

## Dante Gabriel Rossetti's letters

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, poet and painter, was a friend of Sarah's cousin, Margaret Alicia Losh. He was her guest for two nights at Ravenside in 1869. On Saturday 21st August he wrote with enthusiasm to his mother, addressing her with his customary filial salutation:

'Good Antique,

Here I am since Thursday afternoon, as I know you will be glad to hear in your maternal solicitude. I left London on Tuesday, and spent two nights and a day at old Miss Losh's house near Carlisle, where, as you may be sure, she made me very comfortable. I saw in the neighbourhood some most remarkable architectural works by a former Miss Losh, who was the head of the family about the year 1830. She must have been really a great genius, and should be better known. She built a church in the Byzantine style, which is full of beauty and imaginative detail, though extremely severe and simple. Also a mausoleum to her sister - a curious kind of Egyptian pile of stones with a statue of the lady in the centre, and opposite a Saxon cross - a sort of obelisk, reproduced from an old one, but with restorations by the lady herself. Also a Pompeiian house for the schoolmaster, a parsonage, and a most interesting cemetery-chapel attached to a cemetery which she presented to the parish before such things were instituted by law. The chapel is an exact reproduction of one which was found buried in the sands in Cornwall, and excited a good deal of controversy at the time under the name of 'The Lost Church!' She also built a large addition to the family mansion at Woodside in the Tudor style. All these things are real works of genius, but especially the church at Wreay, a most beautiful thing. She was entirely without systematic study as an architect, but her practical as well as inventive powers were extraordinary. I am sure that the whole of this group of her works would interest you extremely, and I should suggest your paying a visit to the neighbourhood on one of your holidays.'

He also wrote with equal enthusiasm to Janey Morris, the wife of William Morris:

'I have been here since last Thursday, having spent a day on the road at old Miss Losh's house near Carlisle. The neighbourhood there is a beautiful one, and there are some really extraordinary architectural works - a church of a byzantine style and other things - erected from her own designs by a lady of Miss Losh's family who has been dead some years and who must certainly have been a true genius. The works are very original and beautiful, very much more so than the things done by the young architects now, and they were done as far back as 1830 without any professional assistance or directed study, though the practical part of them is quite as remarkable as the invention. I was very much interested and should like Webb to see them. The place is called Wreay.'

In 1878, Philip Webb, the architect of the Morris's south London home, the Red House, built his only church, St Martin's, in Brampton.