, 4 miles south from Horncastle, a retirement village 20 miles east from Lincoln, known as the place where William Marwood, a master boot and shoemaker, took a keen interest in the technical aspects of hanging, it has an abundance of antique shops or rather clearance businesses which sell items acquired in the local area. In the 19th century Wood Enderby was a prosperous village. Now it has a population of around 100. It has no shop or pub. The only amenities are a telephone box and a post box. The church is sited on the edge of the village and is surrounded by an overgrown graveyard; the grass is almost as high as the tallest of the gravestones. There is no mobile network coverage. It is silent, windy and mysterious.

The medieval aiseless church was rebuilt in 1860. The three bays Victorian building has a stone tower and spire, a main nave and an aisle, a modern bathroom, colourful stained windows, two lights with plate tracery and unusually long for the size of the chancel with ogee-headed lights under almost triangular heads. It contains almost all of Scorer's work with his successive partners: Denis Clarke Hall, Roy Bright, and his most recent partner Philip Hawkins. Scorer met Hawkins when he, as a student in Sheffield, was hitchhiking from London; Scorer gave him a lift along M1 in his E-type.

The interior is full of wooden shelves and cupboards covered with spider webs and dust, table worktops are bowed under loads of rolled drawings. The further from the entrance, the more artefacts pile up. Old furniture is gathered around a Norman architectural fragment, a fluted capital of a pillar piscine. The pulpit (with its German 17c iron relief of the *Noli me tangere*) lies on its side near the entrance, opposite several electric grass cutters, which sit against the doorway, which leads to the staircase for the tower. Amongst the scattered samples of grey cladding materials and window sections, cans of paint and plastic watering cans are love letters of Scorer's relative, Oscar Wilde's poems and stories, and personal files of his daughter. In the church there is the documentation for over 800 architectural jobs. All the documents are in order and clearly numbered. The projects are packed in dusty tubes, they are difficult to open, it seems as if no one has touched

them since they were aside after the projects were completed. The tops of the cylinders are rusty, the old tracing paper is too brittle to handle. Some of the shelves caring schedules, specifications and other contract documentation are far from the vertical and look as if they could fall soon. Between shelves are some unfinished canvases, damaged models, papers from conferences and piles of miscellaneous ornamental objects, casts and frames. In the middle of the church there is an enclosure built out of wine bottles set in mortar within a timber frame. It was intended as a sort of a bedroom. Some fragile architectural models are kept in there under protective layers of dark green rubber sheets. Further into the chancel there is a steel cupboard with the most precious old photographs of newspaper cuttings, but the three most acknowledges hypars are missing. There is a personal folder with portraits of Denis Clarke Hall, some of the photographs are held by RIBA Image Library. Opposite, under layers of boards and dirty protective textiles, there is a cardboard portfolio with Scorer's student work and some portrait drawings from late 1940s.

Discovering the dusty contents of the archive was an archaeological adventure. History smells of dust and humidity, it is covered by dirt accreted through the years and slowly eaten by silverfish, small, wingless insects, which consume glue, book bindings, paper, photos and textiles.

No one visits the store anymore. The building and the content belongs to Scorer's son, who shares Alan Howarth's opinion and regards his father as one of the most significant

architects of post-war Britain. He is also concerned about the attitude and the quality of Scorer scholarship. It is puzzling why one would keep project documentation for so long; it is neither a legal obligation nor common practice. Perhaps Scorer's attitude towards publicity, fame and acknowledgement was ambivalent. Maybe it was some sort of conspicuous modesty, and the archives are left to be discovered. The amount of material to be revealed is vast.

Assessing the papers would take months.



A photograph of Scorer's drawing with a reflection of the owner.

Mystery confuses perception. The assumption of an optimist is that the mystery's explanation will be valuable. Oscar Wilde in a short story, 'Sphinx without a Secret', draws a portrait of a woman who is attractive as long as she creates an atmosphere of secrecy around her. The unknown is alluring as long as one does not know the solution of the puzzle. In Wilde's story, discovery brings disappointment.

One does not know fully, if what one is investing in, is valuable at the time of the venture. Scorer was perhaps as remarkable an architect as the 19th century architects he was interested in. He dedicated his career to concrete shells, eclectic postmodernism and fit-for-purpose unglamorous buildings. None of the ideas he followed were lasting or widely important. Unlike his more famous cotemporaries he did not commit any spectacular mistakes. Despite their builders' initial optimism, concrete shells did not become the future of the global building industry, just as asbestos did not prove to be a suitable insulation material. The advertisements for both were often found next to each other in the architectural journals of the 1960s. The majority of concrete hypars have had perennial maintenance problems since their construction.

formworks were disproportionately expensive to construct. For large spans they were superseded by cable net and membrane structures. There were some trials using precast concrete in exciting structures later on at the National Garden Festival pavilion in Stuttgart (1977), which was a copy of Candela's Xochimilco shell (1958). Eight prefabricated sections in glass fibre concrete from the same form work were assembled using a normal building crane. 'Candela visited the pavilion shortly after the completion and expressed his gratitude that his idea has been moved forward.' Glass fibres are not alkali-resistant, which means the glass fibre concrete become brittle. The roof had to be dismantled in 1982 (Schlaich & Bergermann, 2000:99). Hyperbolic paraboloids seems high-tech, but they are very low-tech; so low in fact that in times of high wages and cheap materials, people are not willing to pay for expensive formwork. The novelties of contemporary methods, or theories, do not guarantee their lasting importance.

Writing on a blank slate assures novelty. The biography of an unknown figure, an individual who has never been written about, creates certain demands, but offers certain freedoms. There is nothing to compare the resulting work with. It tempts some authors into romanticizing the subject. The fictional or the mythological seems unavoidable, especially in the context of interviews. A part of the author's research consisted of collecting recollection and undertaking interviews. She heard some charming stories, some love stories, some stories not to be repeated, loads of positive statements and declarations about the greatness of the architect. She

felt as though she was expected by her interviewees to create a story praising the great figure, a prominent architect and a grand citizen; a hagiography. Nietzsche called such work Monumental History, and warned against its blind uncritical acceptance of a glorified version of the past. In 'On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life' (1980) he states:

... admiration for the 'power of history' which practically at every moment turns into naked admiration for success and leads to the idolatry of the factual: for which service one has now generally memorized the very mythological. (47)

This admiration of the power of history is no different to an admiration for the power of authority or a propensity to seek it. An authority is stronger if it is glamorised, with no doubts, caveats or reservations; mythical. This is what people like, and what sells well. Readers look to history in the way that architects look to those who publish, and students look to tutors – for an authoritative acknowledgment of what is good. Merits, the value of novelty, innovations in technology, social wellbeing, purposefulness, are only part of opinionated judgments.

The interviewees would often advise the author of others she could talk to, or more interestingly, who she should not talk to, because 'they would not talk positively about Sam'. The author interviewed a married couple who had been married for over 40 years. During the conversation, which they were fully aware they might be quoted, they discussed their solidified memories, advising each other over what was a fact and what was gossip, and

speculated about what kind of story could be written about Scorer.

As requested by a number of the interviewees the author often didn't record the conversations, as it would have put them under unnecessary pressure to apply a certain unwanted level of responsibility to historical accuracy.

Primary historical sources might be more exciting than secondary historical sources, but there are some limitations associated with them. They might simply not exist where one expects them or there might be too many or too few of them. They might be meaningless. The gaps in the researched story present the possibility for speculations and literary interpretations.

Biography is a story describing more or something else than conventional history can offer. It is well illustrated in Philip Larkin's letter to Virginia Peace, wife of the professor of Russian at the University of Hull who had shown him the novel she had written about her experience of losing a son in a tragic accident. Larkin himself was quite celebrated for being averse to the requirements of celebrity, and had no patience for the trappings of the public literary life (Banville, 2006). He wrote:

You have done amazingly well to describe what happened in so dispassionate and calm a way, but for you this is enough, the events speak for themselves. Unfortunately for the reader it isn't: the reader wants that impure thing, literature – plot, suspense, characters, ups, downs, laughter, tears, all the rest of it. ... Now I can quite see that to 'play about' with the kind of subject matter you have taken would seem

heartless, frivolous, even untrue, an offence against decency or decent feelings, something you couldn't do, and yet in literature it somehow has to be done – one might almost say that it's the mixture of truth and untruth that makes literature. (1993:593)

'Playing about' distance the story from a *Sine ira et studio* (without indignation and involvement) historical account.

Hayden White (1975) explains Nietzsche's historiography. The historian's task is not to collect the facts or write mythologies, but to transform familiar things into unfamiliar ones, by rendering them 'strange' and 'mysterious', to reveal the 'universal' that exists in the 'particular' and the 'particular in the 'universal' (353). Nietzsche, in 'On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life', asserts the value of the historian's work does not lie in its generalizations, but

[R]ather that its value is just this, to describe with insight a known, perhaps common theme, an everyday melody, to elevate it, raise to a comprehensive symbol and so let the whole world of depth of meaning, power and beauty be guessed in it.(36)

[T]he genuine historian must have the strength to recast the well known into something never heard before and to proclaim the general so simply and profoundly that one overlooks its simplicity because of its profundity and its profundity because of its simplicity. (37).

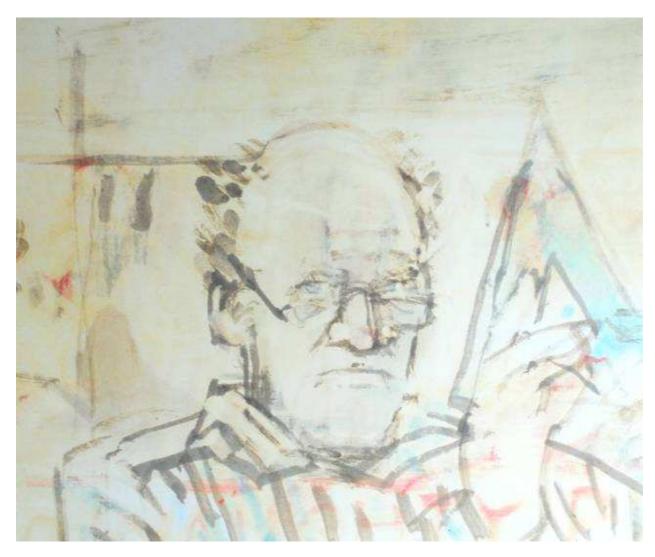
It brings Nietzsche's history close to Aristotle's poetry, which has a general message for all. The poetry is didactic therefore better than descriptive history.

The historian and the poet are not distinguished by their use of verse or prose. (...) The distinction is this: the one says what has happened, the other the kind of thing that would happen.

For this reason poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars. (1996:16)

The universal, the general and the particular are not only a way of getting closer to truth, meaning and merit. In 1779, Joshua Reynolds, a painter and the president of the Royal Academy, wrote in his Discourses that the 'disposition to abstractions, to generalising and classification, is the great glory of the human mind'. Shortly after, the largely unrecognized during his lifetime poet and a painter William Blake, a student of the Royal Academy under Reynolds' presidency, wrote in marginalia to his personal copy of Reynolds' book 'To Generalize is to be an Idiot; To *Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit*' (Blake, 2008:641). In a book Provincial England, Essays in Social and Economic History, published in 1964, W.G. Hoskins, a historian, used Blake's quote as a motto. The dialectic of these dichotomies expresses the personal preferences of the author, and their frames of references they want to be associated with. The fashions blossom and fade, so to theories; they alter their focus and shift values. Distortion in

emphasis also consists of another factor. Writers, historians and architects naturally are inclined to begin theorizing from their own predilections, their own sharpest responses, however strange or limited these may seem to be (Dutton, 2009:48-49). Hoskins, noted for his anti-modern and anti-state attitude (Varley, 1997), was an important contributor to the study of the provinces. He believed: 'We should be studying living communities and their reaction to their environment' and the local history should be 'a science of Human Ecology' (1966).



Sam Scorer's portrait by Tony Bartl, Sheila Bartl's collection.

On Sam's 80th birthday we had arranged a big party, with a hundred friends and family at the gallery. He prepared everything for that occasion, and printed his old and new sketches, and photos illustrating his life, on colourful sheets of paper for guests to take with them. He went into hospital about 10 days before it was due, but he wouldn't hear of cancelling the part. The hospital said he could come out for an hour in ambulance, but he said 'No, I don't want to go, I'll just be a wet blanket. Let everyone enjoy themselves' (LCL, Lincolnshire Echo, 2003, quoted Mrs. Scorer). Four days later he died in the Lincoln County Hospital for the same reason his daughter had died seventeen years earlier. She was so young, it was devastating. The funeral ceremony took place in the local crematorium. Sam was in the coffin he had designed, decorated with flowers from his garden in accordance with the instructions he had left. The ceremony was accompanied by an acoustic jazz quartet. The little chapel was packed. There was an absolutely superb atmosphere. After the ceremony ended the attendees were asked to go to Damon's restaurant. Sam designed this curious circular building in 1987-1988. A timber couronne on the top of the roof represents ribs. The restaurant serves industrial left-over ribs. After the portioning there is a decent amount of meat

left on ribs, it is a quantity easy and economical to dismiss in a factory. The interior of the building features a strange Hollywood movie fantasy theme, with floors on different levels rising like in a theatre auditorium, and an orchestra pit near the bar. It is a space full of patterns, mirrors and artificial plants. Sam loved the work because he could put there different wall papers on different walls.

Sam Scorer's selected buildings (*listed)

William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School (1952) Welton

Lacey Gardens Junior School (1953) Louth.

House for E.W. Scorer (1955) Lincoln

Summerhouse for E.W. Scorer (1955) Lincoln

Own house, Gibraltar Hill (1955) Lincoln

Extension to the Gartree Secondary Modern School (1956 and 1960) Tattershall.

Laboratory for Richard Thomas and Baldwin (1958) Redbourn Works, Scunthorpe Steel Works

Riddings Comprehensive School (1958) Scunthorpe

*Petrol Station (1959-60) Markham Moor

*Lincolnshire Motor Company Showrooms (1959-61) Lincoln

*St. John the Baptist (1963) Lincoln

House for Peter and Kari Wright, refurbished air raid shelter (1970) Canwick

Barclay's Bank (1968-70) Lincoln

Lucy Tower car-park (1973-4) Lincoln

Sports Centre (1974) Lincoln

The Welding Institute (1970-80s) Abington

Waterside House (1978-9) Lincoln

Southern Outfall Pumping Station (1987) Cleethorpes

Damon's Restaurant (1987-8) Swallowbeck

Roman villa (1990s) Lincoln

Damon's Motel (1993) Swallowbeck

Drury Lane Gallery, now Sam Scorer Gallery (2000) Lincoln

Abbreviations

LCL – Biographical files, Sam Scorer. Lincoln Central Library: Lincoln.

RL – Biographical file available on request from the Enquiry Desk. Sam Scorer. RIBA Library: London.

Archives

AA Archives

Archive at the St. John the Baptist, Lincoln

Lincoln City Archives

Scorer's Archive at Wood Enderby

Interviewees

Peter Moss (8th July 2010)

Sheila Bartl (14th July, 4th and 5th August 2010)

Philip Hawkins (2nd August 2010)

Peter and Kari Wright (9th August 2010)

Author's photographs

pp.8 Memorial plaque on the building at the Brayford Pool, Lincoln.

pp.38 St. Benedict's Church, Wood Enderby.

pp.44 A photograph of Scorer's drawing with a reflection of the owner.

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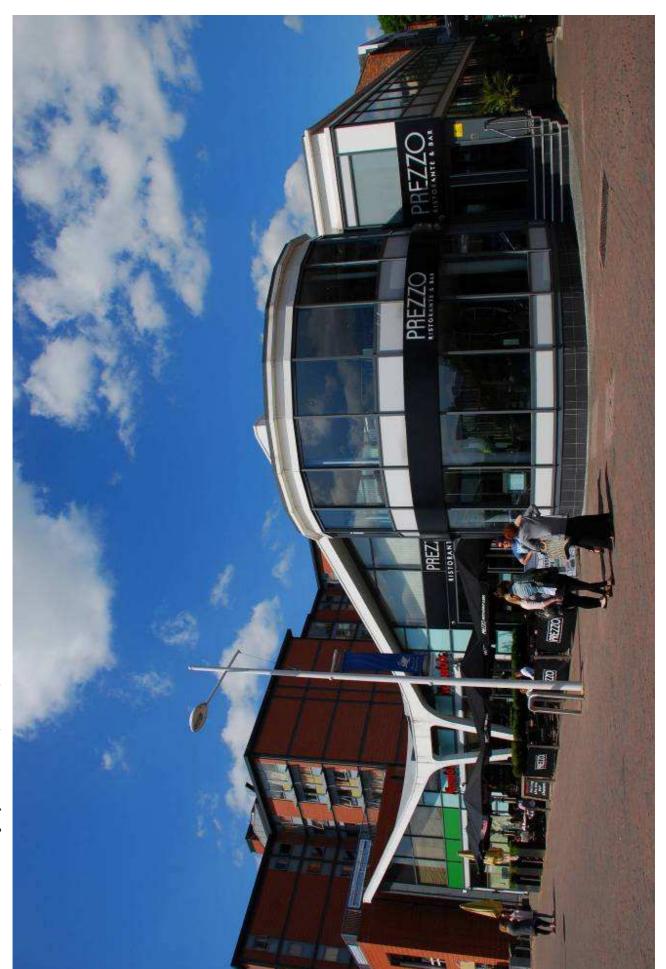
Appendix

Sam Scorer's buildings in 2010

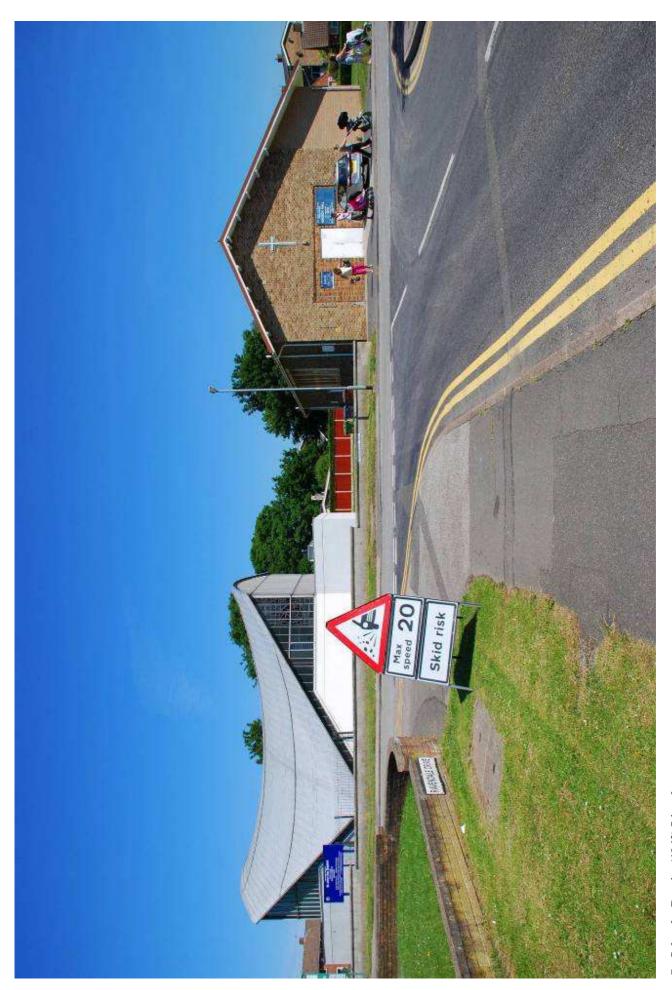
Photographs: author



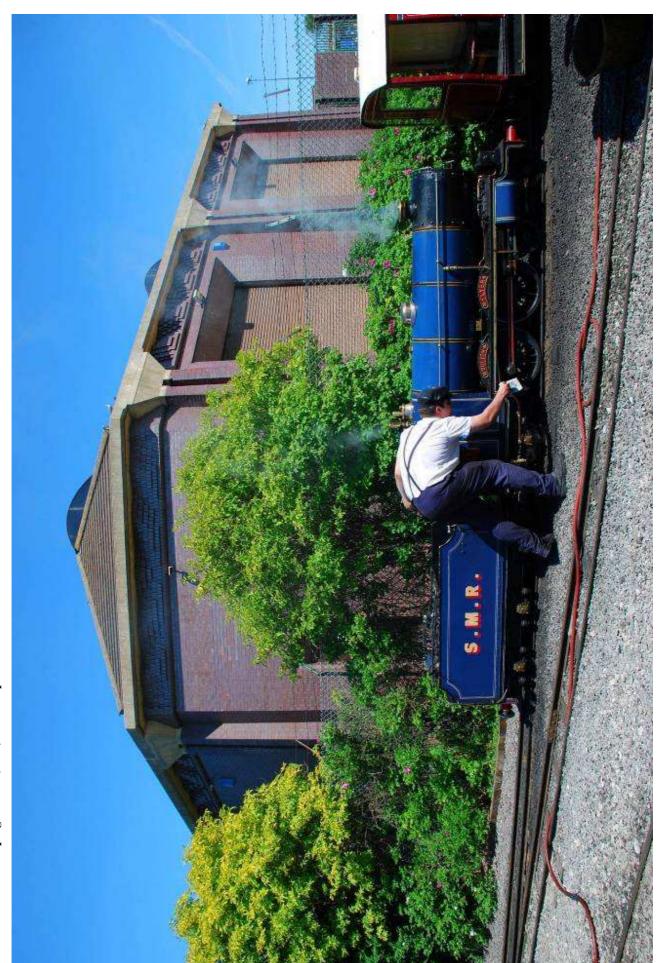
Petrol Station (1959-60) Markham Moor



Lincolnshire Motor Company Showrooms (1959-61) Lincoln



St. John the Baptist (1963) Lincoln



Southern Outfall Pumping Station (1987) Cleethorpes