

Mr Barry's War

Rebuilding the Houses of Parliament After the Great Fire of 1834

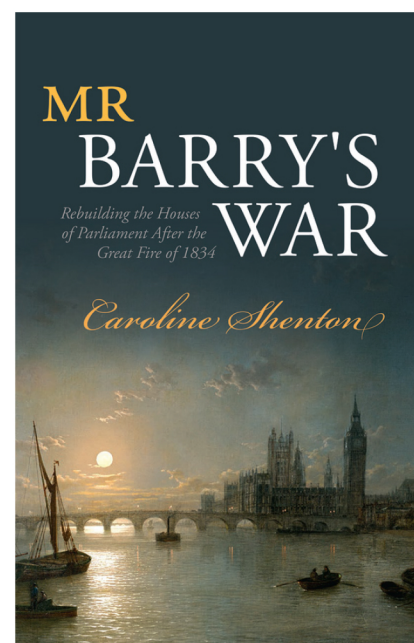
Caroline Shenton

'An achievement as intricate and splendid as Mr Barry's own. Superb.' - Lucy Worsley

When the brilliant classical architect Charles Barry won the competition to build a new, Gothic, Houses of Parliament in London he thought it was the chance of a lifetime. It swiftly turned into the most nightmarish building programme of the century. From the beginning, its design, construction and decoration were a battlefield. The practical and political forces ranged against him were immense.

The new Palace of Westminster had to be built on acres of unstable quicksand, while the Lords and Commons carried on their work as usual. Its river frontage, a quarter of a mile long, needed to be constructed in the treacherous currents of the Thames. Its towers were so gigantic they required feats of civil engineering and building technology never used before. And the interior demanded spectacular new Gothic features not seen since the middle ages.

Rallying the genius of his collaborator Pugin; flanking the mad schemes of a host of crackpot inventors, ignorant busybodies and hostile politicians; attacking strikes, sewage and cholera; charging forward three times over budget and massively behind schedule, it took twenty-five years for Barry to achieve victory with his 'Great Work' in the face of overwhelming odds, and at great personal cost.



- Sequel to the award-winning *The Day Parliament Burned Down* - this is the story of the re-building of the Houses of Parliament after the great fire of 1834
- The creation of one of the most famous buildings in the world: a masterpiece of Victorian architecture, a spectacular feat of civil engineering, and one of the London landmarks

About the Author

Caroline Shenton was Director of the Parliamentary Archives at Westminster from 2008 to 2014, and prior to that was a senior archivist at Parliament and The National Archives at Kew. Her first book, *The Day Parliament Burned Down*, won the inaugural Political Book of the Year Award in 2013. It was also shortlisted for a number of other prizes, including the Longman-History Today Prize, and was a Book of the Year for the Daily Telegraph, New Statesman, Daily Mail, and Herald Scotland. This is its sequel.

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