

# LASSCO

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## A SET OF THREE VICTORIAN GOTHIC ROSEWOOD AND BRASS MORTISE SETS,

c.1875, removed from Sir George Gilbert Scott's gothic masterpiece - The Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras,

comprising three pairs of rosewood handles with a reeded grip and coned face with generous rose-plates with a scalloped edge, the knobs tightened to the spindle with replacement hexi-drive grub-screws, each set supplied with a pair of beehive escutcheons designed en suite,

DIMENSIONS: 6cm (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) Wide, 7cm (2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " ) Deep, each door knob

STOCK CODE: 45958



### HISTORY

The Victorian Web gives this summary of the Midland Grand Hotel:

“Sir George Gilbert Scott’s Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras, on the Euston Road in north-west London, is one of the most prominent and best-loved monuments to the Gothic Revival in the capital. Aptly described as “the gorgeous fruit of his great disappointment”, it expresses the vision that the architect had fought unsuccessfully to embody at the Foreign Office in Whitehall. Having been forced to give way and deliver a neo-classical complex at that stage of the Battle of the Styles, he designed the Midland Grand in his preferred mode instead. When writing his memoirs, he still seems bitter about the earlier defeat, grumbling that the St Pancras building was “possibly too good for its purpose”. But it has turned out to be great landmark all the same.

The purpose-built hotel was already a familiar part of the railway network when Scott first drew up his plans. The earliest hotel built specifically to serve a station had been constructed just up

the road at Euston Station, opening “by stages, beginning in September 1839”. The next ones to open in London were at King’s Cross and Paddington in 1854. The latter, the Great Western Hotel designed by P. C. Hardwick, was the real milestone: it dominated the station itself, and was truly big and grand. Obviously, the commercial possibilities of such a hotel had now been recognised and were being fully exploited. Other large hotels followed. But the Midland Grand, built 1868-76, was something else again, “perhaps the most spectacular Victorian hotel of any kind, except the Grand at Scarborough” (Simmons 39). Proudly announcing the arrival of the Midland Company in the capital, both station and hotel were to be really special. Unlike the other hotels mentioned, but like those already constructed at Charing Cross and Canon Street, this hotel was an integral part of the whole design, stretching along the station front and both screening and giving access to it.

There were occasional problems... but on the whole the Midland Grand, with its advanced as well as luxurious amenities, like “speaking tubes” and the potentially dangerous “ascending chambers” (i.e. lifts), flourished during the nineteenth century.

However, the huge palatial structure was getting too costly to maintain. Besides, by the early twentieth century, its High Victorian opulence had gone out of fashion. Arthur Mee, the historian and editor of the King’s England series, a dependable barometer of taste in this period, echoes the view of it as “Scott’s tawdry masterpiece”. It was closed in 1935, and became increasingly the particular butt of critics “for its size and pretension, its colour and ornamentation,” not to mention its apparently “rather improper association of cathedral architecture with railway lines” (Sir John Summerson, qtd. in Stamp). A few decades later it was still in use as railway company offices under the name of St Pancras Chambers — but fast deteriorating inside.

Yet, as demolition loomed, the beleaguered Midland Grand became a *cause célèbre*. Today it has further significance in the history of architecture. In its splendid reincarnation, it represents the greatest triumph of a whole spate of campaigns to preserve Britain’s Victorian heritage. Its future was secured by its upgrading from a Grade III to a Grade I listing in 1967, and the London & Continental Railways at length took steps towards finding developers for its costly and painstaking restoration. Completed in 2011, the renamed St Pancras Renaissance Hotel gives us a good idea of the Midland Grand’s original impact.”

