



The Pugin Room

The Pugin Room was planned by Robert Cooke and opened by George Thomas, then the Speaker of the House of Commons. Cooke later wrote that it had been 'dedicated to the memory of Augustus Welby Pugin'.

The room had been used as a Peers' committee room up to this point, but now it was turned into a reception room and bar for MPs and Officers of the House and their guests, and it was imbued by Cooke with a sense of luxury and relaxation associated with a gentleman's club. The room was redecorated in two phases: the first, in 1978, saw the introduction of new furniture and a specially woven carpet, and portraits of Barry, Pugin and his wife. The second phase, in 1979, was concerned with the painting of the ceiling and the installation of a chandelier.

The wallpaper chosen for the room was *Gothic Tapestry*, dating from about 1850, one of the richest flock papers designed by Pugin, and one based on Italian figured velvet of the Renaissance. The Pugin Room had originally a simple grained ceiling, but its matching room in the Commons Library further north along the river front, also with a bay window and known as the Oriel Room, had original ceiling stencil-patterns by Pugin. The Oriel Room patterns of roses surrounded by leaves and small flowers which had been applied by the firm of J.G. Crace, were traced and reproduced on the Pugin Room ceiling. A large gilt brass and crystal chandelier which had once hung in the Great Dining Room at Alton Towers, the Earl of Shrewsbury's house in Staffordshire was hung in the centre of the ceiling. The furniture was of the late Victorian style, whilst a niche was created in the bay window with seating raised on a dais.

In a further act of commemoration, three of the six blank stone shields above the door were painted with the coats of arms of Pugin, Barry, and Giles Gilbert Scott. Speaker Thomas was also given this honour, and in addition his crest – a miner's lamp – was painted above the side door. Following his death, the coat of arms of Sir Robert Cooke was added on another of the remaining blank shields.

Flanking the doorway in the corridor outside were placed a pair of tall brass fourteen-light candelabra, about two metres high, and in 'Hardman Gothic'. The items were a typical acquisition by Cooke. Research into the engraved inscription has shown that the candelabra were originally commissioned and given in 1903 by the congregation to their church, run by the Society of Jesus (probably Christ Church, Bournemouth), in memory of Sir William Perceval Heathcoat (1826-1903), a Catholic convert.