
A Visit to Hawarden

Tony Little describes the Gladstone family home.

Gladstone lived a somewhat peripatetic lifestyle; the index to the diaries lists some seventeen different London homes, not including the Dollis Hill home he borrowed in later life. When not in London he was often at one of the great houses of the Whig aristocracy or of other friends. But if anywhere could be called home it was Hawarden Castle.

Hawarden is a village in Flintshire in North Wales, and the Castle was the property of Gladstone's wife Catherine's family. When the family got into financial difficulties over an unwise investment in an iron and brickworks at Stourbridge, it was the resources of the Gladstone family which came to the rescue. From thereon, Gladstone and his family

shared the house with Sir Stephen Glynne, and Gladstone's family inherited the estate. The house remains in the family and is not open to the public. It was a great privilege for those who attended the Chester centenary conference (see pp. 43–44) to be able to visit Gladstone's home.

The house is approached through a grand mock-castle gate entrance in the village and requires a 15–20 minute walk which passes the ruins of the medieval castle. The main part of the house is a classic eighteenth century home, not built on an unduly grand scale, which has been clad in stone with mock battlements added in a Regency Gothic style. Under Gladstone's occupation it was extended to include the

Temple of Peace, and the Octagon room, which was used for the storage of state and important family papers. We were allowed to see the downstairs rooms. These were simply furnished but rich in portraits of the family – in which it was interesting to note how the features of the young Catherine just before marriage were clearly recognisable in the later portraits. The furniture in the dining room was still the original.

The largest room was the drawing room, which had also served as the library in times past. On what must be the north wall are still the fake book cases with titles bearing witness to the family's sense of humour – *Ascent of Cader-Idris* by Anthony Strollope Esq, *An Israelite Without Guile* by Ben Disraeli. It is through the hidden door in one of these bookcases that access is gained to the Temple of Peace – Gladstone's study – which is largely unchanged since his day.

In it are to be found the desk in the window where he worked and the desk in the centre where he studied. In this room he wrote his famous pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities. Around the walls are some of the bookcases which he designed himself to jut out into the room, providing the maximum space for books on the two sides and at the ends facing inwards. One of these was used to record the heights of the family at various ages, and Sir William Gladstone, who acted as our guide, indicated that the GOM had been recorded as 5ft 11½". Lying scattered around are the great seal of office of 1859, one of the many axes presented to him in acknowledgment of his tree-felling, and a wheelbarrow which came from the opening of a railway. On top of the bookcases are a series of busts, including, unexpectedly, a bust of Disraeli to stare down at his rival at work. On the wall is the Millais portrait of Gladstone and one of his grandchildren. Perhaps the most poignant document we saw in this year was the original of his will, written in his own hand over eight pages of a ½d notebook.



HAWARDEN CASTLE, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST. PHOTO BY H. TITZEL and Co., ALBANY.

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candidate's speeches were regularly punctured with staccato cries of 'rabbits!, rabbits!', and occasionally with worse: *Amberly Papers*, II, 208, 209–10, 212, 219–20, 223, 235 and other refs.

30 Freeden, p. 35.

31 Freeden, p. 219, 209.

32 Freeden, pp. 218, 222.

33 Freeden, p. 14. Hobhouse's exact words were: 'the interests of every man are no doubt in the end bound up with the welfare of the whole community, but the

relation is infinitely subtle and indirect ... the direct and calculable benefit of the majority may by no means coincide with the ultimate good of society as a whole'. It is a line of thought whose debt to Mill's *Utilitarianism* is surely clear.

34 J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, (ed. Stefan Collini, 1989), p. 95.

35 Grimond, p. 43.

36 Paddy Ashdown, speech at party conference, Cardiff, 9 March 1997.

37 Paddy Ashdown, *Beyond Westminster*, p. 6.

38 Paddy Ashdown, speech in London, 8 April 1997.

39 Paddy Ashdown, Friendship Group annual lecture, 16 June 1997.