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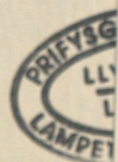
THE LITERARY LENS OF WILLIAM BURGESS: HIS WORK AT CARDIFF CASTLE AND CASTELL COCH.

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Abstract

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts – the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the other two; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy one is the last.¹

As Ruskin implies above, architecture, like written history and literature, can be understood in terms of a record of the people who produced it and “read” in a similar way. Architecture, like literature, can function as a historical narrative of the period and culture in which it appeared. Thus, in order to put William Burges’ works into context, it is important to establish the historical ‘book of deeds’ and literary ‘book of words’ background in which they were conceived before we can begin to understand the message that his buildings, representing the ‘book of art’, convey.

The Gothic Revival created changes in both the plastic and pictorial arts, but particularly in architecture and literature (especially poetry and the novel), which shared a creative impulse and gave impetus to each other, thus developing along similar lines. It is the scope of this dissertation to concentrate on these two areas within the context of Burges’ work at Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch in South Glamorgan for the renowned third Marquess of Bute.

Burges’ life was steeped with Gothic influences because he was a bibliophile, a reputed scholar and writer of the period (whose romantic tastes it suited well), and partly because he was a socialite who mixed with the pundits of the Revival. Investigation of the cultural climate of Burges’ lifetime reveals that the informality of architectural education encouraged personal discipleship and the cultivation of individual expression, which Burges demonstrates by his progressively absorbed teachings from Pugin, the Ecclesiologists, Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc most closely, while he also appears to drift from the written counseling of the architectural theorists of his day to add some imagination to his work. Burges’ written work offered little to artistic debates of the era, but his architectural style was memorable for its drama and often aped as a consequence. His artistic motivation lay not with the religious or socio-ethical concerns of his theorist heroes, but in a desire to immerse oneself in art.

Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch, which will be considered first structurally and then decoratively in this dissertation, are prime examples of a historically sound, yet individual style. Moreover, the aim of this work is to show that Burges’ additions give the buildings a quality of timelessness which makes them appear to be a three-dimensional version of a fictional book illustration, in spite of his accompanying Reports packed with detailed historical justifications for his choices. This fictional notion will be demonstrated by further investigation of the decorative interiors, which demonstrate styles from other countries, thereby showing the viewer things they may never have seen outside of a book, or illustrate tales from the Bible, history, poetry and children’s literature.

¹ John Ruskin, preface to 'St Mark's Rest' in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, 1877, ed. by E.T Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 24 (London: George Allen, 1906), p.203.

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Introduction

William Burges was an architect in love with literature and learning, whose life's work was dominated with the desire to permeate Life with Art. Indeed, the architectural results of this artistic desire set him apart from other architects of his day. His buildings showed an uncompromising commitment to model a blending of Life and Art, and his writing offers practical solutions to aid the process.

In fact, such was his influence on the profession, that Professor Robert Kerr, architect, journalist and critic, unsuitably immortalised him as the rather comic character Georgius Oldhousen in his novel *The Ambassador Extraordinary* (published 1879). In this novel, Georgius is an architect in love with the Middle Ages and is represented as both a fool and a genius and, indeed, no such description is closer to the truth of how Burges was considered by his contemporaries, for his work brought forth attention that was both fascinated and intimidated. The cause of this reaction was his unique combination of austere massing and an inexhaustible attention to detail. Burges' argument for this trait was: 'Are we to have ugly or beautiful things continually before our eyes?'¹

Although his buildings produced polemic opinions for and against them, his written work was generally considered less controversial, for his scholarship was far-reaching. Because of this, it seems almost befitting that the man so much in love with books should himself become a literary character.

¹ William Burges, *Art Applied to Industry* (Oxford: Henry and Parker, 1865), p.2.

Chapter One: Burges the Man and His Cultural Inheritance.

The complete story of Victorian architecture rather resembles one of those endless novels typical of the period, over complicated in plot and subplot ...The protagonists, moreover, are often so highly individualized that they seem like caricatures, or even fictional inventions....¹

William Burges was one such character. He was a hopeless romantic who read widely in order to keep abreast of contemporary publications on antiquarian subjects in both English and French and wrote passionately on these subjects. In fact, his love of the past was such that he would dress up in medieval clothing on occasion. [See figure 1]. On sight he was generally considered a comical figure as a stout and extremely short-sighted socialite, but he was highly respected for his scholarship, particularly within the field of archaeology in his early career, and his architecture was very well known. [See figure 2]. Burges' greatest patron, the third Marquess of Bute, thought him 'soul-inspiring', Lady Bute deemed him 'a duck', and his friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti irreverently immortalized him in a limerick:

There's a babyish party named Burges
Who from infancy hardly emerges
If you had not been told
He's disgracefully old
You would offer a Bull's Eye to Burges.²

It is hardly surprising, then, that Burges, as a bibliophile with a romantic view of history, was so much a part of the Gothic Revival, a movement based in and steeped in literature.

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Burges had a brief career. He died at the age of fifty-three, having received his earliest major commission (Cork Cathedral) at the age of thirty-five. [See figure3]. Therefore, his design language did not fully evolve and repetition of certain themes can be plotted throughout his works.³ He was a theatrical, apolitical architect who regarded the established church and social hierarchy as essential patrons and guarantors of the arts. Throughout his lifetime, though, he remained faithful to the Gothic ideal, which represented the dream of a generation of Victorians who were trying to come to terms with a society in transition after the ravages of industrialization, and the aftermath of the Napoleonic war.

The Gothic Revival had its beginnings in the eighteenth-century with a quest for the picturesque in garden design, whereby the landscape was decorated with ornamental (and usually impermanent) structures from the past in the manner of a picture. This was a taste furthered by the allegorical landscapes and untamed nature paintings of Nicholas Poussin and Salvator Rosa,⁴ in order to capture a romantic reflection of the past whilst experimenting with taste, where roughness and irregularity were prized for embracing nature in all its untidiness. Moreover, this type of garden architecture was thought to derive its value in direct proportion to its literary associations, that is, the degree to which the historical references were in accord with the building's function.⁵ Buildings of the Gothic Revival have a close connection with literature by both exerting an influence upon it, and also receiving inspiration and potency from it. For example, taste for the Gothic genre in literature increased again in the eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's design for Strawberry Hill (1747), which was guided by seventeenth and eighteenth-century engraving but lacked historical accuracy. [See figure 4]. Indeed, Burges later criticized this unreserved architectural

invention, noting that Walpole 'did [his] very worst with the art' and that his work had become an infamous 'by-word'.⁶ The inventiveness of this building contributed to the literary romances of the time, as did Walpole's Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) which began a trend in themes of terror, mystery and exoticism played against a background of dungeons, keeps and crenellations of medieval castles, which were considered evocative and mysterious settings. He was a man of letters and a collector of art and armour, which were gentlemanly hobbies shared by Burges.

Sentiment grew for the Gothic style with the growing popularity of the sensationalism of Gothic novels, demonstrating Clark's assertion of Gothic architecture that 'it is possible to find direct evidences of a connection between literary and architectural taste'.⁷ Novels of this genre featured ancient houses of rambling design with expressive irregularity and asymmetry such as Ann Ward Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (whose work is parodied by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*) and Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, illustrating that literature contributed to the revival of Gothic forms of architecture, in return for using its descriptive features, through a mutual symbiosis. However, as Kenneth Clark highlights, it is important to note the difference between the Gothic architectural forms which were used to create light and variety and the horror and mystery of Gothic structures in fiction, although the popularity of this type of literature showed something of the appeal that Gothic architecture had in its early stages before the reaction which took its rendering down a more serious and academic path.⁸ This was pioneered in literature by Sir Walter Scott with *Ivanhoe* (1819), which turned away from the Romantic horror genre of Walpole that was popularized by Radcliffe, to embrace a new realism in its depiction of life in the twelfth-century. *Ivanhoe* was so vivid in its description that it caught the

imagination of the Earl of Eglinton who held a medieval-style tournament at his castle at Ayrshire in 1839, which 80,000 people were reported to have attended.⁹ This quality of realism is also evident in *Kenilworth*, set at Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire (which is not a medieval castle, but was useful as a romantic setting), which had strong associations with Elizabeth I who had stayed there in the sixteenth century with her childhood friend Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. The emotionally-charged plot of this historical novel, where Dudley was rumoured to have had his wife murdered to free him to marry Elizabeth, was seized upon and turned into a highly successful opera in 1831. This was a source of much discussion for its attention to accuracy in costumes and stage scenery, the latter of which was the responsibility of a young Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin who was to become a figure of enormous importance to the Gothic Revival, and a key exponent of scrupulous precision with the style's usage.

The Revival had enough momentum and credibility to be considered a genuine cultural redirection from about 1830, when the fanciful and nostalgic yearning for a past age became more archaeological in character, for which Pugin was mostly responsible through his writings rather than through his buildings; influencing mainly architecture and painting.

Historically, the Gothic Revival owed much of its pervasive vigour to its close links with literature. During the first half of the nineteenth century book production became cheaper and an outpouring of books and illustrations of Gothic architecture made familiarity with medieval models easier to acquire. Moreover, the inevitable explosion of literature that followed made the Gothic style of architecture increasingly available to the rapidly expanding, and moneyed, middle class who also became

patrons of this style. This made the style less exclusive to ecclesiastical and civic buildings, where its roots were based, and available to domestic buildings, through its humbler support and adaptable construction. This new ease with book production also made engravings and measured architectural drawings more prolific. These books were infused with designs recorded from other countries (such as Burges produced from his many journeys) and contributed to the Revival's characteristic trait of eclecticism.

Burges' education in the gothic style was aided by literature supplied by his father, an acclaimed government engineer. Alfred was to provide William with a copy of Pugin's *Contrasts: or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, Shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (1836) [sic] for his fourteenth birthday. This diatribe had political ramifications, which strengthened the cause of the Gothic Revival as a polemic against modern Neo-Classic architecture and society's ethos of bourgeois Liberalism. This text was to begin Burges' life-long respect for the man to whom he acknowledges: 'it was reserved to...wake us up by his enunciation of true principles...[which] did immeasurable good to everybody in the profession'¹⁰ and with whom he was already familiar through his father's work constructing Westminster Embankment (with his partner James Walker), providing the foundation for Pugin (and Barry's) rebuilding work with the Houses of Parliament.¹¹ [See figure 5]. Moreover, through his works at Bute Docks in Cardiff, Alfred was to introduce his son to the third Marquess of Bute who was to become his wealthiest patron.

Burges attended King's College, London, in 1839. Among his near-contemporaries were Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Michael Rossetti, who shared

the art-master John Sell Cotman with him. Moreover, he maintained links with them as a member of several clubs in which they had a common interest, such as the Hogarth Club, the Medieval Society, the Arts Club and the Arundel Society which was founded for the propagation and publication of Pre-Raphaelite principles and art.¹¹ Indeed, Burges had an active social life, belonging to at least twenty-eight social clubs. Burges accepted Pre-Raphaelite principles implicitly, with their collective desire to recapture the sense of brotherhood, innocence and Christian charity romantically associated with medieval life, which arose from a renewed interest in national culture. Indeed, in England and Germany the Gothic Revival was seen more as a continuation of the tradition than an actual revival, reworked from a romantic point of view. The Pre-Raphaelite artists, poets and critics, like Pugin before them, were driven by a quest for Truth in art, which they considered to be a victim of the degeneration and corruption of their time, and came to be especially recognizable through the clarity and brightness of their use of colour. Their common interest lay in fidelity to nature and moral seriousness, expressed in religious themes or symbolic mystical iconography. This was manifested mainly in medieval and literary subject matters in their art and literature. The Brotherhood were also patronized by the middle class which helped to boost the popularity of their sensitive medieval imagery and the advancement of the Gothic style.

When Burges left university in 1844, at the age of sixteen, he took up articles with Edward Blore who was the celebrated 'Special Architect' to William IV and Queen Victoria, and whose professional links brought him into contact with the Ecclesiological Society (where he became a member) amongst other important exponents of the Revival. With Blore, some of Burges' more important pieces of work involved the Archbishop's private chapel at Lambeth Palace and Westminster Abbey,

where he shared credit for the discovery of its renowned thirteenth-century retable. At this time he was principally recognized for his knowledge of archaeology, which he considered to be 'the true magic mirror'¹² to another culture and period in time. Whilst he respected Blore as a scholar and: 'one of the most minute and beautiful architectural draughtsmen the world has ever beheld',¹³ Burges derided narrow use of archaeology and came to criticize his idealized approach to architectural drawing - which he believed should be essentially explanatory rather than attractive. This insistence of making accurate and measured representations in building sketches Burges demonstrated with his guarded use of photography. Crook notes that he would have considered its effect 'to suspend thought without having the compensating benefit of accuracy'.¹⁴

When Blore retired from general practice in 1849, Burges joined the office of Matthew Digby Wyatt, whose interest in the decorative arts of the Middle Ages he shared. Here, he did research, illustrations, and some articles for Wyatt's *Metal Work and Its Artistic Design* (1852) and *The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century* (1853-4).¹⁵ This move was to shape Burges' career when Wyatt, with Owen Jones and Henry Cole, captained the trend for the use of manufactured art for public use, and became known as the expert on the application of fine art to industry. Indeed, Wyatt, with Joseph Paxton, was convinced that the new style would develop through utilization of the new iron and glass technology, and be a conducive style for a progressive age.¹⁶ The results of this Burges intensely disliked and they set him on an opposing artistic path. This was ultimately to lead him to contribute to the beginnings of the Arts and Crafts Movement with its renaissance of the applied arts, along with Ruskin who also strove to remove the boundaries between the fine and applied arts.

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Burges, like Pugin and Ruskin, contested the use of machinery in art, and reform of the industrial arts became one of the principle aims of his life's work. He was an expensive professional who deplored the fragmentation of skills in art and keenly advised that an architect should master the principles of all decorative arts. In so doing he considered himself as an 'art-architect'.¹⁷ In order to achieve this comprehensive and unified artistic status, Burges believed that the student should learn how to draw the human figure in order to master the sculptured form, whilst inadvertently learning the principles of naturalistic ornament and three-dimensional design. He also recommended a serious course of reading (prioritizing works of the imagination) to 'educate the designer as thoroughly as possible',¹⁸ so that with these tools at an architect's disposal he might produce a work of art rather than mere architecture. Indeed, Burges trained himself to master architecture, the fine and applied arts, although this knowledge was still conditioned by his romantic imagination (which earned him Pre-Raphaelite associations) notably at Bute's Welsh castles.

This notion of individual expression in architecture demonstrates the essence of Ruskin's work, *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3). This work highlights the artistic role of workmen in architecture, especially in the chapter 'The Nature of Gothic', which contrasts feudal relations between authority and workman with those resulting from the division of labour and mechanical mass production in manufacturing. These volumes, in turn, take inspiration from Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) where his evocation of medieval working conditions at the time of Abbot Samson shed an accusing light on the value of machinery against craftsmanship. Ruskin was to argue this from a moral stance, using the spirit of Gothic to challenge the materialistic

interests of his time consequent on the mass production methods of the Industrial Revolution, however, Burges' concern was principally an aesthetic one. Indeed, Burges was not a philosopher like Pugin and Ruskin, and neither his work nor his writings suggest that he was particularly earnest about artistic integrity and truth. Instead, he simply wanted Art to permeate Life, as his only book *Art Applied to Industry* (1865) shows, with its principle impetus being to improve public taste. For example, when referring to the decline in quality of manufactured silverware, Burges places the blame with 'the customers, who have the bad taste and want of education which leads them to buy such objects'.¹⁹

Burges' aesthetic language owed much to his travels as well as his reading, which he regarded as an essential means of observing various art problems and how they were resolved by different cultures and periods in history.²⁰ He had an eclectic appetite, which was fuelled by his broad journeying, on which Turkish art and architecture were notable influences. He also combined Greek art with early French Gothic (his preferred style of Gothic architecture), as the Middle Ages had absorbed the antique. Burges stated this with explicit reference to literature and the importance of breadth in reading:

We shall fail to gain all the benefit we may hope to draw from works of the ancients if we neglect their literature. In the Middle Ages it was not neglected: it is true that Greek art was but little read, but educated men were perfectly familiar with that of Rome. The works of Chaucer, Dante, Petrarch, of the author of 'Le Roman de la Rose' and many others, all abound in classical illustrations, and how many more advantages have we who have the whole of Greek literature at our disposal.²¹

Indeed, Burges used classical proportional systems of design in both his planning and elevation, rejecting the trend for picturesque in Gothic architecture and citing the lack

of rhythm as its failure: 'If we look at the façade of any large building of the Middle Ages, we shall find nearly as much regularity as in a Classic building'.²² He preached a system of regularity against taste for the picturesque, which resulted in buildings, which looked 'as if they have been shaken about in a hat'.²³

Burges, like the Pre-Raphaelites and the Romantics before them, was also fascinated by the exoticism of the Orient, probably for its retention of medieval techniques. Appreciation of the exotic led this trend to become part of a new aesthetic vocabulary, which represented a place beyond reality and, as such, a refuge for the Romantic soul; serving also as a mask of the mysterious side of the human psyche, which appealed to Burges' romantic nature. Indeed, it permeated trends in literature, music and the visual arts throughout the nineteenth-century and is noticeable in the interior decoration of certain rooms at both Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch.

With regard to architectural debate and the question of which style could unite the beauties of the past with the necessities of the present, Burges made no original or memorable revelations. Moreover, he had few pupils and founded no school, instead he built up a team of manufacturers and craftsmen, who were to complete his work at South Glamorgan following his untimely death. The division in mid-Victorian thinking lay with those who looked forward to an age where construction would embrace new materials and those who looked into the past and to traditional methods, which came to be seen as a division between the engineers versus the architects. Burges, like Pugin, saw architects and engineers as poles apart, subscribing to Ruskin's theory that an architecture of glass and iron (such as Paxton's Crystal Palace brought into question) [See figure 6] lacked in the colour and form necessary to ennoble a building, and

therefore could not express Art.²⁴ However, he admitted that 'the Civil Engineer...is the real nineteenth century architect',²⁵ whilst complaining that it was the imagination which turned utility into art and buildings into architecture: 'The machines have been very strong and have done their work well, but they have been dreadfully ugly, bearing about the same relation to what they ought to be as a skeleton does to the human body'.²⁶ Burges and his fellow architects began to turn their backs in disillusionment at the implications of contemporary technology, seeking salvation in an eclecticism of the past, which followed the disappointingly ugly results of such experiments. Indeed, a pervasive moral argument sprung up against the use of new materials, whereby it came to be regarded as blasphemous for an architect not to use materials God had given them, such as brick, stone and wood.

In the pursuit of a new architecture, Ruskin argued that once a single style had been universally accepted its adaptation would produce a new style to suit the majority. However, he confusingly came to recommend a choice of four: Pisan Romanesque, Early Gothic of the Western Italian Republic, Venetian Gothic and Early English Decorated, leaving Burges to lament: 'we have no architecture to work from at all; indeed, we have not even settled the *point de départ*'.²⁷ Burges went on further to say that:

The student, instead of confining himself to one style as in former times, is expected to master...[some] half-dozen, which is just as reasonable as asking him to write half-a-dozen poems in half-a-dozen languages, carefully preserving the idiomatic peculiarities of each. This we all know to be an impossibility....²⁸

Ruskin was later to renounce his Italian examples in favour of French Gothic, and his *Seven Lamps* (1855 edition) came to influence a taste for the Sublime, which could more easily be found in the austere Continental examples. Burges himself found little inspiration in Italian Gothic, and thought it unsuitable for British materials and climate, stating that: 'nearly all our faults in modern architecture may be traced to the misuse of Italian examples'.²⁹ Indeed, Burges found Early French offered flexibility and opportunity for figure sculpture, which could be made to tell stories from history, poetry or literature, in spite of his Ecclesiological membership with their preference for English Middle Pointed. For Burges, Early French was characteristic of the modern age with its cult of manliness and chivalric values, as represented in its massive and protective forms.

This taste for French Gothic was due partly to the success of *Annales Archéologiques*, published in 1844, which concentrated its interests on the thirteenth rather than fourteenth century, symbolism rather than liturgy, and decorative and minor arts as well as architecture. The movement of the Ecclesiologists away from English Decorated or Middle Pointed architecture and towards thirteenth century Europe for its architectural models was a measure of its influence.³⁰ In this publication, archaeology was placed above the 'liturgical science' of ecclesiology, and invention not given much credibility. Of its contributors, Burges admired Viollet-le-Duc, whom he regarded as 'a great scholar, an average architect and a disastrous restorationist'.³¹ However, Crook argues it was not the French who led the pursuit of Early French style,³² but the English who, like Burges, took the subject of Medieval art and architecture so seriously. Indeed, Burges and his once partner, Henry Clutton (with

whom he won the 1855 design for Lille cathedral which won him much favourable acclaim) [See figure 7], were among the pundits of this style's promotion.

However, sated with this emphasis on archaeology, the Gothic movement then turned to invention in order to maintain its momentum. High Victorian 'Go' appeared as an attempt to construct a brand new style out of the fragments of Gothic Revival. 'Go' made Burges deeply pessimistic of the possibility of ever achieving a new style of architecture. The Queen Anne style also became popular, which was based on late seventeenth century vernacular classicism. This represented a compromise between Gothic and Classicism, by being gothic in planning and composition and classic in the language of its form.³³ In 1868 Philip Webb's London houses established Queen Anne as fashionable and, according to Burges, Thackeray was bidding to do for this new style what Lord Byron did for the Greek Revival and Sir Walter Scott did for Gothic. In the mid 1870s J.T. Emmett's article in the *Quarterly Review* criticized the 'Art-Architect' as the product of professional and social fragmentation, and signalled the waning of the Revival. Burges bore the brunt of this criticism when he attempted to refurbish St Paul's. The Gothic revival was not extinguished by this movement, but was considered 'late' and 'flat' in its last phase: Arts and Crafts Gothic.

Burges remained steadfast in his Gothic preference. He regarded it as being a perfect system, with its own development and surrounded by all subsidiary arts. His waning hope for a new style lay in the renaissance of the minor arts, for it was his belief that if domestic artefacts regained their vitality, the salvation of architecture would follow. Burges resolved the problem of creating a New Style for the many by fashioning a personal architecture for the few, springing from his bookish knowledge

but with an added twist of imagination. He achieved this in three characteristic ways: romanticism, theatre and visual humour, and enormity in scale, which has been described as being 'far in excess of reality'.³⁴ He withdrew from debate; moving away from the High Victorian Dream to Art for Art's sake, Crook argues.³⁵ Burges' art evolved from the Medieval models, but the results are highly personal and new. Two of his most famous examples of this can be seen at Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch in South Glamorgan.

- ¹ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain*, 1954 (New York: Da Capo, 1976), p. vii.
- ² Terry Measham, *Castell Coch and William Burges* (Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1978), p.10.
- ³ J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray, 1981), p.2.
- ⁴ Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 1997), p.45.
- ⁵ Leland M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture: Its Elements, History, and Meaning* (Cambridge: Herbert Press, 1998), p.413.
- ⁶ William Burges, *Art Applied to Industry* (Oxford: Henry and Parker, 1865), p. 110.
- ⁷ Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival*, 1928 (London: John Murray, 1962), p.31.
- ⁸ Ibid, p.45.
- ⁹ Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, p.140.
- ¹⁰ Burges, *Art*, p.111.
- ¹¹ Crook, *Dream*, pp.74-9.
- ¹² Ibid, p.92.
- ¹³ Burges, *Art*, p.110.
- ¹⁴ Crook, *Dream*, p.67.
- ¹⁵ Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p.195.
- ¹⁶ C. M. Smart, Jr., *Muscular Churches: Ecclesiastical Architecture of the High Victorian Period* (London: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), p.17.
- ¹⁷ Burges, *Art*, p.119.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, p.12.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p.54.
- ²⁰ Crook, *Dream*, p.44.
- ²¹ William Burges, 'The Importance of Greek Art and Literature to the Practice of Gothic Architecture', *RIBA Journal*, 1876, p.26.
- ²² Burges, *Art*, p.113.
- ²³ Ibid, p.113.
- ²⁴ Crook, *Dream*, p.110.
- ²⁵ Ibid, p.112.
- ²⁶ Burges, *Art*, p.51.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p.91.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p.7.
- ²⁹ Ibid, p.111.
- ³⁰ Crook, *Dream*, p.119.
- ³¹ Ibid, p.120.
- ³² Ibid, p.120.
- ³³ Ibid, p.134.
- ³⁴ Smart, *Muscular*, p.143.
- ³⁵ Crook, *Dream*, p.137.

Chapter Two: Castle Structure and the Influence of the Word.

When presented with the task of assessing the viability of making Bute's Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch habitable, Burges was faced with an issue over which much debate, and consequently literature, had arisen: restoration. Cardiff Castle was a partly reconstructed ruin with a colourful history, which would have been irresistible to Burges' archaeological and historical sensibilities. Consideration of the changes to the building, and the part his patron's family played in local and national history would be essential to Burges' schemes, particularly with the interiors.

Cardiff Castle was strategically positioned near the mouth of the river Taff. It was originally a Roman fort and trading post, until the eight-acre site on which it stands today was established in the fourth century. The site was re-used following the Norman conquest around 1081 initially by Robert Fitzhamon, first Norman Lord of Glamorgan, when the motte was built with a wooden keep. Robert the Consul, second Lord of Glamorgan, used much of the Roman wall to build a keep around 1140, in a possible response to the Welsh uprising following ^{the} death of Henry I in 1135. It also served as a prison for Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, elder brother of King Henry I, from around 1126 until his death in 1134. The castle was successfully attacked in 1158 by Ifor Bach, who abducted Earl William, his Countess and their infant son and held them hostage. In the 1180s the town and castle were attacked, again by the Welsh. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the castle was impressively fortified by the de Clare family, who built the Black Tower to the south and linked it to the keep with the ward wall. The keep had a gatehouse, and fore-buildings were also added. In 1400, the last Welsh uprising began, led by Owain

Glyndwr, and in 1404 the town of Cardiff was burned and the castle sacked. Following Glyndwr's defeat the fifteenth century was comparatively peaceful. In the early fifteenth century the castle came into the possession of the Beauchamp family when Richard, Earl of Warwick married the heiress to the castle, Isabel Despenser in 1423, and he built the new tower and hall block on the western wall of the site. The house was begun about 1420 and became the main domestic quarters (although the keep was kept fortified for reoccupation if necessary). In the late sixteenth century additions were made by the Herbert family, later the Earls of Pembroke, who were granted the castle by King Edward VI. Under the Herberts, Cardiff Castle became a luxurious house. In the civil war the fourth Earl of Pembroke sided with Parliament and the King seized the castle among his estates, which remained in royalist hands until 1645. In 1704, the Herbert heiress married Viscount Thomas Windsor.¹

The castle came into the possession of the Bute line in 1766, when John Stuart, Lord Mountstuart, the first Marquess of Bute, married Charlotte Jane, the Windsors' granddaughter. It was the Butes who turned Cardiff into a major port and both the family and the town prospered from its industry throughout the nineteenth century. The first Marquess commissioned the first phase of alterations to make a practical residence for his son. However antiquarians of the day disapproved of his uncompromising attitude, which led to the destruction of many of the medieval buildings and Gilbert de Clare's wall. He also removed Henry Herbert's 1574 additions to the Great Hall to replace it with Henry Holland's modernized residential west wing. He also added Greater and Lesser wings to the north and the south, thereby increasing the castle's frontage, whilst retaining the Herbert Tower and Octagonal Tower, built for defence by the Beauchamps. In the grounds, Holland's father-in-law, Lancelot

'Capability' Brown re-landscaped the courtyard to create the early Picturesque appearance that was his trademark, achieved by demolishing the Norman lodgings and Shire Hall on the green, removing trees from the mound, planting new trees on the green and filling in the Norman moat. However, modernisations were abandoned when the Marquess' son was killed falling from his horse. It was not until his grandson became the second Marquess, after 1814, that work was completed and the castle used again. The second Marquess was the first of the Butes to exploit the economic potential of his Glamorgan estates. Moreover his two astute marriages, to Lady Maria North and later to Lady Sophia Hastings, elevated the Bute family to a position as the greatest landowners in the British Isles. In 1839 he opened Bute West Dock in Cardiff, heralding a period of industrial expansion and prosperity in South Wales and earning him the unofficial title of 'the maker of Modern Cardiff'.² Unfortunately he did not live to see the fruition of his enterprise when he died suddenly at the castle in 1848, leaving his widow Sophia and an infant son. John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, the third Marquess, inherited a partly destroyed, partly preserved, and partly modernized castle, which was to become the first of his many restoration projects.³

Lord Bute came of age in 1865, amid extraordinary scenes of feudal joy, involving the public roasting of at least two oxen.⁴ In one of his earliest public speeches he complained of being 'painfully alive to the fact that [Cardiff] Castle is very far indeed from setting anything like an example in art'.⁵ With a view to remedying the situation Bute invited Burges to produce a report on the south wall of the castle, leaving him to advise whether rebuilding, preservation or modernization would be appropriate for the project.

Faced with the prospect of a restoration, Burges had a wealth of views available to him from architectural writers of the Gothic Revival, where two attitudes of restoration were in conflict: the destructive and the conservative. Burges was generally in favour of conservation⁶ as he considered, like Ruskin, that restoration had the potential to be destructive both of the spirit and history of a building, however, he had to ascertain what would be the most suitable approach for the site and his client's wishes. Falling back on his knowledge from the originators of architectural opinion during the Revival, Burges shared Pugin's encouragement of the conservation of medieval buildings. However, Pugin's aim was not Burges' as his primary interest was restoring ecclesiastical buildings to their original appearance as a means of reshaping national life through the resurgence of the Catholic faith; whereas Burges' aim was always to produce a work of art. Pugin recorded this trend of Church conservation, and welcomed it: 'innovators are frequently denounced, blocked arches and windows restored, whitewash removed, and stained glass reinserted. All these are good signs, and promise for much in the future'.⁷

Inspired by Pugin, the members of the Ecclesiological Society, of which Burges was one member, made it their duty to recover the original scheme of an edifice and not to retain later work except for reasons of age and purity.⁸ They published their opinion that 'to restore is to recover the original appearance, which has been lost by decay, accident, or ill-judged alteration'.⁹ Although these publications carried much influence among architects through their dogmatic literary style, which argued that their building standards derived from meaning and that they built in a style not because it was beautiful, but because it was right,¹⁰ the actual results of their teaching came under criticism over what exactly constituted a building's 'original appearance', which

became a source of much debate. Burges was not motivated by a quest for the religious conversion of society at large, like the Ecclesiologists, but did consider their insistence on the accuracy of architectural detailing and eclectic attitudes of interest.

Of all the architectural writers of the age, it was with Ruskin that Burges shared the closest affinity for his aesthetic principles. Indeed, he was also highly literary in both the style and content of his arguments, employing an 'architectonic structure of prose',¹¹ along with other literary styles such as the religious conversion narrative, and 'word painting'¹² in the manner of lyrical poetry to relay his message of improving architecture to the many. This in turn influenced imaginative literature of the era. Ruskin's mission was social rather than religious: to restore a healthy society, which he considered to be found in the dignity of labour, for modern factories with their mechanical production and division of labour prevented a relationship between a worker and his work. Ruskin read architecture as an indication of social ethics,¹³ and for his model Ruskin looked to the thirteenth century, where relationships between workmen and their employers were based on feudal trust and mutual dependence. Ruskin's way of looking at architecture was not new, and it is clear that his views owe a debt of acknowledgement to Pugin and the Ecclesiologists. Regarding the restoration of medieval buildings, Ruskin considered it 'the most total destruction a building can suffer',¹⁴ offending his exquisite sensibilities which elevated such buildings almost to the position of creaturely love objects,¹⁵ as evident in his writings, especially *The Stones of Venice*. He also objected to such action because it contradicted his opinion that architecture embodied the living expression of the architect and his society.

This opinion on the status of architecture being representative of the work of an entire race, '*les enfants du peuple*',¹⁶ was also held by France's leading restorer, Viollet-le-Duc, who also considered Gothic architecture to be a living organism. Burges admired his scholarship and was familiar with his *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'Architecture Francaise* and *Entretiens* in which Viollet-le-Duc celebrated the rib used in Gothic architectural vaulting as creating the perfect equipoise of its components and the interdependence of all parts. In *Entretiens*, Viollet-le-Duc stated that learning the medieval principles of building might lead to a 'happy revolution' in architecture.¹⁷ However, he mixed his admiration for the past with an enthusiasm for the present and its new materials in a manner that fellow architects did not always consider harmonious. [See figure 8]. Indeed, he came to be seen as something of a radical thinker, which was exacerbated with his views on restoration, stated in his *Dictionnaire* as being 'to restore a building is not just to preserve it, to repair it, and to remodel it, it is to re-instate it in a complete state such as it may never have been in any given moment'.¹⁸ This was to have disastrous consequences for its freedom of interpretation, as exemplified with his own restoration work at Clermont-Ferrand Cathedral, where he disregarded the age of the fourteenth century nave and made his own additions from an early to mid-thirteenth-century style, to the disapproval of many fellow architects. Burges himself had little praise for his restoration work, but did reverence his historical research, calling the *Dictionnaire* 'that wonderful monument of human knowledge and human industry',¹⁹ which he refers to in his report for Castell Coch.

In his 1866 Report on Cardiff Castle, Burges' evaluation detailed three possible methods of approach to the restoration of the building. The first option he termed the

'strictly conservative' which required 'finding out what features really did exist in ancient times and then to strictly preserve them, but with no additions, excepting such as might be imperatively demanded and which should be made as different to the old work as possible'.²⁰ The second course of action Crook terms the 'antiquarian',²¹ which Burges stated 'would involve what might be called an archaeological restoration i.e. the replacing of everything that a study of archaeology would lead us to suppose had been lost'.²² The final 'modern' approach Burges details as being 'like the two former...a conservative one as far as the preservation of the old work is concerned, but it would involve sundry additions which are to a certain degree demanded by the fact of the castle being used as a Nobleman's residence'.²³ Of these choices Burges recommended that: 'the last one mentioned is that which should most certainly be adopted, in as much as ...the fact that Cardiff Castle is not an antiquarian ruin, but the seat of the Marquess of Bute'.²⁴ This statement, in effect, gave him the opportunity to experiment with his designs.

In fact, Burges' work was to combine all three possibilities to varying degrees. The strictly conservative approach was evident in the Norman keep which was preserved as a ruin in the spirit of Pugin, whilst the antiquarian was manifest in the number of medieval features which were incorporated into Burges' designs, such as the restored south curtain wall, a covered parapet walk, arrow slits and embrasures, as well as a bretache, such as was detailed in the woodcuts of Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire*. However, Burges would not have been able to maintain his 'antiquarian', Ecclesiological approach without destroying all its post-medieval features and thus he offered a largely modern and somewhat personal approach to his work on the residential west wing. In the 1866 report, Burges proposed the building of a great

clock tower of his own design with a medieval style garden at its base. [See figure 9]. The function of this tower would be to compensate for the flatness of the site by creating a silhouette of municipal importance, which largely ignored the castle's previous military function. It would also demonstrate various architectural principles from Burges' favourite literary sources: 'Pugin, plus Ruskin, plus Viollet-le-Duc'.²⁵

Burges' plan for the Clock Tower called upon the architectural language of associationism, which was alluded to by Pugin with his insistence on the proper knowledge of function in a building and accepted by both the Ecclesiologists and Ruskin, who investigated the communicative possibilities of architecture in relation to its inhabitants and landscape setting in 'The Poetry of Architecture' (published in the *Architectural Magazine* 1837-8). This belief acknowledged the capability of a building to arouse emotion in the spectator through disposition, structure and decoration, thereby communicating its purpose whilst arousing emotions in the spectator.²⁶ Style, as opposed to 'rules' became the means through which the individual personality of each structure was visible, giving it a unique combination of emotional force and intellectual content,²⁷ thus eclecticism, which became something of a trademark for Burges, could produce greater associational possibilities than stylistic purity.²⁸ Through the language of associations, an architect could make his building reflect a portrait of the client,²⁹ which appears to be at work with Burges' Clock Tower. The sheer size of the tower indicates something of the importance of the Marquess of Bute and his exemplary position as the heir to an industrial fortune: the landlord of 117,000 acres, inheritor of thirteen titles, and owner of half a dozen seats.³⁰ Burges' design literally heightens Bute's position above the city, which surrounds him in a gesture of

magnificence, making the inhabitant of the castle the nineteenth century equivalent of a feudal overlord.

Following Bute's marriage to Gwendolen FitzAlan Howard in 1872, work began on the rest of the castle. Burges had originally intended its enlargement by building wings, but Lord Bute insisted that additional rooms should be in towers. [See figure 10]. This could suggest that Bute, like Pugin who was also a convert to Catholicism, wanted the castle to express his faith in his building by having it pointing skywards in the manner of Pugin's idealized Gothic town in *Contrasts*. [See figure 11]. New versions such as the Guest and Tank towers were built, whilst the existing Herbert, Octagon and Bute towers were heightened, using a variety of foreign sources that sharply contrast with the original stonework in order to create the effect of a syncopated skyline. By using a dark Caerphilly stone for most of his extensions, Burges carefully separates his new work from the old in a manner reminiscent of Pugin's and Ruskin's advocacy of using local materials (as the stone was from Bute's own quarry), and of making the restoration 'honest' by marking boundaries between old and new work. [See figure 12]. The finished product resembles something of Burges' rejected plan for the London Law Courts, which also aimed for an effect of municipal importance - a weighty association appropriate for a figure such as Bute, who was to become 'Mayor of Cardiff'.³¹ [See figure 13]. Burges' exterior structure expressed the ongoing use of the castle, which embodied the architectural theories of the age, sometimes in contrast to its historic background, yet also acknowledging it by degrees. It was designed not as a relic of past, but an imaginative statement of present.

The Castell Coch project proceeded in tandem with Cardiff Castle and marked a boundary of about five miles through which Bute's property and transportation rights extended. This indicated the integral importance of the building to the Marquess's policy of improvement to Cardiff Castle's landscaped park, the conception of which is reminiscent of use of ornamental buildings in the Regency period, like Paxton's Tower at Middleton, Carmarthenshire which stands in a dominant position above the Twyi Valley, far enough away from the house to justify expeditions to use the banqueting and prospect rooms.³² In contemplating Castell Coch in relation to Cardiff Castle, the Marquess was also likely to have been influenced by his familiarity with Staffordshire's Alton Towers and its nearby castle - the Romantic project undertaken by Pugin for the sixteenth earl of Shrewsbury. This building was considered one of the greatest Gothic fantasies since Beckford's Fonthill [see figure 14], and it was used by Disraeli as the model for Lothair's country seat.³³

Lothair was a literary character based on the Marquess of Bute. The novel, of the same title, was written by the Tory statesman Benjamin Disraeli in 1870 who met Bute at a parliamentary dinner held in Edinburgh in 1867, but also knew him through his legendary status as the richest man in Britain. Moreover, the location of Disraeli's Green Meadow estate, situated just below Castell Coch, which was passed on to him in 1839 when he married Mary Anne Lewis, the widow of his industrialist patron Wyndam Lewis, might have afforded them an occasion to meet. Through the novel, Bute acquired much attention. Indeed, according to Disraeli, the book was more widely read than any other work published in the previous half century. Certainly, the first edition was sold out in two days, and a further eight editions produced in 1870 alone in spite of poor reviews highlighting its lack of *gravitas*. The plot takes Bute's

religious conversion from Scottish Presbyterianism to Roman Catholicism as its inspiration, portraying the hero as a young man determined to seek the true path. Bute is characterized as a nobleman burdened by great wealth, which was easily comparable with his actual circumstances. Though the character Lothair shared a lifestyle not unlike Bute's own, Disraeli was not trying to create a true portrait of him as suggested by the overlooking of Bute's serious study, philanthropy and patronage of the arts for creative purposes.³⁴

The history of Castell Coch was less colourful than Cardiff Castle, and because the building was a ruin and no documentary evidence existed detailing its previous complete appearance there was less of a need for Burges to adhere to any particular style or Gothic period, leaving him more creative opportunities when conceiving his design for its structural form.

As with Cardiff Castle, it was the Clares, probably no later than 1280, who developed Castell Coch into a stone fortress. This was likely to have begun under Earl Richard de Clare and reaffirmed by Earl Gilbert de Clare, known as Red Gilbert because of his hair - which could also be indicated by the castle's name: 'coch', meaning 'red'. Moreover, it was Gilbert who built the mighty fortifications at nearby Caerphilly, which provided a useful model for Burges' considerations of historical form and detail. Structural evidence suggested the castle was destroyed in the early fourteenth century, probably during the Welsh rebellion in 1316, led by Llywelyn Bren, the son of the ruler of Senghennydd whom Gilbert de Clare had dispossessed in 1267.³⁵ Like Cardiff Castle, evidence suggested that alterations to the building had been made in different periods, as indicated by the irregularity of the castle plan and its diversity of

features which show that it was not raised in a single phase of construction. The castle then fell out of use and was not repaired.

What was known about the structure was recorded in the 1530s by the Tudor antiquary John Leland, who noted 'Castelle Gogh [is] al yn ruine'.³⁶ A more substantial depiction of the remains was also to be found in a watercolour by J. C. Ibbetson of 1792, featuring the ruins of the castle in the background, whilst a workman fuels a lime-kiln below. [See figure 15]. McLees suggests that this may indicate that some of the limestone dressings of the castle could have supplied some of the material for the lime-burning industry.³⁷ Later, in 1840, a Cardiff chemist named Robert Drane, made reference to the castle by naming his publication *Castell Coch: a Gossiping Companion to the Ruin and Neighbourhood*. However, while this guide included a layout plan of the ruins, its main concern was advertisements for Drane. It was the engineer and pioneer student of British castle studies, G. T. Clark, who prepared the first full site evaluation, and it was he who published the first measured plan of the castle. This plan has since formed the basis for most subsequent accounts of the castle, and Burges acknowledged its historical research as being of use to him.³⁸ Clark also referred to the historical importance of the site, described the location and its strategic placement within the Anglo-Norman settlement in Wales, and made systematic observations about the military and domestic features of the ruins. He noted the similarity of the spur buttresses with those at Chepstow, and judged Castell Coch to be stylistically a little earlier than Caerphilly Castle. Clark's report also suggested extensive outworks, with towers to protect the more vulnerable eastern and southern sides of the masonry enclosure, which could be the later lime-kilns recorded in Ibbett's

painting and shown on the 1876 Ordnance Survey map of the area³⁹ which was to be an invaluable source for Burges' restoration of the building.

Burges' own assessment of the site was detailed in the Castell Coch Report, 1872. This project folio he bound, giving it the bookish quality that was something of a trademark to him, used perhaps to lend importance to his work and to give it some inherent 'truth', which was often associated with literature. In his evaluation, Burges advised the Marquess that: 'There are two courses open with regard to the ruins; one is to leave them as they are and the other to restore them so as to make a Country residence for your occasional occupation in the Summer',⁴⁰ the latter of which was chosen.

The conclusion of the folio belies Burges' approach to the restoration:

This completes the survey of the ruins and my conjectural restoration. As for the latter I must claim your indulgence: for the knowledge of military architecture of the Middle Ages is a long way from being as advanced as the knowledge of either domestic or ecclesiastical architecture. It is true that Viollet-le-Duc and Mr. G. T. Clark have taught us a great deal, but we are still very far behind and the restoration I have attempted will I hope be judged according to the measure of what is known and not what ought to be known.⁴¹

This statement suggests that Burges would include appropriate medieval military details, whilst giving him leave to use his imagination where deemed necessary. In comparison with the restorative choices Burges highlighted for Cardiff Castle, it appears that Burges preferred an 'antiquarian' approach to this site as his excavation had revealed the underground parts to be in perfect condition, thereby allowing archaeological accuracy in a number of features. However, Burges also reveals a

fanciful element in his proposals that he has difficulty supporting historically, which suggests an element of the 'modern' attitude.

The plans for his proposed rebuilding of the exterior were accompanied by arguments to confirm the historical accuracy of his reconstruction by the archaeological finds at the castle, comparisons with the structure of contemporary and less ruined castles in South Wales (such as Clark had highlighted), and various medieval documents. However, despite Burges' historical considerations for his reconstruction of the castle, and the purpose of the building being for nothing more than 'occasional occupation', certain luxuries still had to be accommodated. These took the form of a modern kitchen, a central heating system, gas lighting, water closets to the bedrooms, and passages for the servants to avoid intrusion on the family's privacy, which had to be housed within authentic masonry and timber reconstruction. This he achieved without such modern materials as steel, reinforced concrete (with the exception of Bute's bedroom), or plate glass. The Marquess required a fully equipped residence, whether it was to be used or not.

Burges maintained the ruin's basic plan, accurately reconstructing the Kitchen and Keep Towers' clasping spurred buttresses comparable with those at Carew Castle in Pembrokeshire, Caerphilly, Chepstow, and Goodrich. As at Cardiff Castle, Burges' work is made visible through the use of differing materials, in this case the transition from the original sandstone to Burges' local limestone is easily detectable. He added a rectangular gatehouse to the south-east Keep Tower, and next to this a short stretch of curtain wall leads to the Well Tower, on the north-east side. From here, back to the

south-west tower, is a substantial length of curtain wall which Clark originally confirmed in his plan, and Burges retained. [See figure 16].

Burges' towers were surmounted with conical roofs, over which there was some controversy, and each bearing a weathervane punched with the Bute monogram in a chivalric gesture. The only evidence for this aspect of the building were the roofing stones and earthenware tiles which were found during the excavation. Clark had already suggested that the castle previously had flat roofs made of timber or lead, but Burges was to take a more personal view of the feature. Adding to the difficulty of justifying such a choice was the fact that no other examples of conical medieval turrets have been found in Britain. Burges admitted he had difficulty finding British examples, but argued somewhat unconvincingly that: 'nearly every castle in the country has been ruined and as the few that remain have been converted to modern uses (like Cardiff) it is not surprising that no examples are to be found'.⁴² However, he adds, 'we may form a fair idea [of high roofs] if we consult contemporary manuscripts'.⁴³ To strengthen this argument he added tracings of the illuminations of the fourteenth-century *Queen Mary Psalter* to his Report, unfortunately not accounting for the fact that such illuminations were often copied from continental or even oriental examples. [See figures 17 and 18]. However, it is likely that Burges would have been inspired by Viollet-le-Duc's restorations at Pierrefonds and Carcassonne which featured conical roofs. Finally, though, he conceded that he had simply found the addition aesthetically pleasing and 'selected the high roof for being more picturesque and affording much more accommodation'.⁴⁴ This element is further seen at his own private residence, Tower House. [See figure 19].

The addition of external timber galleries, bretaches or hourds, was another imaginative element that Burges sanctioned by reference to general medieval precedents. Burges believed that timber fighting galleries of this sort were 'for the most part employed in time of war – the timbers being moveable'.⁴⁵ Others he considered to be 'permanent features such as those over drawbridges...as in the Tower of London',⁴⁶ which helped him to warrant his addition of a look-out gallery over the gatehouse. As for the timber walkways Burges employed, he took inspiration from the meticulous drawings he made of the Swiss castle of Chillon during his extensive travels.

While Burges' travels, as well as his interest in the sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt, might be considered the major origin of Burges' inspiration for the authenticity of his reconstructions at Castell Coch, he was also greatly familiar with Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire*. These volumes contained many illustrated entries of medieval architectural details, including a notable example of hourds [see figure 20], pictured in a manner not dissimilar to the arrangement proposed by Burges for the Well Tower, and justification of many of the embellishments at Castell Coch can be found in this source.

This admixture of historical details and stylistic sources from England, Switzerland, and France demonstrates the 'progressive eclecticism' of the Ecclesiologists as well as the associational belief that a mixture of styles in a building could tell a rounder and more circumstantial story.⁴⁷ However, Crook suggests that Burges moves a step away from an archaeological restoration by 'dissolving his prototypes in the crucible of creative process'⁴⁸ towards a more personal design.

Certainly, the naked exterior, presented in simple geometrical forms and free from excess details, gives the castle a timeless quality. The general effect of this uninterrupted massing is suggestive of what Smart refers to as a Ruskinian 'updating of the doctrine of the sublime, replacing terror with a stress on strength and power – muscularity'[sic],⁴⁹ thereby echoing the impression of feudal austerity Burges sought to portray at Cardiff Castle. McLees states that 'these two extraordinary castles...were eventually consolidated according to the antiquarian principles of the age',⁵⁰ however, they appear to be much more than this. Burges' unique touch makes Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch appear almost as examples of anti-history in their inventiveness and defiance of convention, deriving rather from the pages of a fairytale. This imaginative element would become even more fantastic with Burges' interior schemes.

- ¹ Matthew Williams and others, *Cardiff Castle* (Cardiff: Cardiff City Council, 1999), pp.2-6.
- ² J.Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray, 1981), p.254.
- ³ Williams, *Cardiff Castle*, pp.6-7.
- ⁴ Crook, *Dream*, p.255.
- ⁵ Bute cited from *Merthyr Guardian* in Crook, *Dream*, p.260.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, p.223.
- ⁷ A. Welby Pugin, *Contrasts*, 1836, intro. by H. R. Hitchcock (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), p.19.
- ⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.137.
- ⁹ *The Ecclesiologist*, 1872 cited in James White, *The Cambridge Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.159.
- ¹⁰ Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste*, 1928 (London: John Murray, 1962), p.212.
- ¹¹ Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p.67.
- ¹² George P. Landlow, *Ruskin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.4.
- ¹³ Barbara Dennis, 'College Chapels: Architecture and Ideology' in *Victorians Institute Journal*, 21 (1993), p.94.
- ¹⁴ John Ruskin, 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture', 1849, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. By E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 8 (London: George Allen, 1903), p.242.
- ¹⁵ George L. Hersey, *High Victorian Gothic: A Study in Associationism* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1972), p.56.
- ¹⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p.17.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.208.
- ¹⁸ Viollet-le-Duc cited in Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc*, p.38.
- ¹⁹ William Burges cited in Crook, *Dream*, pp.119-20.
- ²⁰ William Burges, *Cardiff Castle Report* ([n.p.], n.pub.), 1872
- ²¹ Crook, *Dream*, 261.
- ²² Burges, *Cardiff Castle Report*
- ²³ *Ibid*.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*.
- ²⁵ Crook, *Dream*, p.262.
- ²⁶ Hersey, *Associationism*, p.2.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p.4.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, p.12.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*, p.25.
- ³⁰ Crook, *Dream*, p.259.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, p.262.
- ³² David McLees, *Castell Coch* (Cardiff: Cadw, 1998), p.27.
- ³³ *Ibid*, p.27.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p.17.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p.10.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, p.10.
- ³⁸ William Burges, *Castell Coch Report* ([n.p.]: [n.pub], 1872), p.1.
- ³⁹ McLees, *Castell Coch*, p.11.
- ⁴⁰ Burges, *Coch*, p.15.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.14.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, p.7.
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, p.7.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.5.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.5.

⁴⁷ Hersey, *Associationism*, p.12.

⁴⁸ Crook, *Dream*, p.280.

⁴⁹ C. M. Smart, Jr., *Muscular Churches: Ecclesiastical Architecture of the High Victorian Period* (London: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), p.15

⁵⁰ McLees, *Castell Coch*, p.17.

Chapter Three: The Decorative Interiors and Burges' use of imagination.

The decorations are not only legible, but to read them is a treat to educated people; the thoughts and occupations of the owner are translated in the things surrounding him. There is a style in them – not the style of the multitude, but of a *grand seigneur*, who, from circumstances, has more sympathy with the past than with the present; who is poet enough to choose poetical subjects for the decoration of his favourite rooms, and who, blest with vast hereditary possessions, chooses to make a little world of them and live in it.¹

Burges was an architect whose speciality was interior design. To Burges the status of interior decoration was of prime importance: 'it is probable, if we once manage to obtain a large amount of art and colour in our sitting-rooms, that the improvement may gradually extend...to the architecture of our houses'.² Moreover, he firmly believed that 'the next development of art will be a domestic one, and it rests with all of us ... to help it on, by paying attention to the interiors of our houses in the first place'.³ This shows Burges' affinity with Ruskinian principles, for whereas Pugin in his *True Principles* established a relation in which ornament completed and glorified a structure while remaining subordinate to it: 'all ornament should consist of the enrichment of the essential construction'⁴, Ruskin valued ornament because he believed that 'all architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame' and it was a part of architecture which contributed to man's 'mental health, power and pleasure'.⁵ Ruskin as a trained art critic, as opposed to Pugin as a trained architect, described buildings in terms of being seen rather than being used, stressing the importance of ornament rather than construction, which was Pugin's main concern. Burges balanced both these qualities in that his love of ornament was tempered by his knowledge of construction.

Burges also embodied the Ruskinian belief, stressed in 'The Nature of Gothic' that the 'architect should work in the mason's yard with his men'.⁶ Through this statement, Ruskin implies that architecture was merely a vehicle for the decorative arts and could only be considered high art if it emphasized sculpture and painting, thereby heightening the importance of surfaces and the visual impact of buildings. Burges followed this doctrine closely and even rigorously trained the craftsmen at the Cardiff workshops himself. This led to complaints from contemporary architects that their professional role was being undermined: 'By allowing his hobby to run away from him, Mr. Burges has treated the profession very shabbily...instead of an architect, he has become, and would have us become, mere canvas-stretchers for the painters'.⁷

Of Burges' craftsmen satellites, two of his staunchest allies were William Frame and John Starling Chapple. Frame was not a pupil, but an assistant in Burges' office who from 1873 onwards maintained an independent practice although he was of Burgesian mould, particularly with his subscription to the 'Early French' style.⁸ From 1871, Frame acted as clerk of works for the restoration of Castell Coch. J. S. Chapple joined Burges in 1859 and stayed with him to the end. For many years Chapple acted as office manager, clerk of works and executant, involving himself with furniture and stained glass as well as with architecture, and in the end it fell to him to complete the interior decoration of Castell Coch. His was a close relationship with Burges, whose diary entries included 'skittles with Chapple'.⁹ The only associate as close to Burges as Chapple was his chief artist, Horatio Walter Lonsdale¹⁰ who gave up his career as an architect (having won a Royal Academy travelling studentship), following an invitation from Burges to work at Studley Royal and Skelton. He then followed a career as an architectural artist, shadowing Burges from commission to commission.

Whilst he, too, executed independent orders for furniture, metalwork, sculpture and heraldic illustrations, scholars such as Crook have considered his later work, without the oversight of Burges, to be 'mechanical and vapid'.¹¹ Fred Weekes was less happy as a follower of Burges, perhaps because he was more ambitious for his talents.¹²

Of the craftsmen involved with Bute's restoration project other than Frame and Chapple, Lonsdale painted the wall murals in the Banqueting Hall at Cardiff Castle, and Weekes painted the Winter Smoking Room. Charles Campbell, whom Burges taught to draw, and trained in the principles of colour and composition,¹³ also produced murals in the Chaucer Room at Cardiff and Castell Coch's Banqueting Hall and Drawing Room. His firm, Campbell, Smith and Co., was funded under the aegis of Burges, and followed the medieval practice of painting in the masonry coursing.¹⁴ Moreover, they became the most prestigious private firm of architectural decorators in Britain.¹⁵ Nathaniel Westlake contributed the murals in Cardiff Castle's Chapel. Stone carving and sculpture was executed by Thomas Nicholls in the Winter and Summer Smoking Rooms at Cardiff Castle and the Drawing Room at Castell Coch. Sculptor Ceccardo Fucigna contributed the statue of St. John for Bute's Bedroom, the Holy Sepulchre of Cardiff Castle's Chapel, and the Madonna and Child bronze statue in the Roof Garden along with the painted exterior version at Castell Coch. The zodiac tiles in Castell Coch's fireplace are by W. B. Simpson and Sons of London. This was an area of personal interest to Burges who became part of the revival of encaustic tiles in the 1850s and wrote an article in 1858 entitled 'What we learn from the Chertsey tiles'.¹⁶

Ironically, in spite of Burges' discipleship, Ruskin's only recorded reference to him was a slighting one. Quoting his article from *The Ecclesiologist*, 1861, which expresses Burges' disappointment with Arnolfo's Duomo building he states: 'You must not be too hard on him. These are the natural impressions of a man who had never done anything with his own hand, and had been taught to sell on commission the labour of others'.¹⁷ This seems unfair as Burges controlled every detail of his work, and consequently produced only twenty-two buildings in three productive decades,¹⁸ by putting his own stamp on each. He at least trained his craftsmen, even if he did not execute his designs himself. However, the two men were on sufficiently good terms for Burges to get permission to photograph Ruskin's own plaster casts of the capitals of the Doge's Palace to illustrate an article that he published in *Annales Archéologiques* in 1875.¹⁹ In fact, this article was one of Burges' earliest projects with Ruskinian connections, put together with the French antiquary Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, founder of *Annales*, whom he met in 1865 through their shared admiration of *The Stones of Venice*²⁰ and collaborated with thereafter.

Whilst considering the interior schemes of Bute's castles, Burges believed that he could reach a 'satisfactory solution' to the question of the appearance of Medieval interior design if he looked in the following places:

first, the few articles which have escaped the hand of time and of man; secondly, the illuminations in MSS.,[sic] the written descriptions and sculptured representations; and, thirdly, the actual domestic life of the East. Thus we could transport ourselves back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, we should find the interiors of the apartments very nearly as commodious and very much more artistic, than those of ours.²¹

Of Burges' favourite medieval texts, the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius and the *Rota Alternationis* of the Arundel Psalter supplied imagery, particularly used at Cardiff

Castle (as can be seen with the depiction of the Seven Deadly Sins in Bute's Sitting Room).

Burges owned a large library from which he could research sources, and amongst which could be found Vasari, William of Malmesbury as well as Greek and Latin classics. Quotations from such works are also enlightening as possible sources for Burges' interior schemes at Cardiff. For example, in *Art Applied to Industry* Burges details an extract from Guillebert de Metz in Laborde's *Emaux du Louvre* describing the interior of a mansion where the first hall was embellished with 'sentences attached to walls...also a study where the walls were covered with precious stones...[and] plenty of armour',²² whilst in Vasari's *Life of Dello Delli*:

chests [were] adorned with painting, and in addition to the stories which it was usual to depict...[these coffers were] adorned with arms and other insignia of the respective families. The stories which decorated the front of the chest were...fables taken from Ovid, or other poets; or narratives related by Greek and Latin historians; but occasionally they were representations of jousts, tournaments, the chase, [and] love tales.²³

These quotations appear to highlight themes and sources which Burges used himself for the Marquess of Bute. In Cardiff Castle's Chaucer Room, echoes from schemes in Laborde's *Emaux du Louvre* can be found in the written quotations from the *Parlement of Foules*, for example, inscribed on banners which adorn the walls as if Burges is giving his architecture the power of the written word and its inherent status as a source of truth. The bathroom adjoining Lord Bute's Bedroom reflects the use of precious stones in the description, as it has walnut panelling inset with sixty different varieties of marble, each specimen inscribed in gold, and mineral deposits, found on the Bute estates, decorate the fireplace whilst precious stones are represented in the stained glass of the Bachelor Bedroom. This has the effect of celebrating Bute's legendary financial status. Moreover, there is a collection of armour at Cardiff Castle,

which Burges himself collected perhaps as a symbol of medieval chivalric values and masculinity or as a trophy which made the past tangible.

Furthermore, themes from the painted furniture of Vasari's *Life of Dello Delli* can be found throughout the two castles. For example, the insignia of the respective branches of Bute's family Burges repeats as a decorative theme in both Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch, and implies a narrative of the family's history and its member's contributions towards shaping national history (particularly as they are situated within the walls of such magnificent castles and their dominant geographical settings), whilst confirming their significant status. Such examples of heraldry can be found foremost in the public rooms, such as Cardiff Castle's Banqueting Hall, where stained glass windows illuminate the 'Glamorgan Ancestors' and their consorts, along with heraldic shields of fifteen generations of Crichtons, Stuarts and Herberts in the roof vaulting, as befitting of the room's theme pertaining to the medieval history of the castle. The Library also makes reference to the Herbert, Stuart, Crichton, Howard, Hastings and Ross connections on each bookcase. At Castell Coch, the fireplace of the Banqueting Hall bears a shield, which carries the rampant lion of the Crichtons, quartered with the blue and silver chequered fesse of the Stuarts which Burges blended to represent the merging of the families, and on the west wall the Stuart coat of arms is depicted together with their motto '*Avito Viret Honore*', meaning 'he is green with ancestral honour'. Also included in the scheme were copies of portraits of the Herbert family, Earls of Pembroke, whose estates passed to the first Marquess on his marriage into the Windsor family. Heraldic stained glass is also featured. Repeated in the Drawing Room of Castell Coch are three shields, on the left the lion rampant of the Crichtons, in the centre, the blue and silver chequered fesse of the Stuarts, and right, the silver

saltire and twelve gold crosslets of the Earldom of Windsor (one of the Marquess' subsidiary titles). Again, the room features copy portraits positioned clockwise as the first Marquess of Bute with his wife; his son with his two wives; and the third Marquess with Lady Gwendoline. Finally, there are a few heraldic references made in the decorative schemes of the bedrooms of Lord Bute and Lady Gwendoline including the heart-shaped shield of Psyche or Hope on her fireplace as well as on her furniture such as her bed and chairs designed by Burges.

Regarding the use of myths and fables, poetry and narratives by Greek and Latin authors, it appears as though Burges uses this device to indicate the presence of meaning 'by an enigmatic literal or narrative level'.²⁴ Crook refers to Burges' interior schemes as 'intellectual exercises',²⁵ and it certainly appears that Burges' creative purpose was to appeal to Bute's scholarly mind, as is implied by the introductory quotation to this chapter. Examples of such myths can be found in the Norse gods Moni, Tyr, Wodin, Thor, Freyja and Satyr after whom Saxons named the days of the week, in the stained glass of the Winter Smoking Room (Sol is carved on the central boss of the room's vaulting), and the eight winds of classical antiquity, such as Africus, Auster and Zephyrus²⁶ are featured in the columns in the Summer Smoking Room. The walls of the Bachelor Bedroom illustrate tales of the pursuit of mineral wealth from Homer, Herodotus and Sinbad the Sailor. The Nursery walls depict a pageant of characters from fables and fairytales: Aladdin, Ali Baba, Jack and the Beanstalk, Robinson Crusoe and the Invisible Prince, whilst the carved chimneypiece features Chaucer's figure of Fame, who holds the two trumpets of 'ill-fame', and 'great renown', demonstrating that Burges included a didactic message for everybody, even the children. In the Study Sophocles, Homer and Aeschylus are painted on the

walls, and six stained glass windows relate the story of Hercules approaching Ladon, the dragon guard of the Hesperides' garden, so that he might pick their apples and deliver them to Eurystheus.²⁷ Lastly, no room was so consistently literary, and so dedicated to a single author as the Chaucer Room, depicting the poet on the fireplace, surrounded by ceramic tiles decorated with letters of alphabet, the tools of his trade. [See figure 21]. The stained glass above the clerestory illuminates scenes from the *Canterbury Tales*, whilst the walls are painted with the *Parlement of Foules* and the *Romance of the Rose*. Carved heads depicting *Legend of Good Women* such as Cleopatra, Thisbe, Phyllis and Philonella, borrowed by Chaucer from classical literature, have been attributed to Lady Bute's instruction, for whom the room was conceived.

Castell Coch's Drawing Room features the well known fables of Aesop, and represents seven of his moralistic tales. Some of those depicted which have a particularly Burgesian feel include 'The Cock and the Jewel', which teaches that the value of an object is in the eye of the beholder; 'The Hare and the Tortoise', where dedicated application is rewarded with success; 'The Quack Frog', which implies that a man's profession can only be tested by his practice; and 'The Fox and the Crow', which warns that whoever listens to the music of flatterers must expect to 'pay the piper'. It is interesting to ascertain what audience Burges was appealing to, as a drawing room was generally considered to be a lady's domain, yet this is one of only two reception rooms in the castle. Obviously the animals with human attributes (such as a monkey with side-whiskers) would appeal to children, whilst instructing them with the more serious message of proper conduct, but for the adults it would undoubtedly have proved a humorous conversation piece. The carved figures of the

fireplace mantle of this room represent a more sober message with the three Fates of Greek mythology, daughters of Zeus and Themis, who controlled the destinies of men. Here, life is represented as a frayed and knotted rope: Clotho, presiding over birth, spins the web of life; Lachesis measures its length and Atropos cuts it at death thus representing the three ages of man, and is appropriate for the room's theme of 'the fragility of life' or 'life and death in nature'. [See figure 22].

Representations of medieval pastimes Burges quoted from Vasari can be found in the carved fireplaces of the Winter and Summer Smoking Rooms. In the Winter Smoking Room, medieval lovers hunt, skate and sit by the fire beneath the figure of Amor who presides above the Latin inscription which translates: 'love conquers all, let us all yield to love'. Similarly, the Summer Smoking Room is dedicated to scenes of courtship and matrimony, with the inscription '*aestate viresco*', meaning 'in summer my love grows green'. These depictions represent the romantic impressions of an idealised past and indicate Burges' and Bute's shared perception of the period. They also demonstrate the importance Burges placed on the didactic quality of his interiors, which he achieves mainly through 'our chimneypieces...[which] should project well into the room, and have a deep frieze with stories or coat-armour sculpted upon it'.²⁸ One particularly fine example of a fireplace with a narrative is that of the Banqueting Hall at Cardiff Castle. [See figure 23]. This room was intended as the grand centrepiece of Bute and Burges' restoration project, where the sculpted stone chimneypiece represents the medieval Cardiff Castle and shows Robert the Consul, second Norman Lord of Glamorgan, riding out to battle as his lady bids him farewell and trumpets sound from the battlements. Below him the Duke of Normandy, son of William the Conqueror, looks out from his prison cell, where he was imprisoned in the

castle for eight years before his death 1134. Here Burges appears to have allegorised history, which alludes to the Castle of Love of *The Romance of the Rose*, but actually depicts the Castle of War. This piece commemorates the important role Robert the Consul played in the civil war of the twelfth century between Stephen and Matilda who were contesting the English throne, and would have been a source of great pleasure to Bute who admitted 'history is my favourite reading'.²⁹

Such borrowings from varied literary sources highlight Burges' eclectic nature, but these quotations of narrative also demonstrate his purpose that his work should appeal to the mind as well as the eye. This was acknowledged by Andrew Dewar, a contemporary architect, who stated: 'that architects should desire to put a meaning in their buildings at all is a step in advance of the age, and Mr. Burges deserves credit for it',³⁰ but, again, this reveals Ruskin's influence, for he advocated 'the idea of reading a building as we would read Milton or Dante, and getting the same kind of delight out of the stones as out of the stanzas'.³¹ With this statement Ruskin was referring particularly to reading sculpture and judging it with precisely the same principles as a book. At Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch we see that Burges himself took up this idea, whose decorative sculpture Clark praises for its ability to 'exactly represent that intermediate condition between natural form and abstract idealism which is the essence of Medieval...[and] admirably adapted to their position'.³² This demonstrates that, whilst Burges allowed his imagination a certain amount of freedom, his archaeological and historical knowledge did not let such medieval considerations vanish.

In fact many of Burges' interiors reflect Bute's personal interests. Crook notes the working partnership they had: 'if Burges' inventive powers began to flag, they could be supplemented by Bute's encyclopaedic knowledge, biblical, genealogical, or astrological'.³³ The rooms of the Clock Tower, for instance, which were designed to be used by Bute and his male guests, have a single iconographic theme: 'time', which portrays Bute's hobby interest in the heavenly bodies and temporal division.³⁴ For example, the ceiling of the Winter Smoking Room is painted with signs of the zodiac, whilst in the Summer Smoking Room, the floor tiles depict the five continents and the Holy City which represents earth at the centre of the cosmos, the walls depict legends of the zodiac such as Apollo and Cupid, Venus and Jupiter, Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Jupiter and Ganymede, Europa and the Bull, Phyrxus and Hellen,³⁵ and the dome is painted with stars and constellations. Suspended from the ceiling stands Apollo on his chariot wheel. Like the Clock Tower, the Bute Tower, situated above the Small Dining Room, contains Bute's private sitting room, bedroom and roof garden and all convey a biblical theme, which reflects his conversion from Scottish Presbyterianism to Roman Catholicism and its use of iconography. The Small Dining Room illustrates scenes from the life of Abraham in the stained glass, and the fireplace features the episode from the book of Genesis when Abraham and Sarah were visited by three angels disguised as travelers who foretold the birth of their son. It also bears the inscription 'entertaining angels unaware'. Bute's sitting room is dedicated to the life of Saint Blane, whilst his bedroom interior is dominated by St. John the Evangelist, Bute's named saint, who stands above the chimneypiece - a gilded bronze statue. The stained glass windows continue the theme and depict the seven Churches of Asia referred to by St. John in the Book of Revelation. Finally, the roof garden includes wall tiles painted with scenes from the life of Elijah, plus inscriptions in

Hebrew which Bute was learning at the time. This interest in languages is reflected in the library, with its theme of literature and learning, where five sculptured figures above the fireplace represent the Greek, Assyrian, Hebrew and Egyptian alphabets respectively, whilst the fifth is reputed to be Bute himself in the guise of a Celtic scholar-monk. [See figure 24]. At Castell Coch, Bute's personal interests may be seen mainly in the scheme of the Banqueting Hall, where the figure of St. Lucius stands who, according to a tradition now regarded as apocryphal, was king of Britain in about 200AD and believed to be the first Christian king of Britain.³⁶ The murals on two end walls depict the lives of two unfamiliar martyrs and thereby probably incorporate iconography chosen by Lord Bute: on the west wall a female is being burned at the stake, and a male on the east wall is being stoned to death.

It is clear from these examples that Burges' interiors have a footing in medieval design techniques and subject matter, for which he appears to have derived much inspiration from his own library (as well as his travels), yet the overall impression of these rooms is fantastical, as if Burges is purposefully imbuing the outwardly austere castles with imaginary enchantment. William Michael Rossetti highlighted this trait of Burges in his *Reminiscences* of 1910, about his time at school with him, stating: 'I found him to take a lively pleasure in his art, and especially in any aspects of it which it combined advanced gothicism of style with quaint trips of fantasy'.³⁷ However, this element of fantasy was sometimes at odds with practicality, for example with the Arab Room, the height of the tower in which it is built had to be raised to accommodate the 'muqarnas', stalactite style ceiling, leading Matthew Williams, keeper of collections at Cardiff Castle to consider it 'more of an intellectual exercise than a practical one'. [See figure 25]. Moreover, in spite of this room being

conceived in terms of display with the grandeur of its rich décor, it is rather small. However, guests such as King Edward VII are known to have been entertained to coffee here after dining in the Banqueting Hall. At Castell Coch, the size of the Drawing Room compared with the Banqueting Hall also made the retirement of dinner guests an impractical affair; moreover, there was no sleeping accommodation for visitors in spite of the spacious scale of the Banqueting Hall, which probably accounts for its lack of use.

Where Burges' interior schemes appear fantastic and impractical we see a shift in emphasis away from referring to direct episodes from literature, yet still the literary feel is not lost - as the Arab Room demonstrates (reflecting the exoticism prized by the Pre-Raphaelites), which transports the visitor to a place such as they may never have seen outside the pages of a book. Moreover, the inhabitants of these rooms could almost be considered to take on the role of literary characters themselves. For example, at Castell Coch, the position of Lady Bute's Bedroom, situated at the top of a tower and accessible by a single winding staircase, calls forth images of a languishing damsel such as the Lady of Shalott, and the use of brambles in the murals representing 'birth and motherhood' imply that she is the heroine of *Sleeping Beauty*. [See figure 26]. Bute's Bedroom, complete with meticulously justified military details, suggest Burges wanted to give impression of his patron controlling the defences as a 'Captain of the Tower'³⁸ figure. To add to the romantic aspect of the castle, a dungeon was included, as befitting a Mediaeval fortress, and because Burges speculated that one had been there previously. This was obviously of no practical use, instead it served to bolster Burges' romantic characterization of Bute as a chivalric feudal overlord.

This decidedly demonstrates Burges' inherent belief in the primary consideration of interior decoration, and realises Ruskin's statement: 'Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless'.³⁹ Moreover, when it came to its application Ruskin and Burges shared similar opinions: the more important the building, the more decoration it should receive. Ruskin believed that the controlling factor of ornament was a matter of 'all feeling, not reasoning',⁴⁰ and Burges echoed him, saying that 'ornament is as much a matter of feeling as poetry',⁴¹ thereby giving himself *carte blanche* control over its use with no regulatory formula other than his architectural training which imposed certain practical rules. The results of this standpoint, a glut of images and minutiae of detail, produced mixed opinions amongst his contemporaries. The *Builder* considered these rooms 'truly fearful and wonderful', the *Architect* regarded them as 'thoughtful art' and the *Archaeological Journal* found the mass of detail 'overpowering'.⁴²

From the exuberant examples at Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch, it can be seen that Burges is not trying to faithfully represent the interior scheme of a medieval household, but rather to improve upon these models in a way that could reflect the scholarly interests of his patron and suit his own fertile, but informed, imagination and overflowing inventiveness. As Crook remarks, using one of Burges' contemporary literary heroes: Burges supersedes past medieval examples through his idealized work 'just as Tennyson upstaged Malory'.⁴³ Inspired by Romanticism and literary Gothic, he achieves these results through the breadth of his bookish knowledge of fiction as well as contemporary theorists, and through literary devices, such as his use of narrative and direct quotations from literary works in order to imbue his work with meaning. Burges built, not in the style of the thirteenth century, but rather that of the

High Victorian - demonstrating its 'arrogantly stylized proportions and strident plasticity'⁴⁴ defiantly, during the waning of the Revival where the awe-inspiring massiveness of Gothic forms came to be seen as devoid of grace; and its copious ornament regarded as a camouflage for its weakness of form.⁴⁵ Governed by a policy of 'whatever looks best is best',⁴⁶ Burges' buildings have footings in the medieval style, but float free from such historical grounds into the realms of fantasy in a potent and individualistic mix of reality and fiction.

- ¹ Secretary of the Institute, 'Our Rambler at Cardiff Castle', *RIBA* (1881-2), pp.21-2.
- ² William Burges, *Art Applied to Industry* (Oxford: Henry and Parker, 1865), p.92.
- ³ Ibid, p.93.
- ⁴ A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, 1841 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1969), p.1.
- ⁵ Ruskin cited in Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste*, 1928 (London: John Murray, 1962), p.201.
- ⁶ Ruskin cited in Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p.22.
- ⁷ Andrew Dewar 'Mr Burges and Cardiff Castle Tower' in *The Architect*, 7 (London: Gilbert Wood, 1872), p. 39.
- ⁸ J.Mordaunt Crook, ed., *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray, 1981), p.83.
- ⁹ Ibid, p.83.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p.84.
- ¹¹ Ibid, p.85.
- ¹² Ibid, p.85.
- ¹³ Ibid, p.269.
- ¹⁴ David McLees, *Castell Coch* (Cardiff: Cadw, 1998), p.34.
- ¹⁵ Crook, *Dream*, p.269.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p.265.
- ¹⁷ John Ruskin, 'The Schools of Art in Florence', unpublished lecture first delivered 1874 in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 23 (London: George Allen, 1906), p.269.
- ¹⁸ C.M. Smart, Jr., *Muscular Churches: Ecclesiastical Architecture of the High Victorian Period* (London: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), p.143.
- ¹⁹ Virginia Glenn, 'William Burges as a Medievalist' in *The Strange Genius of William Burges: Art-Architect, 1827-1881*, ed. by J. Mordaunt Crook (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1982), p.124.
- ²⁰ John D. Rosenberg, *The Genius of John Ruskin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p.194.
- ²¹ Burges, *Art*, p.70.
- ²² Ibid, p.72.
- ²³ Ibid, p.73.
- ²⁴ George P.Landlow, *Ruskin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.49.
- ²⁵ Crook, *Dream*, p.264.
- ²⁶ Ibid, p.263.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p.274.
- ²⁸ Burges, *Art*, p.80.
- ²⁹ Bute cited in Crook, *Dream*, p.291.
- ³⁰ Dewar in *Architect*, p.39.
- ³¹ John Ruskin, 'The Stones of Venice II: The Sea Stories', 1853, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 10 (London: George Allen, 1904), p.206.
- ³² C. L. Eastlake, *The History of the Gothic Revival*, 1872 (NewYork: Humanities Press, 1970), p.354.
- ³³ Crook, *Dream*, p.273.
- ³⁴ Ibid, p.263.
- ³⁵ Ibid, p.264.
- ³⁶ McLees, *Castell Coch*, p.34.
- ³⁷ William Michael Rossetti, *Reminiscences*, cited in Terry Measham, *Castell Coch and William Burges* (Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1978), pp.10-11.
- ³⁸ McLees, *Castell Coch*, p.39.
- ³⁹ John Ruskin 'The Stones of Venice I: The Virtues of Architecture', 1851, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 9 (London: George Allen, 1903), p.72.
- ⁴⁰ Pevsner, *Ruskin*, p.24.
- ⁴¹ Burges cited in Crook, *Dream*, p.60.
- ⁴² Ibid, p.266.
- ⁴³ Ibid, p.280.
- ⁴⁴ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, 'High Victorian Gothic', *Victorian Studies*, 1 (1957/8), 41-71, p.49.
- ⁴⁵ Smart, *Muscular*, p.22.

Conclusion

Burges embodies an uneasy duality in his character. His idealism and unworldliness show him to be almost child-like, but his seriousness as a scholar is an equally significant feature of his approach to his work. His architecture also reflects this dichotomy: his designs are based on his bookish knowledge but move away from reality into the realm of the fantastic. His work is not a slavish imitation of the architectural and archaeological reading that gave it impetus and credibility but, rather, moves a step beyond this into an idealised version of the past, which is concerned with the present. Crook summarises this highly personal quality thus: 'Burges turned the Middle Ages into magic, draining the exuberance and the torment of his own strange genius in pursuit of the High Victorian Dream'.¹ The cause of Burges' torment was the tension between Art and Life – it was his endeavour to immerse one with the other for the salvation of industrial Victorian society, but his work was simply too extravagant for the many, so he gave satisfaction to the few.

Burges' book learning was unrivalled except, perhaps, by Bute. At Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch, their shared interests in heraldry, allegory and symbol combine to simulate the unity of space and time. Burges instructed Bute in the unity of art; Bute taught himself through his interest in art, and through faith, the ultimate unity of the universe. Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch were their joint creation: 'professions of faith in the feudal ideal, [and] dream[s] of 'pure art' in an alien world'² from an architect and patron 'born romantic, drunk with learning, and in love with the Middle Ages'.³

Burges' work stands apart from the other architects of his day, distinguished by its richness and completeness. Indeed, it is this sheer exuberance that both delights and intimidates the observer – it simply dazzles the onlooker. This effect is especially true of Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch.

Burges once confessed that: 'I was brought up in the thirteenth-century belief and in that belief I intend to die'.⁴ Indeed, on a literal level this might have been seen as a prophecy: Burges died in Tower House, an embodied conceit of his lifetime, in a bed painted by Henry Holliday with a theme from one of Tennyson's poem '*The Day Dream*'. William Blake Richmond was there, still expecting the notorious dreamer to wake up: 'as we stood there, I saw Burges lying dead upon his bed. I looked again and he was still there – dead'.⁵ Burges may not have lived to see a new style develop in Victorian Britain, for which he campaigned throughout his lifetime, but his contribution to the arts is incontestable: 'No one ever forgets Burges' work'.⁶



¹ J. Mordaunt Crook, ed., *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, (London: John Murray, 1981), p.3.

² Ibid, p.292.

³ Ibid, p.259.

⁴ William Burges (1876) cited in Crook, *Dream*, p.34.

⁵ From Simon Reynolds, *William Blake Richmond*, cited in Caroline Dakers *The Holland Park Circle: Artists and Victorian Society* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.178.

⁶ Crook, *Dream*, p.2.

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Fig. 1 – William Burges in Medieval Attire

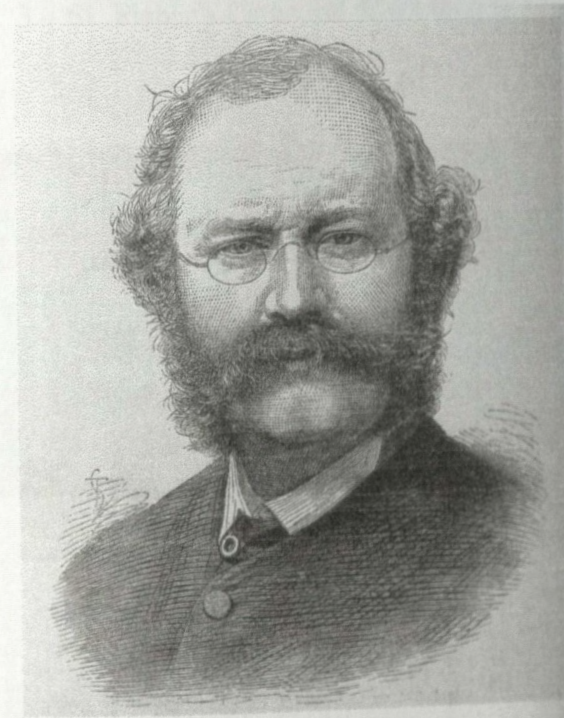


Fig. 2 – Portrait of William Burges

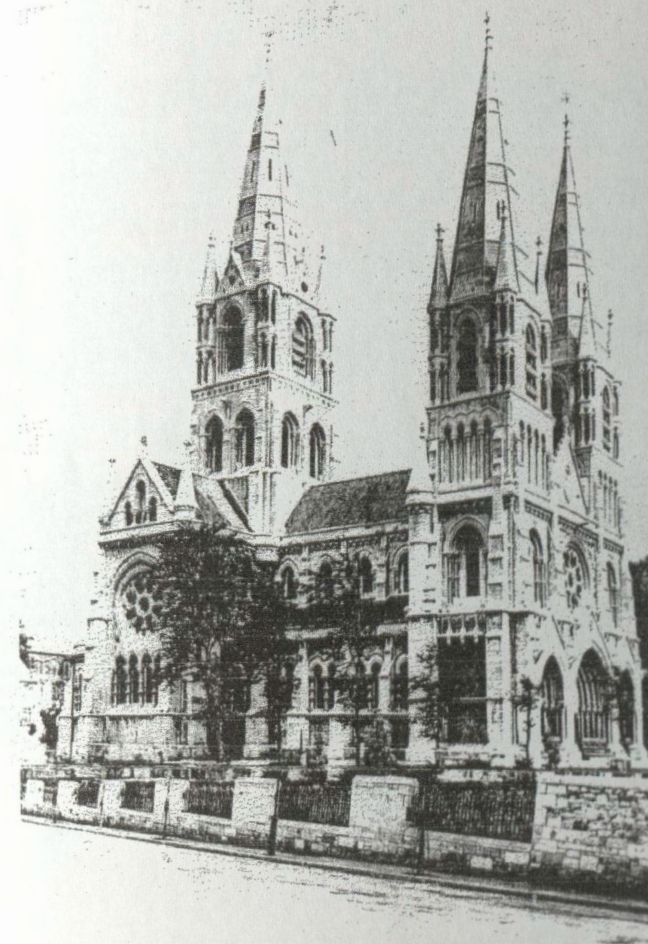


Fig. 3 – St. Finbar's Cathedral, Cork (begun 1863)

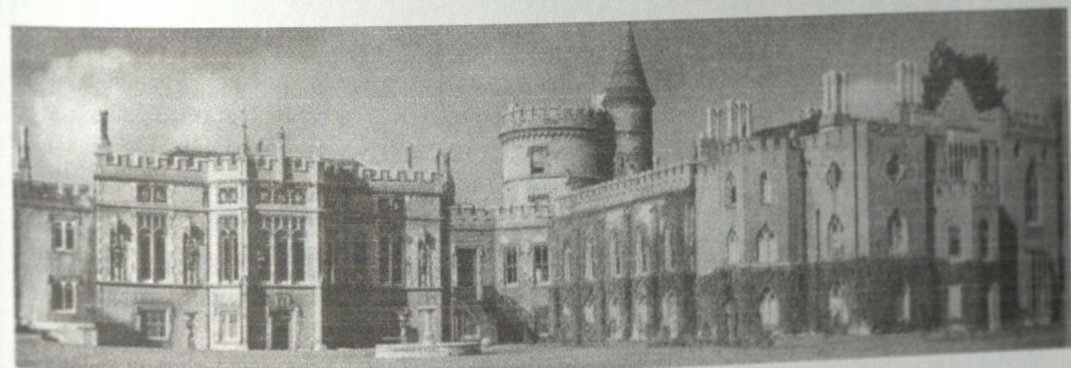


Fig. 4 – Strawberry Hill, Twickenham (begun 1748)

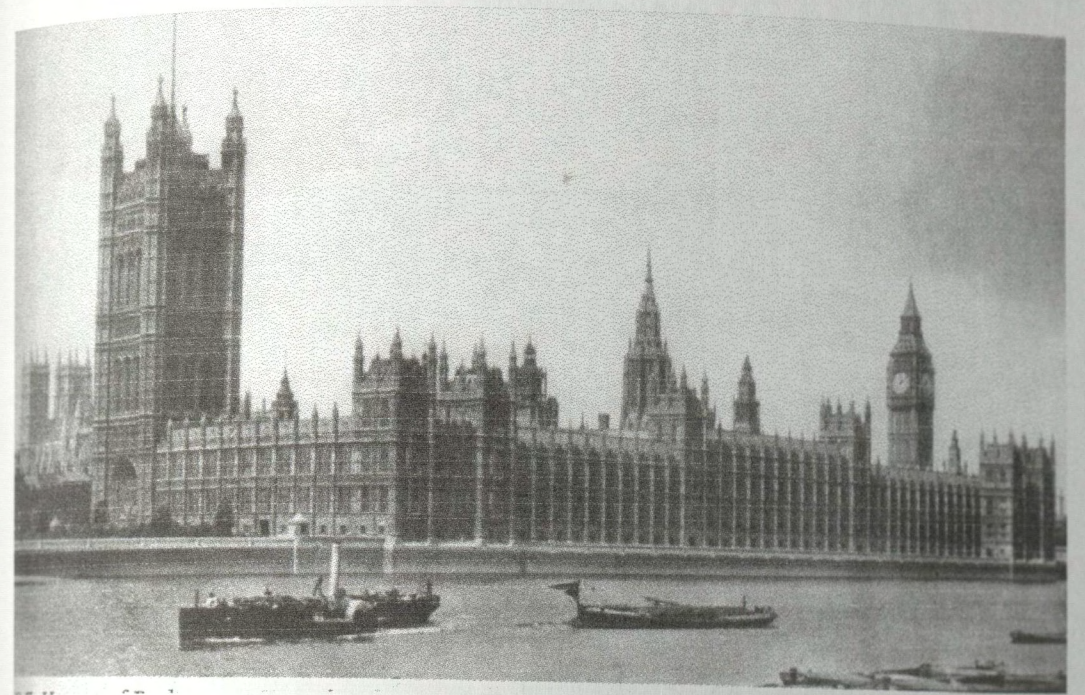


Fig. 5 – Houses of Parliament, London (1836-70)

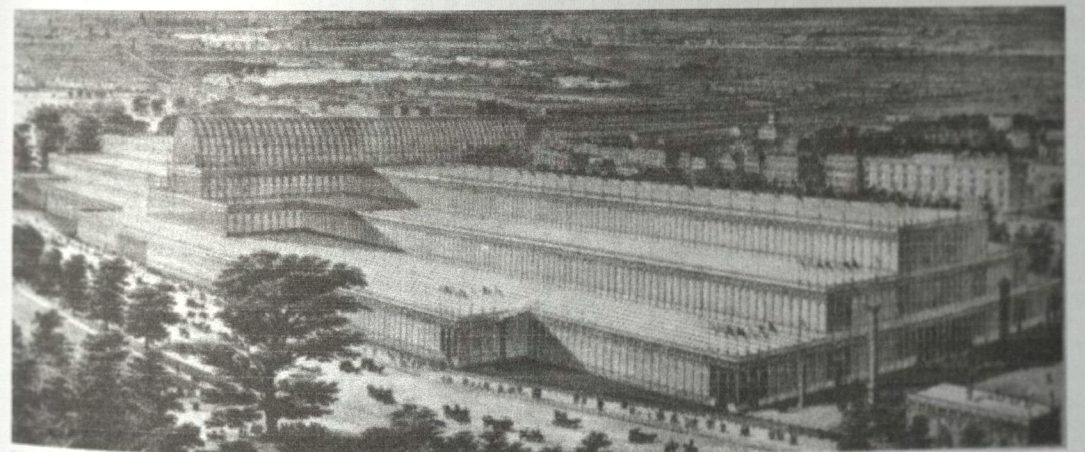


Fig. 6 – Crystal Palace, London (1851)

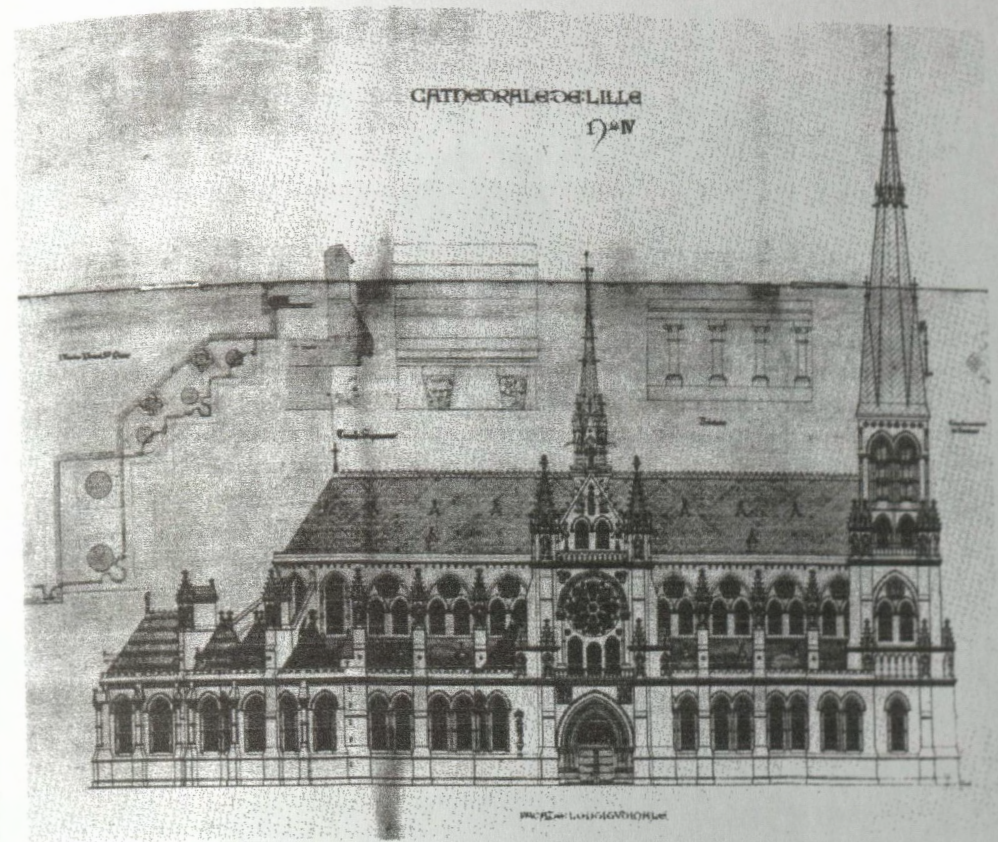


Fig. 7 – Lille Cathedral Design (1855)

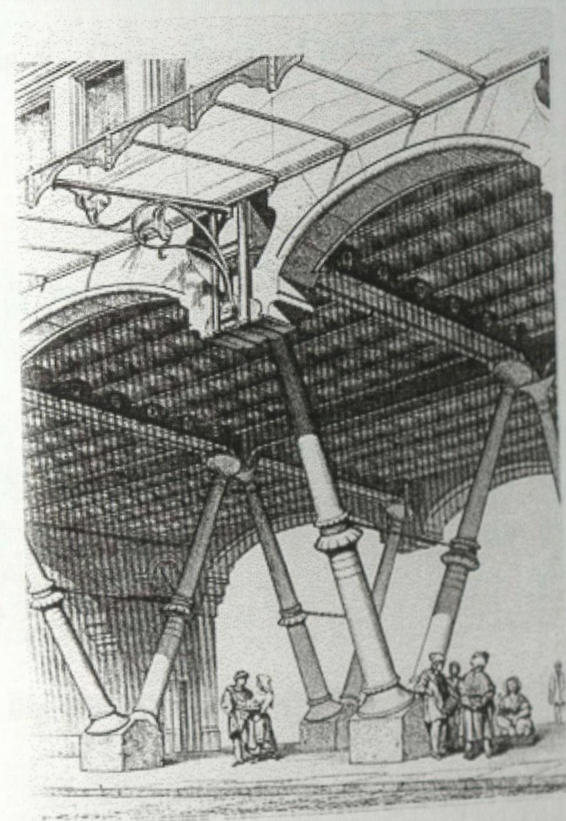


Fig. 8 – Market Place Design (1863-72)

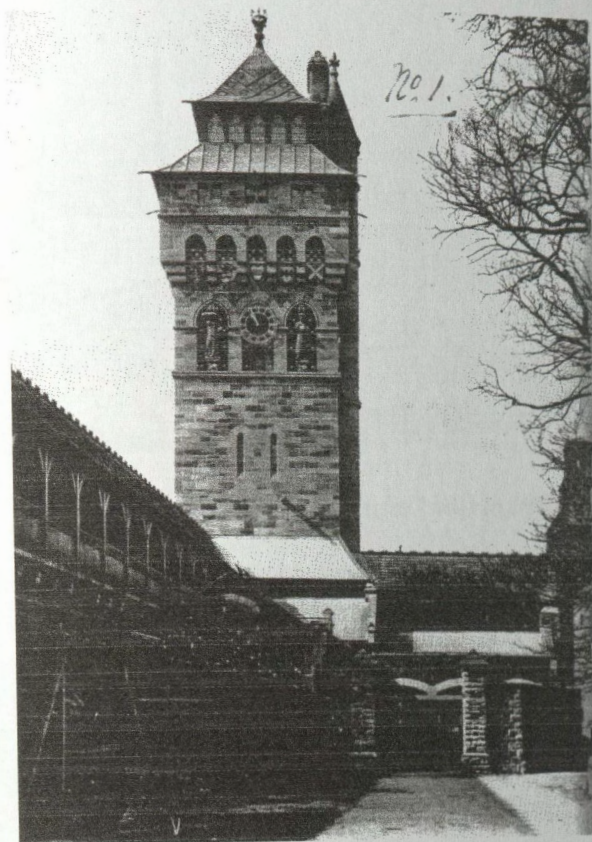


Fig. 9 – Clock Tower at Cardiff Castle (1869-73)

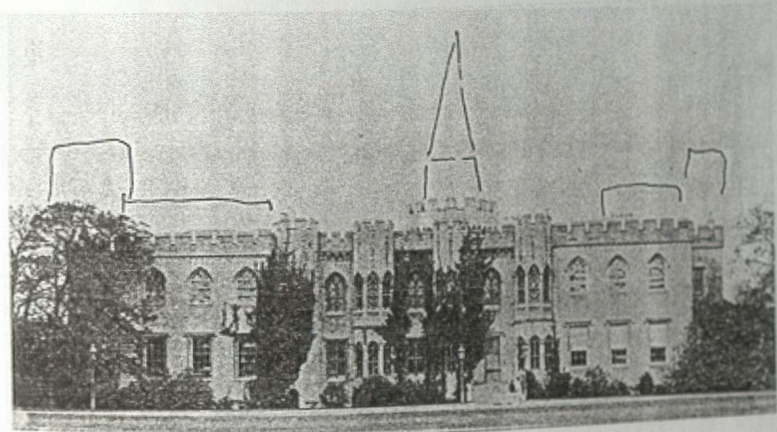


Fig. 10 – Cardiff Castle Photograph (pre 1870)

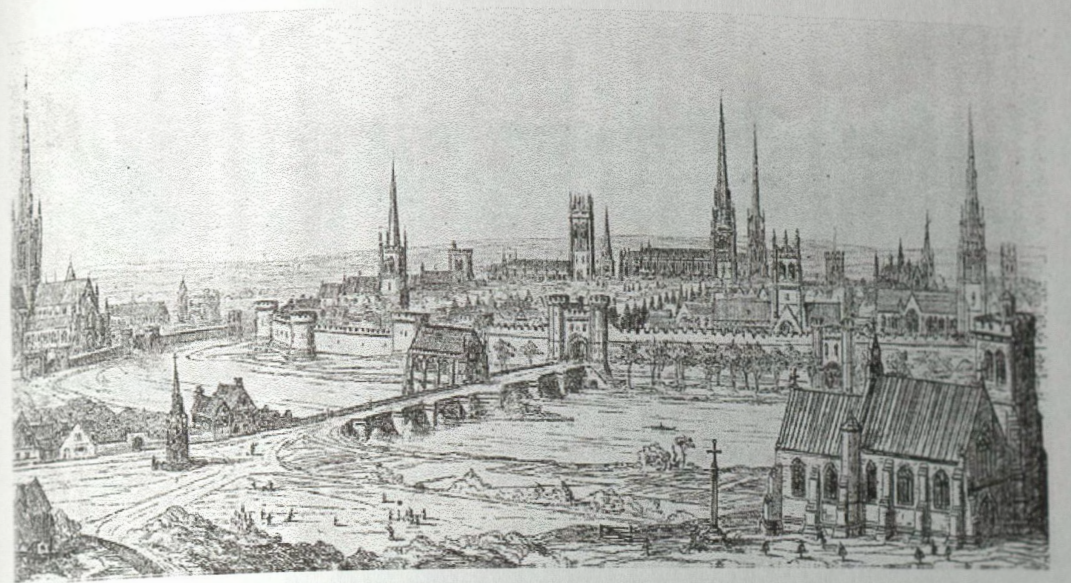


Fig. 11 – Catholic Town in 1440 (1836)

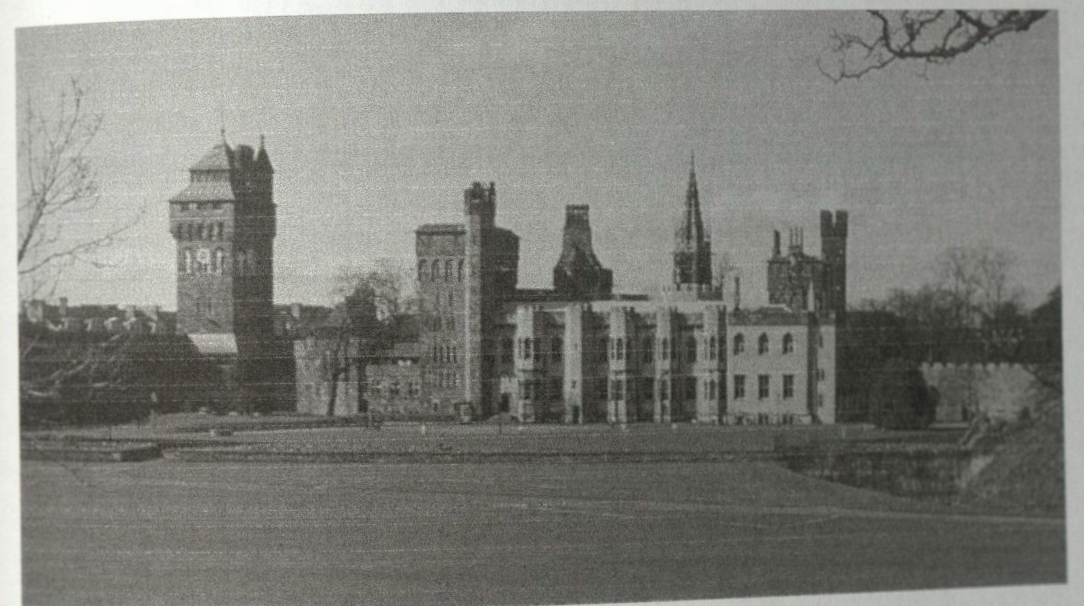


Fig. 12 – Cardiff Castle with Burges' Alterations (begun 1866)

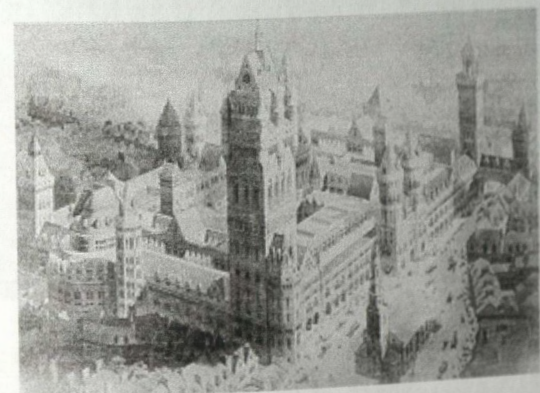


Fig. 13 – London Law Courts Design (1866)



Fig. 14 – Fonthill Abbey (1796-1818)



Fig. 15 – 'A Party of Welsh Damsels, Under the Ruins of Castell Coch' (Ibbetson Watercolour 1792)



Fig. 16 – Ariel Photograph of Castell Coch, Cardiff (1875-91)

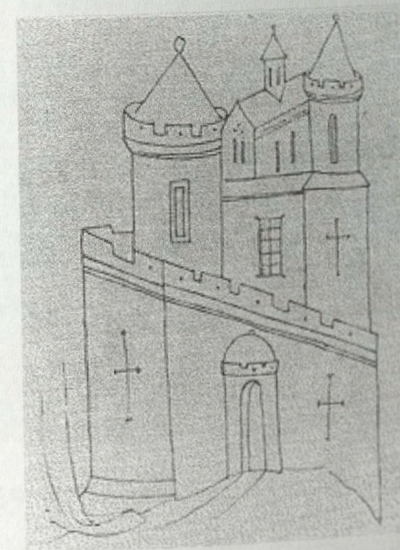


Fig. 17 – Queen Mary's Psalter Tracing (13th Century)



Fig. 18 – Queen Mary's Psalter Tracing (13th Century)

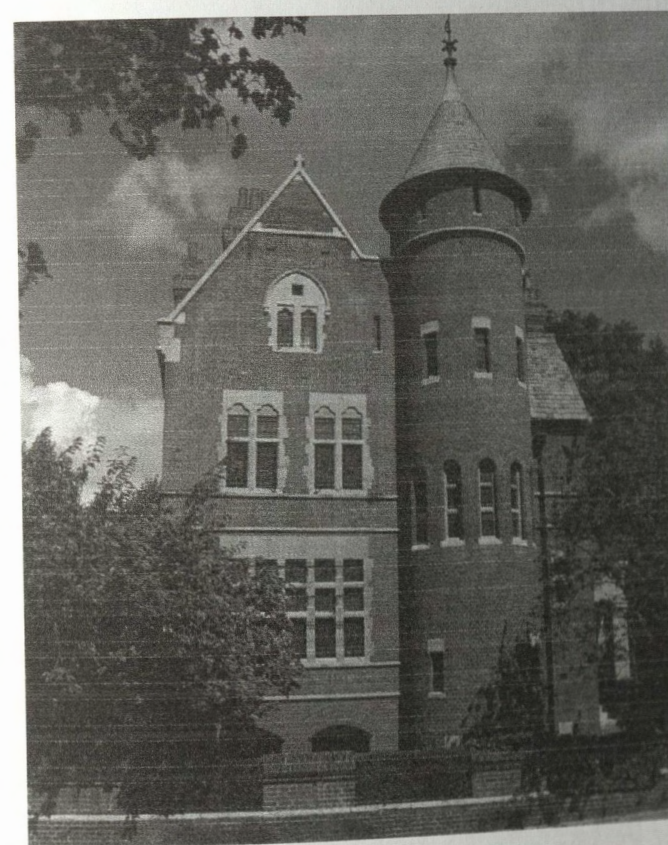


Fig. 19 – Tower House, London (1875-1878)

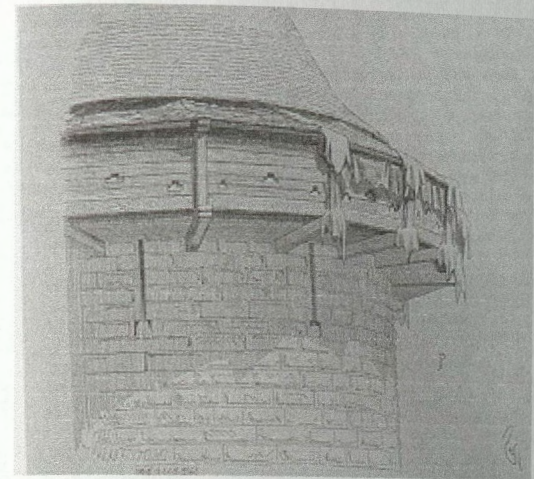


Fig. 20 – Hourd Detail



Fig.21 – Chaucer Room at Cardiff Castle (Painted 1889)



Fig. 22 – Drawing Room at Castell Coch (Begun 1878)



Fig. 23 – Banqueting Hall at Cardiff Castle (Begun 1872)



Fig. 24 – Library Chimney Piece, Cardiff Castle (1873-81)



Fig. 25 – Arab Room Ceiling at Cardiff Castle (Begun 1887)



Fig. 26 – Lady Bute's Bedroom at Castell Coch (Completed Posthumously 1881)

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