

A close-up photograph of a terracotta sculpture of a young man with curly hair, looking upwards. The sculpture is set against a background of ornate, colorful decorations, including a large, golden, textured object on the left and various floral and geometric patterns in the background. The text "British Art Studies" is overlaid in the center of the image.

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Cover image: Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, Hereford Screen (detail), 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics, and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (M.251:1 to 316-1984).. Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill

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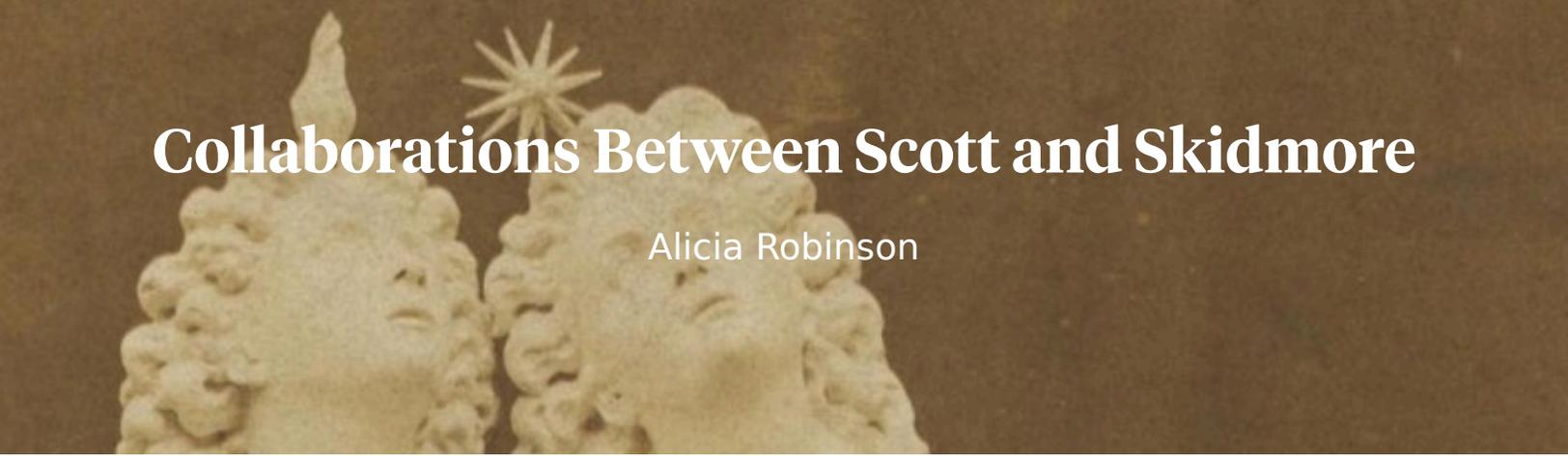


PAUL MELLON
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Collaborations Between Scott and Skidmore, Alicia Robinson



Collaborations Between Scott and Skidmore

Alicia Robinson

Abstract

This essay examines the collaboration between architect and designer George Gilbert Scott and metalworker Francis Skidmore. It compares their metalwork screens at the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury—projects which sometimes overlapped and were all completed in the relatively short time span between 1861 and 1870—within the wider context of Skidmore’s career. While Scott was lauded in his lifetime and has been much studied since, Skidmore has not often been written about, despite having achieved an impressive scale and pace of work in British cathedrals, parish churches, and town halls. This essay therefore shines particular light on Skidmore’s work as designer and maker, and particularly the high profile commissions for these great cathedrals, restored and enhanced with the aesthetics and ambition of the Victorian era.

Authors

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Scott and Skidmore

The prolific architect and designer George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878) ([fig. 1](#)) and now little-known metalworker Francis Skidmore (1817–1896) ([fig. 2](#)) met in the 1850s. At the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury, they collaborated on innovative and spectacular ironwork choir screens, made in the Gothic Revival style, and designed to complement and enhance the cathedral interiors in which they were situated ([fig. 3](#)). In Britain, the use of ironwork in this context was new. The screens synthesized medieval and modern aesthetics, and combined ambitious construction with meticulous craftsmanship.

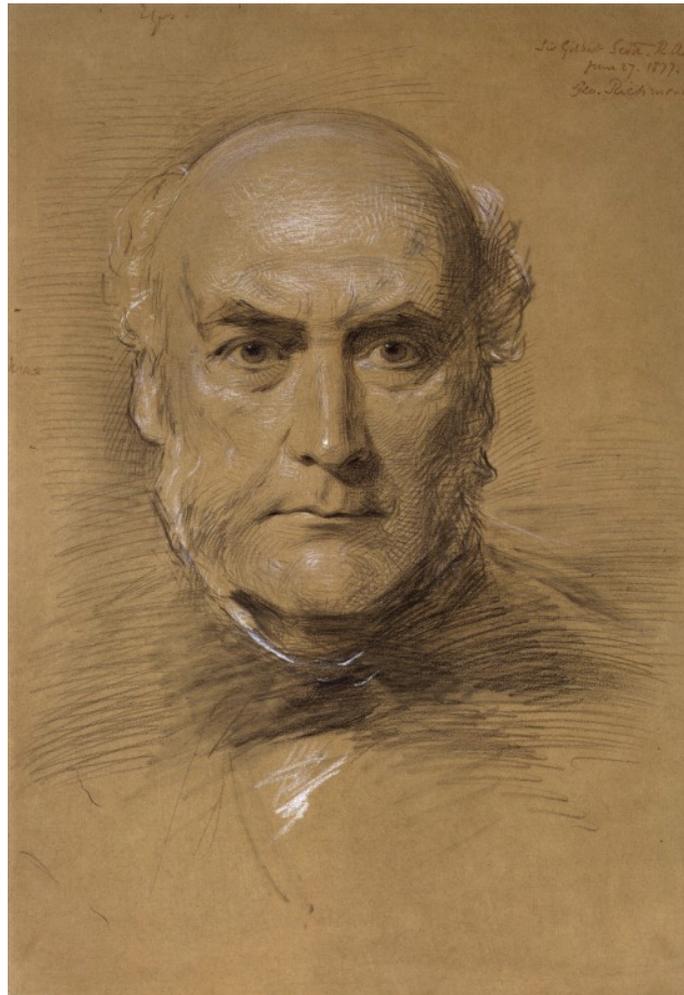


Figure 1.

George Richmond, Portrait of Sir George Gilbert, 1877, chalk, 47 × 31.8 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London



Figure 2.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, photograph from his obituary in the *Coventry Times*, 18 November 1896.

Scott often worked on a number of projects concurrently in different parts of the country and within tight timescales, and subcontracted the specialist craftsmanship required to realize them. ¹ For metalwork, he usually recommended Skidmore, although he also worked with John Hardman and Thomas Potter (who were both considered for the Hereford Screen). ² Sometimes the metalwork delegated was a major structural undertaking, as at Salisbury Cathedral where the civil engineer F. W. Shields used iron to brace the main tower. ³ Scott was lauded in his lifetime, even if he was not universally admired. Skidmore has not often been written about despite having worked in twenty-two cathedrals, three hundred parish churches, and twenty town halls. ⁴ On the reverse of “postcard format” photographs he produced of his work he proudly listed cathedrals and the other locations of his significant creations (fig.4). At the height of his career he employed over one hundred people, but he seems to have been a perfectionist and

destroyed work with which he was not satisfied, and therefore was not commercially successful; his firm went into liquidation in 1872.⁵ Only a decade earlier, Scott and Skidmore's most successful collaboration had resulted in the Hereford Screen, described at the time as "the grandest and most triumphant achievement of modern architectural art . . . the most important and successful example of modern metalwork that has ever been executed".⁶



Figure 3.

Hereford Choir Screen in Hereford Cathedral, photochrome print, circa 1890-1900 published by the Detroit Publishing Company, 1905. Collection of the Library of Congress. Digital image courtesy of Library of Congress

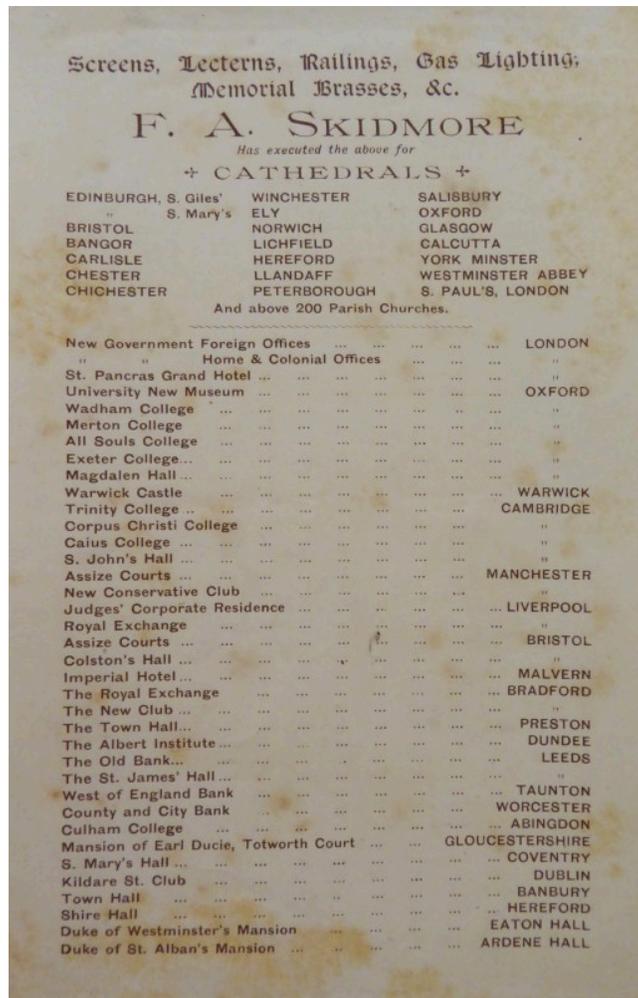


Figure 4. List of highlights of work by Francis Alexander Skidmore, printed on reverse of photographic image of brass monument by him. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

The chronologies of Scott and Skidmore's work at the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury leading up to the production of the screens, were short and overlapped. In November 1854, Scott conducted a report of repairs needed at Hereford including the entire refitting of the choir, an early milestone in his association with the cathedral.⁷ A year later, he started work at Lichfield, and in around 1858 he was appointed architect at Salisbury.⁸ Scott's designs for new features for these cathedrals were usually created within the context of his wider involvement as a restoration architect, and as part of integrated interior schemes. At Hereford, the scrolling ironwork foliage relates to the curling foliate decoration and the red, green, and gold-yellow colour scheme of the contemporary floor tiles by William Godwin.⁹

In terms of cathedral screens, the benefit of using iron was that physical separation was achieved with greater visual porosity than was possible with either stone or wood. Scott promoted metal screens for this reason, as well as for their modernity. Of the proposed screen at Hereford, he wrote that he “strongly recommended that it should be of metal, as capable of uniting the greatest degree of lightness and of beauty, and as at the same time being the class of material most in accordance with the direction of the Art-progress of the present age”.¹⁰ The Lichfield Screen was in fact the first commission of the three (fig. 5) and on 16 April 1857 it was resolved to take down the existing screen.¹¹ On 21 September 1859, Skidmore undertook to make a new one for £800, as per a now lost drawing.¹² On 29 November he received the go ahead, while on 4 October 1860 it was reported, “metal screen getting on very fast”, and on 21 December 1860 the first payment, of £400, was made.¹³ Skidmore also made ironwork gates for the North and South aisles, as well as standards for gas lighting. On 22 October 1861, Lichfield Cathedral reopened, with the new screen and Skidmore’s other metalwork in place.¹⁴

At Hereford, Scott’s screen was approved on 31 December 1861, on the basis of a preliminary drawing he had provided. A much-reduced price of £1,500 was agreed—Scott said this amounted to at least £1,000 less than such a work could be produced for under any other circumstances—on condition that Skidmore be allowed to exhibit the screen at the 1862 International Exhibition, thus promoting his work to a large international audience.¹⁵ The Hereford Screen was completed astonishingly quickly, and was ready to be exhibited in London from May to November 1862. Prominently positioned (fig. 6), the screen was trumpeted with a lengthy text in English and French and accompanying colour illustrations in the lavish publication on *Masterpieces* of the exhibition (figs. 7, 8, 9).¹⁶ The production of the screen had been made possible by many subscribers including Scott himself, and the Bishop and the Dean, who each contributed £50.¹⁷ On 6 February 1863 the first instalment of £1,000 was paid to Skidmore, and on 30th June 1863 the cathedral reopened, the screen having been erected inside earlier that year.¹⁸ On 12 November 1863 the Chapter agreed the final £500 be paid to Skidmore, but only two months later the return sections at the two extreme ends of the screen were enlarged and Skidmore was reportedly very irked that changes of mind by the cathedral concerning the completion of the installation of the screen had led to a loss of income.¹⁹ His bill was only finally paid on 12 November 1864.



Figure 5.
Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, Lichfield Cathedral Crossing Screen, 1859-63. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Steve Cadman



Figure 6.
Hereford Screen, as displayed in the South East Transept of the International Exhibition, London, 1862. *Illustrated Times*, 7 June 1862, 92



Figure 7.

Hereford screen, illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son), 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

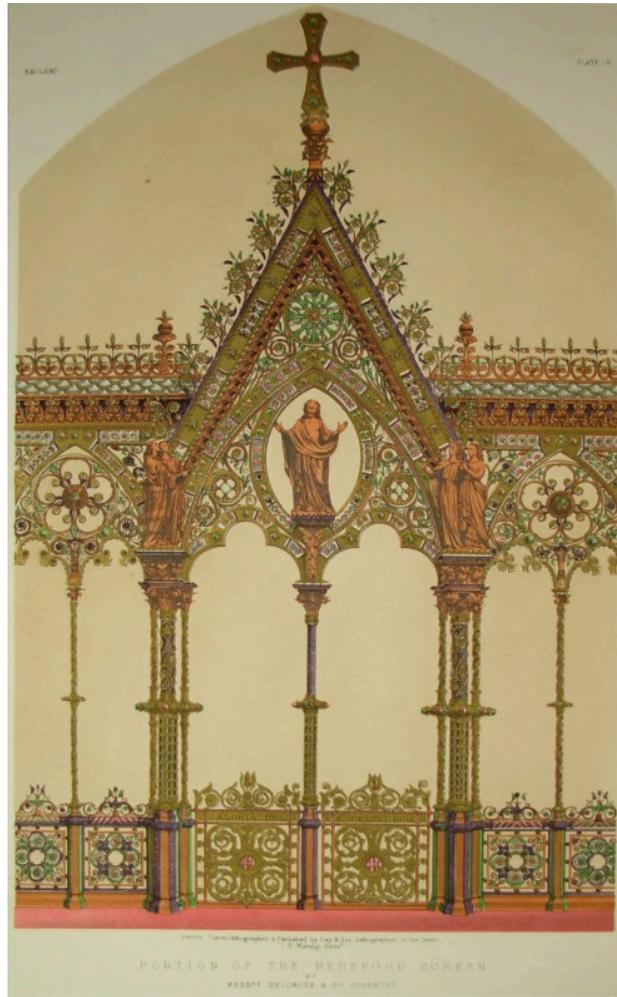


Figure 8. Hereford Screen (central portion of screen), illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son, 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

THE HEREFORD SCREEN.

THIS fine example of the smith's art was executed by Skidmore's Art-Manufactory Company, Coventry, from the designs of G. G. Scott, Esq., R.A. Its length is about thirty-six feet; the framework is of cast iron, plated with tarnished brass; the capitals and foliage are of copper; the panels at the base are of wrought iron, adorned with cuttings of the marble used in the composition; the delicate ornament of the columns, the roses, and figure-work generally, are also of wrought iron; the figures of Christ in the centre, and the ministering angels each side, are of electro-copper; the iron-work is relieved by masses of marble, spar, and crystal; and the entire design is oxidized with colour and vitreous masses.

Of this company at Coventry Mr. Skidmore is the acting manager; there are six partners, who form a permanent committee, and employ a working staff of over 100 hands, by whom every branch of work in gold or silver, iron or wood, is produced in convenient workshops on the spot. Other important works executed by the use of their services at Lichfield and Ely, both designed by Mr. Scott; the iron-work of the Oxford Museum, Messrs. Dunn & Woodcock, architects; the great Corona for Hereford Cathedral, which formed so striking a feature in the East Transept; two star-shaped gas-lights, about twelve feet high, for Lichfield and Hereford; an iron clock-tower for New Zealand; and the canopy tomb for Bishop Percocq, in Charter Cathedral, designed by Mr. Woodcock, architect. Besides these large works in iron, the Company executed, in Class 10, some very good jewelled, enamelled, and electro church vessels, and domestic furniture in the mediæval style.

The photo of the entire screen, which we have thought it desirable to give, affords necessarily no adequate an idea of the confidence of the detail, that we have given another illustration of a portion only. Very great praise is due both to the designer and artificers of this magnificent screen, although its use in a church where the Protestant service is performed seems more than questionable. In the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, the screen has always been, however, an important feature; its object being not so much perhaps to obtain effect and impart a peculiar respect to the chancel, as for the convenience of the officiating priests and choir; for in the earliest examples, the chancel was comparatively open, and the charge of excommunication cannot be brought against the system until a more recent period. Pugin, in his treatise on "Church-Screens and Hood-Laths," says: "From the time of Constantine's conversion, it is beyond doubt that the chancel was divided off from the other portion of the church by rods or screens." Raskin describes the choir of the Church of the Apostles, erected by Constantine at Constantinople, as inclosed by screens or iron-work, marvelously wrought;—"Inclosures adiu parietes, unguis in architectura circumstantia, rotundis apertis ac acutis adhibet formam necessarii." The same writer speaks of the choir of the Church of Tyne, built and consecrated by the Bishop Paulinus, as being also a choir thoroughly inclosed, so that it should not be got at by the people, and adorned with screens (possibly, oak-church) made of wood, and of an elaborate description as to delight the beholder. The Emperor Theodosius divided the church into three parts, one of which is "Sacrosanctus altar sanctis classibus;" and Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, describes three doors in the screens of the Church of St. Felix. Among the decrees of the second Council of Tours, A.D. 577, it is ordered that lay persons are not to enter the chancel which is divided off by screens, except to receive the Holy Communion; and St. Germain, Patriarch of Constantinople, thus explains the intention and meaning of the choir-screens;—"Screens mark out the place of prayer, up to which only outside come the people,—the middle, which is the holy of holies, being accessible to the priests alone." The space inclosed by the screens in those churches whose sides extended round the choir, was entered by three double gates: those in the west at the lower end of the choir were called "the holy doors;" the others were placed between the choir and the sanctuary, on the epistle and gospel sides. But in smaller churches, where the chancel alone forms the eastern extremity, there was only one pair of gates or holy doors at the west; and this most ancient arrangement has continued down to the present day, even in churches which have been fitted up with modern iron railings.

From the authorities above quoted, which are some cited by Father Thiers, in his treatise "Sur la Culture des Cloîtres," it will be seen that open screens existed from the earliest times of churches, and that they were composed of wood or metal,—most frequently brass. This style of inclosure prevailed universally in all classes of churches till the end of the 12th century, when, in the antichapel and collegiate churches, they were altered into solid walls.

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Figure 9.

Hereford Screen (text accompanying image), illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son, 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Scott and Skidmore thereby established the precedent of using iron for ecclesiastical screens in Great Britain, beginning with their collaboration at Lichfield. The screens were all enhanced with metal oxide paints and other materials: at Lichfield, with blackberries made of onyx; wild rose and currant seed-pods of carnelian; and white strawberries of ivory.²⁰ The Lichfield Screen also has sixteen much smaller music-making angels, eight on each side, in horizontal rows, modelled by the sculptor John Birnie Philip.²¹

At Hereford, the Lichfield precedent of an ornate ironwork screen was taken to an altogether different level in its dazzling, jewelled effect. The Hereford Screen, weighing over eight tons, is particularly notable for its more obvious profusion of different materials: polished brass, copper (for the leaves), one hundred and twenty mosaic panels with tesserae of marble; foil-backed glass, semi-precious stones, enamel, stencilled paintwork (added in 1863), and the use of a range of colours of metal oxide paints (figs. [10](#) and [11](#)). It also incorporated prominent figures of Christ in the centre, and pairs of angels with instruments, all made of electroformed copper (thin copper deposited in a mould using electricity), patinated to imitate sculpture.

At Lichfield, Skidmore then undertook to make an ironwork pulpit (completed in 1864) where he used the decorative techniques employed for Hereford two years earlier to striking effect on a smaller scale (fig. [12](#)): the structure is of iron, but it is richly decorated with enamelled plaques, clusters of hardstones, and vivid paint juxtapositions of deep red-brown, green, and blue, enhanced with gilding (figs. [13](#) and [14](#)). This combination of colours and gilding is equally vibrant in some of Skidmore's highly finished designs for light fittings (fig. [15](#)).²²



Figure 10.

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen (detail), 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 11.

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen (detail), 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

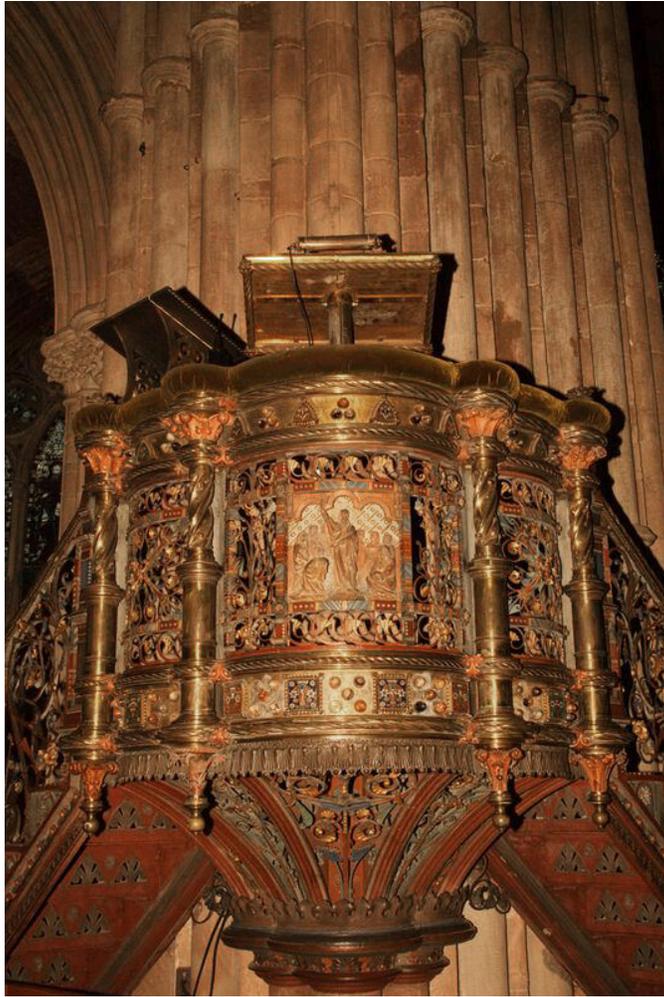


Figure 12.
Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield
Cathedral, 1864. Digital image courtesy of Alicia
Robinson



Figure 13.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield Cathedral (detail), 1864.
Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

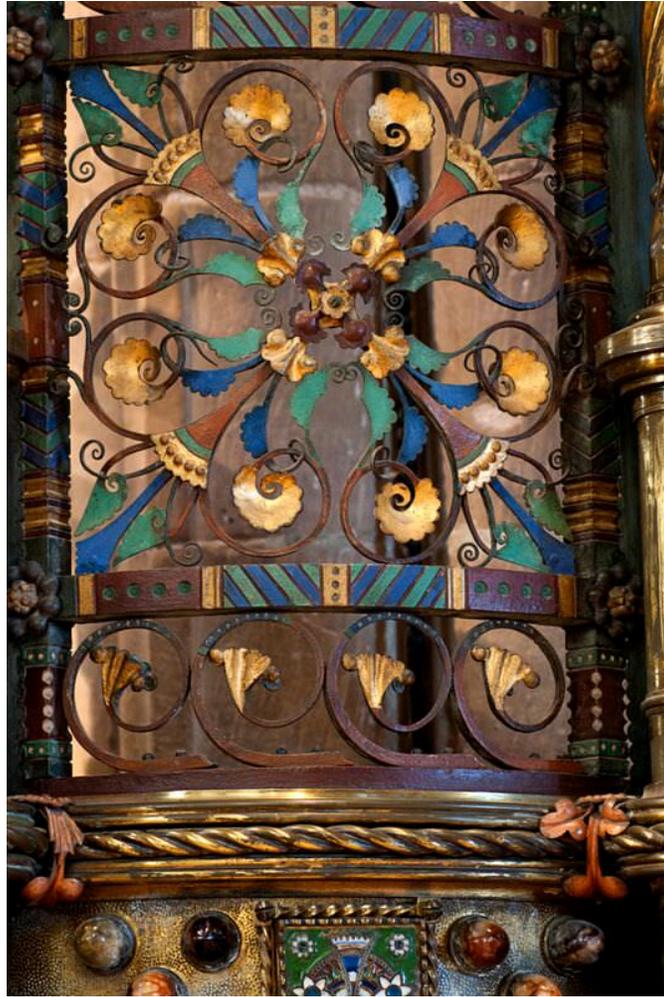


Figure 14.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield Cathedral (detail), 1864. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

At Salisbury, the screen was much simpler in design than at Hereford, using a relatively restrained red and gold colour scheme.²³ Looking at its surviving wrought iron elements, Skidmore's skill in handworking hot iron in the forge to create elaborate twists and curls, seen even more impressively at Hereford, can be appreciated (fig. 16). The sides facing out appear to have been gilded, and the returns painted deep red.²⁴ The Salisbury gates show the influence of medieval models with repeated C and S scrolls (fig. 17).²⁵ Cast iron double-heart and lozenge decorative panels seen on the cross once at the very top of the Salisbury Screen and also horizontally across it at high level (figs. 18 and 19), are the same as panels used by Skidmore for other cathedral commissions at Chester and for the cross on the screen at Worcester,²⁶ showing Skidmore pragmatically either "recycling" left-over panels or using the same model across these different commissions, saving

on cost. More idiosyncratically, the Salisbury cross includes copper alloy leaves protruding at angles, a feature seen in more restrained form in the Hereford gates, and foil-backed glass on at least one element of the screen, a “vesica” (a pointed oval shape where two circles overlap).²⁷ By 1870, the Salisbury Screen was in place.²⁸ Worcester Cathedral, with its own ironwork by Skidmore, reopened in April 1874.²⁹

Thus within just a decade, three huge and elaborate ironwork cathedral screens had been produced alongside other work by Scott and Skidmore, notably the high-profile Albert Memorial for which Skidmore’s ironwork was underway by May 1864.³⁰ Apart from very ornate surrounding railings by Skidmore, the Albert Memorial, like the Hereford Screen, has a cross with (in this case, imitation) hardstones at the very top, and winged angels modelled by Birnie Philip just below (fig. 20).



Figure 15.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Design for a Bracket Lamp (detail of "No. 10"), 1865-1872, pencil, watercolour and gilt on paper. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.394-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 16.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Surviving section from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought iron painted red and gilded. Collection of Antony West. Digital image courtesy of Antony West



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Figure 17.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Gates from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought iron, painted red and gilded, Coventry, c. 18701 (overpainted with bronze paint, 1970s). Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.4&A-1979). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



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Figure 18.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Cross from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought and cast iron and brass on a wood core, Coventry, c. 18701 (restored 2015/16). Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.5-2015). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 19. Salisbury Cathedral Screen in situ (detail), shortly before it was taken down in the 1960s. Digital image courtesy of Antony West



Figure 20.

Sir George Gilbert Scott, Albert Memorial Cross (detail), 1872, Kensington Gardens, London. Digital image courtesy of Loop Images Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

The Career of Francis Skidmore

Francis Skidmore trained in Coventry with his father as a jeweller and silversmith and learnt traditional techniques of engraving, casting, chasing, enameling, and mounting stones. Like Scott, he was influenced by medieval metalwork and particularly jewelled shrines. By incorporating a dazzling array of other materials into the Hereford Screen's iron structure, they effectively created jewellery on a large scale, and the result is unlike anything which had been seen before.

Skidmore had experimented with architectural ironwork in creating the Oxford University Museum roof, with mixed technical success. Made mostly of wrought iron, the roof, begun in 1857, started to collapse under its own weight and was largely rebuilt in cast iron. The new structure featured

colourfully stencilled columns ornamented with wrought ironwork in the spandrels representing branches of sycamore, walnut, and palms (fig. 21).³¹ Here Skidmore established his naturalistic style, with curling foliate capitals and tendrils, seen later in his cathedral screens.

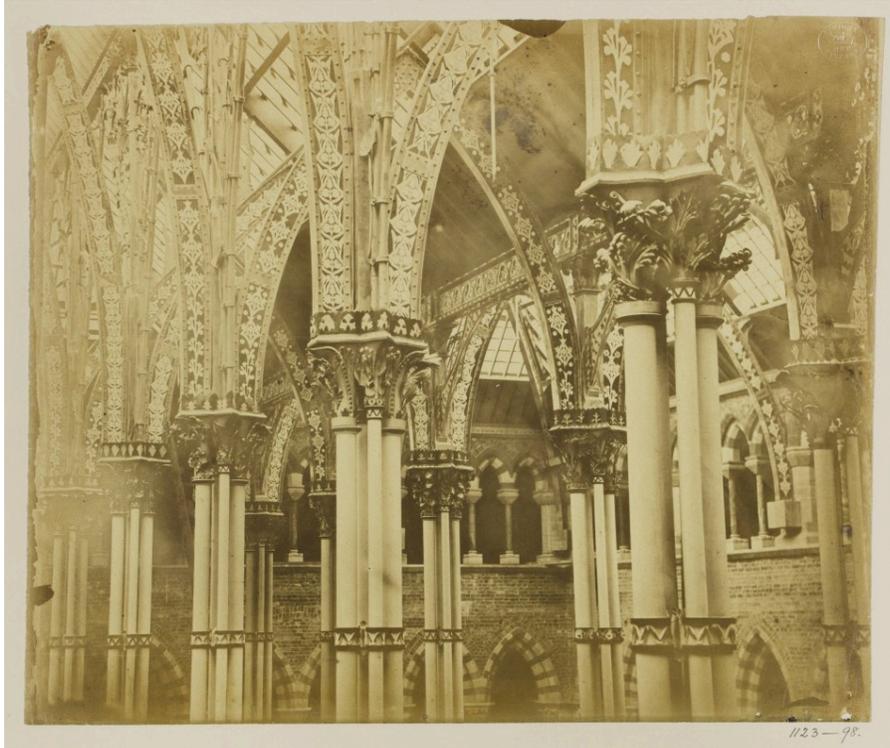


Figure 21.

Oxford University Museum during construction, with roof by Francis Alexander Skidmore. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Although much influenced in style by metalwork of the past, Skidmore was a technical innovator. A chalice shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851 (fig. 22) featured the new technique of electroplating, which involved using an electrical current to deposit a thin layer of silver onto another metal.³² He was also interested in newly invented gas lighting which he installed in several buildings including Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, in 1856, where his fourteen light fittings still provide the main light source for the interior (fig. 23).³³ These fittings were the precursor to those commissioned from Skidmore for Hereford Cathedral, no longer in situ but recorded in old photographs. Similar Skidmore fittings at Ely Cathedral feature his characteristic twisted columns and flamboyantly curling foliage, elements seen on the Hereford Screen.



Figure 22.

Francis Skidmore & Sons, Chalice, silver-gilt and enamel, 1851.
Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1329-1852).
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

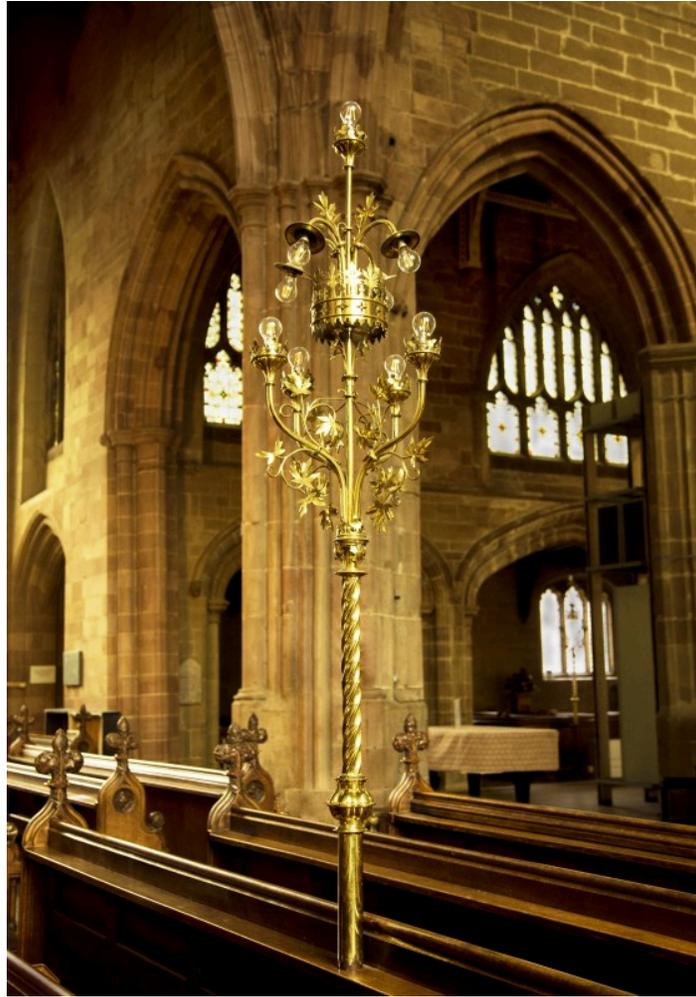


Figure 23.

Francis Skidmore, Light fitting in the Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, 1856. Collection of Holy Trinity Church, Coventry. Digital image courtesy of Ken Johnson

In the 1860s—the decade of these three screens—Skidmore’s career was at its peak. In 1865, his company in Alma Street, Coventry, employed seventy-four men and fifty-four boys, many apprentices from local charity schools, on an average wage of about £1 per week. The premises included an extensive showroom, drawing offices for designs and photographs, a large general workshop, pattern shops, a photographic studio, enamelling rooms, a furnace, a stamping room, an electrotyping room with bath and stone figure models, a boilerhouse, stores, a carpenter’s room, and a packing shop.³⁴ By 1865 “Skidmore’s Art Manufactures Limited” had expanded to become “Skidmore’s Art Manufactures and Constructive Iron Company Limited”, marking a shift to include larger scale construction. A new letterhead proudly included the wording used when Skidmore was awarded a medal in 1862 for the Hereford Screen: “for progress, elegance of design, and for excellent workmanship” (fig. 24).³⁵

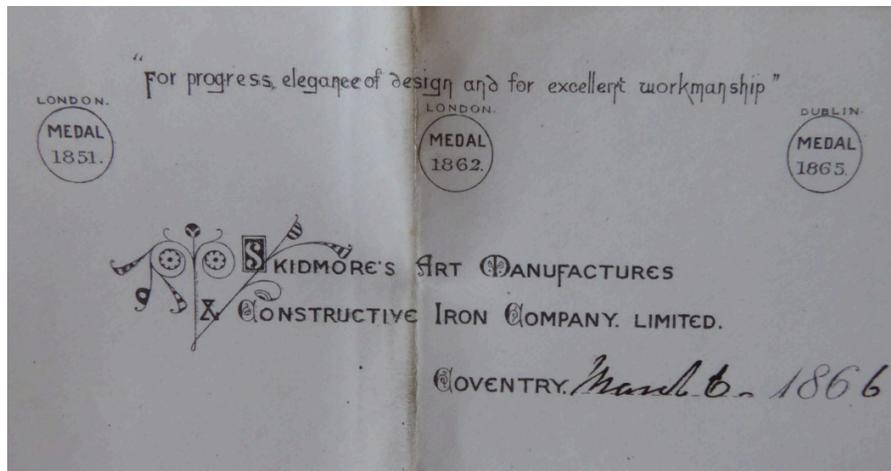


Figure 24.

Letterhead of Skidmore Art Manufactures and Constructive Iron Company, 1866. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

In its heyday, besides being used for manufacture, the Alma Street premises served to showcase Skidmore's design archive, as he kept not only original drawings but also photographic records of the best examples of his work. Skidmore recorded elements of the Hereford Screen including the figure of Christ, a pair of angels and a spandrel (figs. [25](#) and [26](#)), and the south aisle gates. These gates, and a pair in the north aisle, were erected in 1864 ³⁶ and are still in situ, with colourful decoration over most of the surface, including characteristic incised diagonal lines and punched holes painted one colour against a background of another, twisting foliage of vivid polychromy, applied imitation hardstones and intricate decoration around their keyholes, a distinctive feature shared with the Salisbury Screen gates (figs. [27](#), [28](#), and [29](#)).



Figure 25.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of figure of Christ from the Hereford Screen, Coventry, circa 1861. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.402-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

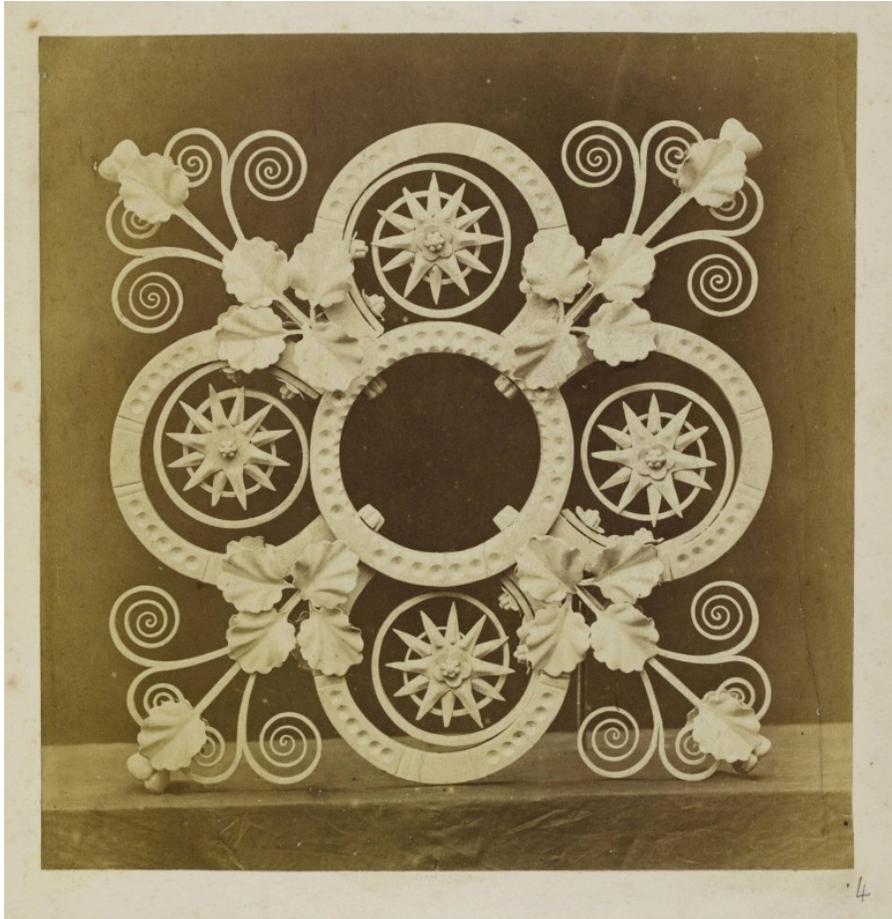


Figure 26.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of Spandrel of Hereford Screen, Coventry, circa 1861. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.430:4-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 27.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, North Aisle Gates, Hereford Cathedral, Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman



Figure 28.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, North Aisle Gates, Hereford Cathedral (detail of lock), Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

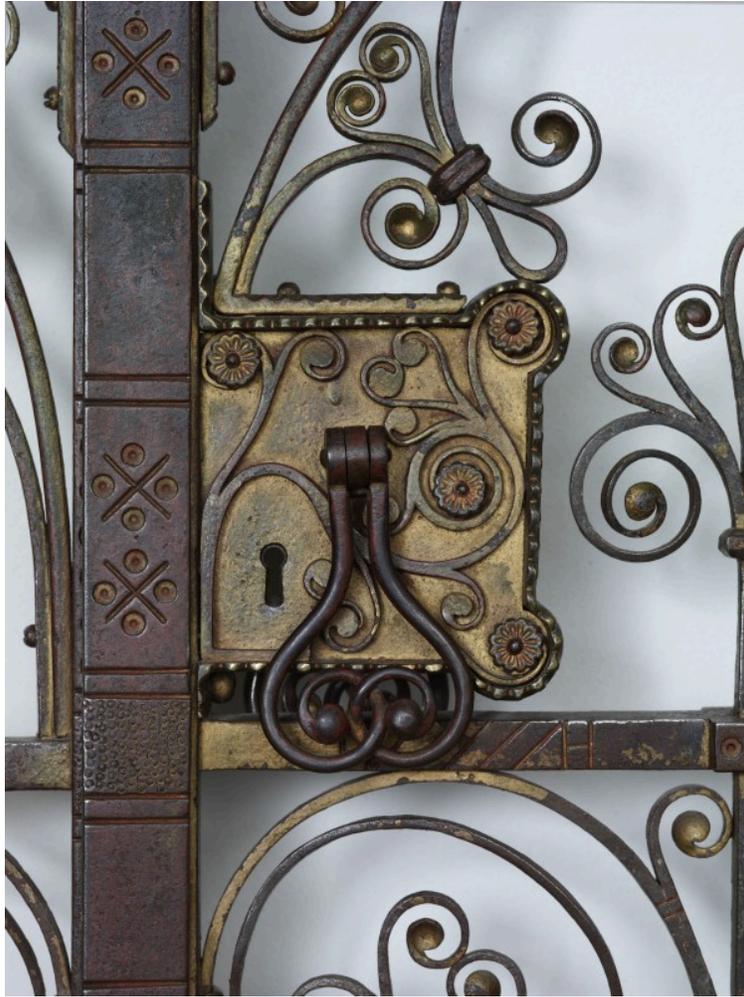


Figure 29.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Gates from Salisbury Cathedral Screen (detail of lock), 1869–72. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.4-1979). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Skidmore was ambitious in recording the entirety of the Lichfield Screen photographically, but this new medium was much better suited to showing the crisp detail of his wrought iron close up (fig. 30).³⁷ Skidmore was also aware of the role of photography in terms of “property rights”, ordering at a critical stage that no person could photograph the Hereford Screen without his permission.³⁸ Finally, he used photographic images to present different options for commissions to clients, numbered and annotated with corresponding prices.



Figure 30.

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of wrought iron door fitting, Coventry, 1865-70. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.416-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

The Dean and Chapter commissioned Skidmore to create the Hereford Screen on Scott's recommendation, stipulating that the sketch Scott produced was to be further developed by Scott and Skidmore, indicating that they were to work, at some level, together. Scott was not always happy with Skidmore's interpretation of his ideas, recording later:

I have had one or two great works carried out, such as the choir screens at Lichfield and Hereford cathedrals. Both of these were designed in full by myself, and are carried out according to my designs in general; in both, however, as in all his works, Mr Skidmore has "kicked over the traces" wherever he has had a chance. In some cases the work has gained, and in some suffered from this. Original ideas have been imported but a certain air of eccentricity has come in with them. ³⁹

He also mentioned Skidmore taking "as usual with him a few liberties of his own". ⁴⁰ Later he wrote of Skidmore and the Hereford Screen, "Skidmore followed my designs, but somewhat aberrantly. It is a fine work, but too loud and self-asserting for an English church." ⁴¹ These words were to be much quoted a hundred years later, to justify removing the screen from the cathedral.

Not only a preliminary pencil sketch, but also the detailed design by Scott for the Salisbury Screen has survived (fig. 31). ⁴² His exuberant curling decoration on the cross ended up as sequence of simpler cast panels, showing that Skidmore adapted the detail of Scott's design, presumably anticipating what would be easiest to create in metal. Scott and Skidmore seem to have worked most amicably on the canopy of the Albert Memorial.

⁴³ Scott wrote: “For the perfect carrying out of this idea I am indebted to the skill of Mr Skidmore, the only man living, as I believe, who was capable of effecting it, and who has worked out every species of ornament in the true spirit of the ancient models.” ⁴⁴ Skidmore proudly (albeit also desperately) later quoted this praise by Scott in a petition for funds. ⁴⁵

As a postscript to Scott and Skidmore’s collaboration, there were inevitable delays in communications as the two worked and employed workmen all over the country. They used the services of the Electric and International Telegraph Company (incorporated in 1846) who priced transmission of messages from on foot locally, to the “upwards of 700 stations in Great Britain and Ireland” (fig. 32). On at least one occasion, and probably several others, Skidmore was obviously irritated by his workmen being kept waiting (at his expense) for Scott’s instructions. ⁴⁶



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 31.

Sir George Gilbert Scott, Design for choir screen for Salisbury Cathedral: plan and elevation, c. 1869, pen on card, 56 x 44 cm. Collection of RIBA. Digital image courtesy of RIBA / RIBApix



Figure 32.
Letterhead of The Electric and International Telegraph Company (incorporated 1846), Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

Looking back when writing his recollections, Scott summarized his views on Skidmore's work: "metalwork has, during the period in question, made considerable progress, though it has suffered from its share of eccentric mania of the day. Mr Skidmore can claim an eminent place both in skill, progress and eccentricity."⁴⁷ Despite the modifications Skidmore made to Scott's designs, often simply because of the properties of the metals he was working with, but also in keeping with his own ideas, Scott evidently had great admiration for Skidmore. Skidmore was understandably proud of his collaboration with Scott given that it resulted in some of the most ambitious and spectacular ironwork ever produced.

Footnotes

- ¹ See Gavin Stamp, "Sir George Gilbert Scott, 1811–2011", *The Victorian* 37 (July 2011): 5, for an overview of Scott's prolific and hectic output, or Gilbert George Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), ed. Gavin Stamp (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995).
- ² George Gilbert Scott, letter to the Dean of Hereford Cathedral describing and detailing general estimates and proposed works to the choir, 9 November 1857 (see Hereford Cathedral Chapter Acts 1857, 406, Hereford Archive ref 7031/20).
- ³ Claudia Marx, "A Conservative Cathedral Restorer", *The Victorian* 37 (July 2011): 8–9.
- ⁴ See Skidmore's obituary in *The Herald*, 13 November 1896; also his obituary in *The Builder* 71, 21 November 1896, 430.
- ⁵ Peter Howell, "Francis Skidmore and the Metalwork", in *The Albert Memorial*, ed. Chris Brooks (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 252–85.
- ⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 30 August 1862.
- ⁷ Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts 9 November 1854 (ref 7031/20), 306–7.
- ⁸ Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 487.
- ⁹ Godwin began production of encaustic tiles at Lugwardine near Hereford in 1852 and his tiles were also used by Scott at Salisbury. Many of the tiles were based on medieval prototypes.
- ¹⁰ George Gilbert Scott, Letter to the Dean and Chapter, 7 November 1862, Hereford Cathedral Archive.
- ¹¹ Lichfield Cathedral Archive, Chapter Acts Vol. 12, May 1852–April 1866, 71 (ref D30/2/1/12). The cathedral archival material is housed, well-indexed and available via Lichfield Record Office, in the public library nearby.
- ¹² Lichfield Cathedral Archive, correspondence ref D30/2/7/72.
- ¹³ Lichfield Cathedral Archive, Chapter Acts Vol. 12, 133–34; 150; and 164 respectively.

- 14 Lichfield Cathedral Archival papers include a programme for the service on Tuesday 22 October 1861 (loose inside back of Chapter Acts Book 13, 1866-76 (NB should be in Vol. 12), and an entry ticket to the service (within correspondence D30/2/7/72).
- 15 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 31 December 1861.
- 16 John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition, 1862*, 3 vols. (London: Day & Son, 1863), 2: Plates 112 and 113, each with full-page caption in English (and also given in French).
- 17 The list of subscribers was published in the *Hereford Journal*, Saturday 21 February 1863.
- 18 Their names and roles handwritten on a slip of paper were found when the screen was dismantled in 1967 (copy in Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- 19 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 23 January 1864 (ref 7031/21), 166-67.
- 20 See Jane Davies Conservation, "Lichfield Cathedral, Skidmore Ironwork, Architectural Paint Research Report" (October 2000), for an analysis of paints used on the Lichfield screen and pulpit, and later overpainting of the former.
- 21 This is according to Nikolaus Pevsner in *The Buildings of England: Staffordshire* (1974; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 184.
- 22 The V&A has a good collection of Skidmore designs, photographs, and other material. For more on Skidmore himself as an artist and designer, see Howell, "Francis Skidmore", 262.
- 23 On the Salisbury Screen, see Alicia Robinson, "Lauded, Lambasted, Lost and Found: The Salisbury Cathedral Screen Cross by George Gilbert Scott and Francis Skidmore", *Journal of the Antique Metalware Society* 23 (2015): 2-17.
- 24 My thanks to colleagues Donna Stevens and Zoe Allen in V&A Conservation for investigations and work on the Salisbury ironwork; also to Mr Antony West of Wiltshire, who retains some parts of the screen which Mr Bert(ram) Shergold, with whom he worked at the time, dismantled.
- 25 These are inspired by twelfth to thirteenth-century ironwork, such as the grille thought to be from the shrine of St Swithun, in Winchester Cathedral.
- 26 These heart and lozenge panels are clearly visible in a black-and-white photograph of the upper portion of the screen sent by Mr West (see above) to the author (fig. 14), and on the Worcester cross. On the Chester cross, see Robinson, "Lauded, Lambasted, Lost and Found", illustrated as fig. 28.
- 27 A vesica from the Salisbury Screen, then in the possession of Mr Shergold, was displayed at the V&A, and described by Shirley Bury in *Victorian Church Art*, exh. cat. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971), 58-59 (no. F7).
- 28 The date of the screen's erection is disputed. Peter Howell, *Victorian Churches* (London: RIBA, 1968), 6, Plate 17, says this happened in 1869. Sarah Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd: The Decoration of Salisbury Cathedral* (London: Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments, 1999), gives 1870 as the date. Scott proposed a double screen supported by marble columns in *The Architect* in 1870 (vol. 3, 115). This provides the terminus post quem for the ironwork screen; a terminus ante quem is provided by Scott writing in the past tense about the screen in a section of his *Personal and Professional Recollections* written in July (or August) 1872. *Brown's Shilling Handbook and Illustrated Guide to Salisbury and Neighbourhood* (1874), 11, mentions Skidmore's screen in situ.
- 29 See Elizabeth Yarker, "The Victorian Restoration of Worcester Cathedral", *Worcestershire Recorder* 66 (Autumn 2002): 11-15, also available online: <http://worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk/Worcs%20Recorder%20Issue%2066.pdf>.
- 30 See Howell, "Francis Skidmore"; also "Albert Memorial: The Memorial", in *Survey of London*, Vol. 38: *South Kensington Museums Area*, ed. F. H. W. Sheppard (London County Council, 1975), 159-76. Also available via British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38/pp159-176> (accessed 19 August 2016).
- 31 See "The Architecture of the Museum"; <http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/arch.htm>. Also Huw Jones and Annette Wickham, *Francis Skidmore: A Coventry Craftsman* (Coventry Arts and Heritage Service, 2003), 9.
- 32 V&A, Museum no. 1329-1852. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O68999/chalice-skidmore-francis-alexander/>
- 33 These light fittings were adapted for use with electricity when the branches drooping down were added (they are now used with LEDs). Before these branches were added, they can clearly be seen in a lithograph of the interior of the church (image emailed to the author by a parishioner), and an original fitting survives in the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry.
- 34 A description of the Alma Street factory and its employees is given in a prospectus of 1865, quoted more fully than here in Jones and Wickham, *Francis Skidmore*, 9-10.
- 35 In May 1864 "Skidmores Art Manufactures Limited" was the printed letterhead. By November 1865 Skidmore added by hand "and Constructive Iron Company Limited", and by March 1866 this addition was printed, marking the expansion of his business (evidence in letters/letterheads in Lichfield Cathedral Archive).
- 36 This is according to F. T. Havergal's *The Visitors Hand-Guide to Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford, 1865).
- 37 Lichfield Screen, photographed in 1861 (V&A, museum no. E.3008-2007).
- 38 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 15 August 1863 (ref 7031/21), 161.
- 39 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 216.
- 40 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 486 (originally Appendix I, Vol. 4, 51).
- 41 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 291.

- 42 George Gilbert Scott pencil sketch captioned "For Salisbury", RIBA Collection, SKB 293(1). The RIBA Collection includes various plans and an elevation by Scott for Salisbury Cathedral, including a double screen as originally proposed, and a single screen as created (refs PA 1129/4; PA 1727/ScGGs[122]1,2&3).
- 43 The V&A has Scott's architectural model for the memorial, Museum no. A.13-1973. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11741/albert-memorial-national-prince-consort-model-scott-george-gilbert/>.
- 44 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 265.
- 45 Skidmore's petition (incomplete) is in the V&A, E.396:1-2006.
- 46 On 16 December 1864, Skidmore telegraphed to Scott: "Pulpit. Workmen standing still two days . . . [awaiting] orders from Scott. Immediate. (cost 3/6)". See Lichfield Cathedral Archive (ref D 30/2/7/72).
- 47 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 216.

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