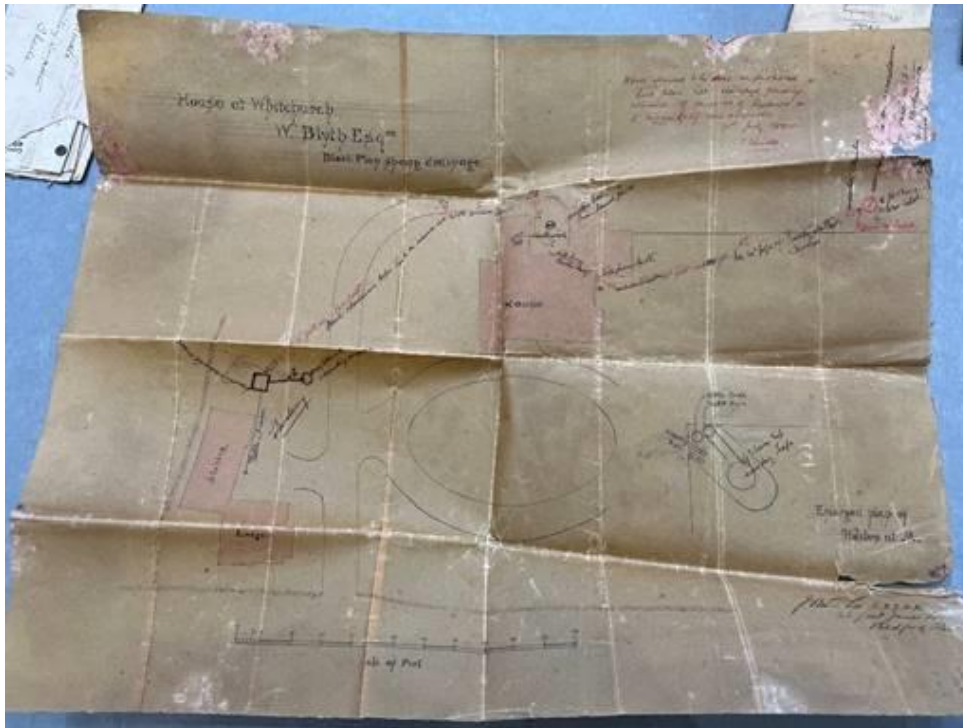


Note on Eastfield House – Identity of the architect

A visit to the Oxfordshire Archives revealed the architect to be John Thomas Lee (ca. 1845-1920) FRIBA, as revealed by this drawing:



Lee was articled to Sir Arthur William Blomfield in 1862 and was then assistant in the offices of Blomfield; (John) Raphael Brandon; William Eden Nesfield and Alfred Waterhouse from 1870; travelling in England, France and Belgium, until he commenced practice in London in 1873.

Probably the most successful of all Victorian architects, Waterhouse was best known for his designs for Manchester Town Hall and London's Natural History Museum, and was President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) 1888 to 1891.

It was the then Vice-President of RIBA, Blomfield, that proposed Lee to become a Fellow of RIBA in 1892. Blomfield had become president of the Architectural Association (the oldest independent school of architecture in the UK and one of the most prestigious and competitive in the world) in 1891, a Fellow of RIBA himself in 1867, and vice-president of RIBA in 1886.

John Thomas Lee is most often celebrated for his restoration of listed churches, and he carried out very little of his work on domestic dwellings. Some of Lee's very limited residential designs can be found at Bodicote House, Hambleton Hall and the infamous Knebworth House. All are listed:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1248703>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1073716>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102767>

Hambleton Hall was built in 1881 and Eastfield House was built at almost the same time (a date of 1880 can be found in the stained-glass window and the owners were in residence by 1882). The similarities in their design and plot layout are notable: These two photos show Hambleton Hall:



Here is Eastfield House, for comparison:



Lee's designs were exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibitions at least 8 times. Pevsner states Lee's chancel at Hambleton Church to be "a splendid remodelling". Other churches Lee designed include St. Luke the Evangelist, Kilburn; Cathedral of Holy Cross and St. Michael, Golders Green; St. Mary the Virgin, Little Wymondley; Cley next the Sea Ecclesiastical Parish Church, Norfolk; Emmanuel, Paddington; St. Margaret, Eastney; St. Jude's Kensal Green; Church of All Saints, Swinderby; Church of All Saints, Harby, Lincolnshire.

Sadly, some of Lee's prestigious work in London, including Sloane Founders House (dwelling for 170 ladies) and St. Luke's Church, Kilburn were destroyed by second world war bombing, but his remaining works are widely celebrated and are nearly all featured on England's National Heritage List.

Laura Lucas, June 2022