

Case studies and lost tribes: the Bristol firm of James Diment and Stephens, Bastow & Co

by C. G. Powell

The nature and identity of Victorian Builders and building firms are not well understood. A few London examples have been studied in recent times, among them Cubitt, Dove Brothers, Freake, and Yates¹, but much remains to be done before a full understanding can be reached. When Prof. Dyos wrote that builders kept surprisingly out of the news², he might well have added that they have continued after death as they did in life. Sir John Summerson asked in 1973 what we knew of some leading London firms of the 1860s³. He replied to his own question: 'Very little. Nobody has ever written about them and their biographies and business methods have, by now, become almost impenetrably obscure.' He went on to note that they '... are, historically speaking, a lost tribe.' Events of the last decade have not altered decisively the accuracy of this statement, which applies as much to early- and late-Victorian builders as to their counterparts of the 1860s. The reasons for the predicament of the 'lost tribe' are many. Firms are thought to have been very numerous, small, foot-loose, shortlived, and not given to making and keeping records. Firms also exhibit a perplexing diversity, in which markets, activities, and products all may vary from time to time, place to place, and firm to firm⁴.

Faced with an almost undifferentiated mass of firms as historical raw material, one way in which to proceed is by means of case studies. This approach is employed in the following exploratory and mainly descriptive study of one firm among the many. The study is an attempt to regain from obscurity one of Summerson's 'lost tribe' by examining the origins, development, and projects of the firm of James Diment, succeeded by Stephens, Bastow & Co. Conveniently the life cycle of

the firm in question covered roughly the years of Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Origins and development

James Diment founded a firm of painters and plasterers in Bristol in 1839⁵. He was twenty-three years of age at the time, having been born in the nearby north Somerset parish of Brislington in 1816⁶. He lived in St. Paul's, Bristol, with his wife and three lodgers by 1841, and in the same year, or that following, he moved his business to an adjacent street⁷. He worked with one John Grimes for about two years under the style of Diment & Grimes, painters and plasterers. Diment's associate was a forty-one year old Derby-born plasterer who lived about a quarter of a mile away. The working relationship between the two men did not long survive a move by the business to St. James's Square, St. Paul's, in 1843. No record of either of them has been traced for the years 1844 and 1845 and Diment appears to have severed his connection with Grimes. At any event, Grimes was trading independently as tiler, plasterer and painter (later also slater) from another address in St. Paul's in 1846. He claimed to employ five men in 1851 and three years later he made yet another short move. He disappears from view in 1860, by which time he was approaching sixty years of age. The activities of James Diment are traced again in 1848, after a five year gap. In that year he was trading independently as plasterer and painter from a different address, although still in St. Paul's. Diment moved his business once more in 1851, this time to a four-storey end-of-terrace house, known as 10 St. James's Square. It was next door to the one in which he lived, at the corner of a formal square⁸.

Restless movement from one address to

another, and the short-lived connection with Grimes, suggest that Diment's firm was precarious in the early years. There appears to have been greater stability by mid-century, despite the somewhat depressed state of economic activity in Bristol. Diment had enough work to employ 35 men in 1851, a considerable number by the standards of the time, and the firm was to remain settled in St. James's Square for more than two decades. Diment now diversified the activities of the firm, first in 1853 by including 'tiler' among his advertised list of trades. The following year he added the description 'decorator' and in 1856 he announced that the firm manufactured Roman and Portland cement. It may be supposed that the local practice of rendering external walls provided at least part of the market for this product. Diment described himself as a builder by early 1861, showing that he had broadened his interests successively from finishing trades, to include material manufacture and supply, and then the erection of whole buildings. Later in the same year he referred to his firm as building contractors. This implied achievements (or at any rate pretensions) greater than those of casual jobbing and speculative builders. Exactly which building projects were undertaken at this critical time remains obscure, but they seem to have provided the opportunity to accumulate capital and the experience to meet coming challenges.

The earliest project which has been traced was operationally demanding enough to imply that the firm was already experienced at the outset. Diment was in his mid-forties when he won a contract to rebuild the Theatre Royal, Bath, which had been gutted by fire. The nature and circumstances of the new design posed problems. One was the complexity of building a block which measured about 190 feet x 128 feet. (60 m. x 41 m.), with six separate entrances, and which contained three balconies supported on iron columns, having accommodation for an audience of 1650 people. Difficulties would have been aggravated by the site being in a city centre and

by the need to retain *in situ* a surviving street frontage of 1805 while work went on behind it. Added to this were the need for urgency and the inexperience of the architect, C.J. Phipps, who was engaged on his first commission⁹. Diment appointed a general foreman for the work, G. Tasker, and the leading subcontractors were for masonry, plumbing, and iron- and gas-work. Carving was by H. Ezard and the Clerk of Works was H.J. Elmes. Work began in early October 1862 with site clearance and was completed by early March 1863. The value of the intricate and tightly-timed contract was £7000¹⁰.

Three other projects of the 1860s have been traced although almost certainly more were executed. The first, in 1865, would have reinforced Diment's reputation, founded at Bath, as a contractor for high-quality works of architecture. The £5500 building was Emmanuel Church, in the fashionable Bristol suburb of Clifton, where the architect was J. Norton¹¹. The second project, for another ecclesiastical owner nearby, was St. Joseph's Home, Cotham Hill, begun in 1868 and designed by C. Hansom. The third project, which originated in the following year, was a £3500 warehouse and offices in Broadmead, Bristol, by local architects Foster and Wood. With a growing volume of contracting work, and perhaps with changing markets and stiffening competition, Diment withdrew from cement manufacture. The next five years were filled with high-quality building projects which included at least five churches. St. Mary's, Clifton, was begun in 1870 to a design by J.P. St. Aubyn. The £10,000 cost proved difficult to raise, with the result that building work dragged on for eleven years, during which time Diment magnanimously presented a pulpit. Restoration work worth £5000 was begun on the medieval Temple Church, Bristol, c.1872, directed by local architects Ponton and Gough, with B. Ferrey of London as consultant¹². Four more projects also date from about this time, all in or near Bristol, of which two were designed by Foster and Wood. These were a £5000 addition to a large house outside the city, and some

almshouses in Colston Street. A £2500 clothing factory designed by H.C. Hirst was erected in Colston Street, and in Temple Gate there was a contract for a new telegraph office. Diment submitted competitive tenders in 1873 for the construction of two further commercial buildings in Colston Street. Neither tender was successful, one being placed fifth highest out of six for a project which cost £3795, and the other tender was the highest of five for a project which cost £1940. Diment's tenders were for £4295 and £2289 respectively.

The next phase in the development of the firm was one in which contracts were sought and won on sites distant from the Bristol premises. At least two motives for this geographical expansion are possible, one being the attraction of undertaking high-quality projects which were only to be found scattered thinly over a wide area. The other possible motive is compensation for a lack of sufficient local projects of any sort, whether for high-quality or commonplace buildings. The first of these motives may be regarded as a calculated attempt to specialise in a particular type of work, and the second as more rooted in expediency. The broadening of contractors' horizons at that time, for whatever reasons, would have been assisted by improved cross-country transport, as new secondary rail routes followed earlier main lines. Successful pursuit by the firm of work on distant sites began by mid-1873, at the latest, with a substantial project 60 miles from Bristol. It was the reconstruction of St. Mary's Church, Builth Wells, Powys, under the direction of Norton, an architect with whom Diment had already worked. The cost was £5050 and the building was consecrated in July 1875. Overlapping with this project appear to have been additions costing £3600 to a house in Chepstow, Gwent, and other projects more distant from Bristol. The Victoria Hall, Exeter, cost £4000 and was designed by Phipps, the Bath Theatre architect. Ten miles beyond Exeter, remodelling work costing £6000 was carried out on Dawlish Church, with St. Aubyn, another architect who had already worked with Diment. Another country church project which commenced in 1874 with an

already-known architect was that at Wookey Hole, Somerset, by Ferrey, costing £2500. A further church project arose at Llanlleonfel, about six miles west of Builth Wells, designed by R.J. Withers. Nor was this all, in what was an exceptionally successful year for commencing projects. The firm extended its activities into south Wales by winning a contract worth £5299 to build the Albert Hall, Newport, Gwent. The architects were A.O. Watkins and Son, and there were six unsuccessful tenders above Diment's, which ranged upwards to £7800. Diment was less fortunate in the case of two local tenders in 1874. His tender was only fourth cheapest for work on Bristol Museum and Library, and for a new 750-place Board School he managed no better than eighth place. In view of new heavy commitments in Wales and the west, a failure to compete more keenly on these two local sites may not be surprising.

Diment had developed the firm by the early 1870s from small origins in painting and plastering work, to established regional contracting for prestigious ecclesiastical, public and other buildings. The later expansion of the firm, in particular, would have been assisted by the large quantity of national building activity. At fifty-eight years of age, in 1874, Diment found successors to carry the firm forwards after his withdrawal. Indeed it is possible that it was they who, under Diment's name, provided the impetus which won so many new projects for the firm in that year. Within three years Diment had retired to a luxurious seven-bedroom house built by the firm on the edge of Bristol. After many years there he died in 1901 in an asylum in Brislington which had once been extended by the firm¹³.

Maturity and failure

James Diment's successors were George Henry Stephens and John Bastow, both of whom are believed to have been prominent in the firm before Diment withdrew. Stephens was born in 1846 in Gloucester, in or near which city he spent his childhood. His father was a labourer whose household moved quite frequently and which in 1851 shared living ac-

commodation with relatives. Stephens' first step from his origins probably was as an apprentice joiner, but at seventeen years of age, in 1863, he was well on the way to relinquishing manual work¹⁴. Three years later he moved to Bristol where, by 1871, he lodged with the proprietor of a woodworking concern opposite Diment's premises in St. James's Square. In the same year he described himself as an accountant, and in the following year he married and moved to an end-of-terrace house in the middle-class district of Cotham. John Bastow, the other successor to Diment, was nineteen years older than Stephens. Bastow was born in Bristol in 1827 and became a journeyman joiner in St. Paul's by 1851. At about thirty-two years of age he set himself up on his own account as a carpenter and later, probably after 1861, became a managing foreman with Diment.

The new partnership which succeeded Diment and styled itself Stephens & Bastow found larger premises in 1874, off Cheltenham Road, Montpelier, about half a mile from St. James's Square. The old premises, which were more central but probably cramped, continued in use for about another year. Diment, or at least his name, maintained a connection with the firm until 1876 or later. Meanwhile Stephens & Bastow continued the recent success of the firm in winning new projects. Sites beyond the West Country and Wales were found, in London, the Home Counties, and as far afield as Lancashire. Some designs by architects of high eminence, such as Butterfield and Waterhouse, were executed and the cost of the largest project increased to £80,000.

The completion of the projects listed in Table 1 showed that the firm had matured into an operation capable of undertaking contracts for high-quality work anywhere in the country. Indirect evidence of the increasing stature of the firm is seen in moves to larger houses by both partners, and in Bastow's chairmanship of the local Master Builders' Association.

Despite these signs of a successful business partnership, all seems not to have been well between Stephens and Bastow. By December

1880 Bastow was prepared to act as contractor in his own right, submitting a tender for a local project independent of the firm of Stephens & Bastow. The following year Bastow claimed to employ ten men, and he continued in business on his own account on a modest scale in Clifton until 1901. He died in 1905, having given much time over many years as a Liberal member of the town council. His obituary noted of his work for the Master Builders' Association that: 'He took broad views of the relation of capital and labour, and in times of strikes and troubles between the masters and their men he invariably acted fairly'¹⁶. No further details have emerged of the partnership between Stephens and Bastow or of the circumstances of its dissolution.

After Bastow's departure c.1880, George Stephens continued to trade from Montpelier as Stephens & Bastow. Stephens claimed to employ 359 men and 18 boys in 1881, although how much the number fluctuated according to workload and season is unknown. Improvements were planned for the Montpelier premises in 1882 when a design for an overhead travelling crane was submitted for official approval¹⁷. In 1885 the description 'Bristol Steam Joinery Works' was added to the title of the firm which, the following year, became Stephens, Bastow & Co. Ltd. The firm submitted a continuing series of competitive tenders. Six such tenders published in *The Builder* between January 1880 and June 1881 ranged from City of London warehouses to a group of three Gloucestershire cottages. The value of the lowest tenders ranged from £425 to £13,973, with a mean of £5,461. The firm was not successful in any of the six cases.

Under Stephens' control the firm continued to undertake much ecclesiastical work, of which there were at least seven projects in the early 1880s. They ranged in cost downwards from the £26,000 Marlborough College Chapel, and included an £8,000 Congregational Church in Bromley, Kent, and local works. A different type of high-quality architecture was involved in the form of a £13,000 mansion in Harrington Gardens, Kensington, designed by Ernest George and Peto

Table 1. Stephens, Bastow: projects commenced 1875-1879¹⁵

Description	Location	Value (£)	Designer	Date Commenced ¹⁶
Church	Llanwrthwl, Powys	?	J. Noyes	1875
Vicarage	Uley, Glos	?	P.St.Aubyn	c.1875
Tenements	Bristol	8,000	E.Hoole	1875
Market Building	Builth Wells, Powys	4,000	Haddon Bros./ C.H. Cooke	c.1875
Church	New Hey, Lancs.	7,000	H.Lloyd	1876
Board School	Bristol	3,200	Hay & Oliver	c.1876
Church	Beer, Devon	7,000	Hayward & Son	1877
Grammar School	Exeter	14,000	W.Butterfield	1877
Police Courts & Fire Sta.	Bristol	19,000	J.Thomas	c.1878
New Court, Lincolns Inn	London	80,000	A.Waterhouse	1878
Yattendon Ct. (joinery)	Berks.	?	A.Waterhouse	1878
Church	Earley, Berks.	3,500	A.Waterhouse	1879
Mansion	Bristol	11,000	W.Bethel	c.1879
Bank	Bristol	7,600	G.Silley	c.1879

Source: Stephens, Bastow and Co. Ltd, *Book of Buildings* (Bristol, n.d.).

c.1881¹⁸. Joinery was made to designs by Waterhouse at Crimplasham Hall, Norfolk, and the Central Technical College, Kensington, where it cost £7,300. New projects in

the later 1880s were broadly similar, with emphasis on more costly contracts many of which were in London. At Portsea, Hampshire, an important £35,000 church designed by Blomfield was begun in 1887. Other ecclesiastical works included a number by the eminent architectural practice of Bodley and Garner. These works were the beginning of a long and fruitful working relationship between contractor and architect, which embraced six new churches, 12 church restorations, nine church joinery works, and four miscellaneous buildings. Among these projects were works at St. Mary of Eton, Hackney Wick; Shustoke, Warwickshire; St. Margaret's, Lothbury, London; Danehill, Sussex; and Frognal Gardens, Hampstead. Important projects by other architects included: galleries and grand staircase at the National Gallery (£30,000), 1885-1887; the Hotel Albermarle, Piccadilly (£29,000), c.1887; shops in Mount Street, Mayfair (£9,400), c.1886; and foundations of Whitehall Court, Embankment (£23,000), 1886. The latter project provided something of a windfall when large quantities of saleable gravel were encountered during extensive excavations. Another large London contract was for the erection of the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, in 1888, for £30,000. This project, with a restricted site, great urgency (ten months) and the architect Phipps¹⁹, recalled Diment's Bath Theatre of twenty-five years before.

New projects and workload appear to have diminished somewhat in the 1890s, although there was more work at Marlborough College, a £14,500 County Council building in Winchester, and activity in Bristol, south Wales, and elsewhere. Designs by Bodley and Garner (later, Bodley alone) continued on various sites, most notably at Chapel Allerton, Leeds, where a £16,500 church was opened in 1900. Relations between the firm and Bodley, the elderly acknowledged master of ecclesiastical architecture, survived the unbusinesslike methods of the latter²⁰. Bodley's notorious reluctance to deal with correspondence was redeemed perhaps by his recorded ability to get on with craftsmen on

site, with whom he pursued a close attention to detail. The *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* noted that:

His relations with the workmen ... were all that could be wished ... he gave that invaluable interest in their work, so that it seemed they had no difficulty in carrying out his ideas, and a mason, for instance, who had worked long under his guidance was a man worth knowing for many and obvious reasons²¹.

Some such were employees of Stephens, Bastow & Co., who must have benefitted from the continuity of the relationship between the firm and Bodley, which stretched over several decades. It is likely that Bodley frequently chose to nominate the firm for new works in order to take advantage of this relationship. Where the contractor was to be selected by competitive tender rather than architect's nomination, Stephens, Bastow & Co. probably would have had some advantage over rivals. Being familiar with Bodley's methods and standards, the firm may well have been able to price their work more keenly, with less commercial risk, than rivals inexperienced in Bodley's ways.

Stephens took occupation in 1899 of a detached Regency house (he owned another house in Gloucestershire) which backed on to the Montpelier workshops and yard. This appears to have permitted some expansion of the business premises and the opening of a new road giving access to it. These improvements would have enabled the firm to undertake more efficiently the increase in volume of new work which occurred around 1900 to 1902. This upturn was dominated by the large (but not profitable) project of Eynsham Hall, Witney, Oxfordshire, valued at £87,000 and designed by Ernest George and Yeates. Late Bodley designs built by the firm included Holy Trinity Church, Kensington, (£20,100), and other churches in Glasgow and elsewhere. Other prominent turn-of-the-century projects included the Bishop's Palace, Bristol (£12,500), designed by W.D. Caroe, and Maes-y-crugiau Manor, near Llandyssul, Dyfed (£11,500), designed by A. Mitchell. There were also local commercial and

domestic projects and small church works. One of the latter was in the Forest of Dean under W. Tapper, a successful architect who had worked with Bodley and who had private connections with Stephens. Tapper visited Staunton Church, Gloucestershire, in September 1903 and recorded that attention was required to the exterior, tower, and roof. He recommended Stephens, Bastow & Co., with whom correspondence opened in November 1903. Work on site was the responsibility of the firm's Mr. Brown, although Stephens himself at least twice inspected the progress of this very small job. The firm appears to have been paid £470 by December 1904, a charge which Tapper believed very reasonable, although a defect in the newly-leaded roof soon required a return visit by Stephens²².

An indication of the scale of activity in Montpelier in preparing estimates for competitive tenders may be seen from some results published in *The Builder* intermittently between January 1902 and April 1903. The firm submitted at least 18 tenders during that period for sites located across the south and midlands from Essex to Devon. The range of value of the 18 lowest tenders was from £1616 for work on a Bristol church, up to £151,475 for Bromsgrove Asylum, Hereford and Worcester. The latter was exceptionally costly, and the next most expensive project was £39,500. The mean value of the lowest tenders was £20,125 (£12,399 without the exceptional Bromsgrove case). The number of tenders for each project ranged from five to 31 (26 if Bromsgrove is omitted). Stephens, Bastow & Co. were not the lowest in any of the 18 cases, although for unexplained reasons they were awarded one contract. The firm won a place within the lower quartile of firms ranked by tender figures in three cases out of 18, but were in the upper quartile in eight cases. If the sample of projects is typical of all those for which the firm submitted tenders, then a substantial volume of unsuccessful tendering is indicated.

Late-Edwardian national building activity was not heavy, but the firm found church, larger house building, and joinery work. One

of the final projects was one of the, if not the, most costly of all. It was a commercial development in Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, designed by Read and Macdonald and valued at £100,000. The developers appear to have overreached themselves, with the result that Stephens, Bastow & Co. had little choice but to accept a financial half-interest in the crippled venture in return for labour expended and materials used on site. An indirect effect was to make Stephens decide to withdraw from building activity. He was now over sixty years of age and his son, who had once joined the firm but not stayed, appears not to have wished to succeed him²³. The last work on site by the firm was a Bristol school addition, designed by Sir Frank Wills and completed in 1911. Following the decision to run down the firm, Stephens let his Gloucestershire house and the Montpelier premises, and disposed of the adjoining house. A three-day auction in July 1911 dispersed fixed and loose machinery and plant, including three timber carriages, five cranes, three portable engines, mortar mills, steam drilling machines, and a large quantity of smaller goods. Softwood, oak, mahogany, ironmongery, paint, and other supplies were sold also²⁴. George Stephens spent some of his seven active years of retirement as a city councillor, and died at the age of seventy three in 1918²⁵.

The workload analysed

Among the numerous projects built by Diment and Stephens, Bastow & Co. were many not named above and not so far assigned a date. They form a heterogeneous group, resistant to generalisation, which includes: joinery for York Minster; mansions costing £60,000 in Basil Street, Knightsbridge, and costing £35,000 in nearby Hans Crescent; a £36,000 house in Bishops Waltham, Hampshire; offices costing £20,000 in Portsmouth; a £15,600 house in Sidmouth, Devon (where Stephens had family connections and built other projects); various works for the Great Western Railway Company; a £40,000 tobacco factory, Minories, City of London; works at Eton and Charterhouse; and joinery for sites in Aden

and Durban.

Sufficient data exists about projects built by the firm to make possible a tentative analysis, based upon the list of projects published c.1909²⁶. The published list exhibits inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and omissions which have been corrected where possible. The resulting list (Table 2) describes project numbers, values, building types, fluctuations in workload, site locations, identities of designers and, in some cases, building date. The total of 290 projects are classified into 11 types of work. This classification has been retained from the original published list of projects, and appears to follow a ranked order of respectability, as perceived by the firm. Numerically the largest class is Mansions and Dwellings, followed by Public Buildings and Schools, and Business Premises. An approximate starting date has been assigned to 35 per cent of all projects²⁷. These dated projects contain a high proportion of the larger projects, designed by well known architects. Smaller projects are correspondingly under-represented. The same is true of value, where commonplace and obscure works left fewest records. The value of 49.6 per cent of all projects is known, and their total value is £1,495,050. The three most valuable classes of project correspond with numerically the largest classes, namely Mansions and Dwellings, followed by Public Buildings and Schools, and then Churches. The range of value for individual projects is from a £470 church restoration, to a £100,000 commercial development in the West End. The mean value of all projects of known value is £10,382²⁸. Mean values for each class of project were calculated and compared. The results show that the mean values of Bank projects and Church Restoration projects are considerably less than the mean of all classes. Similarly, the mean of both Business Premises projects and Church projects is a little below the mean of all projects. The relative cheapness of the foregoing four classes of projects is balanced by the relative costliness of three other classes (Mansions and Dwellings, Public Buildings and Schools, and Theatres and Music Halls), all of which

have class means higher than that of all projects taken together. The proportion of projects for which both date and value are known is 23.1 per cent. In respect of value, the projects in this group appear to be reasonably typical of all projects of known value.

The distribution of projects with respect to time was examined. In terms of numbers of projects started, there is some concentration in the three periods 1872-81, 1885-91 and 1899-1903. There are corresponding slack periods in the years 1882-84, 1892-98, and after 1904. An understanding of fluctuations in value of workload was hampered by the unknown duration of most projects. Some projects (such as St. Mary's Church, Clifton) are known to have been an extraordinarily long time in building. Some others (such as the Lyric Theatre) are known to have been built very rapidly. In passing it may be surmised that most commercial projects were built more rapidly than ecclesiastical and residential ones of similar value, for reasons of financial expediency and physical complexity. On the basis of the sketchy data available, the value of workload in hand appears to have followed approximately the same course as that traced by numbers of projects started, although the slack period of the early 1880s is less apparent. There is no evidence that the typical projects of the firm changed markedly in value over time.

The geographical location of sites was investigated from several viewpoints, the first of which was distance from the Bristol premises of the firm. It was found that 49 per cent of all 290 projects were sited in Bristol or the adjoining (old) counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset²⁹. Some 37 per cent of all projects were sited in the Bristol of Diment's and Stephens' day. When the class of project was taken into account it became evident that the firm was more prepared to travel in order to carry out specialised, prestigious work than to carry out commonplace work: viz. the comparatively small proportion of all Church projects (32 per cent), Public Buildings and Schools projects (35 per cent), and Mansions and Dwellings projects (41 per cent) executed in Bristol and adjoining counties. On the other

Table 2: Diment and Stephens, Bastow: Building Projects c.1860-1911

Project class	1 No. of projects	2 No. of projects of known value	3 Value (£)	4 Mean value (£) (columns 4 ÷ 3)	5 No. of dated projects	6 No. of dated projects of known value
Churches	25	22	210,350	9,561	24	21
Church Restorations	21	7	26,400	3,771	8	5
Church Furniture & Wood Block Floors	15	0	0	0	9	0
Non conformist churches	5	3	24,000	8,000	1	1
Other Ecclesiastical Buildings	7	4	22,000	5,500	4	2
Mansions & Dwellings	73	38	425,500	11,197	19	9
Public Buildings & Schools	60	31	395,000	12,742	20	14
Hotels & Restaurants	14	4	130,000	32,500	1	1
Theatres & Music Halls	6	5	62,000	12,400	4	4
Banks	15	82	27,800	3,475	2	2
Business Premises	49	22	172,000	7,818	10	8
Total	290	144	1,495,050	10,382	102	67

Source: Stephens, Bastow & Co. Ltd, *Book of Buildings* (Bristol, n.d.).

hand there was a comparatively large proportion of commonplace Business Premises projects (69 per cent) and Hotels and Restaurants projects (71 per cent) executed locally. The location of projects was also investigated by relating travel distance from the Bristol premises to the value of projects. The picture that emerged was that typical

local projects on sites in Bristol and adjoining counties were considerably cheaper than those of the same class on distant sites. Not surprisingly projects in London were particularly costly. The market of the firm for mundane commercial projects was geographically smaller than the market for prestigious projects. The conclusion

therefore is that the firm operated in both a national high-quality specialised market, and in a local lower-quality more general market (although, of course, the two overlapped on occasions). Further investigation may reveal the respective attractions and risks of the two markets, and any advantages which were conferred by operating more or less simultaneously in both of them.

The manner in which the firm carried out a succession of projects with the same designer (usually architects) has already been noted. The number of designers with whom the firm worked was 109, distributed among 237 projects which had a named designer. The practice of Bodley and Garner appears in the list of projects 19 times, to which may be added another thirteen appearances by one or other of the two partners acting singly. The designer occurring next most frequently is H.M. Office of Works, with eleven projects (mainly Post Offices). Foster and Wood designed nine projects, and Waterhouse and Lloyd each designed seven. Walter Cave and the partnership of Ernest George and Peto were each responsible for a further six. Phipps, Blomfield and two others contributed five projects each, but otherwise no firm designed more than three. No one at all was recorded as designing 53 projects.

Conclusion

At the point at which blank anonymity is confronted, it may be appropriate to pause and reflect. What is the significance of case studies such as this for the broader study of the industry? The case of James Diment and Stephens, Bastow & Co., necessarily incomplete through lack of data though it is, suggests several benefits of this method of study. One is that of assisting in our comparison of firms, so that eventually the typical may be distinguished from the exceptional. Another possible benefit is that case studies may lead to the extensive and intensive investigation of hitherto little-used sources (particularly local), and to development of methods by which to use them; both of which could assist in other approaches to the sub-

ject that do not necessarily involve case studies. A further possible benefit is that case studies may raise broad issues about the industry, which could enhance general descriptive and analytical understanding. Finally, the case study suggests that at least some members of the 'lost tribe' may yet be reclaimed from undeserved obscurity.

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- 7 Census 1841, Parish of St. Paul, Bristol. Information for this section is derived also from subsequent censuses and from *Mathew's Bristol Directory* (Bristol, 1841, and later editions) and the succeeding Wright's Bristol Directory (Bristol, 1872, etc.).
- 8 Premises described in W. Ison, *Georgian*

Buildings of Bristol (Bath, 1978), pp.149-152 and pl.54a; C.G. Powell, 'Builders as Heroes (Part 1)', *Building Technology and Management*, 20 no 4 (1982), p.23.

- 9 C. Brereton, 'Applause for the Survivors', *Country Life CLXXI* (1982), p.572; Stephens, Bastow, *Book of Buildings*, p.44. This source also lists other projects referred to here.
- 10 *Builder*, (1863) XXI pp.164-165.
- 11 A. Gomme, M. Jenner, M. & B. Little. (1979) *Bristol: An Architectural History*, p.439. This source also provides dating evidence for certain other projects.
- 12 This contract and some following were recorded in the *Builder*, usually in the form of a tender submission list or short report of completion.
- 13 *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 20 April and 14 Sept. 1901
- 14 A boxed set of drawing instruments engraved with date and Stephens' name exists as evidence.
- 15 Most dates from the *Builder*.
- 16 *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 3 Feb.; *Western Daily Press*, 3 Feb. 1905
- 17 Bristol Record Office, Building Plans, XIX, 1882, p.16.
- 18 The building was occupied by W.S. Gilbert and has been admired by architectural historians. See N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London Except the Cities of London and Westminster* (1974), p.267.
- 19 E.O. Sachs & E.A.F. Woodrow. *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres* (3 vols., New York, 1968), II, p.37.
- 20 D. Verey, 'George Frederick Bodley: Climax of the Gothic Revival', in J. Fawcett (ed.), *Seven Victorian Architects* (1976), p.86.
- 21 E. Warren, 'Life and Work of George Frederick Bodley', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, XVII 3rd Series, p.339. (1910)
- 22 I am indebted to Teresa Cooke for information about the Staunton project. Gloucestershire County Record Office, P310, CW3/2.
- 23 I am much indebted to George Young for this point, and many others.
- 24 Sale particulars in *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 10 June, 17 June, 24 June, and 15 July 1911.
- 25 Obituaries in *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 14 Dec. 1918; *Western Daily Press*, 14 Dec. 1918.
- 26 Stephens, Bastow, *Book of Buildings*.
- 27 The *Book of Buildings* contains no project dates.
- 28 This figure almost certainly would be lower were it possible to include in the calculation those 146 projects of unknown value.
- 29 Corresponding to the modern counties of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset.