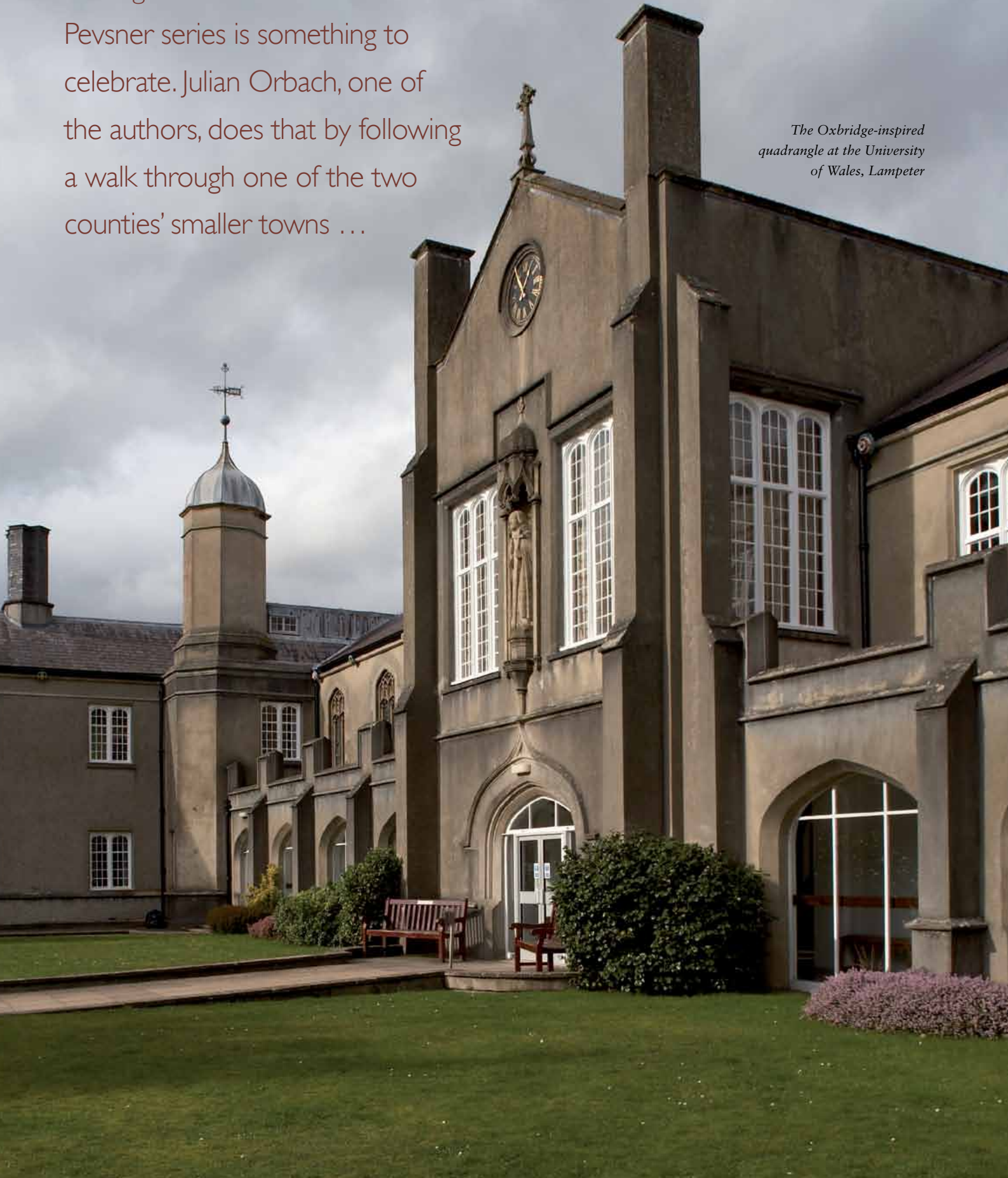


A Pevsner perambulation

The new *Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion* volume in the famous Pevsner series is something to celebrate. Julian Orbach, one of the authors, does that by following a walk through one of the two counties' smaller towns ...

The Oxbridge-inspired quadrangle at the University of Wales, Lampeter



One of the special features of the Pevsner architectural guides is the treatment of towns, with churches, chapels and public buildings to the fore, followed by a quaintly named 'perambulation' that further explores the architecture and townscape. A closer look at Lampeter illustrates how these guided walks can turn up new information for local people and visitors alike ...

Lampeter grew up at a crossing of ancient routes. The old road along the northern bank of the Teifi met the road up from Carmarthen, after it had crossed the bridge (*pont*) enshrined in the town's Welsh name — Llanbedr Pont Steffan. The Steffan (Stephen) also immortalized there was probably a Norman lord, very likely the one who raised the castle mound that still survives in the grounds of the university. Harford Square marks the intersection of the two routes and it bears the name of the Bristol banking family who contributed so much to the town, bringing the university here in 1819, at first as a college for the training of Anglican clergy.

The railway came through in 1866–67, part of the unachieved project of David Davies of Llandinam to link Manchester to the Atlantic through Milford Haven. This promoted a little

building boom, but the town took until the next century to fill two of its three main streets, College Street and Bridge Street.

High Street was the site of the town's celebrated horse fair and the Common (*Y Cwmins*) the site of the market, a reminder that agriculture was the life-blood of Lampeter; which was associated with three landed estates.

A substantial house stood at the heart of each of those estates, but only the youngest, Falcondale, still survives. Once the Harford House, it is now an elegant Victorian hotel. The ruins of the second house, Peterwell, can be seen just east of the town. This extraordinary house with corner towers was built for Sir Herbert Lloyd after 1755 and abandoned after the suicide in 1769 of its violent owner: He had terrorized the county from his position as JP, MP and baronet.

The third house, Maesyfelin, had been home to earlier generations of the Lloyds. Peterwell was built from its stones and only a few garden walls remain behind Station Road. The earlier Lloyds were equally notorious and were cursed by the saintly Vicar Prichard of Llandovery in the early seventeenth century: '*May God with heavy curses chase / All Maesyfelin's villain race*'. The cruelty of the family is



The Town Hall of 1880 — an early example of Queen Anne revival architecture in Wales

remembered in folk tales that are still repeated today.

Sited at a meeting of roads Lampeter became a focal point for Nonconformists and has chapels of the four main denominations and also, on the outskirts, a Unitarian chapel — a reminder that this upper Teifi valley was part of a remarkable

rural stronghold of this sect, normally associated with the urban Enlightenment.

The university is a thread in the story of education in the town. Lampeter was attractive as a site for the new college because it already had a renowned grammar school. The new primary school just being built, the secondary school being modernized and the new buildings of the university show that the story continues.

The walk around Lampeter

It is at the university (I) that the new Pevsner's 'perambulation' starts. This is the third oldest university in England and Wales, after Oxford and Cambridge and just pre-dating London, in the smallest university town in England and Wales.

The quadrangle of 1819–22 by C. R. Cockerell, who went on to design the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford and

© University of Wales, Lampeter



The sumptuous decoration of the university's chapel after its remodelling by T. G. Jackson in 1878–79 (left); Sir William Goscombe John's war memorial (middle); the 1830s terrace on High Street (right)



The Roman Catholic church, which the donations of Irish schoolchildren helped to build

University Library at Cambridge, is based on Oxbridge examples. Visit the dining-hall, still as Cockerell designed it, and be surprised by the chapel. The Oxford architect, T. G. Jackson remodelled it in 1878–79. He dropped the floor into the cellar to increase the height and fitted it with dark green, red and gold Gothic pews, startling in an age grown used to pitch pine and dark stain. Just behind the quadrangle is the grassy mound, or motte, of the Norman fort.

At the northern end of the campus is the town's war memorial with its bronze soldier (2), a work by Wales's finest early twentieth-century sculptor, Sir William Goscombe John. From here, College Street, one of the three main thoroughfares, leads back to the T-shaped meeting of roads in Harford Square, passing the elegant Post Office building of 1933 (3) on the right.

The Harfords, bankers of Blaise Castle, Bristol, were benevolent landlords of the

town and gave it its water-supply, commemorated on the square by the grey stone Harford Fountain (4) of 1862.

Beyond the square, up narrow Drovers Road, is the Common — Y Cwmins (5) — now a car park but once home to the open market. Rearing over the little terraced houses like a church in Italy is the Independents' Capel Soar (6), of 1874, the Renaissance design by an architect as yet unknown.

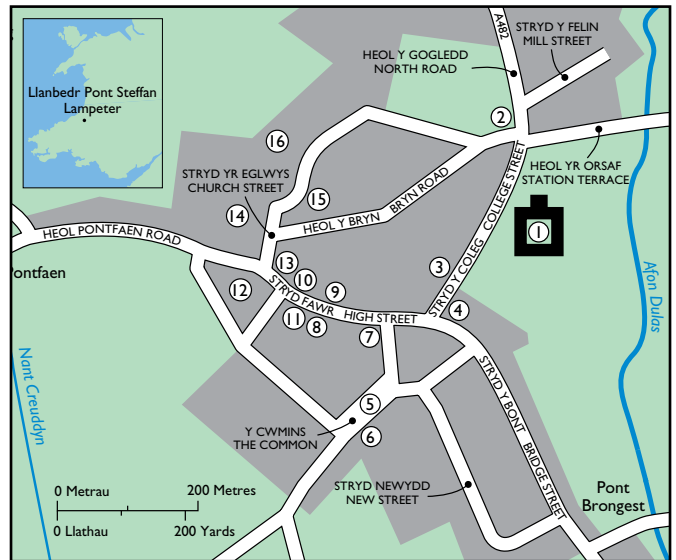
Another narrow passage leads back to High Street, formerly site of the *Ffair Dalis*, the horse fair. Old photographs show the street full of horses, sellers, buyers and bystanders.

Going left and southwards along the long, broad curve of High Street, pick out on the left the late Georgian Lloyd's Bank (7) and the Black Lion (8), the hotel for the carriage trade, a particularly nice design of about 1835.

But it is the Town Hall (9) on the right that sails over the town, its great hipped roof topped by a



Spout from the Harford Fountain



The Lampeter 'perambulation'

pretty timber cupola. It was another Harford gift of 1880–01, by the London architect R. J. Withers who designed the Gothic Guildhall at Cardigan. But this is an early example of the Queen Anne revival, perhaps the first public building in the style in Wales. Try not to see the plastic windows.

Further up High Street, is a three-house stone terrace of the 1830s (10), while an alley opposite leads to the disused Tabernacle Chapel (11), of 1806, one of the oldest chapel buildings in the two counties and a reminder of the small beginnings of Nonconformity. It was abandoned in 1874 for the much grander Capel Seilo (12) further on, a minor work by the prolific chapel architect, Richard Owens of Liverpool.

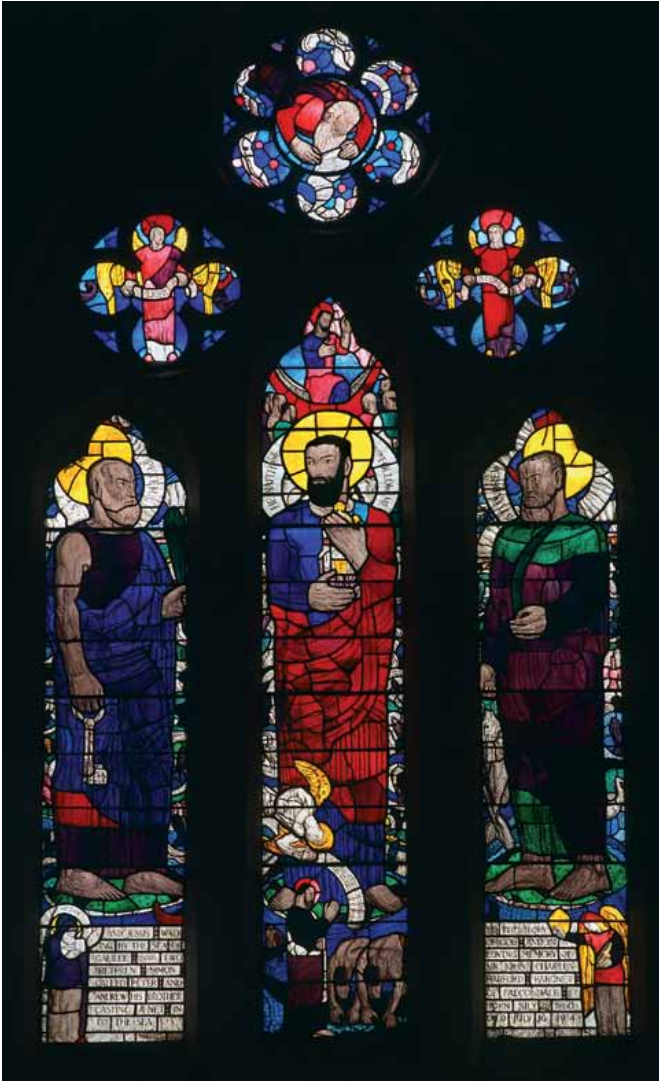
Almost opposite, the Gothic National School of 1850 (13) is a careful essay in neo-medieval asymmetric design. Early for this part of Wales, it was designed by W. B. Moffatt, the former

partner of Sir George Gilbert Scott, the most eminent of Victorian architects.

Facing the school at the top of a green slope is the pretty whitewashed group of the Roman Catholic church (14) and its presbytery. Designed in 1940 by Thomas Scott, it is a delightful example of achieving much with little, with a flash of colour from the Italian Della Robbia-style ceramic over the door. Go inside



The Black Lion — 'a particularly nice design of about 1835'



The stained glass by Wilhelmina Geddes in the west window of St Peter's Church is one of the best pieces of its date in Britain

and the subtle complexity of the interior delights: arches with arches above, and two colours of brick. The founder, Fr Malachy Lynch, built it against great odds, appealing for money to the schoolchildren of Ireland. The fittings are all handmade, in the Arts and Crafts tradition.

Behind is the parish church. On your way there, you pass the famous little single-storey grammar school of 1823 (15). This school was so noted that Sir Walter Scott sent his son from Edinburgh to be taught by John Williams, whom he called the finest schoolteacher in Europe. Williams was later rector of Edinburgh Academy.

The parish church of St Peter (16) is all of 1867–70, a very

good Victorian work by R. J. Withers, built with Harford money. Stand and admire the powerful tower and the row of wheel windows over the aisle. The interior is beautifully light, having long windows to the north and good revived Gothic stained glass of the 1870s in the chancel. The massively circular font and pulpit are in the High Victorian manner; placing geometry over decoration.

In the west window is the glory of the church — the stained glass of 1938–45 by Wilhelmina Geddes, a member of the famous Dublin *An Tur Gloine* (The Tower of Glass) studio, who had moved to London in 1925. This is one of her finest works, made just after the great *Te Deum* window at

Pevsner — almost complete

This Pevsner volume is the sixth in the Buildings of Wales series since Powys in 1979. The seventh, for Gwynedd and Anglesey, will complete the set in 2008–9.

The Welsh series is one of four covering the British Isles in what must be the most ambitious ongoing architectural guide project in the world. *Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion* follows *Dublin and Shropshire* and will be followed shortly by *Perth and Kinross* in the sister series for Scotland.

The international scope of the project makes for

unexpected links. E. Trefor Owen, who designed a clock tower in Aberystwyth in 1857, turns up in Dublin in 1864 designing the Public Record Office. Edward Haycock of Shropshire was the principal designer of the planned town at Aberaeron in Ceredigion. The Scots peer, Earl Cawdor, had a country house built near Carmarthen by the English architect Sir Jeffrey Wyattville. The design was similar to one Wyattville was building in Shropshire for the heir of the wealthiest Scots noble, the duke of Sutherland.



The National School of 1850

Ypres Cathedral of 1938, and one of the best pieces of its date in Britain. It shows Christ between St Peter and St Andrew, three figures on a heroic scale, contrasted with tiny figures under their feet.

In the north-western corner

of the churchyard, note the baldly initialled headstones of the paupers who died in Lampeter workhouse.

A short walk leads back to the war memorial and the university. ☘

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