

# Pugin Society

## e-newsletter

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*A.W.N. Pugin* by David Frazer Lewis  
Liverpool University Press

£25 from the Victorian Society, £30 from Amazon

**Joanna Lyall**

When David Lewis, assistant professor of architectural history at Notre Dame University, Indiana, announced a study tour of Pugin, based at The Grange, Ramsgate, 60 students applied for eight places. Planned for May 2020 the trip was axed by the pandemic but undergraduates still ask about possible rescheduling. Meanwhile David hopes his new book, *A.W.N. Pugin*, published last month (May) by Liverpool University Press, in conjunction with Historic England and the Victorian Society, will introduce a new generation to the architect he first became aware of in high school. ‘My task is not to create any new insights sui generis, but rather to bring together the work of Pugin scholars of the last five decades to tell afresh the story of his architecture,’ he says. The result of several years study in the UK and USA, the book is the first to present Pugin’s work in a ‘short narrative format’ since Phoebe Stanton’s *Pugin*, published in 1971, he points out. Pugin’s work, he argues, is ‘architecture of activity’ and a ‘total work of art’ with no detail overlooked. Opening with a striking black and white photograph of the Palace of Westminster behind a flock of birds the text is highly illustrated including photographs by the author. One of these, of St Chad’s, Birmingham, brings home a contrast that would have appalled Pugin. Towering over the city’s skyline when Pugin completed the church at the age of 29, ‘the biggest statement he could make’ it now abuts a ring road ‘divided from the central city by asphalt and traffic, forlorn among austere landscaped empty lots’. David says of his book that:

The format considers Pugin’s buildings according to their purpose – The House of God, The House of Man; The Seat of Wisdom (educational establishments) and The Golden Throne (the Palace of Westminster). ‘I felt that certain buildings tend to get lost in chronological accounts and that the churches dominate. So I went for a typological approach,’



David, edited the Pugin Society's peer-reviewed journal *True Principles* for four years, including, in 2018, an edition devoted to previously unpublished letters from Pugin to Charles Barry, on the building of the Palace of Westminster.

He believes his interest in historic buildings was probably sparked by his parents' restoration of a Victorian house in Macon, Georgia. 'It had secret passages, a library with a moving ladder and stained glass,' he recalls. He discerns in *The Grange* 'a thoroughly maritime house'..... 'the heart that would pump the blood of Pugin's domestic principles into the suburbs and villages of Britain' while still reflecting the architect's religious views. 'Here too, as at Birmingham, Cheadle and Alton, he was creating a little world, rebuilding Catholic England, half an acre at a time.'

After graduating from Stanford University, California, in British cultural history and urban studies David gained an M.Phil from Clare College, Cambridge, in Edwin Lutyens' chapels and churches. For his D.Phil from St John's College, Oxford, he wrote on Giles Gilbert Scott, whose grandfather, Sir George Gilbert Scott placed the figure of Pugin on his Albert Memorial believing him 'our leader and most able pioneer'.

More recently David worked as a historic buildings advisor at Donald Insall Associates, the London architectural practice whose work has included restoration of the Pugin room at the Palace of Westminster. He then returned to the USA to become a postdoctoral research associate at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

In the final chapter of his book – *En Avant* – considering movements in Pugin's reputation, he says 'His cultural relevance today suddenly seems enormous'; 'A generation reared on Harry Potter revels in the Gothic aesthetic and architects continue to build in Gothic Revival'. He credits the Victorian Society for helping to stem the destruction of Victorian buildings after WWII and then, he notes, 'the small but mighty Pugin Society arose to help preserve his buildings and encourage Pugin studies'.

With the pandemic lockdown finally easing in the UK he hopes more and more people will realise how much there is to learn and see about Pugin. 'Make the pilgrimage to Cheadle, as so many Victorian architects did, stroll along the cliffs at Ramsgate, where Pugin's banner still flaps above *The Grange* and visit St Augustine's,' he urges in conclusion.

David shares with Pugin a love of Oxford and he will be returning there this autumn to take up a post as director of studies for architectural history at Kellogg College.

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## Windsor Castle Furniture

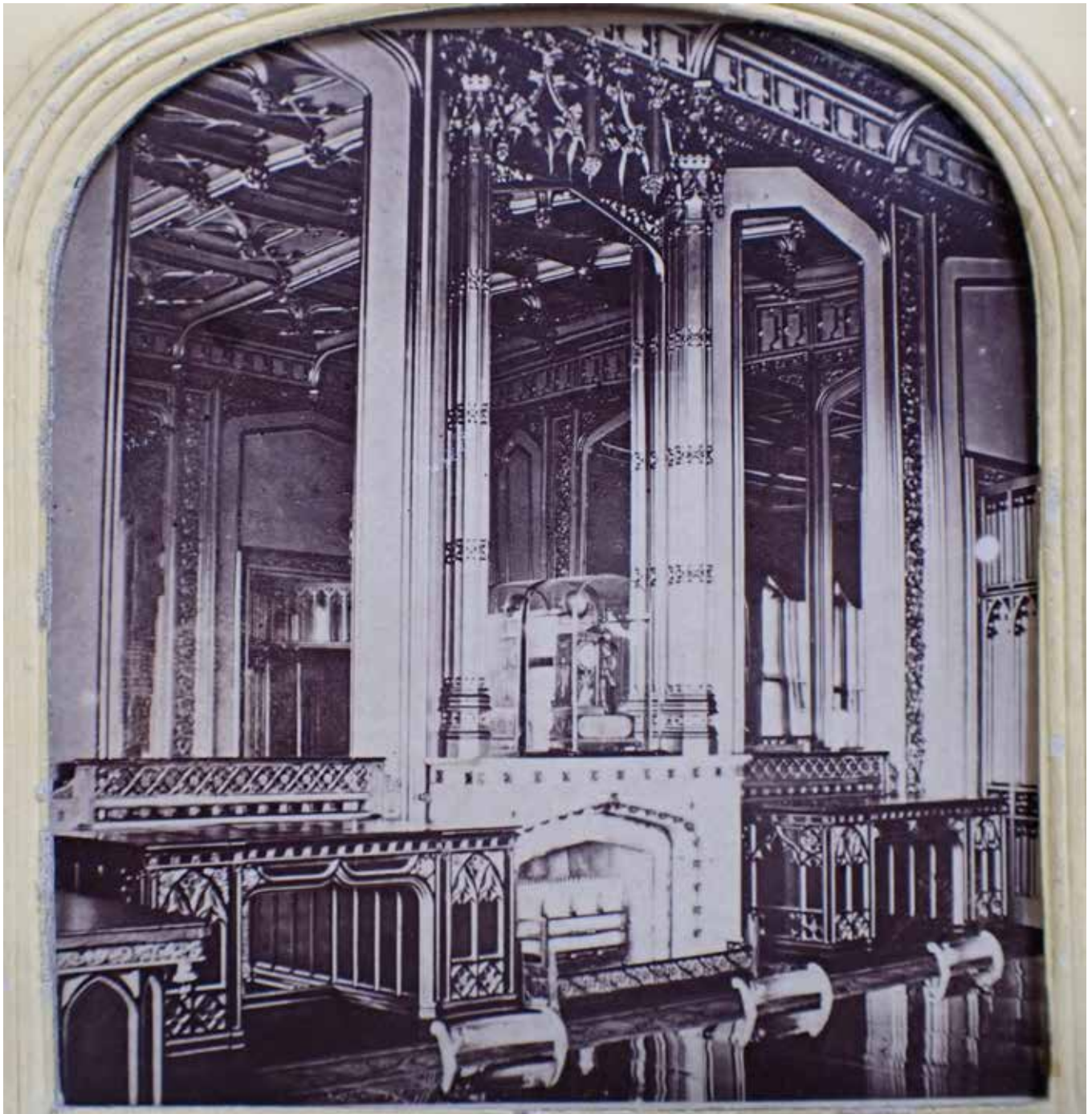
### Paul Atterbury and Rosemary Hill

This recently discovered photograph from the 1850s-60s of the Large Dining Room at Windsor Castle gives a rare view of some of Pugin's earliest designs *in situ*.

As part of George IV's elaborate and ruinously expensive refurbishment of the Castle a suite of Gothic rooms was commissioned for the Private Apartments, of which the Large or State Dining Room was the biggest. Initial designs for furniture and fittings were made by Pugin's father, Auguste Charles, in about 1827, after which he seems to have handed the commission over to his precocious fifteen-year-old son. Pugin, in the autobiographical notes written in his late teens, says that on June 26<sup>th</sup> 1827 he: 'Went to design and make working drawings for the Gothic furniture... I likewise superintended the execution of them at Mr Seddons manufactory Aldergate [sic] Street in the City.'

This, like his later boast to Hardman that at Windsor he had 700 men working for him, was an exaggeration. As Hugh Roberts demonstrated in his definitive study of 2001, *For the Kings Pleasure: the furnishing and decoration of George IV's apartments at Windsor Castle*, Pugin did not have even seven men at his command. Most of the 'Pugin' furniture had been designed and approved by the time he arrived and was carried out largely to his father's designs, shown in watercolours which survive in the Royal Collection.

There were, however, significant modifications. Pugin probably did oversee the design of the 'Projecting



Canopy ... ornamented and Gilt' for the overmantel, visible here, which is more elaborate than his father's watercolour, and has already something of the House of Lords about it. The sideboards were another collaboration and have seen many vicissitudes. George IV was not the easiest of clients. He ordered tall rosewood and gold mirrored backs for the sideboards. When they arrived, however, they were found to be 'not answering his expectation' and were dismantled and replaced with lower galleries which Pugin no doubt designed. These are also visible in the photograph, but later disappeared. In 1997 they were replaced with new gilt bronze galleries. The dining chairs, which Pugin designed, working up a more robust version of his father's delicate Regency Gothic, are not in the picture as they were soon replaced, having been found to be so very sturdy that it took two footmen to lift each one.

**Don't be shy. Send your contributions to the e-newsletter to  
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## Henry Welby

### Rosemary Hill

Pugin, who took great trouble to trace his connections to the supposedly noble Pugin family, was much less interested in his ancestors on the Welby side although they were, as we saw in an earlier e-newsletter, richer in connections with the world of Gothic chivalry. It was perhaps his difficult relationship with his uncle Adlard Welby, who disapproved of Pugin's first two marriages and of much else in his nephew's career, that coloured his view. They seem never to have spoken after 1834, although Adlard outlived his nephew, dying in Islington in 1861.

The Welby family is one of the oldest in Lincolnshire. The name is Saxon in origin and Pugin's mother claimed that they had been established before the Conquest. The village of Welby was no doubt named for them, but the family seat was, and remains, nearby at Denton where the monument to Richard Welby, who died in 1713, is an impressive, not to say intrusive, feature in the parish church. He is represented life-size in marble complete with full bottom wig.

Adlard was a family name since before the Reformation. One of Pugin's ancestors was the son of an Adlard Welby of Gedney (c1506-1570). Born sometime in the 1540s, Henry Welby became that apparent oxymoron, a famous recluse, meriting an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Henry matriculated from St John's College Cambridge in May 1558 and, like many

later Welbys, entered the Inner Temple. He married Alice White who, Pugin would have been unhappy to know, was a niece of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, principal advisor to Elizabeth I and co-architect of the Elizabethan religious settlement, under which Catholic worship was prohibited.

Henry's life seems to have been prosperous and respectable until, with that Welby family tendency to criticise the life choices of younger relatives, he expressed strong disapproval of his half-brother John's dissolute ways, whereupon John tried to shoot him. After this shock Henry retreated into seclusion in a house in Grub Street, near Cripplegate in London. There he remained, eating nothing but porridge and salad, for forty-four years. He never left the house, though he was famously generous to his neighbours in a part of London that was increasingly crowded and poverty-stricken. A year after his death in 1636 he was memorialised in *The Phoenix of these Late Times, or, The Life of*



H. WELBY, ESQ<sup>r</sup>

*who lived 44 Years in Grub Street,  
without being seen by any Person!*

The Phoenix of these  
late times:

Or the life of Mr. Henry  
Welby, *Esq.*, who lived at his house in  
Grub-street forty foure yeares, and in  
that space, was never seene  
by any. Aged 84.

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Shewing the first occasion, and the reasons  
thereof.

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Whose Portraiture, you may behold,  
as it was taken at his death.



*With Epitaphs and Elegies of the late deceased  
Gentleman, who lyeth buried in S. Giles Church  
neere Cripple gate, London.*



LONDON:  
Printed by N. Okes, and are to be sold by Richard  
Clotterbuck at his shop in little Brittain,  
at the signe of the golden ball. 1637.

*Mr Henry Welby Esq*, a quarto volume of epistles and epitaphs by Shakerly Marmion, John Taylor the water poet, Thomas Brewer, and Thomas Heywood, an actor and dramatist who had been one of Shakespeare's colleagues in the *Admirals Men* in the 1590s.

That a recluse should have had so many and such distinguished friends and admirers says much for the character of one of Pugin's most unusual ancestors.