

## **Bentley, John Francis 1839 - 1902**



John Francis Bentley was born John Bentley in Doncaster, England on 30 January 1839. He acted as voluntary superintendent in the restoration of Loversall church, Yorkshire in 1854. The following year he was apprenticed to Winsland & Holland a firm of contractors in London. In 1857 he began working as an assistant in the office of Henry Clutton (1819-1893). Clutton was an architect with an extensive domestic and ecclesiastical practice. He had converted to Roman Catholicism and may have influenced Bentley's decision to take the same step in 1862. In doing so he took the baptismal name of Francis.

In 1862 Clutton invited Bentley to become a partner, however, he declined and set up his own independent practice with an office at 14 Southampton Street, Covent Garden, London. He subsequently worked primarily as an ecclesiastical architect. While waiting for commissions he was engaged on decorative art projects, designing stained glass, embroidery and work in metal and stone. This included stained glass for Lavers & Barraud; metalwork for Hart & Son; and the design of organ cases for T. C. Lewis. Examples of Bentley's work as a decorative designer were shown at the International Exhibitions in London in 1862 and in Paris in 1867.

Examples of Bentley's work as an applied artist were shown at the 1st (1888), 2nd (1889 and 3rd (1890) exhibitions of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society in London.

Bentley relocated his office to 13 John Street, Adelphi, London in 1868. In 1898 he was invited to the United States to advise on the design and construction of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Brooklyn. Later that year he was taken seriously ill from which he never recovered. He died at his home, The Sweep, Old Town,

Clapham Common, London on 2 March 1902.

Worked in

UK

Works

Bentley's most outstanding architectural project was the Byzantine Revival Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral (Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood) in London. He received the commission in 1894 and work on its construction began in 1895. It was completed in 1903, a year after his death.

Other notable commissions included additions to St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic church, Pottery Lane, London (1861-63); 235 Lancaster Road, London (1863); Sunnydean, 108 Westwood Hill, London (1868-70); additions and furnishings for St. Mary of the Angels, Moorhouse Road, Bayswater, London (1869-87); The Presbytery, St. Peter & St. Edward, Palace Street, London (1870); Franciscan Convent, Potabello Road, London (1870); Ellerslie, Sydenham Hill, London (1870); St. Thomas Seminary, Hammersmith Road, London (1876-84); St. Mary, Cadogan Street, Chelsea, London (1877-82); Our Lady of the Holy Souls, 62 Hazlewood Crescent, London (1881-82); Holy Rood Roman Catholic church, Watford, Hertfordshire (1883); St. John's Presbytery School, Beaumont, Windsor, Berkshire (1886-88); Our Lady of Victoria, Clapham, London (1886-94); Corpus Christi, Brixton Hill, London (1886-87); Redemption Monastery buildings, Clapham Park Road, London (1891-93); St. Luke, Chiddingstone Causeway, Kent (1897-98); and St. Francis, Convent Lane, Bocking, Essex (1898).

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*See also:*

[British Listed Buildings](#)

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## Links

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- Historic England - St. John's College Beaumont, Priest Hill, Runnymede, Surrey <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1189597?section=official-list-entry>
- Historic England - Roman Catholic Church of St John the Baptist, Rochdale <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1376506>
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