Magniac Mausoleum

This monument takes the form of a great stone chest. The cornice is supported at the corners by corbels and cherubs; the sides are adorned with cartouches flanked by inscriptions; and the frieze is formed by a colourful band of inlaid stonework. It is this exuberant marble decoration - so foreign to England but frequently seen in Italian churches – that is the glory of the monument. There is also a fine memorial to Magniac inside the church.

Churchyard of St Peter
Sharnbrook
Bedfordshire
MK44 1HU
England

Scan for Google Maps Link

Architects
William Burges

Year Built
1870

Style
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Listing
Grade II (England and Wales)

Condition
Fair. The shelter is in need of repair (2002).

History
The Magniacs were a Huguenot family. Although originally clockmakers, Hollingworth Magniac (d.1867) made his fortune from the opium trade in China. It was this that enabled him to buy the Manor of Colworth and fill his house with an eclectic collection of Rococo and Florentine furniture as well as medieval works of art. His son Charles Magniac (1829-91) who became MP for Bedford and the first Chairman of the County Council, was equally interested in aesthetic matters. He believed that the great secret of art lay in originality, and it was he who, after his father's death, commissioned William Burges to design the mausoleum. By 1900, because the marble inlay on the monument was deteriorating, a “rough shed” had been erected to protect it from the weather. Whether the present structure is the original “shed” or a later building is not clear.

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Sources

BoE: Beds (1968), 141;
H Colvin, Architecture and the After-Life (1991), 212;
J Mordaunt Crook, William Burges and the High Victorian Dream (1981), 153-4, 373, 432;
Church Handbook.

Photos

Location

SatNav Co-ordinates: 52.225574, -0.54563

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