

# Pugin Society e-newsletter

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## Mount St Mary's Church, Leeds

**Robert Finnigan, Leeds Diocesan Archivist**

Cathedral-like in its appearance and its proportions, Mount St Mary's occupies a prominent position on Richmond Hill overlooking the centre of Leeds. Built in two stages between 1853 and 1866 the church closed in 1989, its parish having been all but eliminated by successive slum clearance schemes that began in the 1930s. The past thirty years and more represent a sad tale of theft and vandalism that have left this once great church, and Grade II\* Listed Building, on both the Leeds City Council and Historic England registers of buildings at risk.





The saga began with the sale of the church by its owners, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate – a religious order, some of whose priests came to Leeds in the early 1850s to minister to the growing population of Irish Catholic migrants who made their home in this part of Victorian Leeds. The sale in 1989 did not involve the local Catholic diocese, the Diocese of Leeds, but was made by the Oblates in consultation with the Charity Commission. The initial purchaser was later accused of asset stripping and removing valuable artefacts from the church's interior, selling them on to a dealer in architectural and decorative antiques. In the years that followed ownership of the building changed hands several times and various plans were drawn up for its re-use for housing and as a community facility.

The latest plans for the redevelopment of Mount St Mary's were submitted to Leeds City Council in July 2020. These envisage the demolition of the nave and aisles, together with the adjoining presbytery. The presbytery will be replaced by a five-storey apartment block while the area of the nave and aisles will form the site for an extension to the remainder of the church. The parts of the church to be demolished date from the first phase of its development and were built between 1853-57 to designs by Joseph Hansom and William Wardell.

The chancel and transepts will be retained and converted into apartments. These are the elements designed by Edward Welby Pugin and which were added in 1866, including stained glass by John Hardman Powell. This structure together with the new extension on the site of the nave will provide space for 62 apartments, while the new block on the site of the presbytery will provide a further 113 apartments. A landscaped courtyard will link the two buildings.

A decision on the developer's planning and listed building consent application is awaited but on this occasion there is some hope, at last, that a resolution to what has long been an unfortunate and unsatisfactory situation is in sight.

# The Lafitte Drawings & Mrs Pugin's Letters

From Stephen Bann

There is just one point that I would like to make in response to Rosemary Hill's thoughtful reply on the subject of Pugin and Louis Lafitte. Of course, their family relationship was well known to Ferrey. But the excellent London show of drawings from Lafitte's private sketchbook in 1998 was mounted without having taken note of that link, which is not mentioned at all in the catalogue. Consequently Rosemary Hill and Clive Wainwright seem to have been exceptional in recognising the possible significance of the connection. The drawing in question was purchased for the British Museum in 1999 from the dealer Thomas Williams, and given the title devised for his catalogue: 'Portrait of a Young Man'. At the very least, Lafitte's record of having sketched his nephew at least once should surely be mentioned in the BM listing. Lafitte is still virtually unstudied in his native country, and he remains a precious example of an artist of the period with connections on both sides of the channel.

The issue of whether and how a portrait can be adjudged to be 'like' its subject is inevitably a difficult one. When clear visual parallels are not available, it is inevitable that we should have recourse to verbal descriptions, and I am well aware that Pugin has been described as being 'notoriously slovenly' (implying 'dirty and untidy', according to my dictionary). But that epithet appears to me to be very much at odds with the vivid descriptions that occur in the lively and informative letters of Mrs Pugin to her family which recount her travels with her young son in the 1820s. These letters, held by the Yale Center for British Art, have never been published in their entirety. So it may be interesting for the readers of this bulletin to see the short extracts that follow here, several of which have not been noticed before to my knowledge. In each of these vignettes, an impression of young Augustus in action is (so to speak) is put on display by a doting mother. It is Augustus in person who has taken the initiative (or is the object of interest) in each of the different episodes. Taken together, these periodic glimpses seem to me to be close in spirit to the image created in the drawing by his uncle Lafitte, who knew him well, and they certainly give no sense of 'slovenliness'.

## **MS Pugin 44 [letter from France postmarked 11 September 1821]**

Ruminating what I should do without my baggage, in came my boy with an air of triumph at the head of two porters & the commissioner saying "Mamma I saw your luggage as soon as I went to the side of the vessel, & I told the commissioner I was sure it was yours, and he must bring it away directly" – and so it was.

## **MS Pugin 45 [letter from Hotel de France, Rouen, postmarked 25 September 1824]**

[After discussion of Pugin family's Swiss origins] This delights Augustus because there is a law in Switzerland that a younger branch of a noble family may at any time by proving their right, claim territory sufficient to build a chateau with grounds [...] Augustus is drawing delightfully and speaking French like a native. He is the pride of papa's and the anxious joy of mamma's heart.

## **MS Pugin 46 [letter recalling the same visit to Rouen, postmarked 14 October 1824]**

In the cool of the evening we all took a walk to look at the Church of St Ouen and afterwards strolled into the pretty garden of St Ouen the church being in it. We sat down on a bench where there were sitting some gentlemen past middle age. The one next me began a very pleasant conversation for the french do not sit sultry and silent like the English if they do not happen to know you and learning as much as he could of me my son and Mr Pugin when I rose to go he said there was one thing he must hope for the honour of his country that as I had made (it is the french expression) so admirable a young englishman for the honour of England I would take care to make as charming a little french girl before I left France.

## **MS Pugin 47 [letter recording expedition to Salisbury with Augustus, for his 'health, pleasure and improvement' since he was too ill to make the customary trip to France, dated 6 September 1825]**

At Christchurch he recovered his looks surprisingly but when he returned to Salisbury lost them again [...] He has made a great many drawings while in the country and some very extraordinary and scientific for his age,



East-facing range in the courtyard of 35 Rue Jacob, Paris 6: probable site of the Hotel Bourbonne-les-Bains, where the Pugins stayed: this range is visible on the right side of Pugin's drawing, 'View from the back of Hotel Bourbon, Rue Jacob, Paris, Sep.1827' (Birmingham Museums, 1922 P248)

papa was surprised and delighted and gruded not to pay the carriage of the waggon of two large chests full of antiquities besides a very ancient chair which cost I know not what in packing which he talked and coaxed the old lady out of with whom we lodged at Salisbury.

**MS Pugin 48 [letter from Paris dated 16 September 1827]**

At last see us all arrived and happily seated in our old Hôtel Bourbon in the same suite of rooms we tenanted when I first saw Paris ten summers ago. How many fond recollections did they revive! My boy then only five years of age! Here we played together, then we studied, that was the room in which Mamma seriously nursed him when ill and it was recollected sat by his bedside while he slept one evening, giving up a grand music party at my sister Lafitte's lest he should be uneasy, but he reminded me how he rewarded me for it by performing the character of Cupid according to what he had seen of the opera, having a pair of wings fixed to his shoulders and sweetly he looked, and delightfully he played it. How all is changed. Nothing remains but his affection [...].

**MS Pugin 49 [letter from Paris dated 25 September 1827]**

When we were at Dieppe, I took great content with this I must needs go early to the coach saw all was well understood. A[ugustus] and I then walked about the pier but approaching the coach there was the apparition of a French gentleman who had placed himself in my place and was arranging his parcels comfortably around him in the bags and pockets which are in a diligence. Sir said I advancing very civilly and speaking in French, excuse me but that is my place. "Ce ne pas possible Madame". "Sir, I have taken it these four days." "Ce ne pas possible, Madame." "How do you mean not possible. I shall enter the coach and will have that place." "Ce ne pas possible, Madame." "But Sir I will soon make it possible. I will call the conductor and you shall be removed. As good as my word I went and the whole office indignant at the violation of their laws rushed forth to tear



him when Augustus perceived it was not the right coach ... Of course we all laughed heartily and all ended ... amicably adieu [...].

The early part of the day being fine we went with Madame and Monsieur Lafitte to dine at what is called the Swiss Mountains a place where the cars roll down with the rapidity of lightening [sic]. I went down in the same car as Augustus last time we were at Paris and you may admire my courage or my anxious affection for my boy when I say our young man Mr [Joseph] Nash could not be persuaded to go down it looked so tremendous to him.

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## Letters of Sebastian Pugin Powell

### Sarah Houle

I have been reading through some of Sebastian Pugin Powell's letters - Uncle Bat, my great uncle and son of John Hardman Powell - and wondered if this one would interest readers of your excellent newsletter.

Key: Cuthbert is my father.

Hilda is his sister and lived at Blackmore, Worcestershire with her mother Mildred, Pugin's first grandchild.

The step-great-grandmother is Jane Knill.

Dame Monica is also Cuthbert's sister and was at Stanbrook Abbey, Worcestershire.

Someone might like to comment and also I would be grateful if anyone knows about Pugin and Pugin and whether there would be a list of Bat's designs anywhere.

March 11, 1935.

My dear Cuthbert,

Cheerio! That is a gay letter for the 6th inst. is it not? I hear from your mother that she did not go to church but that Hilda came back much ashed, due apparently to a previous and liberal use of holy water which acted as a sort of fixative! She would, you know - I mean the holy water.

Don't be too sure that the letter is by Uncle Edward. Your step-great-grandmother (or is it great-step-grandmother?) did most of his correspondence for him, and their handwritings were so much alike that she even drew and signed his cheques for him, and they were duly passed by his bankers! How does that take the fancy of a business man? I have a notion that the said Mr. Myers got mixed with E.W.P. and A.W.P. and priced accordingly. There is no value in a letter of the former, except as to its contents; I destroyed scores of them in 1895. I expect all letters received were burnt years ago; when Purcell and I went through Uncle Cuthbert's on his death, we did not find any but a few from some member of the family (French branch) with reference to the history of the Pugins, and these passed in the usual way to Welby as legatee.

I have never been to Woodchester and so have never seen the house you mention, or the lady. It might be done - the visit, I mean. Dame Monica has been writing to me with regard to the completion of the sacristy furniture, designed long years ago, and I expect I shall have to pay a call at the Abbey; Worcester is a

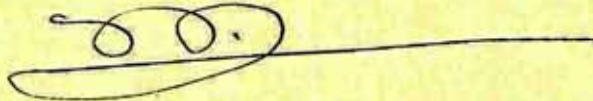


bit nearer than Seaford is, you know. I am wondering if the tea set is of the same pattern as my dinner set; that is of trefoils in dark blue on white, and quite simple. The dark blue was insisted upon by the designer although Minton pleaded for another colour because the one chosen was so hard to burn properly. Later Minton used sky blue instead on that account, and I remember seeing such a set; but where I cannot call to mind. It may have been Sir Sturte Knill's. Talking of him Edie unearthed a series of Pugin pamphlets bound together by him and showed them to me; I have "borrowed" them, and I think they are better in my possession. Likely, she has forgotten all about them - they include his Apology for Contrasts which I lent to Mgr. Ward and never got back from him. I did write to his executors but nothing transpired. With it there is an illustrated guide to St. George's, Southwark - it is not dated but by internal evidence must have been printed early in 1851 for it gives a list of Catholic churches in that year (in London) and Nicholas Wiseman is still called Vicar Apostolic. It mentions that the vestments were made by Mrs. Powell and daughters of Birmingham - your great-grandmother and great-aunts of course.

Do you see the Listener? In last Wednesday's there is a photo of the Houses of Parliament "designed by Sir Charles Barry and A.W.N. Pugin". I am wondering if that is going to start a correspondence, but few people in these days bother about that old controversy.

Did Hilda tell you the story of "Blondie" and the two dogs? I don't suppose you see that rag of the "Sunday Pictorial"; they have it at Crosslets of course and so I got two little china dogs on my birthday, labelled "take one out and try your luck".

Your affectionate uncle,



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## *True Principles*

The 2020 edition of *True Principles* will be devoted exclusively to the Palace of Westminster and especially its restoration.

If you would like to contribute an article to this edition could you please send the text and any illustrations to Dr John Elliott, South Barn, Old Standlynch Farm, Downton, Salisbury SP5 3QR or preferably can you e-mail it to [jpelliot@btinternet.com](mailto:jpelliot@btinternet.com)

Likewise if you have any material that you would like to have included in a future e-newsletter can you send it to the same address.

Text should be in a Word file with a suffix of .doc and illustrations should be at least 300 dpi and in any of the popular file formats eg TIFF, JPEG etc.

*True Principles* is your journal and the e-newsletter is also your publication so don't be slow in sending your contributions in.

# Pugin on Kossuth: an angry Dissent

Timothy J McCann

Rosemary Hill in her magisterial biography of Pugin argued that he saw 'Chartism and Radicalism to be a threat to the benign and godly social hierarchy that he hoped to establish'<sup>1</sup>, and as he grew older these conservative views became even more firmly entrenched. Writing later of his friendship with Ambrose Phillips she added that: 'their model was a benign paternalistic hierarchy, in which each rank deferred to those above and took responsibility for those below. This, they believed was the only alternative to Radicalism, which they saw as meaning chaos and the destruction of the social fabric of civilisation'<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the violence of his reaction to the triumphant tour of England by Kossuth in the autumn of 1851 still comes as something of a shock.

Lajos Kossuth was born in Monok in north-eastern Hungary in 1802, though later the family moved to Satoraljaujhely, and he was educated at Sarospatak, at one-time the home of S. Elizabeth of Hungary, in whose honour Pugin was to design several windows. He trained as a lawyer and held radical political views. He was regularly in trouble with the Austrian authorities and in 1837 was imprisoned for his attacks on the government. He was released after three years imprisonment and became the editor of a newspaper and was elected to the Hungarian parliament. He quickly rose to prominence becoming the leader of the extreme liberals who demanded an independent government for Hungary and when the revolution broke out in 1848, he became Minister of Finance and later provisional governor of Hungary in their war with Austria. In 1849 Kossuth declared Hungary independent of Austria, dethroned the Hapsburg monarchy and installed himself as President. At first his government managed to hold off the Austrian army, but when the Russians joined the war his regime collapsed. Kossuth fled to Turkey, where he was held as a political prisoner until his release in September 1851. On 23 October 1851 Kossuth landed at Southampton.

There is no evidence that Pugin ever visited Hungary on his regular continental tours and no suggestion that he interested himself in the affairs of Hungary. Certainly, he never met Kossuth. So, what accounts for his angry hostility to the Hungarian leader? The answer seems to be that he felt threatened by the views that Kossuth represented. Kossuth was a great orator and spoke in English, which he had learned during his imprisonment, largely from the Bible and the works of Shakespeare,<sup>3</sup> and he cleverly equated the Hungarian movement with certain universal values such as democracy, freedom and nationalism which found huge support in England. Pugin was very much opposed to those groups which supported him in England and had encouraged his visit.

One of Kossuth's supporters was Richard Cobden, a particular enemy of Pugin. In 1847 when disparaging the radicals in a letter to Fredrick Apthorp Paley, Pugin had written of 'such rascals as Cobden'.<sup>4</sup> Pugin and Cobden had crossed swords before and the enmity was increased by Cobden's part in rejecting Pugin's fees for decorating the new Houses of Parliament. He complained angrily to John Hardman, 'and then to be kicked out because that infernal rascal, that double hypocrite humbug thief and imposter Cobden who has got £1000000 for his own whack makes a trade of crying out against a little carving and painting'.<sup>5</sup> And a few days later, he wrote again: 'I believe Cobden is a traitor & deserves death as much as any traitor ever did – we have all been sold to a Manchester Mill & the wretched government, the vile Wigs, dare not even grant a few thousands for decorating the largest national work – they have cut out our stenciling'.<sup>6</sup> The anger continued unabated despite both men being on the same side in the controversy following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy by Pope Pius IX in 1850.

Rather as with the situation in 1956 there was a great surge of support for the Hungarian people across the country after the uprising and much agitation to show some support for them. Cobden and the peace party were opposed to offering practical help and felt that the allies were in no moral position to censure Russia, which had intervened and ensured the defeat of the Hungarian nationalists.

After landing in England, Kossuth went first to Southampton, where he was greeted by crowds of thousands outside the Lord Mayor's balcony, and was presented with the flag of the Hungarian Republic. On 6 November 1851 Pugin wrote to Ambrose Phillips: 'I am greatly disgusted at these Chartist & radical exhibitors in favour of that Hungarian mountebank, pretender humbug misleader of fools. It is a real disgrace to England that such a plundering profligate insurrectionist should not have been met at the pier, with a speedy order to depart forthwith.'<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, and unknown to Pugin, Cobden was beginning to have second thoughts about his support for





Lajos Kossuth, 1802–1894. West Sussex Record Office, Cobden Ms. 1143, no.40.

Kossuth, and a disagreement arose between the two men about the extent that it was possible to support the Hungarian nationalist leader without compromising the peace movement's policy of non-intervention.

Kossuth next moved to Winchester, where he and Cobden shared a platform though making markedly different speeches Cobden spoke after Kossuth and said 'I believe the word stop applied to Russia would be as conclusive as if we spoke with a thousand canons.'<sup>8</sup> From Winchester Kossuth set out on a tour of the country visiting Manchester before reaching Birmingham, a town Pugin always disliked, in mid-November. There he was received under triumphant arches erected for his visit by a crowd of not less than 75,000. On 13 November, Pugin reacted to Kossuth visit by writing to John Hardman: 'what an infamous business this is about that villain Kossuth stirring up revolutionary principles, chartists & Socialists – how long is this to last – the whole week. It is disgusting. I can't think how the government allowed all in the first instance, he should have been civilly informed under the existing amicable relations between the English & Austrian Governments he should not be allowed to enter the country'.<sup>9</sup> Later, on 16 November, he wrote to Hardman again: 'I am delighted you are clear of the Hungarian Socialist &

only wish the country was so clear'.<sup>10</sup> Finally, on 23 November he wrote his last words on the subject to another friend, Jean Baptiste Bethune: 'as you say everything is very disgusting the way in which that Kossuth has been received is a disgrace to the country & I think our government is very relax in letting such a socialist rascal & Communist enter & Parade about England. all sensible men are disgusted with this exhibition of a vile atheist set up as a sort of divinity in a place like England. (horrible)'.<sup>11</sup> Unbeknown to Pugin, Kossuth seemed to have modified his views and adopted Cobden's position for he wrote to him at the end of his English tour: 'permit me on departure from your shores to thank you for the sympathy you have shewn me. It will not have escaped you that I take the same views of the real vulnerability and weakness of Russia as yourself and in America or wherever I may find myself, I propose to follow your advice by industriously endeavouring to enlighten public opinion on these points and to impress on it of not permitting interference by one state on the affairs of another'<sup>12</sup>

After a stay of almost three weeks, Kossuth sailed for America, and another rapturous reception in November 1851. Pugin died on 14 September 1852, but although Kossuth returned to England in June 1852 Pugin is not recorded as making any further comments about him. He was not to know that Kossuth returned to England and settled in the country for eight years.

## Notes

1 Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (Allen Lane, 2007),

2 Rosemary Hill, *ibid.*, 174.

3 The Diary of John Abel Smith. West Sussex Record Office, Add. MS. 22,345.

4 Pugin to Frederick Apthorp Paley, 1847. Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 3 (2009), 377.

5 Pugin to John Hardman, 29 March 1849. Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 4 (2012), 79.

6 Pugin to John Hardman, 2 April 1849. Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 4 (2012), 90.

7 Pugin to Ambrose Phillipps, 6 November 1851. Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 5 (2015), 439, 40.

8 Cobden in Winchester, 27 October 1851 (*The Times*, 28 October 1851).

9 Pugin to John Hardman, 13 November 1851. Margaret Belcher, *ibid.*, vol. 5, 449, 50.

10 Pugin to John Hardman, 16 November 1851. Margaret Belcher, *ibid.*, vol. 5, 469, 60.

11 Pugin to Jean Baptiste Bethune, 23 November 1851. Margaret Belcher, *ibid.*, vol. 5, ...

12 Kossuth to Cobden, 19 November 1851. West Sussex Record Office, Cobden MS. 17, f.118.