

# Pugin Society e-newsletter

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## Pugin in Salisbury

**John Elliott**

**A**.W.N. Pugin married his first wife – Sarah Anne Garnett – on 12 January 1832. She died of post-puerperal fever and was buried in the north choir aisle of Christchurch Priory. At this time Pugin was a member of the Church of England. He remarried – Louisa Button - in 1833 and their child was born in 1834.

On 29 January 1835 he bought a plot of land on the outskirts of Salisbury in 1834 from John Staples<sup>1</sup> - he paid £150 for it - and started to build a house for himself and his family. His diary records the progress which was made, the purchase of furniture and how they began sleeping there 15 September. While building work had been under way the family had lived in Salisbury High Street and Pugin used the office of William Osmond for his work.<sup>3</sup>



St Marie's Grange which is located on the old Southampton Road south of Salisbury. (*Julia Twigg*)

While the house – St Marie’s Grange - has been considerably modified internally the exterior still presents a credible example of what Pugin was attempting to achieve – ‘a compleat building of the 15th century’.<sup>2</sup> The attraction of the site, which is beside the river Avon, was that it provided a ‘magnificent view of the cathedral city with the river Avon winding through the beautiful valley’.<sup>4</sup>

While living in Salisbury in 1836 Pugin was asked to design a lodge gate house for one of the entrances to Clarendon Park. The Tudorish style is very different from the Gothic for which he is more commonly known.

Mysteriously Pugin’s diary entry for 25 March 1835 says ‘began house at Belmont’, though the footnotes to Alexandra Wedgwood’s *A.W.N.Pugin and the Pugin Family*, says that the house has not been identified. Just down the road from St Marie’s Grange there is a house called Belmont which could be the building in



The lodge at an entrance to the Clarendon Estate. The part that Pugin is credited with designing is the main structure on the left. There is a more recent extension at the rear of the building at the right. (*John Elliott*)

question. The current owner tells me that the initial house was built for John Staples in the 1830s, though much enlarged in 1875 when part of the original house was incorporated within the larger addition. The original house is of brick but well rendered with stucco. It is also close to the river Avon, like St Marie’s Grange, and has views of Salisbury. See photos on next page. The phrase ‘began house at Belmont’ could just refer to the start of work on some drawings for a house - a project that came to nothing.

The date fits with those connected with work on St Marie’s Grange. At this time Pugin was working on the drawings for the Houses of Parliament and several publications, but he was also a young 23 year old man with a family to support. It is generally accepted, though unproven and perhaps debatable, that he was responsible for the design of the lodge gate to Clarendon Park which is not in the Gothic style. There seems to be no reason for him not undertaking a commission for the man who sold him the land for his own house. Both John Staples and Sir Frederick Hervey-Bathurst, who owned Clarendon Park, were men of substance and would have been seen as desirable clients for a young and ambitious architect. However, as Rosemary Hill says of Belmont ‘it’s an Italiante villa straight out of Loudon, it is everything he [Pugin] was against’. As such it seems unlikely that Pugin was the architect, though the possibility is intriguing.

While in Salisbury Pugin decorated the small chapel that the local Catholic congregation was using and he converted from the Church of England to Roman Catholicism there on 6 June 1835. The Catholics used the





Belmont House.

*Above:* The original building is the structure with the slightly lower roof line which is straight ahead. The extension on the left, and at the extreme right with a higher roof line was added in 1875.

*Left:* This image shows the remaining visible part of the 1835 building. Only the right hand end of it is visible externally today as the remainder, which was on the left, has been incorporated into the 1875 extension.

*(John Elliott)*





What is today part of Wiltshire College and where the Catholic chapel was located. It was here that Pugin was received into the Catholic Church. The chapel was on the upper floor on the left of the building where there are a series of small Gothic windows. (John Elliott)



St Osmund's exterior. The north aisle was added in 1894 and was not part of Pugin's plans. Pugin's drawings are still held by the church. (John Elliott)



St Osmund's interior. (*John Elliott*)

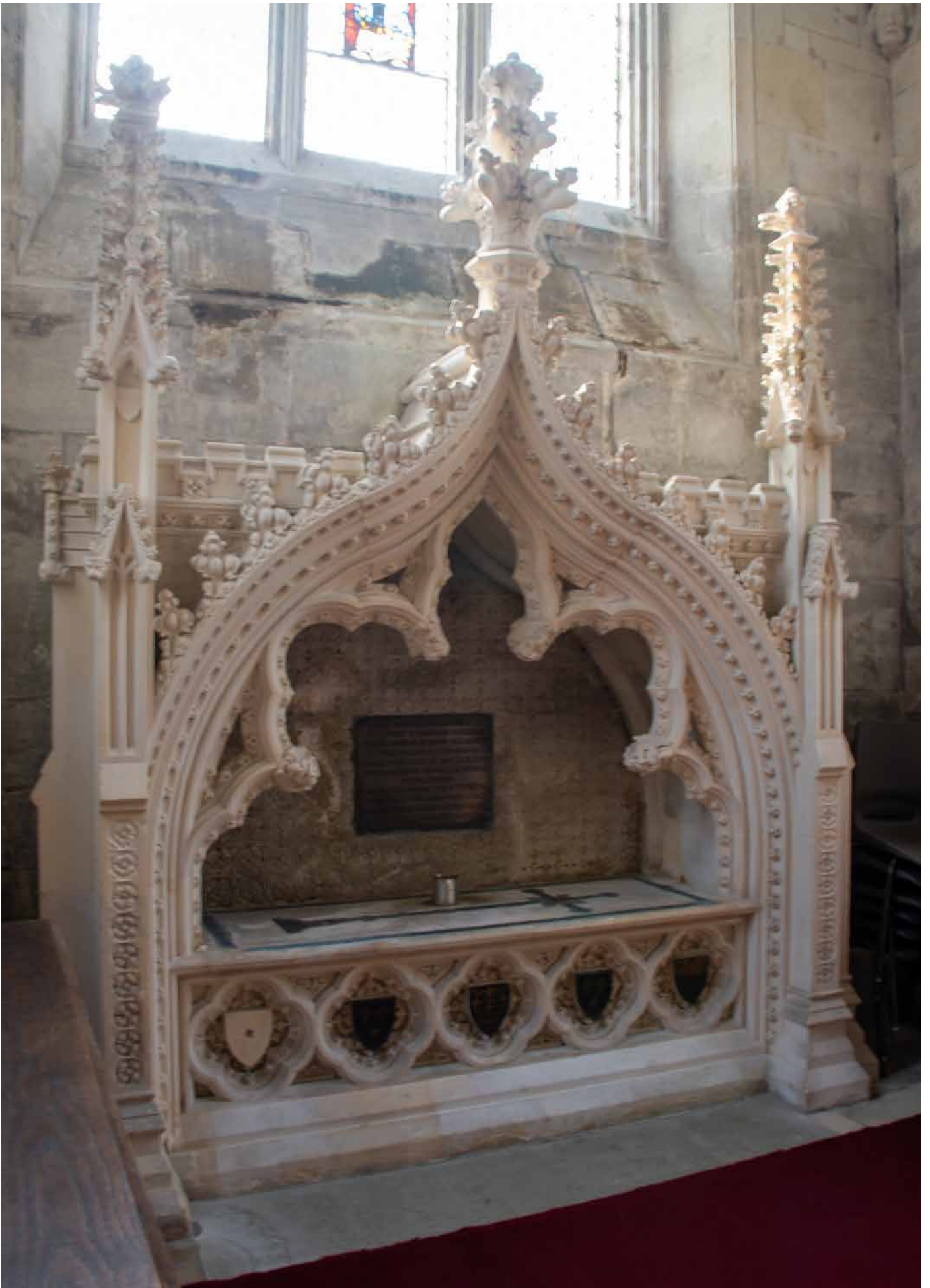


Pugin's design for a fountain for Col. Baker. It is unclear if the work was ever executed. (See Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol 1, p 59)





The house of John Halle in central Salisbury which is now the entrance hall to a cinema and where Pugin restored the fireplace (above). The facade (left) was created in a pseudo medieval style during the latter part of the nineteenth century. (*John Elliott*)



The monument in Bishopstone church which was erected as a memorial to the Rev G.A. Montgomery. (*John Elliott*)

chapel until 1848 when St Osmund's church was opened. Today, what had been the chapel, is now part of the student accommodation of Wiltshire College.

The Pugin family moved to London in 1837 and he sold St Marie's Grange in 1841. However, during his time in Salisbury Pugin had made many friends and in 1846 he was asked to prepare drawings for a small church for the local Catholic community. Work started in 1847 and it was consecrated on 6 September 1848. Since then St Osmund's has been considerably modified, mainly in 1893 when a north aisle was added and the nave columns replaced. Such painted decoration as existed has been removed and then later replaced with new decoration. The church still functions and is the principal church of the three Catholic places of worship in Salisbury.

Pugin also designed an elaborate fountain for Col Baker who lived in St Ann's Street, though it is unclear if the fountain was ever constructed.

He did some minor works at the medieval house of John Halle in the centre of Salisbury. Halle was a cloth merchant, four times mayor and twice the MP. His house was restored in 1833-4 by F.R. Fisher, though Benjamin Ferrey says that Pugin painted the heraldic angel on the wall and the fireplace. Today the hall is part of the local cinema.

Perhaps the best Pugin commission is in the church at Bishopstone, which is a few miles to the west of Salisbury. Here Pugin was asked to create a monument to the Rev. G. A. Montgomery who died in 1842. The monument dates from 1844. Pugin was paid £52 for the design which is a sumptuous Gothic tomb chest with a canopy. There is an inset brass cross by Hardman and there was a Pugin designed window which was made by Wailes above it (no longer there).

#### Notes

- 1 Sir John Staples (b,1815) became the Master of the Leathersellers Company in London and later Mayor of London in 1885-6. At his death in 1888 at his house in Regent's Park he an Alderman of Aldersgate Ward and a JP.
- 2 Benjamin Ferrey, *Recollections of A N Pugin and his father Augustus Pugin*, (1972 ed), p. 72.
- 3 Osmond was a monumental mason at Salisbury Cathedral with offices just outside St Catherine's Gate on the east side of the cathedral. There are a number of his carvings surviving in the cathedral. His archive, which contains letters between himself and ~Pugin, is in the Winterthur Museum, Delaware.
- 4 Phoeby Stanton, *Pugin*, (1971), p. 14.

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## The Next Edition

Now that the Covid restrictions have eased, the visits which are organized by the Society are recommencing. As a result the e-newsletter will become a two monthly publication. This edition covers the months of September and October, the next one will be issued sometime in November or December.

Remember that the e-newsletter relies upon your contributions. If there are no contributions there will be a lot of blank pages ! Please send your material to [jpelliott@btinternet.com](mailto:jpelliott@btinternet.com)

At the moment a focus in the next edition will be Pugin's activities in 1833 - where he went, what he did etc. This is in addition to the material that you may send.

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## A Date For Your Diary

We are delighted to announce that we are holding the AGM, Lecture and Lunch on 4 December at the Art Workers Guild, London.

Caroline Stanford of the Landmark Trust will talk on Researching & Presenting Pugin's Domestic Interiors.

Full details and information of how to book a place at lunch will be announced shortly.