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George Shaw at Gawthorpe Hall: links to Pugin

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It was with great pleasure that I read Rachel Pilling's essay, 'Gawthorpe Hall and Pugin', in the last issue of *Present State*.¹ I have visited Gawthorpe several times to examine the property's wealth of faked 'ancient' furniture that speak of a fashion for such pieces in the 1840s and 1850s: known today as 'cut-and-shut', this furniture combines genuinely ancient and more modern (often historically styled) woodwork. Mark Westgarth has written extensively about dealers producing and selling such 'historical' furniture, including a pair of chairs supplied to Gawthorpe by Samuel Luke Pratt Jr (1805–78): there is no surviving (or traced) bill of sale for these chairs, however, as Westgarth has noted, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth wrote a letter to his wife, Janet, and mentioned 'the Elizabethan chairs made by Pratt'.²

Most of Gawthorpe's 'cut-and-shut' furniture is anonymous, however there is a bed at Gawthorpe (**Fig.1**) very similar to one included in Samuel Rush Meyrick's landmark *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (1836) (**Fig.2**) identified as a,

Bedste[a]d of the time of Charles 1st', that 'has upon it the date 1628, and stands in what is termed, from the period of its furniture, the Charles the First's room, at Sir Samuel's residence [Goodrich Court, Herefordshire]. It is of oak, very dark from age; and the panelling of the apartment, which is of the same time, reaches only half-way up the wall.³

Again, there is no bill of sale in the archives for this bed, but it was certainly made for the house by the architect-antiquary-forgery George Shaw (1810–76) of Uppermill, Saddleworth.⁴ Shaw was commercially active from the mid-1840s, and he fitted up, augmented, or built homes and churches near to his Yorkshire base, including: Towneley Hall, Burnley; Knowsley Hall, Liverpool; Hopwood Hall, Rochdale; St Leonard's, Middleton; St Chad's, Rochdale; and Chetham's Library, Manchester. He also worked further afield, including at Rolleston Hall, Staffordshire, and Alnwick Castle, Northumberland.

Most interesting, perhaps, is Shaw's repeated attempts to make and sell Tudor-style furniture that he claimed to be ancient; his biggest project in this regard targeted Algernon Percy (1792–1865), fourth Duke of Northumberland.⁵ Forgeries supplied by Shaw to the Duke of Northumberland and his numerous other 'clients' are very similar and essentially differentiated by their heraldic augmentation; Shaw was an avid student of armorials even as a teenager.⁶

¹ Rachel Pilling, "Gawthorpe Hall and Pugin," *Present State* 20 (2023), 13–15.

² Mark Westgarth, "A Biographical Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Antique & Curiosity Dealers With Full Explanation and Plates," *Regional Furniture* XXI (2009), 149.

³ Henry Shaw and Samuel Rush Meyrick, *Specimens of Ancient Furniture Drawn From Existing Authorities* (London: William Pickering, 1836), Pl. XXXIX, p. 40.

⁴ See, Adam Bowett, "George Shaw, Rogue Antiquary: Fake Furniture for the Earl of Derby and the Duke of Northumberland," *Furniture History* 57 (2021), pp. 109–147, and A Petford and M Buckley, "George Shaw and the Duke of Northumberland," *Saddleworth Historical Society* 47 (2017), 6–18.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Peter N. Lindfield, "Heraldic Forgery: The Case of George Shaw," *The Coat of Arms* 4th Series, 4 (2021), pp. 177–204.

The Gawthorpe bed matches Shaw's *corpus* of known forgeries in form and specific decoration: a very similar example was photographed Rolleston Hall in the late-nineteenth century,⁷ and another with Shaw armorials survived at Shaw's house in Uppermill until 1920 when it was sold off (**Fig.3**).⁸ Appropriate to Shaw's known working methods, the heraldry applied to the Gawthorpe bed refers to the house's ancient occupants, Richard Shuttleworth (1587–1669) and Fleetwood Barton (1595–1664): the headboard's impaled shields depict their marriage by combining Shuttleworth (*three weavers' shuttles, threaded, in fess point a mullet*) with Fleetwood (*per pale nebuly, 6 martlets*). Notably, the Shuttleworth arms includes a five-pointed star (mullet) that is otherwise absent in Barry's designs for the rest of the house (*three weavers' shuttles, threaded*), or as preserved on the seventeenth-century overmantel in Gawthorpe's Huntroyde Room (**Fig.4**). Whilst this appears to be a mistake on Shaw's part (heraldic errors plagued Shaw's initial 'ancient' furniture sent to the Duke of Northumberland), this shield actually retells an otherwise forgotten and abandoned form of the Shuttleworth arms that is nevertheless documented in Lancashire's second heraldic visitation (1567).⁹ Shaw clearly did his research! The bed's association with Richard is further underscored by "R" and "S" carved into the barbed hourglass escutcheons on the footboard (**Fig.5**).

Whilst Gawthorpe preserves Pugin's 'true principle' furniture, the house is also home to the historically deceptive work of George Shaw: Uppermill's architect-antiquary-forgery extraordinaire. Shaw was working at the same time as Pugin, and whilst Pugin put his antiquarian research to moral ends, Shaw's antiquarian knowledge facilitated a more underhand agenda. There are interesting and important overlaps between Pugin's and Shaw's work at Gawthorpe that are worthy of further investigation.

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Image Captions

Fig1: George Shaw's 'Richard Shuttleworth' bed

Fig.2: Samuel Rush Meyrick's 1628 bed

Fig.3: George Shaw's 'Shaw' bed seen in 1920

Fig.4: Headboard of the 'Richard Shuttleworth' bed and the overmantel in the Huntroyde room

Fig.5: 'R' and 'S' on the 'Richard Shuttleworth' bed footboard

⁷ Peter N. Lindfield, "'Pierced and Perforated Carving, as Fine as the Best Cathedral Screen Work': Antiquarianism and Faking Tudor Furniture in the 1840s," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 175, no. 1 (2022), p. 288.

⁸ Allen Mellor & Co, "*St. Chad's, Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks.: Catalogue of the Valuable Antique & Modern Furniture etc., Including a Very Fine Collection of Old Oak* (Oldham: Messrs. Allen Mellor & Co, 1920), Lot 547, p. 24.

⁹ William Flower and F. R. Raines, *The visitation of the county palatine of Lancaster, made in the year 1567* (Manchester: The Chetham's Society, 1870), 30. On the disuse of these arms, see John Harland, *The house and farm accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall in the county of Lancaster at Smithills and Gawthorpe: from September 1582 to October 1621* (Manchester: The Chetham's Society, 1856), p. 310.