

# The Landmark Trust

## THE GRANGE, RAMSGATE, KENT

### INTRODUCTION

The Grange is important today because it is the house Augustus Pugin built for himself and his family. Listed Grade I, it was rescued from development by the Landmark Trust in 1997 with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The HLF provided a further grant for its repair and restoration (2004-6), with generous additional support from English Heritage, Thanet District Council, charitable trusts and many private individuals.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52) was one of the most influential and prolific architects and designers of the nineteenth century. Only forty when he died, Pugin spent his life trying to revive medieval Gothic architecture and design as the only fit architecture for a Christian society, part of a movement known as the Gothic Revival. He looked back wistfully and sometimes whimsically to medieval society, which he thought morally superior to the increasingly mechanised and secular society he saw around him. A devout convert to English Catholicism, Pugin built many churches, schools, convents, monasteries and country houses. He also designed the interiors for the Houses of Parliament. As a man, Pugin was passionate, intense, naïve, impatient, combative and funny. He worked ceaselessly to recreate in his own life and works the Gothic life that he idealised, supported by a loyal team of craftsmen and builders who translated his countless designs into reality.

Pugin built few domestic houses and the site in Ramsgate is particularly important because here he was building for himself, to create his ideal setting for his family. He wanted to bring Catholicism back to this part of Kent and so a church and monastery were also part of his plan, to recreate the medieval social structure that he so admired. Here he was able to build according to his own true principles, imposing 'No features ... which are not necessary for convenience, construction or propriety.' Built of yellow stock brick and surrounded by walls of knapped flint, The Grange was not an inherently extravagant house despite the richness of its interiors. However, it is quietly revolutionary in the arrangement of rooms and their outward expression in architecture. Pugin was reacting against mainstream Classical architecture, which had been the most popular style for the past hundred years and which he considered pagan. Pugin's starting point for The Grange was not outward symmetry but internal function, how he and his large family were to live in the house. Windows, roofs and chimneys were placed to suit life inside rather than external appearance. This cheerful and uncontrived asymmetry became and remains such a familiar feature of English domestic architecture that it is easy to forget how radical it was after the formal terraces of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The principle it reflects, that form should follow function, remains central in much of today's architecture.

Pugin bought the site on the West Cliff at Ramsgate in 1841. The house was built between 1843 and 1844 by his builder, George Myers. The original floorplan (now reinstated) was a distinctive 'pinwheel' arrangement: three principal ground floor rooms (the drawing room, library and dining room) grouped around a square entrance hall, with a corridor leading off to a small kitchen, a square tower (from which Pugin would watch for vessels in distress on the Goodwin Sands) and a private chapel. The house was designed to enjoy views of the sea and the monastic site next door from all angles, and was richly wallpapered, painted and panelled. It was full of furniture to Pugin's own designs and of the paintings and *objets* that he collected avidly.

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As his second wife Louisa died in 1844 just before the family moved into the house, it was only after his marriage to Jane Knill in 1848 that the house became the happy family home he dreamed of. Sadly, Pugin himself died in 1852, just two years after the interiors were completed, worn out by his pace of work and unbalanced and poisoned by the mercury prescribed to cure recurring eye inflammation.

After a decade away, Augustus's eldest son Edward Pugin returned to live in the house in 1862 with his stepmother Jane and other family members. Edward too was an architect and became a substantial local figure in his own right. It was Edward who designed and built most of St. Augustine's monastery and finished the church. He also altered his father's house, adding the entrance corridor and the gate piers, extending the drawing room, adding a conservatory and making various extensions and changes to the internal layout to adapt it for mid-Victorian life. The house remained in family ownership until the death of Augustus's last son Cuthbert in 1928, after which its contents were dispersed and it became a school run by the monks of St Augustine's monastery next door. It passed into private ownership in the early 1990s, but sadly continued to deteriorate until it was put on the market again with talk of turning it into flats. By now, its importance was more widely recognised and the Heritage Lottery Fund stepped in to enable Landmark to acquire it.

Detailed analysis by Landmark was to reveal more detail about the house in Augustus's day than at any other period of its history – the building was successively stripped out for redecoration both by Pugin's sons and later occupants, but traces of its original state remained concealed in its fabric. Pugin also left a great deal of documentary evidence. On the basis of all this analysis, Landmark gained permission to restore most of the building to its appearance in Augustus's time in the 1840s, which is also considered the period of greatest significance for the building. Most of the later changes have therefore been reversed, but the main gate, entrance courtyard and the bedroom refurbished by Edward for his stepmother are presented broadly as they would have been in his time. The roof, altered when replaced after a near-disastrous fire in 1904, has recovered its original steeply Gothic slopes. Restoration was completed in 2006.

In 2012, the monks of St Augustine's sold up and moved away. Landmark acquired St Edward's Presbytery, the priest's house beside Edward Pugin's later gateway and part of Pugin's original vision for the site. In 2015, Landmark has begun work on site to restore and repair the Presbytery. Its restoration has also enabled the removal of ugly 20th-century additions from years when the site was a school and reinstated its original relationship with The Grange. Now fully restored, The Presbytery has become a second Landmark for up to four people, completed in 2015, to crown Landmark's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

## **TOUR OF THE GRANGE**

### **Cartoon Room, Covered Porch and North Courtyard**

This area was altered considerably by Edward Pugin, who used the room with the large oriel window in St Edward's Presbytery next door as his studio. The courtyard remains much as Edward left it. Edward demolished a small gatehouse built by his father to the left of the porch and made a new, double-gated entrance with stone lion gateposts (Augustus Pugin used the small side entrance off Screaming Alley). Edward also added hips to the roofline of the Cartoon Room and inserted the dormer so that the building could be used as a stables and coach house, with accommodation for the groom. The covered walkway is also Edward Pugin's work, though as you enter the house, you go through Augustus Pugin's original small porch. Note the large front door, which is very typical of his work. Originally, it only had bolts on the inside so that it could only be opened from the inside – Pugin was extremely security conscious, as there was still considerable anti-Catholic feeling at the time.

## **Hallway**

This is the centre of the house, off which the main rooms open. It is an intimate, overlooked space, an echo of medieval halls or main living areas where everyone co-existed. It was very unusual in a house of this scale in the 1840s. In Augustus Pugin's day there was a woodstove in the corner and a large statue of the Virgin Mary and Child on the wall - a bold and public statement of the family's Catholic faith. He kept a chest of clothes in the hallway to give as charity, and a rack of favourite sou'westers and telescopes. The panelling is a reinstatement of the simple matchboarding used throughout the house. The stairwell is papered in the red and green version of the En Avant design, which Pugin designed for himself (En Avant was his family motto and means 'forward').

The striking diagonal design of the banisters was probably inspired by timber framing in northern France, which Pugin visited often. The small window on the stairs gives light into a secure internal room, perhaps a silver store and now a shower room. On the floor are original tiles designed by Pugin with his monogram AWP and family emblem, the black martlet. The doors to the library and sitting room have been returned to their original size and simple joinery.

## **Sitting Room**

This room has been returned to its original, 1840s dimensions, by removing a later flat-roofed extension. A watercolour done by Augustus Pugin in 1849 showed how the room appeared in his day, including use of the red and green En Avant paper. The panelled ceiling, painted over and stripped of its paper medallions at a later date, has been restored to match the Library ceiling. The stained glass in the large stone window shows St Peter, the Isle of Thanet and the Blessed Virgin, and in the small window a panel dedicated to St Barbara, patron saint of architects. Based on careful paint analysis, the fireplace looks as it did in the 1840s. The original enamelled brass shields were lost long ago and we do not know the original designs, so those put up reflect the family nature of this room and show, from right, St Barbara's shield, then the Pugin, Knill and Welby (Pugin's mother's family) arms. The motifs around the hearth opening ('read, mark, learn, digest') are at child's eye height and include symbols for each of his children. The arch between drawing room and library was closed with a curtain, as Pugin hated slamming doors: "a door once made is bound to be opened and slammed". The arch was later enlarged, but has been returned to its original dimensions. All the carpets in the house (except that in the nursery and Jane's room) have been specially made, to evoke Pugin's own designs.

## **Library**

This is a room of great significance, since it was here that Augustus Pugin worked, pouring out drawings based on his encyclopaedic knowledge of Gothic detail. With its original matchboarded panelling, it has a masculine, almost maritime feel. Here, Pugin designed the interiors of The House of Lords, singing snatches from operas or Gregorian chants as he worked at a desk in the bay window. His helper John Hardman Powell sat at the other window, both with good sea light streaming in through the lower lights. The stained glass in the upper lights in the bay shows SS Anselm, Augustine, Dunstan and Thomas à Becket, all of whom had local Kent associations. The west window has late medieval Flemish glass reset against a background of the AWP monogram and motto, En Avant. The fireplace has been returned to its original appearance. The enamelled shields replace lost originals but replicate the original designs, known from Pugin's own drawing for them. They show, from left, St George's cross, the arms of the See of Canterbury, the assumed arms of Edward the Confessor and the fleur de lys of France, for Pugin's French origins and perhaps to show the historic links between the two countries.

Four large free-standing bookcases almost cover the walls, used by Pugin as open shelving for storing rolls of drawings and examples of carved stone etc. One section is cleverly hinged to allow the door from the hall to open - the original runner can still be seen in the floorboards. These have been reconstructed from shadows on the walls and Pugin's letters. We also know,

and have reinstated, the text friezes of quotations from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs in Vulgate Latin that ran round the shelves. The shields on the ceiling, whose paintwork is newly restored, show the Pugin martlet and the Knill lion, from the arms of Pugin's third wife, Jane. The main cornice frieze bears the names of Pugin's favourite people – saints, friends and clients - and places, to inspire him in his work. This was also a room for relaxation – Pugin would stand at the window with his friends, wielding telescopes as they commented on passing shipping and, on rainy days, Pugin played at storms here with his children.

### **Dining Room**

This was perhaps the grandest room in the house and Augustus Pugin hosted many a jovial dinner with his Ramsgate and London friends. The panelling is original and, like all the panelling in the house, had to be stripped of later paint before being restained to its original warm light brown shade.

All the panelling in the house is pine, but this stain made contemporaries think it was mahogany. The walls are hung with a bright pink, red and white version of the En Avant paper. The ceiling joists have their original painted decoration and have been stencilled between with a design using the AWP monogram and known from a letter. The fireplace shows Augustine, Pugin's patron saint, as a bishop. The Latin text above is the opening of the Magnificat, Mary's 'song' to her cousin Elizabeth as she tells her of the Annunciation: 'For he that is mighty hath done to me great things and holy is his name.' (Luke I, 49). The stained glass shows the arms of the Towers, Jane Knill, Pugin and the Welbys. Massive rising shutters were suspended below the floor when not in use here and in the library (all now in working order again) and also in the sitting room (now lost). The fireplace shields are replacements, showing from left the AWP monogram, Knill and Pugin arms impaled (both known from an early photo) and the Welby arms.

The **corridors** are papered with a 'strapwork' design, a paper that Pugin seems to have used off-the-peg. Scraps of it were found in many places, used by Pugin to paper the less public areas of the house. It too has been reproduced specially.

### **Chapel**

A private chapel would have been a common feature in medieval Catholic households but was very unusual for a house of this status in the 1840s. It was used by the Pugin family on a daily basis. The door, with its elaborate metalwork, is a very fine example of Pugin's work. The original altar, whose proportions are replicated in today's altar, was moved to the Pugin chantry chapel in the church next door in the 1930s. The ceiling decoration dates from the 1840s and the decoration around the east window has been recovered from beneath later paint. 'Sancte Augustine Ora Pro Nobis' means 'Holy Augustine pray for us.' The stained glass shows Pugin kneeling beneath St Augustine on the left and on the right, his second wife Louisa with his eldest daughter Anne and two more of their own children beneath St Gregory. Cuthbert and Edward are shown as boys in the south window, beneath their respective saints. Pugin always provided a small stove in the chapel in winter – 'most people pray better when warm.' The chapel was richly furnished with all necessary trappings. Today, it is kept as a simple space for prayer and quietude for those staying in the house.

*The remaining rooms are only accessible to the general public on full Open Days. At other times, please respect the privacy of those staying in the house.*

### **Kitchen, Scullery and Pantry**

The kitchen was what we would call a breakfast room today and Pugin designed it so that the west front of his church was framed in its bay window – it was described as 'the brightest of kitchens.' Edward and then Cuthbert extended the kitchen, which has now been returned to its original size and the window put back in its first position. The doors are original; note the retainer for the heavy bar that sealed the kitchen from the main house at night. The large

dresser dates from the 1840s and is the only piece of furniture original to the house. The hearth would have held a range similar to the one now there. The open roof timbers of the scullery next door show Pugin paid as much attention to the detail of the service areas as to the rest of the house. The outside door was the entrance most used for daily comings and goings. There is a small pantry beyond, built facing north for coolness.

### **First and Second floors**

There are four bedrooms: a guest room hung with green and yellow En Avant wallpaper; Jane's Room, presented to evoke its appearance in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century; Pugin's room hung with blue En Avant paper, and the former nursery, papered with the strapwork design. The second floor is not furnished, nor open to visitors. There is a small room at the top of the tower, formerly the bedroom of Pugin's assistant, John Hardman Powell.

*The Landmark Trust is a building preservation charity that rescues historic buildings at risk and lets them for holidays. The Grange sleeps up to 8 people. To book the building or any other Landmark property for a holiday, please contact us.*