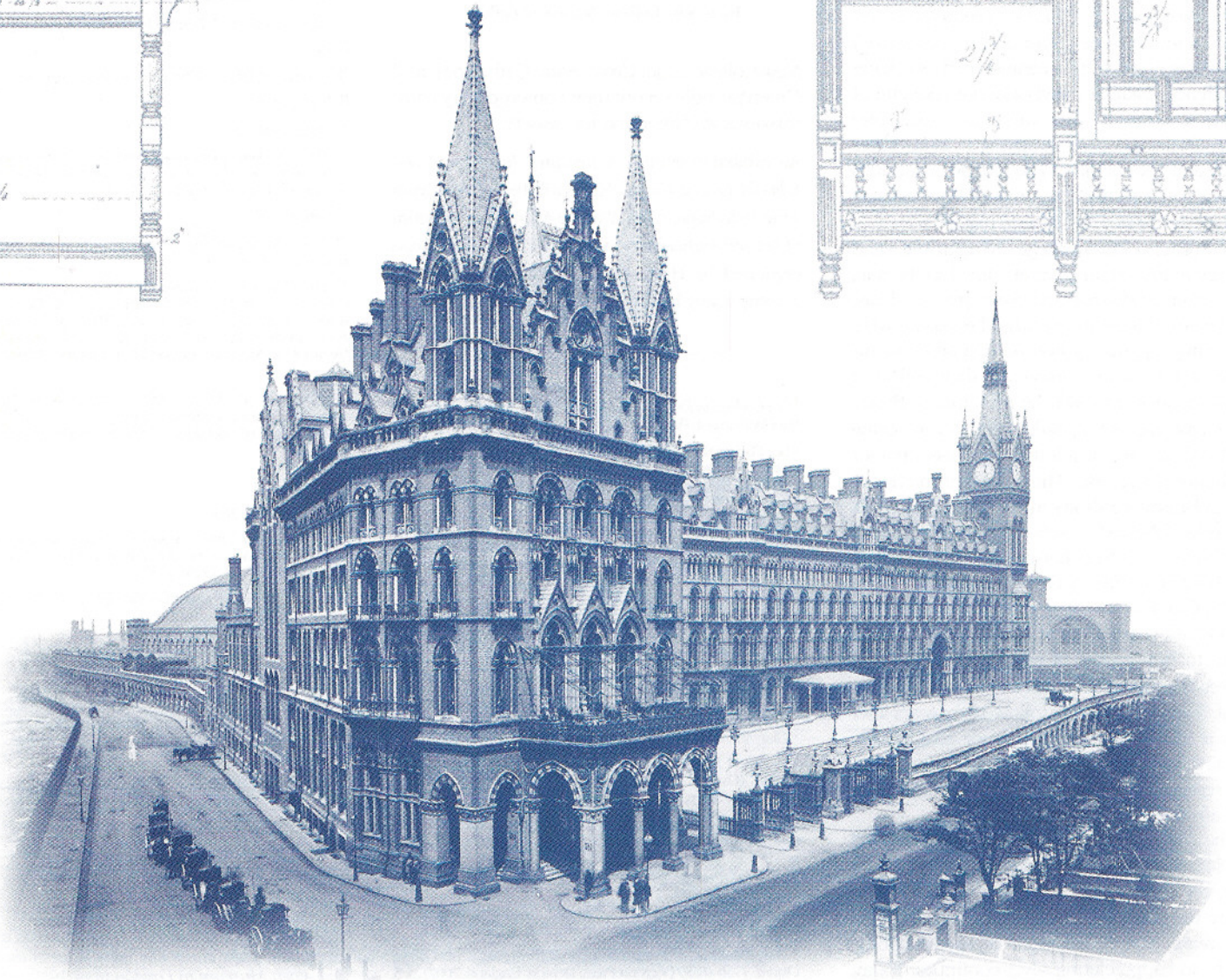
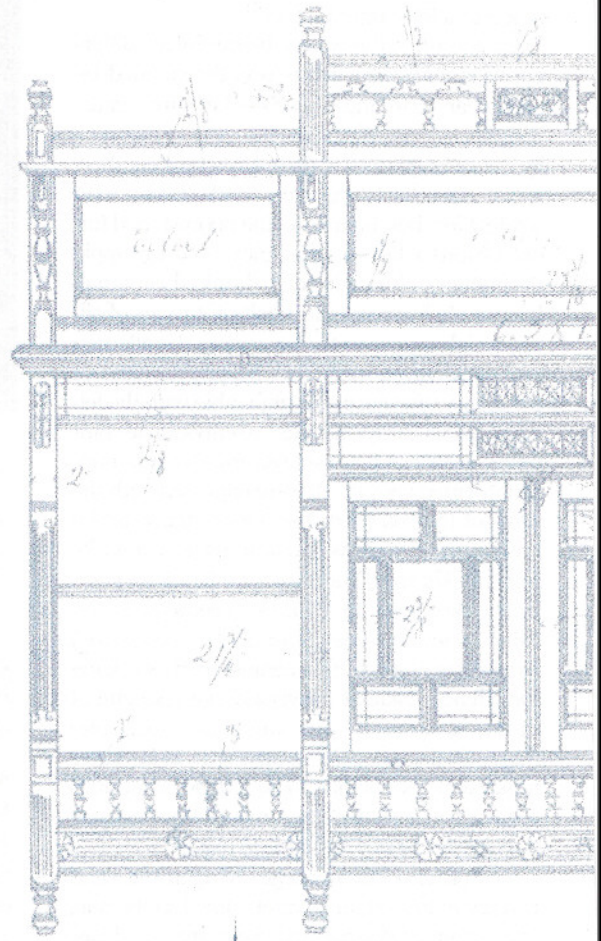
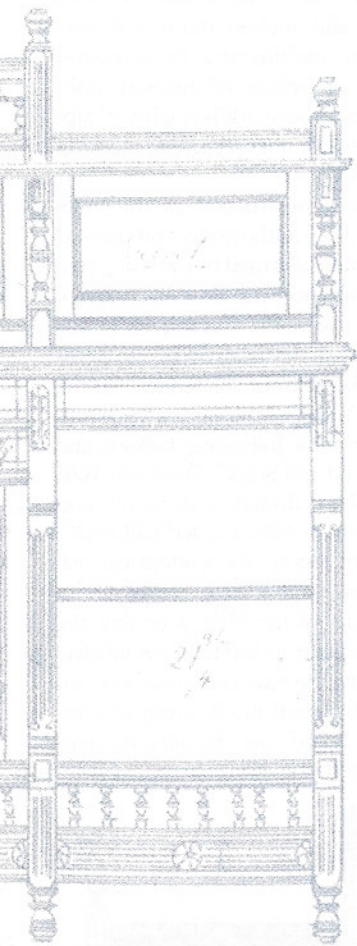
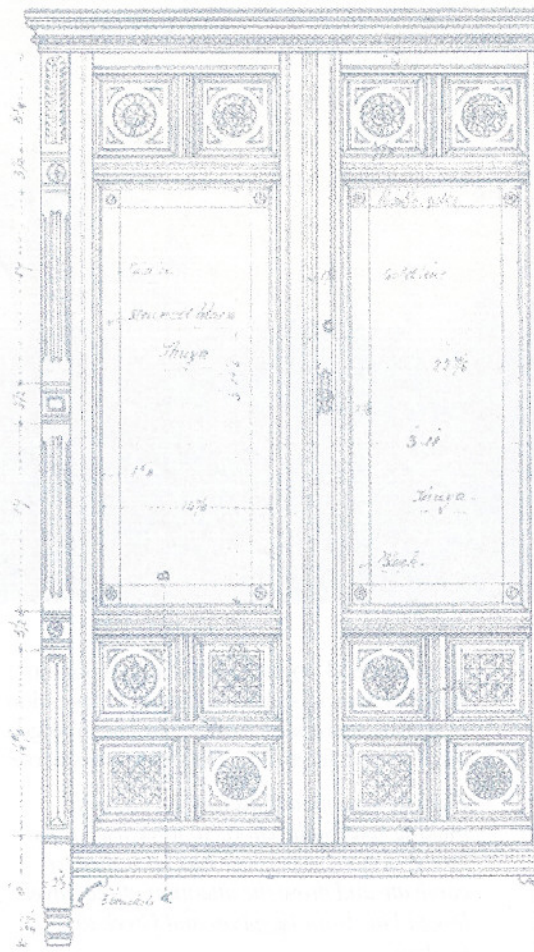
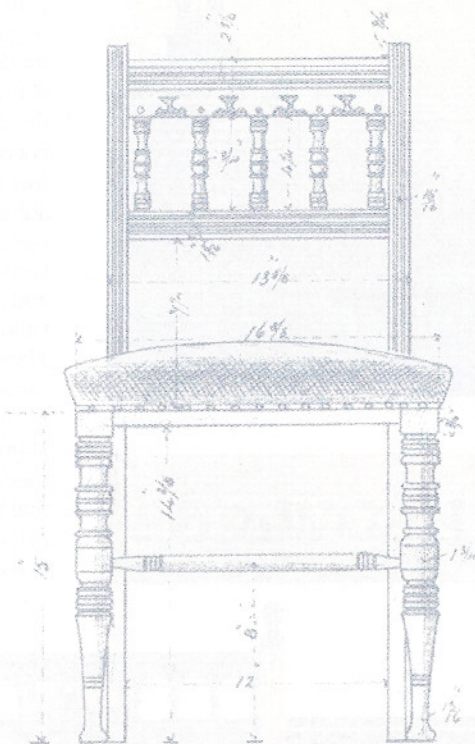


GILLOW  
AND THE  
FURNISHING  
OF THE  
MIDLAND  
GRAND HOTEL,  
LONDON



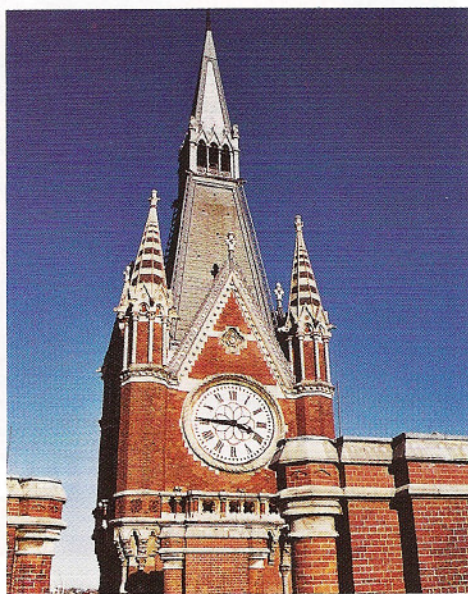


BY LAURA MICROULIS



Rising dramatically on Euston Road between the new British Library and the austere King's Cross railway terminus is one of the most striking examples of High Victorian Gothic architecture in London, the Midland Grand Hotel. It was built to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott between 1868 and 1874 to front Saint Pancras Station, the London terminus of the Midland Railway (see Pl. V).<sup>1</sup>

Rail travel revolutionized life in nineteenth-century Britain, becoming the predominant



form of transport for passengers and industrial and agricultural goods. As testaments to the importance of this industry, railway termini

Pls. I–IV. Drawings from Gillow and Company (c. 1730–1897) Estimate Sketch Books. *Left to right:* Walnut hatstand in Sketch Book 344/115, March 1876. Walnut cabinet in Sketch Book 344/116, August 21, 1877. Mahogany and walnut chair in Sketch Book 344/137, 1876. Walnut and thuya wardrobe in Sketch Book 344/114, February 1876. *City of Westminster Archives Centre, London.*

Pl. V. Southwest view of the Midland Grand Hotel, London, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878) and built between 1868 and 1874, in a photograph of c. 1876. *Photograph by courtesy of English Heritage, National Monuments Record, Swindon, England.*

Pl. VI. Clock tower of the Midland Grand Hotel. *Photograph by the author.*



were modeled on cathedrals and palaces in a range of revival styles—a tangible expression of the intercompany rivalry that had emerged among the different lines.<sup>2</sup> *Building News* wrote:

*Railway station architecture is constantly making spasmodic efforts to force itself upon public notice...every style has been tried to captivate and draw the attention of the travelling public, from Egyptian and Greek to Gothic.*<sup>3</sup>

Meeting on May 3, 1865, the directors of the Midland Railway proposed that a competition be held for the design of a hotel to be built adjacent to Saint Pancras Station.<sup>4</sup> Scott was declared the winner<sup>5</sup> with a proposal for a monumental Gothic structure in red brick with terracotta and buff stone that far exceeded the requirements originally specified.<sup>6</sup> With a total frontage of about six hundred feet, ornamented with stepped gables, point-

Pl. VII. *From Pentonville Road Looking West: Evening*, by John O'Connor (1830–1889), 1884. Oil on canvas, 35 1/2 by 59 inches. Saint Pancras Station and the Midland Grand Hotel are shown in the background. *Museum of London*.

Pl. VIII. Display cabinet and sideboard, made by Gillow and Company, 1876–1877. Stamped “470” and “GILLOW & CO” on the top central drawer. Walnut and thuya with ebonized and gilded decoration and applied painted panels; height 66, width 75, depth 18 inches. *Photograph by courtesy of the Country Seat, Henley on Thames, England*.

Pl. VIIIa. Detail of Pl. VIII showing the maker's stamp. *Author's photograph*.



ed arches, and turrets, the facade evoked the splendors of a thirteenth-century French Gothic church and incited many comparisons of railway architecture to cathedral naves in the use of arched ceilings and vaulted supports.<sup>7</sup> This otherworldly quality is captured in John O'Connor's ethereal painting shown in Plate VII.

In March 1868 construction of the hotel began in earnest,<sup>8</sup> but as the project progressed the directors became alarmed by the rising cost of fitting out the interior with Scott in charge of the design and execution. Consequently, the board resolved that the balance of the commission would be put out for tender.<sup>9</sup> In the autumn of 1872 proposals for the furniture were received from the following: Jackson and Graham,<sup>10</sup> Holland and Sons,<sup>11</sup> Doveston, Bird and Hull,<sup>12</sup> Robert Rough and Son,<sup>13</sup> and Gillow and Company (often called Gillows).<sup>14</sup> These firms were among the leading English cabinetmakers of the day, consistently manufacturing furniture of the highest quality. So, although the decision to limit Scott's involvement in furnishing the interiors was a cost-cutting measure, it is clear from the group of competitors that the board was unwilling to sacrifice quality. Indeed, the tender accepted from

the Gillow firm was the second highest submitted.<sup>15</sup>

Gillow was widely admired for the range and quality of its production. Its furniture at the time included work in the standard late Grecian and neorococo styles that dominated commercial production in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as more innovative styles such as the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Gothic revivals. Further enhancing its reputation, the firm was recognized internationally through its prize-winning exhibition pieces,<sup>16</sup> and had received the royal warrant as cabinetmakers to Queen Victoria (r. 1837–1901) in 1863.<sup>17</sup> The company's sustained success was due, in part, to its ability to adapt to the ever-changing tastes of the market by maintaining a judicious balance between conservative and progressive designs.

**W**hile the Gillow family had little direct involvement with the firm after about 1820,<sup>18</sup> the later partners, Redmayne, Whiteside, and Ferguson, and their successors,<sup>19</sup> continued to capitalize on and develop Gillow's reputation and clientele.<sup>20</sup> The diversity of the firm's patrons, socially, geographically, and economically, may also have played a role in its longevity. With the principal factory in Lancaster and showrooms in London, the firm was better able to control costs, manage inventory, and monitor the quality of output. By the year 1852 more than eighty-eight percent of the production of the Lancaster factory was consigned to London clients.<sup>21</sup>

The Midland Grand furniture and interiors are representative of the later phase of the Gothic taste that emerged within secular design during the 1860s and 1870s. Described as modern or reformed Gothic, it was conceived as a more decorative interpretation of the Gothic style, using medieval architectural elements scaled for furniture in conjunction with flat-patterned decoration such as marquetry or low relief carving. This was only one of many design expressions that coincided with the art furniture or aesthetic movement of the period.<sup>22</sup> The high Victorian decorative detail of the hotel's interiors, most notably the elaborate painted ceilings and stenciled walls, balanced by Gillow's modern Gothic furniture, produced a sophisticated and fashionable ensemble. Indeed, a typical contemporary critique of the interior "warmly commended...the furniture and decoration and general appointments of the building."<sup>23</sup>

The Gillow estimate sketches drawn for the Midland Grand project between 1874 and

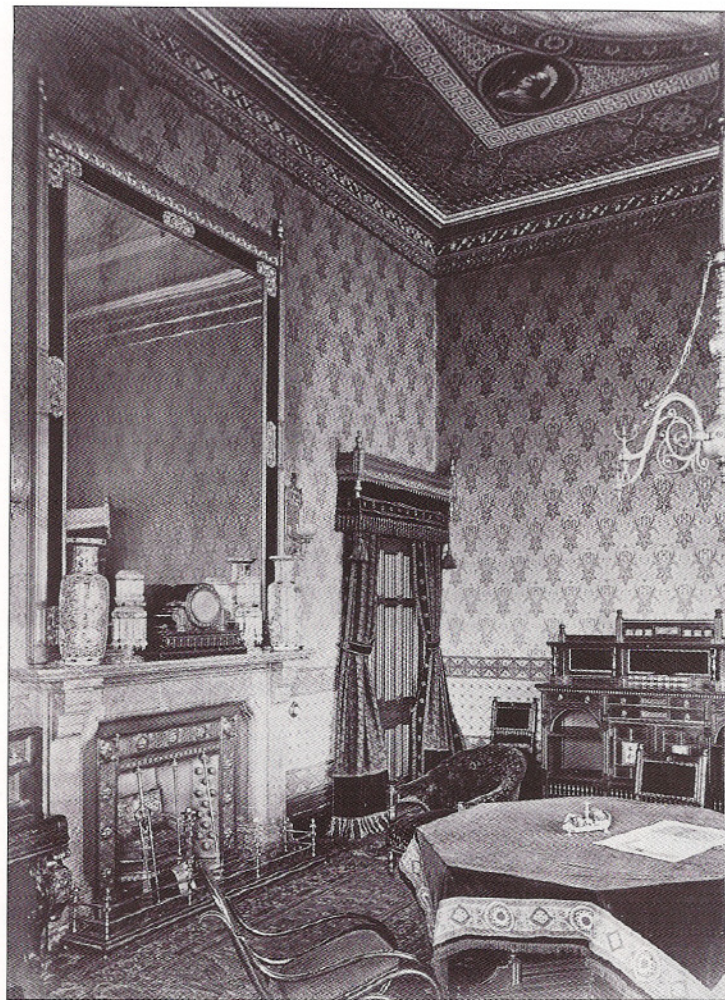
1877 (see Pls. I–IV, XIV) provide insight into the complex nature of this large commission.<sup>24</sup> As an internal record of the firm's production, they convey valuable information about the cost of the materials and labor for each piece of furniture. Because Gillow was responsible for both the elaborate public spaces and the bedrooms, it produced a vast range of objects.<sup>25</sup> Common pieces designed for bedrooms such as an "oak luggage stool"<sup>26</sup> and a "mahogany airing horse,"<sup>27</sup> along with simple ash washstands and dressing tables, appear together with detailed sketches of substantial side tables and cabinets ornamented with ebonized and gilded decoration.

The rooms on the upper floors of the hotel were much more modest in scale and decor than those on the lower floors. Even the wood used for the furniture differentiated the floors, and thus the status of the clientele: the servants' rooms in the attic were supplied with furniture made of "deal, japanned, as oak"; the fifth and fourth floors were fitted with furniture made of ash; on the third floor the furniture was "of mahogany and black, parts being carved, incised and ebonized"; the second floor rooms were furnished in oak; and the first floor was furnished with "furniture of walnut and black wood relieved with gold."<sup>28</sup> A contemporary periodical commented that

*The sitting- and bed-rooms on the upper floors have had care and taste bestowed upon them equal to that of the lower, but in a simple manner, combining the comfort of more sumptuous rooms with less costly materials.*<sup>29</sup>

The Gillow designs for wardrobes, used on the fifth floor and the first floor, respectively, illustrate this measured difference in quality.

All the bedrooms<sup>30</sup> had writing tables, upholstered chairs, chests of drawers, and dressing glasses. The *House Furnisher and Decorator* felt the bedrooms were "furnished rather in the Continental manner than the



English."<sup>31</sup> So elaborate were the bedrooms on the first floor that furnishings for a single room cost £108 more than those for a single room on the fifth floor.<sup>32</sup> The grandest bedrooms on the first floor were supplied with Brussels carpets, velvet upholstery, and "curtains of silk & wool damask...trimmed [with] bow fringe."<sup>33</sup> One contemporary source remarked:

*The spacious and lofty apartments, the handsome furniture, the Brussels carpets, the massive silken or woollen curtains, and the pinoleum blinds; the wardrobes, chests of drawers, clocks, writing tables, sofas, arm-chairs, with which they are supplied, leave nothing to be desired by the wealthiest and the most refined.*<sup>34</sup>

But in *Travels in South Kensington*, Moncure

**Fig. 1.** Private sitting room on the first floor of the Midland Grand Hotel, in a photograph of June 1876. Science and Society Picture Library, London, and National Railway Museum, York, England.



Daniel Conway held a different view:

*One of the bedrooms which I visited had deep-green paper, with gold lines and spots, and bed-curtains somewhat similar. The furniture was of heavy oak, tastefully carved.... Yet I could not altogether like it...the bedroom ought to be more quiet. One does not desire to sleep amid purple and gold.<sup>35</sup>*

The public rooms of the Midland Grand were designed above all to impress. Entering the western wing from Euston Road one passed under the massive porte cochere and through a Venetian Gothic doorway. The entrance hall set an opulent tone for the building with its linen-fold paneled rood screen separating the manager's office from the rest of the room, floor tiles by Minton and Company (founded 1793) of Stoke on Trent arranged in a mosaic-like design, and boldly

carved decorative stonework. While ecclesiastically inspired Gothic elements dominate the hall, the inclusion of carved facing peacocks on the lintels above the interior doorways give a hint of the aesthetic movement taste.<sup>36</sup> This type of rich textural decoration was evident throughout the hotel and is aptly illustrated in the period photograph in Figure 2 showing the entrance to the Grand Coffee Room, the principal public room on the ground floor stretching one hundred feet along the curved facade of the building.

The decoration of the Grand Coffee Room was largely designed by Scott, who specified columns of polished red Devonshire and green Connemara limestone, an elaborate painted wall decoration, and grand baronial fireplaces juxtaposed with dramatic Gothic window surrounds. Under Gillow's direction, at the insistence of the board, the final decorative scheme was scaled down significantly from the original plans, though the budget for this room alone amounted to £6,500.<sup>37</sup> As the project progressed, a suggestion "to put a rich [wallcovering] like Venetian leather in the panels and paint every other part"<sup>38</sup> was adopted

in lieu of tapestries for the walls, and "the four statues Messrs. Brindley & Farmer were prepared to erect" in the niches around the room were canceled to economize further.<sup>39</sup>

**G**illow supplied 160 walnut "Kensington" side chairs<sup>40</sup> (pictured to the left of the doorway in Fig. 2) for the Grand Coffee Room, "the seats & backs stuffed & covered in moquette at £4,"<sup>41</sup> along with thirty-six walnut tables of varying sizes, and three hat- and umbrella stands (see Pl. I). The firm also executed the monumental sideboard shown in Figure 4, reputedly to Scott's design,<sup>42</sup> embellished with marquetry and embossed, richly gilded leather. It is valued in the hotel's inventory of furniture and fittings at £306 8s.<sup>43</sup> The sideboard was used primarily for the display of objects that included many pieces of Elkington electroplate produced specially for the hotel, such as the three-handled "Loving Cup" (Pl. XV)<sup>44</sup> engraved with a wyvern, the winged heraldic beast adopted by the Midland Railway as its symbol.

In addition to the Grand Coffee Room, there were numerous other public spaces—music rooms fitted out with "ebonized and gold furniture and crimson velvet,"<sup>45</sup> billiard rooms,<sup>46</sup> and smoking rooms. The Ladies Coffee and Reading Rooms were particularly notable as they were supplied with ebonized and gilded furniture, including several "circular tables on pillar and claws."<sup>47</sup> The *House Furnisher and Decorator* wrote:

*The chairs and all the stuffed furniture, are covered with cinnamon-coloured velvet, and the cabinets decorated with painted tiles, the curtains being of rich tapestry in peacock-blue, cinnamon and gold...giving the whole a most cheerful and artistic appearance.<sup>48</sup>*

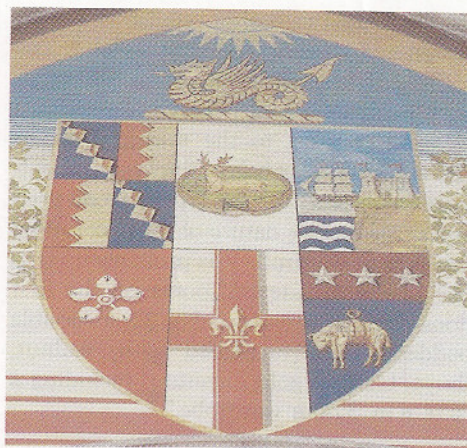
Several private sitting rooms were available for hire on the first three floors of the hotel, presumably providing a quiet place for visitors to relax without spending the night. The photograph shown in Figure 1 documents the opulence of these rooms. The competing flat surfaces—the painted ceiling, the papered walls, and the patterned carpet—created a

Fig. 2. Entrance to the Grand Coffee Room in the Midland Grand Hotel in a photograph of June 1876. *Science and Society Picture Library and National Railway Museum.*

Pl. IX. Edis pattern side chair, made by Gillow and Company, 1870–1877. Stamped "GILLOWS LANCASTER" under the front rail. Oak and leather; height 35 1/2, width 18 1/2, depth 18 1/2 inches. *Photograph by courtesy of H. Blairman and Sons, London.*



sumptuous background for the furniture and decorative objects. Further color and texture were provided by the elaborate portiere of silk tapestry and the velvet table cover with its patterned border and fringe made to enhance "the furniture of fine walnut, inlaid, carved and gilt."<sup>49</sup> In addition to the furniture seen in the photograph, Gillow provided each of the sitting rooms on the first floor with a sofa, two upholstered chairs, and six side chairs upholstered en suite in velvet, as well as the bentwood rocking chair shown in the foreground in Figure 1.<sup>50</sup> While the piano to the left of the chimneypiece was supplied by the firm of Énard (1777–1960) of London,<sup>51</sup> Gillow, as a



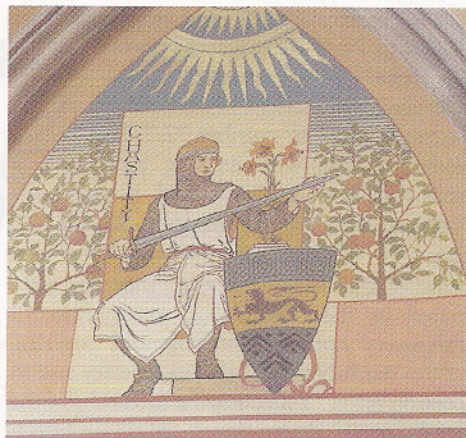
ing promoters of the modern Gothic style, Talbert worked for Gillow on a freelance basis from about 1868 to 1871, before the Midland hotel commission.<sup>57</sup> Talbert also worked in conjunction with Scott early in his career while employed by the art metalworking firm Skidmore of Coventry.<sup>58</sup> Although in the Midland Grand commission no firm connection between Talbert and Scott exists, or for that matter between Talbert and Gillow, the close links between these individuals demonstrate the crosscurrent of ideas and design influences in the applied arts during this period.<sup>59</sup>

Another tantalizing, if tenuous, connection to the Midland commission is found in the sale catalogue of Talbert's effects after his untimely death in 1881 at the age of forty-three. Lot 109 reads, "several sketches, architectural and otherwise, 10 in all [amongst these are the competition designs for the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras]."<sup>60</sup> While the Midland Railway Company did not engage Talbert's design services directly, it is entirely possible, given the nature of the furniture in the hotel, that he worked with Gillow on the furniture designs in some capacity, as numer-



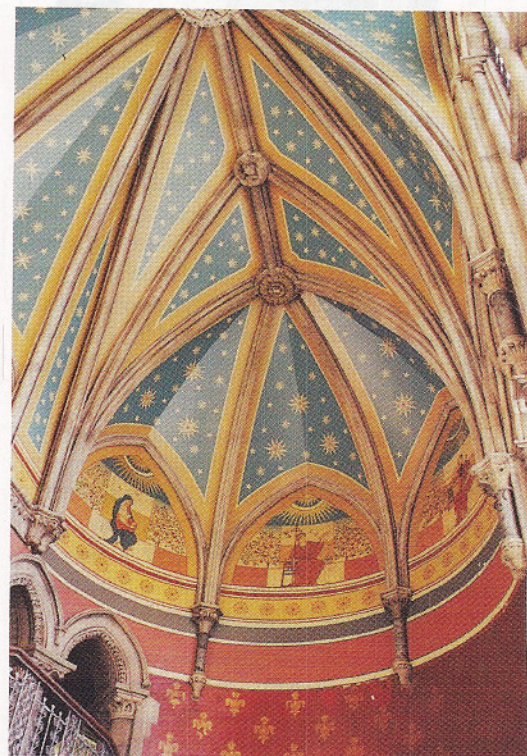
"comprehensive manufacturing firm,"<sup>52</sup> had the resources to provide a full range of objects and complete interior decorating services for its private clients as well as for institutional commissions.<sup>53</sup> In addition to hanging wallpaper, painting walls, and cleaning and varnishing woodwork, records for the Midland Grand Hotel indicate that the firm supplied everything from carpets and spittoons to "simple vases of an inexpensive kind for the mantelpieces"<sup>54</sup> and backgammon boards.<sup>55</sup>

The influence of the architect and designer Bruce James Talbert (1838–1881)<sup>56</sup> is readily discernible in several of the Gillow furniture designs drawn for this commission. A prominent commercial designer and one of the lead-



ous references to "Talbert chairs" appear throughout the Midland Grand Inventory.<sup>61</sup> The existence of sketches associated with the hotel among Talbert's personal effects would seem to justify speculation as to his involvement.

The most elaborate of the Talbert inspired pieces identified to date, and probably supplied for the Midland Grand, is a walnut display cabinet with ebonized and gilded details and applied painted panels (Pl. VIII).<sup>62</sup> Its aesthetic is strongly geometric, balanced by the delicately carved rosette ornament and reeded detail. The two painted panels on the central cupboard doors are decorated with clas-



sically rendered female figures, while the central panel in the upper gallery shows the influence of *Japonisme* in its treatment of the chrysanthemums and butterflies.<sup>63</sup> The

*Clockwise from top:*

Pl. X. Detail of the painted ceiling in the Midland Grand Hotel showing the crest of the Midland Railway Company. The decoration of the ceiling was designed by Edward William Godwin (1833–1886) for Gillow and Company and was carried out in 1877. Photograph by Geraint Lewis.

Pl. XI. Detail of the painted ceiling. Author's photograph.

Pl. XII. Detail of the painted ceiling. Lewis photograph.

Pl. XIII. View of the grand staircase and painted ceiling. Lewis photograph.



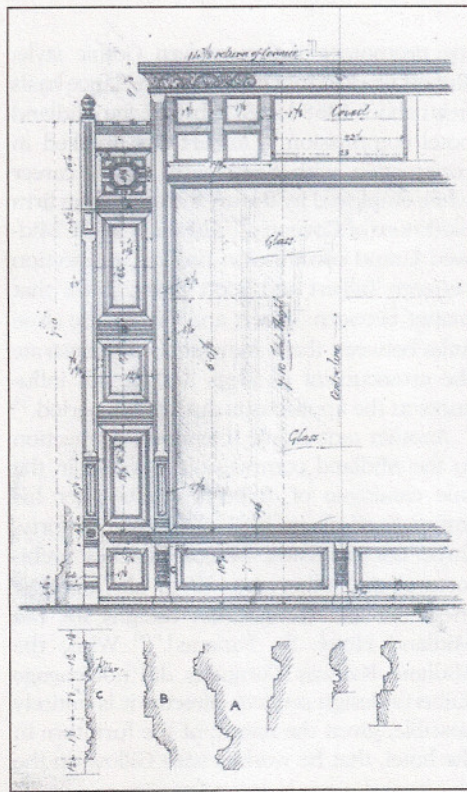
Gillow estimate sketch, dated August 21, 1877, that closely corresponds to this piece (Pl. II) is labeled "First Floor Midland Cabinet"<sup>64</sup> and is pictured in a period photograph as part of the furnishings of a private sitting room in the hotel (see Fig. 1). A contemporary commentator noted the fashionable nature of such an object:

*Each of the private sitting-rooms...[has] a cabinet...of the style which has been formed of late years, chiefly on the basis of the Gothic, whilst having a character of its own, and which can be more easily brought to the minds of readers by an allusion to furniture in recent International Exhibitions.*<sup>65</sup>

An ebonized and gilded overmantel mirror (Fig. 3) made for a first-floor drawing room of the hotel,<sup>66</sup> displays similar Talbert design elements and relates closely to a Talbert sketch published in the *Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher*.<sup>67</sup> The architectonic form, with its coved top, applied boss motifs, and muscular carved elements, is relieved by the inclusion of a delicately rendered figural panel above the glass. Large overmantel mirrors, often in gilded frames, were supplied throughout the hotel, in the public rooms as well as the bedrooms, providing a means to amplify the limited light produced by candles and the gas fittings. The Gillow estimate sketch for this piece, dated April 1876 (Pl. XIV), is nearly identical to the overmantel mirror as executed. The intricate details of the frame's cove molding, carved rosettes, and turned spindles are translated directly from design to finished object.<sup>68</sup>

A wardrobe (Pls. XVI, XVIa), perhaps made for the Midland Grand Hotel, is

closely related to both a published Talbert design and a Gillow estimate sketch.<sup>69</sup> The controlled geometric panels recall other documented work of Talbert and provide a pleasing contrast to the mirrored center and the flanking panels of thuya veneer outlined in black. Given the type of wood used and the elaborate nature of the decoration, this type of wardrobe was probably used in one of the private bedrooms on the first floor, such as room number 32, a "double bedded room [furnished with] walnut, thuya, black & gold furniture" including a "6 ft. 6 in. 3 door wardrobe."<sup>70</sup>



The chair with a single row of turned spindles for which Gillow's estimate sketch is shown in Plate III is a reduction of the more typical Talbert-designed side chair published in *Fashionable Furniture* as plate number 27.<sup>71</sup> The Midland chair, with its ring turned front legs, is a sturdier model, its proportions reflecting its institutional use. This type of chair was probably used in some of the bedrooms since they are estimated in the sketchbooks with different upholstery options: "stuffing and covering seat in red moquette," also in tapestry and in a cotton print,<sup>72</sup> reflecting the hierarchy of the hotel's room decorations. Other architect-designed chairs supplied by Gillow included

"Oak 'Edis' chairs, seats & backs in brown Morocco" (see Pl. IX)<sup>73</sup> for the first and second floor corridors. The "Edis pattern" chair, referring to the architect, Robert William Edis (1839–1927),<sup>74</sup> represents another expression of reformed Gothic taste, appearing in the Gillow estimate sketchbooks as early as May 5, 1870.<sup>75</sup>

While evidence of Talbert's involvement with this commission has to remain conjectural, the influence of his designs on Gillow's production is well established.<sup>76</sup> The firm's style was for years shaped by the work of freelance designers such as Talbert, Edis, Charles Bevan (w. c. 1860–1882),<sup>77</sup> Henry William Batley (1846–1932),<sup>78</sup> and Thomas Edward Colcutt (1840–1924), many of whom promoted the modern Gothic taste. One contemporary source commented that "some excellent specimens of Gothic furniture are to be seen at the premises of Messrs. Gillow and Co... from the designs of Messrs. Bevan, Talbert and Jefferson."<sup>79</sup> Given the lack of documentation, it is unclear whether Talbert continued designing for Gillow on a regular basis after 1871 or whether the Talbert style was simply adopted and fully integrated into the firm's production, as Talbertian details dominated much of commercial furniture design in England for more than twenty years.

The architect-designer Edward William Godwin was also involved in the decoration of the hotel. One of the most striking architectural features of the interior is the grand staircase, a magnificent double stair extending three stories that joins the western wing to the main building (see Pl. XIII). The massive exposed girders and iron balustrade recall the architectural features of the adjacent terminus. The vaulted ceiling, with its stone ribs and carved bosses, is rendered as a starry night sky surrounded by eight panels painted with the



Virtues, alternating with stylized fruit trees, and the coat of arms of the Midland Railway (Pl. X).<sup>80</sup> While most of the original decorative painting in the hotel's interiors is credited to Frederick Sang (w. 1846–1884)<sup>81</sup> under the supervision of Scott, this particular scheme is documented as having been designed by Godwin, who was hired by Gillow in 1877 on a freelance basis to carry out this Gothic-inspired painted figural decoration.<sup>82</sup>

The eastern wing of the Midland Grand Hotel opened to the public on May 5, 1873, to much fanfare and praise. It was declared by a contemporary source to be “unsurpassed and probably unequalled for combined comfort and magnificence in Europe.”<sup>83</sup> The rest of the building did not open until the spring of 1876, with interior work continuing through February 1877. The final payment for Gillow's work in the hotel was made on May 8, 1877, the total for the whole job coming to £22,974 15s 6d.<sup>84</sup> While little remains of its former magnificence,<sup>85</sup> the photographs and period descriptions of the Midland Grand Hotel call forth an image of rail travel on a scale never before achieved. Its luxurious comfort was praised expansively by the *House Furnisher and Decorator*:

*There is no more remarkable example at this day, of an union of the allied arts with commercial enterprise, than the hotel which, with waste of a word, the proprietors or directors call the “Midland Grand.”*<sup>86</sup>

I gratefully acknowledge the generous assistance of the following in the preparation of this article: Frances Collard, Martin Levy, Roderick Shelton, and Bill Turner.

#### Facing page:

Fig. 3. Overmantel mirror made for a first-floor drawing room of the Midland Grand Hotel. *English Heritage, National Monuments Record.*

Pl. XIV. Design for “An ebonized & Gilt Chimney Glass” in Gillow Estimate Sketch Book, 344/115, April 1876. *City of Westminster Archives Centre.*

Pl. XV. Three-handled “Loving Cup,” made by Elkington and Company (c. 1836–1968), Birmingham, 1874. Engraved “THE MIDLAND GRAND/HOTEL” on the front. Electroplated nickel silver with gilt interior; height 7, width 11 inches. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

#### This page:

Fig. 4. Sideboard in the Grand Coffee Room, Midland Grand Hotel, in a photograph of June 1876. *Science and Society Picture Library and National Railway Museum.*

<sup>1</sup> The Midland Railway Terminus at Saint Pancras Station was built between 1866 and 1868 to the designs of William Henry Barlow (1812–1902), the consulting engineer for the railroad. Under a single span roof constructed of iron and glass without intermediate internal supports, the structure measured approximately 240 feet wide, 100 feet high, and 690 feet long. For twenty-five years the roof remained the widest single span in Britain. The terminal was celebrated for its size and practicality and clearly demonstrated the railway's commitment to properly servicing the city of London. For more about the building of Saint Pancras Station, see Clement E. Stretton, *The History of the Midland Railway* (Methuen, London, 1901), pp. 174–186; and Jack Simmons, *St. Pancras Station* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the architecture of London's railway stations, see Alan A. Jackson, *London's Termini* (David and Charles, Newton Abbot, England, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> *Building News and Engineering Journal*, vol. 29 (August 6, 1875), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain, Public Record Office (hereafter cited as PRO), RAIL 491/280, minutes 101. A subcommittee of the board of directors of the Midland Company, the South Construction Committee, was responsible for overseeing the building of Saint Pancras Station and the hotel. The minutes of this committee's twice monthly meetings provide significant detail about the management of these projects. The architects who participated in the competition were Edward Walters, Edward Middleton Barry, George Somers Clarke, Henry Lloyd, Thomas Charles Sorby, Frederick Pepys Cockerell, Henry Francis Lockwood, and Sir George Gilbert Scott (Simmons, *St. Pancras Station*, p. 48).

<sup>5</sup> Scott was widely known not only for his construction and restoration of churches but also for his secular designs. For more about his career, see David Cole, *The Work of Sir Gilbert Scott* (Architectural Press, London, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Scott's initial design included two extra floors of bedrooms and was estimated to cost more than £50,000 more than the next most expensive design in the competition. As a result, it was all the more visually impressive and compelling to the board. Furthermore, Scott was considered to be at the height of his career at the time, and the company must have recognized the prestige that would follow from having its presence in London built by such an esteemed architect. For a discussion of this architectural competition, see Simmons, *St. Pancras Station*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>7</sup> “Railway termini and hotels are to the nineteenth century what monasteries and cathedrals were to the thirteenth century” (*Building News and Engineering Journal*, vol. 29 [August 6, 1875], p. 133).

<sup>8</sup> To cut costs, two floors of station offices and one floor of the hotel were eliminated, and the height of the clock tower was reduced (Simmons, *St. Pancras Station*, p. 52).

<sup>9</sup> PRO, RAIL 491/282, minutes 1444, 1449.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson and Graham (1836–1885) of 37 Oxford Street, London, was celebrated for its high quality furniture and is often considered the most important nineteenth-century cabinetmaking firm. See Clive Edwards, “The Firm of Jackson and Graham,” *Furniture History Society Journal*, vol. 34 (1998), pp. 238–265.

<sup>11</sup> Founded as Taprell and Holland in 1803, the London firm of Holland and Sons (c. 1843–1942) was responsible for furnishing the Reform Club and the Athenaeum, both in London, as well as providing furniture for several royal commissions including Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, and Osborne House, Isle of Wight. See Edward Joy, “Holland and Sons: A Victorian Furnishing Firm” (typescript in the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

<sup>12</sup> Doveston, Bird, and Hull was a prominent regional firm located at 106 King Street, Manchester, and an early employer of the architect and designer Bruce James Talbert.

<sup>13</sup> By 1872 Robert Rough and Son was recorded in the London directories as cabinetmaker, upholsterer, appraiser, and undertaker at Saint Paul's Churchyard with an additional location at Exhibition Road. I thank Frances Collard for this information.

<sup>14</sup> Gillow and Company was a firm of cabinetmakers, upholsterers, and decorators founded by Robert Gillow I (1704–1772) in Lancaster about 1730. A London branch was established at 176 Oxford Street in 1769. For more about the early work of the firm, see Lindsay Boynton, *Gillow Furniture Designs, 1760–1800* (Bloomfield Press, Royston, England, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Jackson and Graham submitted the highest tender at £22,051 2s 4d followed by Gillow at £21,543. Gillow's ten-



der was accepted on December 3, 1872 (PRO, RAIL 491/282, minutes 1452). It is likely that the board gave weight to the fact that Gillow was a regular customer of the Midland Railway, as much of the furniture made in Lancaster was shipped to London by train (344/46, Cash Book, 1874–1881, Gillow and Company Archives, City of Westminster Archives Centre, London).

<sup>16</sup> The firm was awarded a prize for its so-called Pet Sideboard, designed by Talbert, displayed at the London International Exhibition of 1872, and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

<sup>17</sup> *Gillow's: A Record of a Furnishing Firm during Two Centuries* (Harrison and Sons, London, 1901), pp. 70–71.

<sup>18</sup> After the death of Richard Gillow I (1733–1811) the partnership underwent a series of structural changes. With the business sold the last family members associated with the firm gradually withdrew capital until about 1820 (Boynton, *Gillow Furniture Designs*, p. 15, n. 2).

<sup>19</sup> James Moon, Isaac Hunter Donaldson, Samuel James Harris, and James Carter Moon were listed as the partners of the firm in 1863 (*Gillow's: A Record of a Furnishing Firm*



during *Two Centuries*, pp. 70–71).

<sup>20</sup> In 1897 a series of corporate acquisitions took place: Collinson and Lock, Art Furnishers of Oxford Street (successors to Jackson and Graham), T. J. Bontor and Sons, Oriental rug and carpet importers of Bond Street, and S. J. Waring and Sons, Irish linen merchants and wholesale cabinetmakers of Liverpool, merged with Gillow and subsequently became known as Waring and Gillow (*ibid.*, p. 71). Waring and Gillow gained prominence as interior designers and decorators, fitting out hotels, theaters, and yachts among other private commissions. The firm was dissolved in 1938.

<sup>21</sup> Amanda Girling-Budd, "Holland and Sons of London and Gillows of London and Lancaster: A Comparison of Two Nineteenth-Century Furniture Firms" (master's thesis, Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art, London, 1998), p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> For more on this rich period of progressive design, see Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement* (Phaidon, London, 1996). By 1876 Gillow had listed itself in the directories as both cabinetmaker and art furniture manufacturer (cited in Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* [Praeger, New York, 1969], p. 128).

<sup>23</sup> *Building News and Engineering Journal*, vol. 26 (April 17, 1874), p. 437.

<sup>24</sup> While the surviving Gillow and Company Archives are extraordinary in depth (197 volumes for the period from 1731 through 1932), no records of the London branch survive with the exception of a late nineteenth-century upholstery sample book and some sketches of interior schemes from the early nineteenth century. Generally speaking, the records for the firm during the nineteenth century are far

from complete and, as a consequence, leave much to speculation. It must be assumed, for example, that some of the furniture for the Midland Grand Hotel was made in London as the first estimates in the Lancaster records are dated after the opening of the hotel and several years after the firm won the initial tender. The records for the Lancaster branch of Gillow are in the City of Westminster Archives Centre.

<sup>25</sup> Gillow was also commissioned in March 1874 to make a massive oval mahogany table for the Midland Railway boardroom in Derby. Measuring twenty-eight feet long by thirteen feet across, the table was supported on ten carved legs and cost more than eighty-four pounds to make (Gillow Estimate Sketch Book, 344/112, p. 8652 [cited hereafter as GESB]).

<sup>26</sup> GESB, 344/114, p. 9550.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9449.

<sup>28</sup> "Midland Grand Hotel London, Inventory of Furniture, Fittings, &c." (2003–8600, National Railway Museum, York), pp. 1–8 (hereafter cited as Midland Grand Inventory). I thank Robert Thorne of Alan Baxter and Associates, London, for bringing this ledger to my attention.

<sup>29</sup> "Furniture in the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras," *House Furnisher and Decorator*, vol. 3, no. 30 (July 1873), p. 98.

<sup>30</sup> The total number of bedrooms in the hotel is estimated in several sources. *Building News and Engineering Journal*, vol. 26, p. 554, stated that "the whole available area of floors contains about 500 rooms, besides lifts, bathrooms, &c." Frederick S. Williams, *The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise* (London, 1877), p. 348, writes that above the first floor "there are from three to four hundred other bedrooms, of various sizes, but all fin-

ished and furnished with completeness."

<sup>31</sup> "Furniture in the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras," p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> This figure was calculated from data recorded in the Midland Grand Inventory.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, *The Midland Railway*, pp. 347–348.

<sup>35</sup> Moncure Daniel Conway, *Travels in South Kensington: With Notes on Decorative Art and Architecture in England* (London, 1882), pp. 126–127.

<sup>36</sup> The peacock, long considered a symbol of the aesthetic movement, was adopted as a motif for wallpaper, textiles, and interior decorative details, most notably in the so-called Peacock Room at 49 Prince's Gate, London. Originally designed by Thomas Jeckyll (1827–1881) and painted by James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) for the shipping magnate Frederick Richards Leyland (1831–1892), the room is now permanently installed in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

<sup>37</sup> PRO, RAIL 491/282, minutes 1826. Gillow requested an "increase [in] the amount of allowance for decoration [of the Coffee Room] from £6500 to £7000, which was declined."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes 1917.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes 1949.

<sup>40</sup> An estimate sketch for the "Kensington" side chair marked for the Grand Coffee Room is dated September 3, 1875 (GESB 344/137, 203).

<sup>41</sup> Midland Grand Inventory, p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> Alternatively, Jeremy Cooper postulates that the design may have been executed by Thomas Graham Jackson (1835–1924), "an ex-assistant of Scott's" (Jeremy Cooper, *Victorian and Edwardian Décor: From the Gothic Revival to Art Nouveau* [Abbeville Press, New York, 1987], p. 91).

<sup>43</sup> Midland Grand Inventory, p. 157.

<sup>44</sup> Elkington and Company was a leading firm of metalworkers founded in Birmingham. Between September 1873 and April 1876 the firm supplied the hotel with silver-plated objects, such as venison dishes, saltcellars, ice pails, and candlesticks, receiving £9,399.1s in payment (Midland Grand Inventory, p. 80). The three-handled "Loving Cup" design was registered in 1872 and first appeared in an Elkington pattern book one year later. There are several pieces of Elkington electroplate from the Midland Grand commission in the National Railway Museum in York, including a meat plate, a candle holder, a pastry fork, and an oval dish.

<sup>45</sup> Midland Grand Inventory, p. 151.

<sup>46</sup> Billiard tables were supplied by Gillow and the firm of Burroughes and Watts (1835–), London. "A handsome, solid, light oak, Gothic, full-sized Billiard table of elegant design, with massive carved legs & ebonized mouldings" was made by Burroughes and Watts at a cost of £126 (Midland Grand Inventory, p. 199).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> "Furniture in the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras," p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> Midland Grand Inventory, p. 11. In addition to the octagonal center table in the photograph, a writing table, a card and sofa table, a three-tiered whatnot, and footstools were made for each sitting room.

<sup>50</sup> Austrian bentwood furniture, a nineteenth-century innovation, was highly fashionable during this period, particularly the rocking chair, which was introduced by Thonet Brothers (1853–1922) in 1860 (Alessandro Alverà et al., *Bent Wood and Metal Furniture, 1850–1946*, ed. Derek Ostergard [University of Washington Press, Seattle, and American Federation of Arts, New York, 1987], p. 228). The rocking chair, while supplied by Gillow, was probably purchased in London since Austrian firms such as Thonet Brothers and J. and J. Kohn had distribution sites throughout Europe.

<sup>51</sup> "Resolved that Messrs. Erard be requested to supply the Hotel with 10 pianos for the best sitting rooms namely, one Grand, four Oblique and five Cottage all in Walnut cases" (PRO, RAIL 491/282, minutes 1496).

<sup>52</sup> Pat Kirkham, "The London Furniture Trade, 1700–1870," *Furniture History Society Journal*, vol. 24 (1988), pp. 57–71.

<sup>53</sup> Other institutional and hotel commissions recorded in the

