

The Pugin Society

e~newsletter

Issue 25

Autumn 2023

NINIAN COMPER: RE-IMAGINING THE GOTHIC CHURCH

The Department for Continuing Education, Oxford University, is going to hold an event which may well attract members of the Pugin Society. It is a study day on Ninian Comper - the major Gothic Revivalist who adopted aspects of the Pugin tradition - and will take place on 2 March 2024. The event will feature a series of talks on various aspects of Comper's work and an exhibition, including textiles and a rare Comper sketchbook. There will be a special Mass at Pusey House the morning of Sunday, 3 March.

A link to the schedule is here:

<https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/ninian-comper>

The programme looks full of interest.



*Detail, St Mary's Wellingborough
Photo: Catriona Blaker*



*In Comper's St Mary's, Wellingborough
Photo: David Frazer Lewis*

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All material for future editions and comments on the current edition, should be sent to our e-newslettter Editor. Written contributions should be submitted in microsoft Word and all images should be sent as JPGs to:

jasbrazier@talktalk.net

The next edition of the e-newsletter will be published in January or February 2024

THE PUGIN SOCIETY STUDY TOUR 21-25 August 2023

Pugin, Bethune and the Gothic Revival in France and Belgium

This study tour, with three full days of exploration, was particularly exhilarating. Being abroad, in Lille, after the pandemic years, was such a glorious treat. Our Events Organiser, Professor Julia Twigg, and our specialist leader, Dr Gilles Maury, architect and architectural historian of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et de Paysage de Lille, complemented each other perfectly with their skills. This resulted in a wonderfully smoothly run event, paralleled with fantastically knowledgeable and comprehensive on- the-spot architectural – and more - information.

Although the overriding theme of our visit was to consider the influence of Augustus Pugin on his committed follower in northern France and Belgium, Baron Jean-Baptiste Bethune (1821-1894) - a subject on which Gilles Maury is an expert - we saw so much more besides.

On our first day we familiarised ourselves, under Gilles' guidance, with various significant sites in Lille, a city which I think impressed us all with its handsome range of architectural delights from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.



*Looking towards the Chambre de Commerce, Lille.
Photo: Julia Twigg*

Particularly memorable was the decorative and quadrangular Vieille Bourse, or old stock exchange, in the city centre, of 1652-3.

We looked briefly at the Church of Saint-Maurice, fourteenth century in origin but with much restoration of 1868 by the architect Canisse very near our centrally placed hotel, the Hotel Brueghel, and then in much more detail at the extraordinary Lille cathedral, or Basilica of Notre-Dame de la Treille. Here we were able to examine the interior and also enter the crypt and look at an excellent collection of archival material. This Gothic Revival building was



*In the crypt of the cathedral de la Treille, Lille.
Photo: Gilles Maury*

the result of an international competition in 1854, actually won by two English architects, Clutton and Burges, but ultimately executed, at least initially, by the French Charles Leroy. For various reasons, the construction of the cathedral dragged on and on and by the time (1999) the west front was completed the original plan had been abandoned and the present very contemporary, and for many controversial, elevation was created.

In the afternoon, we looked at the elaborate later Gothic Revival Catholic University, and afterwards, for added variety and a complete change of period, the lively façade of the Art Nouveau Maison Coilliot, by Hector Guimard.

Our second day was spent in the nearby city of Roubaix, now an imaginative promoter of the legacy of its once famous textile manufactories and their

associated buildings and social history. Perhaps the highlight of our study tour was our visit here to the church of St Joseph (1876-8), designed by Bethune, and wonderfully and miraculously restored over a period of years by a dedicated team. This neo-Gothic church is a treasure house of the decorative and applied arts and when the west door was opened for us to go in, a collective gasp rose from members. This standard of restoration is so rarely achievable and it was very special to see.



*Looking down the nave of St Joseph, Roubaix.
Photo: Catriona Blaker*



*St Joseph: sculpture of the Archangel Michael
Photo: Julia Twigg*

We also explored the nearby Couvent des Clarisses of 1874-6, another design by Bethune, and a site in need of ongoing attention, the nuns having left it some time ago. Although it was sad to see its rather dilapidated interior, and its garth and garden in need of attention, it was encouraging to discover that an enterprising group of architectural students and others have initiated a form of environmentally friendly experimental living there, and that it is hoped to develop the site further.

In the afternoon, moving away from the world of Bethune, we visited La Piscine, the remarkable museum and gallery in Roubaix. This is a most imaginative conversion of an Art Deco municipal swimming pool (1927-32, designed by Albert Baert), with later extensions and developments. The pool and the great rising sun window at one end make a wonderful focal point for the gallery and for the collections here, which include nineteenth century and later paintings acquired by wealthy Roubaix manufacturers, ceramics, and of course fabrics.



*La Piscine
Photo: Catriona Blaker*

On our last full day we ventured into Belgium, where we went to Dadizele to see Edward Pugin's impressive and extensive polychromatic Basilica of Our Blessed Lady, designed as a pilgrimage church for the veneration of a relic of Our Lady, in such a way that the faithful could progress appropriately around it. The construction of the basilica was supervised by Bethune and the church was opened in 1880. Despite damage in two world wars, it remains a powerful statement.



Interior, Dadizele
Photo: Catriona Blaker



At the Béguinage, Courtrai
Photo: Catriona Blaker



Detail of window, Dadizele, showing the opening of the church. Is that Edward Pugin, standing to the immediate right of the priest holding the plan, fourth panel up left-hand light?
Photo: Catriona Blaker

After a brief lunchtime break at Courtrai, where we had time to take in the delightful seventeenth-century Béguinage Saint-Elizabeth, a self-contained little world of modest but functional buildings suitable for the life of the inmates, we travelled on to Marke for what was undoubtedly our most significant, and final, stop. This was to see the impressive archives and collections of the Bethune foundation, all housed in the outbuildings of the Bethune family's nearby residence.

Much care had gone into laying out rare Pugin and Bethune books and other connected publications for us to look at in the library, and it was lovely to see there too the carefully framed (probably by Bethune) daguerreotype of Pugin, obviously a memorial of huge significance to his follower. Is it the same image that we know of Pugin – said to be the only photographic one - or is it slightly different? If so, there are *two* very early likenesses of Pugin.

Upstairs we saw the archive of Jean-Baptiste Bethune, in area overflowing with with interesting



Happy members outside the Bethune residence, Marke, with our host and hostess and leader Gilles.



*Elegant shops in Lille
Photo: Catriona Blaker*

documents and artefacts. It was particularly intriguing to see letters written by John Hardman, a good friend of Bethune's. His handwriting was considerably easier to read than Pugin's! As Pugin destroyed all incoming mail and one had always wondered how Hardman had responded to his (Pugin's) sometimes temperamental letters, it was remarkable to see the other side of the coin, as it were. Such an archive as this, so carefully displayed to us, and actually housed in a residence of the Bethune family, was truly remarkable. One could have spent months in it.

And to crown it all, the present Baron Bethune and his wife invited us into the main house to conclude, with refreshments and conversation. We are so grateful and could hardly have asked for more.

Our final morning prior to catching the Eurostar, was spent in different ways, some going to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, others to the Vauban Citadel, and some drifting in the older, Flemish-influenced part of the city, with its charming houses and elegant shops.

Again, very special thanks to Gilles Maury and Julia Twigg for making this trip so successful and enjoyable. □

Catriona Blaker

PUGIN'S MINIATURES

Following on from James Thunder's article about Pugin's illustrations to Newman's *Lives of the Saints*, I thought it worth adding a reflection on Pugin as an artist and designer of book illustrations.

From the trouble he took over such work it is clear that Pugin enjoyed the small-scale drawings that decorate his title-pages. Indeed, most of his drawings were small-scale works, which suggests that he felt at home within the confined space of his little sketchbooks, perhaps consciously echoing the enclosed world of the prints of Hollar and Dürer whose work he had studied in the British Museum.

Paul Waterhouse in his articles on Pugin in the *Architectural Review* commented on his style when referring to drawings for Pugin's *Treatise on Chancel Screens*:

"The minuteness of the execution is partly explained by the fact that in all such work Pugin used a lens like a watchmaker's glass, held in the eye.

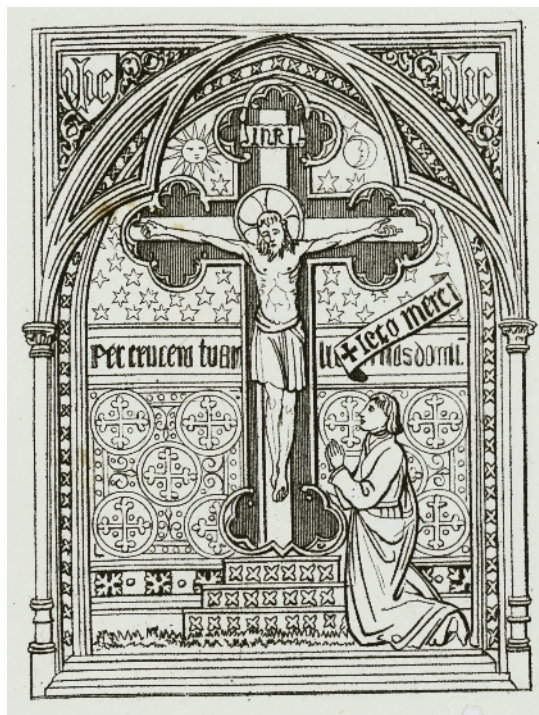
"Clearly, most of the sketches were first of all 'set out' with guiding lines of pencil, and this first process must have been followed up by ruling in the principal vertical and horizontal lines, and by turning in with a 'pen bow' the more important curves. The final process was the freehand addition of the ornament. No appreciative draughtsman can fail to admire the latitude and power with which delicate tracery, fine carvings, mouldings, and figures are indicated by the master hand that has travelled laboriously, but with exceeding rapidity, over the drawings before us."¹

Pugin's designs for small-scale book illustrations and letterheads are amongst some of his most charming compositions, but they are not as well known as his large illustrations for *Contrasts* and his other architectural works. This is probably because they often appear as illustrations in works by other authors. An example is the delightful frontispiece to *Letters to a Prebendary* by Dr John Milner, 1843 edition. Pugin had read the book, and been delighted

by it, as he relates in a letter of 1835 to his friend E J Wilson. Milner had been a pugnacious champion of Catholic rights and duties after his own heart. The frontispiece shows a bishop seated in his gothic panelled study with reading desks and bookshelves, wearing cope and mitre.²

As well as his work on Newman's *Lives of the Saints*, Pugin also designed numerous letterheads for clients, which were executed by Hardman & Co, Birmingham. These miniature illustrations show Pugin's assurance when working at this small scale, and prove Paul Waterhouse's point that:-

"it remains a marvel that any instrument so pin pointed as Pugin's pen must have been, should be capable of keeping up an effect of decorative ensemble among work every particle of which is so intricately minuscule."



Ornamental heading from a letter of John Bede Polding, OSB, (1794-1877), Archbishop of Sydney, dated January 31st 1850

J H Powell in his memoir *Pugin in his Home* describes how Pugin "reserved extraneous drawings such as the illustrations for the *Lives of the English Saints*, books of Prayer etc., for candle light." "It is so pleasant to make an extra guinea or two at the end of the day."³ □

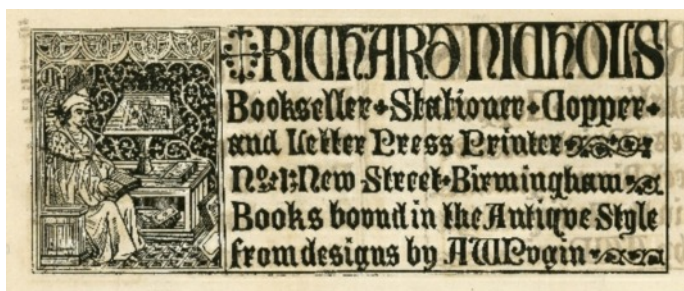
David Meara

Notes:

¹ Paul Waterhouse : 'The Life and Work of A Welby Pugin' : *Architectural Review* : December 1897–November 1898 : Vol.4 : 1898 : pp. 68–9.

² M Belcher : A W N Pugin : *Annotated Critical Bibliography* : Mansell 1987 : p. 145 for illustration.

³ A Wedgwood : *Pugin in his Home* : *Architectural History* 31 : 1988.



Advertisement for Richard Nichols, Bookseller, Stationer and Printer, 1 New Street, Birmingham, who bound books for Pugin and his clients

Stapehill Abbey (Wimborne, Dorset) Revisited

Further to my previous contribution about the windows at the former abbey church, I have more information as to the number of windows attributable to AWN Pugin.¹

As mentioned previously, the abbey church was designed by Pugin-follower Charles Hansom and built in 1847-51. It comprised two parts in parallel: that on the left (liturgical north) was for the *public*, having a nave of five-bays and chancel of two bays under the same roofline. The nave had also a north aisle with entrance porch. The right part, partitioned off from the nave, formed the nuns' chapel comprising sanctuary and enclosed choir, and was the architectural south 'aisle' but of the same overall dimensions (including roof pitch) as the other part.

According to the late Stanley Shepherd, there were 13 Hardman windows, of which 12 were by Pugin of 1850 and one by John Hardman Powell of 1853.² And, by my previous calculation, there were 14 by Pugin and one by JHP.³ This included two additional two-light and quatrefoil tracery windows in the north wall of chancel of the public part⁴ of the same overall pattern as the west window of the north aisle (image below).⁵



North aisle west window

However, according to the Hardman *Stained Glass Day Book* (SGDB) entry for 24 October 1850, there were 17 windows made, including a three-light traceried 'Cathedral glass'⁶ west window and one of plain quarries for the tower.⁷ This source also confirms my previous addition of the two chancel north wall windows. Furthermore, I have become aware of yet *another* two-light and quatrefoil tracery window in the west of the nuns' part, which, from online images of the redevelopment, appears to have the same tracery glass as the west window of the north aisle (see image above). This could be the window referred to as 'organ loft' in SGDB, and which brings the total of windows by Pugin to 15.

(A table summarising the windows made for the abbey church is shown overleaf.)

All windows are extant except for that in the east of the nuns' part (sII in the table). This was of three lights and tracery pieces depicting Our Lady of Dolours in the middle light, with St John the Evangelist to the left and St Anne to the right. It was presented by John Hardman as a memorial to his family: St John and St Anne being the respective patron saints of John Hardman and his wife Anne.⁸ As a result of bomb damage during WW2, the window was deemed unsafe and was eventually removed when a new altar was built in the 1960s, and replaced by plain glass.⁹ It can be assumed, therefore, that the window did not survive its removal and has been lost forever.



The only known image of east window in situ showing damage (former Stapehill Abbey Archives)

**The following table shows Nick Beveridge's summary of windows made for the abbey church
(Note that 'CV' refers to the *Corpus Vitreanum* system of window referencing)**

Window	CV reference	Date	Lights	Designer	Subject
E (public church)	I	1850	3	Pugin	Virgin & Child, and Saints Stephen Harding & Bernard
Nuns' chapel E	sII	1850	3	Pugin	Our Lady of Dolours, Saints John the Evangelist & Anne
Chancel N	nII, nIII	1850	2	Pugin	Patterned with motifs and various emblems
N aisle E	nIV	1850	2	Pugin	'The Taking Down from the Cross & the Pieta'
N aisle	nV-nVIII	1850	2	Pugin	Patterned and emblems
N aisle W	nIX	1850	2	Pugin	Similar to nII & III
S 'aisle' (nuns' choir)	sIII-sVI	1850	2	Pugin	Patterned and emblems
S 'aisle' W ('organ loft')	sVII	1850	2	Pugin	Patterned and emblems; tracery glass as in nIX
'tower'	sVIII	1850	1		Plain quarries
W (public church)	wI	1850	3	JH Powell, 1853	Original cathedral glass replaced with stained glass

In conclusion, therefore, of the windows attributable to Pugin, 14 survive. This compares favourably with the 19 complete windows (as well as four additional tracery lights) by him in the whole complex at his own church of St Augustine's, Ramsgate.¹⁰

The unfortunate consequence of the residential conversion of the former abbey church at Stapehill, despite the Grade II protection, is the loss of cohesion of a remarkable collection of Pugin windows. □

Nick Beveridge

¹ Nick Beveridge (2021) in *Pugin Society e-newsletter*, issue 13, p. 6

² Stanley A Shepherd (2009/2022) *The Stained Glass of AWN Pugin*, gazetteer no. 38, pp. 227-8/455-6

³ Nick Beveridge *op. cit.*

⁴ Scott Worsfold Associates Ltd (2014) *Level 3 Heritage Survey*, Appendices, images 51 & 52, p. 31

⁵ See nVII in Shepherd *op. cit.*

⁶ John Hardman to Andrew Hawkins (Cistercian chaplain), 22 January 1850 in *JHA: Letter Book*, p. 228

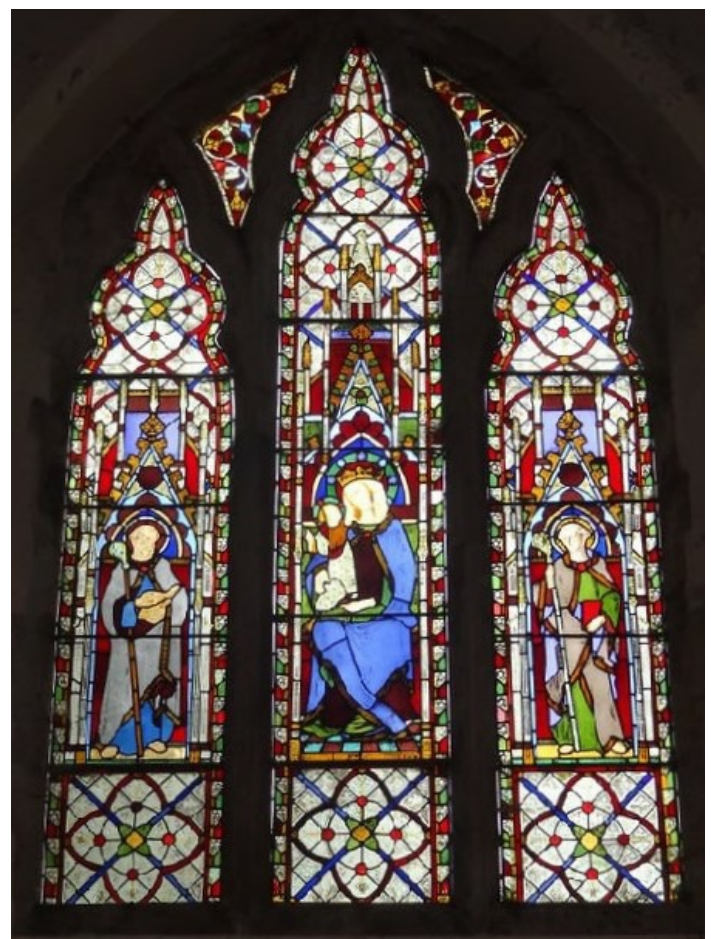
⁷ SGDB at 24 October 1850, in Margaret Belcher (2012), Vol. 4, p. 249

⁸ A Religious of Holy Cross Abbey' (1946) *La Trappe in England*, p. 151

⁹ *Stapehill Abbey, Crafts & Gardens* (1998), p. 11. This is reflected in Dr Shepherd's conclusion that the window must, have at some stage, been replaced with plain glass

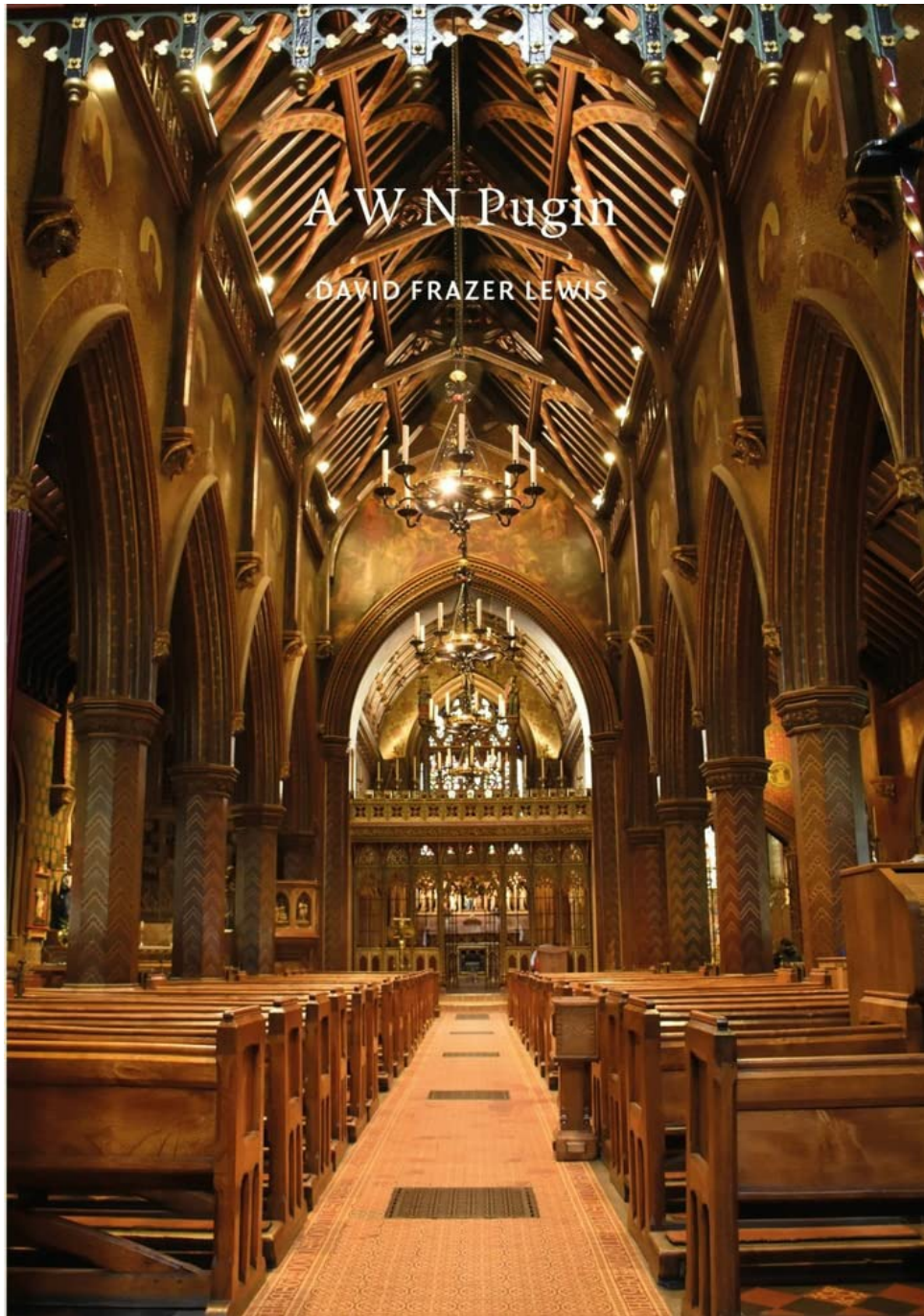
¹⁰ Catriona Blaker personal communication

Note: Due to software technical problems, it was found necessary to reproduce a scanned image of Nick Beveridge's table of the windows made for the abbey church (see above) - Editor



Surviving east window of public church for comparison

The front cover of David Frazer Lewis' book on A. W. N. Pugin, published in 2021 and available from Amazon in softback at £30:



“A.W.N. Pugin transformed the Gothic Revival from an architectural style into an international movement. He decorated and furnished the Houses of Parliament, creating one of the icons of modern British identity in the process. His church designs were vastly influential, and although he was staunchly Roman Catholic, he did much to set the aesthetic tone of modern Anglicanism. The house he designed for himself at Ramsgate transformed the Victorian Gothic villa, demonstrating the ways a thoroughly modern house could draw integral lessons from the Middle Ages. And although his whole ideal was woven around a conception of English identity, his influence was international. Architects in the United States, northern Europe, and across the British Empire followed his lead, drawing from elements of his aesthetic and ideals, and in doing so, altered the look and feel of the nineteenth-century city. Despite the popularity of Pugin's work, this is the first single-volume overview of his architecture to be published since 1971. It summarises much new scholarship and provides a good introduction to his career as well as new insight for those who might already be familiar with it.” - *Amazon*



THE STAINED GLASS OF ST PAUL'S CHURCH

*A talk on the remarkable
Pugin glass with renowned
historian David Beevers*

Saturday 4 November, 7pm

St Paul's Church, West Street

Tickets: £10 (£8 for Friends of St Paul's)

Doors open at 6.30pm

Drinks and nibbles will be served

*Tickets can be purchased in advance from Mark Gourley
(markg.gourley@gmail.com) or on the door*

