

## ALFRED GELDER – HULL'S ARCHITECT



Few people have left their mark so obviously on the city of Hull as William Alfred Gelder. He was born in the village of North Cave in 1854, the son of William Gelder, a joiner, wheelwright and, later, timber merchant. By the age of 15 Alfred was apprenticed to his father, but he changed his mind about what he wanted to do. He went to Hull, married Elizabeth Parker in 1877 and the following year established an architectural practice. In 1881 the couple lived at 24, Kingston Terrace and by 1888 had moved to 4 Chestnut Villas, Holderness Road. In 1892 he formed a partnership with Llewellyn Kitchen, the Manchester born son of a commercial traveller, and the firm of Gelder and Kitchen was founded. Gelder was elected to the City Council on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1895 in a by-election for the Drypool ward, and became an Alderman three years later. By 1899 he was Mayor, an office he held five times.

Gelder had entered the architectural profession at the time of the Victorian development of the city and quickly became its mastermind. The new town plan was largely his work, and was carried out while Gelder was Mayor of the city. The city centre was reconstructed and a new bridge built across the River Hull, the Drypool Bridge. A new road was built through the city centre to link up with this bridge, and was named Alfred Gelder Street. It was said that all this work was carried out without loss to the ratepayers, but it would be impossible today to hold such an office while taking contracts from the council. In the 1930s he was involved with the transformation of Queen's Dock into Queen's Gardens

The firm of Gelder and Kitchen also developed expertise in the design of flour mills, oilseed crushing mills and related facilities, at a time when Hull was a major European centre for the industry. One customer for the revolutionary roller mill was Joseph Rank who, like Gelder, was a noted Methodist. His Methodism led Gelder to design numerous chapels, including the Brunswick Chapel on Holderness Road in 1890 and the Princes Avenue Chapel in 1904. There were commissions for chapels, as well as flour mills, from all over the country.

Gelder was knighted in 1903 as Sir Alfred Gelder, and that year he hosted a royal visit as the Prince and Princess of Wales came to open Victoria Square, unveil the Queen's statue and lay the foundation stone of the City Hall. In 1910 he entered Parliament as the Liberal member for Brigg. He resigned from the Hull City Council in 1912 but continued as an MP until 1918.

In the 1920s Sir Alfred's son Teddy joined the practice. Among the projects in this period were many of the Wm. Jackson & Son grocery stores and the Haworth Arms public house.

Sir Alfred Gelder died in 1941, leaving a very visible legacy to the city.