

# Pugin Society

## e-newsletter

Issue 12

April 2021

### Apologies

I apologise for my rather tardy replies to e-mails sent by members and for the late publication of this e-newsletter. My Mac computer crashed and spent just over a week in the repair shop. It then took me several days to sort out all the files and programs and get it working again - hence the delays. It is surprising how much we all rely upon our computer; something that never becomes obvious until we are without it.

John Elliott, Editor

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### Stanbrook Abbey

Rory O'Donnell

Sarah Houle's historic postcards on Stanbrook Abbey are important evidence, with a family connection. SEW Pugin's church (1869-1871) appears in my *The Pugins in the Catholic Midlands* (Gracewing 2002) where its fittings by Boulton, JH Powell, Hardman & Co and Minton & Co. are noted. There were in fact two re-orderings, that of 1936-7 which Sarah's aunt would have known, and that of 1971. We also have the much anticipated *Life and Works of Edward Welby Pugin* by Gerard Hyland to look forward to. Both of these are antidotes to nonsense quoted from the hotel website. There is also a surprisingly authoritative Wikipedia entry: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanbrook\\_Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanbrook_Abbey)

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### Letter to the Editor

In her article in *Present State* No 18 on "The Pugin Society celebrates 25 years in print", Judith Al-Seffar quotes from the Chairman's letter in the first number of *True Principles* (1996):-

"We feel that there are two strands in the Society: one, Pugin scholars and specialists, and two, those who are very interested amateurs. We hope that the Newsletter will reflect both these elements."

Over the course of time *True Principles* has evolved from an A4 booklet containing a wide range of articles, notices, reviews and Puginian ephemera into a more compact volume subtitled *The Journal, of the Pugin Society*, along the lines of more academic publications. It now comes out once a year. To compensate for this a new publication, *Present State*, was launched, and this in turn has grown into a full-colour, glossy A4 publication which includes articles, news items, regional reports, and book reviews. It has established itself as the main organ of communication for the society, supplemented from April 2020 by an on-line monthly newsletter, which has also expanded in size as members have responded to its immediacy, especially during the pandemic.

We are extraordinarily lucky to enjoy such a rich range of publications for a relatively small society, and we owe a real debt of gratitude to those who edit and produce them. However, as I mentioned at the end of my

piece on the society in the latest *Present State*, there are three questions I think we need as a society to reflect upon. Firstly, how sustainable are three publications in the long term? Will enough original material continue to flow in to fill them? Secondly, what is the relationship between these three modes of communication? And thirdly, does the existence of the two more recent publications, *Present State* and the e-newsletter, threaten to overshadow and marginalise what has been our flagship publication, *True Principles*? This last question also raises the issue which our first Chairman, Judith Crocker, raised in 1996, and which I quoted at the beginning of this piece: how do we strike a balance between the generalist and the specialist, between amateur interest and academic research, and how is that best reflected in our publications? I would be interested to know what our editors and our members think, and celebrating our 25th anniversary seems a good time to start the conversation.

David Meara

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## Rev H.E.G. Rope, Pugin's Third Biographer

Timothy J. McCann

When, in 1957, the archivist to the Venerable English College in Rome retired from his labours, it is said that he had never used a motor-car, and the story goes that he refused the use of a car to take him on his way to the railway station, and insisted on a horse & cart instead. He delighted in the words and phrases he invented to show his disdain for the motor-car and for all kinds of “progress” and development. He called cars “oil-wains” and “petrolleys”, referred to drivers as “motorious” and called modern roads “bituminous skating rinks”. Throughout, the inventive language he used for the changes he abhorred was forceful and full of scorn and despair. His philosophy was summed up in an article in which he wrote: ‘must we indeed go with the times? In that case the Ten Commandments will go by the board, or most of them. They are not exactly in the fashion. And if the times have taken, as world appear, the gadarine swine for their model, I humbly beg to be excused from following the majority or falling into line behind the big drum of progress. Progress quotha! When you have told me whence and wither I will be more ready to listen to you. Non nequiores!’<sup>1</sup> This splendidly eccentric archivist was Pugin’s third biographer – the Rev. H.E.G. Rope.

In December 1935 the St. Dominic’s Press at Ditchling published *Pugin* by the Rev. H.E.G. Rope, printed by Hilary Pepler and Michael Sewell [Fig 1].<sup>2</sup> It is a short 42 page book printed in Caslon Old Face type on Arnold and Foster unbleached hand-made paper. 300 copies were printed. Writing many years later, Michael Sewell, by then Fr. Brocard, reflected that he did not hold out much hope for the book - ‘One might have thought that after Sir Kenneth Clark’s book on the Gothic Revival and Michael Trappes-Lomax’s magisterial life of Pugin, there was little more that needed saying on the subject. The indifference of the public seemed to bear this out’<sup>3</sup> Fr. Rope was well-known to Hilary Pepler and the community at Ditchling being an ardent distributist and a regular writer in *G.K.’s Weekly*. But unlike the biographies of Benjamin Ferrey and Michael Trappes-Lomax, Fr Rope’s study was a literary study rather than a true biography, and, as Fr. Brocard concluded it ‘was a lively essay and is still worth reading’

Fr. Rope made clear that his intention in writing the book was very different from those of Ferrey and Trappes-Lomax. ‘Of Pugin the architect much has been written’, he wrote: ‘There is room, we hope, for a consideration of Pugin the Catholic apologist and writer. The church-builder of Cheadle and Ramsgate and Cotton has never yet received due honour as a master of English prose, varying from brilliant satire to clear exposition or doughty argument and rising at times to a fervent eloquence’. The book he wrote is a distillation of Pugin’s writings with extensive quotations from his works and a very readable introduction to his ideas displaying the full splendour of his language. Margaret Belcher described Fr. Rope’s book as ‘wanting to rehabilitate Pugin especially as a man governed always by a religious rather than an aesthetic motive’, but rather unkindly added that: ‘if *Contrasts* were capable of admitting Pugin to the rank of great writers, it could be expected to have done so before now’<sup>4</sup>

*Stones from the Brook: No. 3.*

# PUGIN

BY

H. E. G. ROPE, M.A.



PEPLER & SEWELL, PUBLISHERS  
ST DOMINIC'S PRESS, DITCHLING  
HASOCKS, SUSSEX.

1935

Fig. 1: Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Pugin*, 1935

later moving to Rushmere before finally settling at Quidenham. Here she continued her glass-making, being known in the community as Sister Margaret of the Mother of God. Her work can be seen all over the world – in America, Australia, Italy and South Africa as well as in England, where it can be seen in Shrewsbury Cathedral,<sup>5</sup> the convent at Quidenham and in the chapel of the Tyburn nuns in London. In 2016 there was an exhibition of her work at Shrewsbury Museum. She died in 1963.

Of his other siblings, Arthur Denys, born in 1884, the only one of the family to remain an Anglican, followed his father's profession as a doctor. He died in 1963. Ellen Monica, born in 1886 was a nursing nun and lived until 1977. Frederick Michael, born in 1888, was an aeronautical engineer. The only member of the family to die young, He was killed in the R101 disaster in 1930. Finally, Irene Mary, who was born in 1889 was a distinguished biologist and lived to a great age, finally dying in 1993.

Henry's most regular companion in his childhood was his sister Margaret, known to the family as Marga, and they remained close for the rest of their long lives. He was educated at Shrewsbury School and at Christ Church College, Oxford, where he graduated with a second class degree in English. In 1900 he paid his first visit to Germany, where he obtained an appointment to teach English to a German boy aged ten. He described his visit in an article in *Pax*,<sup>6</sup> which was chiefly remarkable for his revelation of the anti-British sentiments he came across because of the Boer War. He joined the staff of the Oxford English Dictionary in 1903, thus starting a relationship with the Dictionary that was to continue for the rest of his life. The archives of the Dictionary contain a host of quotations submitted by Fr. Rope from wherever he happened to find himself for the rest of his life. He had a habit of recycling whatever paper he had to hand. When I first saw these messages written on the backs of headed notepaper or postcards I felt that a complete itinerary of his life could be assembled from

Fr. Rope was born Henry Edward George Rope, the eldest of the six children of Henry John Rope, 1847-1899 and his wife, Agnes Maude nee Burd, 1859-1948, on 23 October 1880, at Atcham in Shropshire. His father was a medical practitioner and an active Anglo-Catholic, though very anti-Roman. When he died, his widow was quickly received into the Catholic church and five of her six children soon followed suit. Henry became a Catholic in 1907. His siblings were almost all long-lived and high achievers. Margaret, the nearest to him in age, was a distinguished stained-glass artist. She was born on 20 June 1882 and baptised in St. Mary's Shrewsbury on 7 July. She was received into the church in January 1901. She studied at Birmingham School of Art until 1909 and later moved to a studio in London, where she remained creating windows until, 1923. In that year she became a Carmelite nun at Woodbridge,



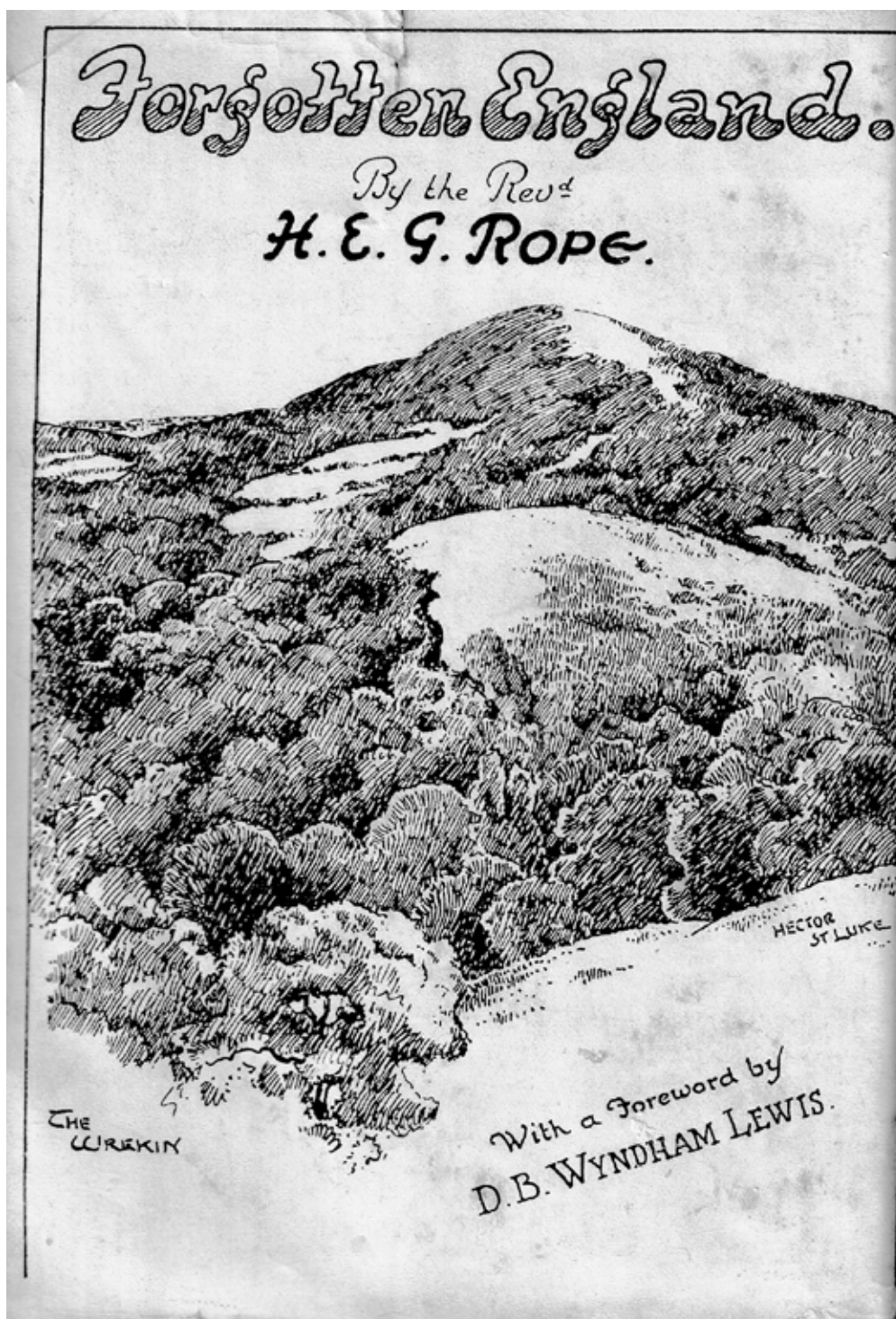


Fig. 2: Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Forgotten England and other Musings*, 1931

before serving as a curate at Crewe from 1917 to 1918. He was appointed Rector of Plowden, where he ministered from 1918 to 1924 before moving to Market Drayton from 1924 to 1926. He was then appointed chaplain to Mawley Hall, near Cleobury Mortimer, the home of the Blount family until the 1960s, where he remained from 1926 to 1937 and while stationed there he said Mass at Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire between 1929 to 1932.<sup>7</sup>

At this stage in his life, Fr. Rope would have regarded himself as a priest and poet. He had written poetry from a young age and published five volumes of verse during his time as a parish priest. First in 1916, he published *Religionis, Ancilla, and other verses*.<sup>8</sup> He followed this with *Souls Belfry, and other verses*,<sup>9</sup> which he published locally in 1919. In 1923 he published *The City of the Grail, and other verses*.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in 1925 he published *The Hills of Home, and other verses*.<sup>11</sup> His verses mixed lyrical descriptions of the local countryside with devotional poems. He even found time to edit the works of other poets. In 1923 he edited a volume of poems for Armel O'Connor,<sup>12</sup> a local poet whose work he often praised and quoted from in his prose writings. In 1931 he jointly produced *Round the Crooked Steeple. A Shropshire Harvest*<sup>13</sup> with Simon Evans. He continued writing poetry for the rest of his life and produced a final volume in his retirement.<sup>14</sup>

the quotations he sent back to Oxford. In 1905 he left the Dictionary for a post as lecturer in English at the University of Breslau then in Germany but now Wroclaw in Poland. After three years in Germany, during which, in 1907, he was received into the Catholic Church, he returned to work again on the Dictionary in 1908. He remained in Oxford until 1910, when he tried his vocation with the Benedictines at Erdington in Warwickshire, a community of mostly German members of the Beuronese congregation, who had been exiled by Bismark and who settled in Warwickshire from 1876 to 1922. When that did not work out well he transferred in 1911 to the Beda in Rome, which, at the time, was housed in the Venerable English College in the Via di Monserrato.

Following his studies, he was ordained priest in the Lateran Basilica in February 1915. Following his ordination, Fr. Rope returned to England and served as a parish priest for the next 22 years in areas such as Cheshire and Shropshire. He began his clerical career as a curate at St. Werburgh's in Chester from 1915 to 1917,



Fig. 3: Rev. H.E.G. Rope as a young man, 1880-1898

At the same time as writing his poetry, Fr. Rope produced a steady stream of prose writing. He wrote for *The Ampleforth Journal*, *Catholic Fireside*, *Catholic Gazette*, *Catholic Times*, *Catholic World*, *Cross*, *The Country Heart*, *G.K.'s Weekly*, *Irish Rosary*, *Pax*, *Shrewsbury Chronicle* and *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*. In 1931 he produced *Forgotten England, and other Musings*,<sup>15</sup> [Fig. 2], a characteristic miscellany of nostalgia and travel writing for those who still love and cherish an un-Americanised unpetrolised, honest English England', which he dedicated to Fr. Vincent McNabb, and which carried a trenchant forward by D.B. Wyndham Lewis. He even found time to undertake some editing, being editor of the *Catholic Review* from 1917 to 1918 and *The Ransomer* from 1932-1934, and displayed his distributist enthusiasm as editor of *Flee to the Fields* in 1934.

Despite his twenty years as a parish priest in his beloved Shropshire and his prolific writing career, Fr. Rope clearly did not have the temperament for the parish ministry and so was delighted when he was offered the post of archivist to the Venerable

English College, the English seminary in Rome in 1935, a post he held until his retirement in 1957.

Once settled in Rome, Fr. Rope continued to write poetry,<sup>16</sup> but his focus naturally turned to the College and to the history of his fellow countrymen. He began the custom of writing an historical article for the *Venerabile* each year, having contributed to the journal since 1923 and contributed regular historical articles to the *Month* and *New Blackfriars*. He celebrated the canonisation of the Henrician martyrs John Fisher and Thomas More<sup>17</sup> and published an admiring study of Pope Benedict XV.<sup>18</sup> He busied himself transcribing the Pilgrim Books in the archives and recording them in English rather than in Latin; he answered archival queries from all over the world and kept up a considerable correspondence with close friends such as Fr. Vincent McNabb and Monsignor John O'Connor, his extensive family a considerable number of his fellow clergy, his distributist friends, and a surprisingly large number of friends from his days in Shropshire. During the war he returned to England and was chaplain at Albrighton Hall from 1940-1944. He returned to the English College in 1944 and published his long awaited history of the College.<sup>19</sup> The controversialist was not far beneath the surface in Fr. Rope, ever since his study of Matthew Parker's ordination,<sup>20</sup> and he found an American publisher to produce his pamphlets, *Breaking the Net of Unbelief*,<sup>21</sup> and *Beginnings of the Anglican Church*.<sup>22</sup>



After retiring from the College, he moved to the Carmelite Convent at Quidenham, where he was able to rejoin his sister, but in 1959 he accepted the chaplaincy at Pallotti Hall at Siddington in Cheshire, where he served for ten years before returning to Quidenham and later to the hospital of Our Lady of Consolation in south east London. Fr Rope [Fig. 3] died on 1st March 1978 in his 98th year and after 64 years as a priest and is buried at the church of the Holy Family at Kesgrave in Ipswich

As Fr. G.A. Hay wrote of him ‘He dearly loved Rome and the Campagna, and the English College and Palazzola, but as time went on became horrified at the development of the city and its noisy traffic. His personal protest was to make his final departure from the college in a horse drawn carrozza. I knew him during my time in the college from 1953-1960, and for one year had the privilege of being his server. I learned to appreciate him as a man of great knowledge, with a good fund of stories about days gone by. He was Archivist of the college and could recount all kinds of detail about its long history. He was a collector of the minutiae of the past, an antiquary of the character of Leland, a fascinating man for his company and his conversation. He also had his own sense of humour with a delightful chuckle. I remained in touch with him after he left the college and had a note from him the Christmas before he died, still in a firm if slightly irregular hand. He always finished his letters recalling the happy days we had together in Rome. Henry Rope was a man who belonged to a different era, at home with the time of Belloc and Chesterton when life was slower and gentler. For him to have lived on into the age of the atom bomb, the supermarket and the computer was a penance’.<sup>23</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Father H.E.G.Rope: *Witness for Continuity* by Ronald Warwick in Christian Order, October 1978, pp. 452-455
- 2 Rev H.E.G. Rope, *Pugin. Stones from the Brook: No. 3* (St. Dominic’s Press, 1935).
- 3 Brocard Sewell, *My Dear Time’s Waste*. (Saint Albert’s Press, 1966), 78.
- 4 Margaret Belcher, *A.W.N. Pugin. An annotated critical Bibliography* (Mansell Publishing Limited 1987)
- 5 Rev Peter Phillips, ‘A Family recorded in Glass. The Windows of Margaret Roper in Shrewsbury Cathedral; in *Midland Catholic History*, no. 16, (209),
- 6 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, ‘Memories of Germany’, in *Pax*, Autumn 1923, 104-22.
- 7 Maurice Abbott, *To preserve their Memory* (2001)
- 8 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Religionis, Ancilla, and other verses* (London: Heath Cranston, 1916)
- 9 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Soul’s Belfry, and other verses* (Church Stretton: Stretton Press, 1919).
- 10 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *The City of the Grail, and other verses* (London: Burns, Oates & Co., 1923).
- 11 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *The Hills of Home, and other verses* (London: A.H. Stockwell, 1925)
- 12 Armel O’Connor, edited by the Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *What will you give to your Child*. (Ludlow: Mary’s Meadow Press, 1923)
- 13 Simon Evans and Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Round the Crooked Steeple. A Shropshire Harvest* (London: Heath Cranston, 1931).
- 14 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Dream Holiday, and other verses* (Ilfracombe: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1964).
- 15 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Forgotten England, and other musings* (London: Heath Cranston Limited, 1931)
- 16 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, ‘Pius XII. A Poem’, in *The Venerable*, vol. ix. No.2 (1939), 99.
- 17 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Fisher and More* (Alexander Ouseley, 1938).
- 18 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Benedict XV. The Pope of Peace* (John Gifford, 1941).
- 19 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *The Schola Saxonum. The Hospice and the English College at Rome* (1951).
- 20 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Matthew Parker’s Witness against Continuity* (London: Burns, Oates & Co., 1931).
- 21 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Breaking the Net of Unbelief* (Brooklyn: International Catholic Truth Society, 195x).
- 22 Rev. H.E.G. Rope, *Beginnings of the Anglican Church* (Brooklyn: International Catholic Truth Society, 195x)
- 23 Rev. George Hay, ‘Rev. H.E.G. Rope’, in *The Venerable*, vol. xxvi, no. 2, (1978), 73,

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## Pugin Family Funeral Hatchment

**Catriona Blaker**

After a rather nail-biting and prolonged anticipatory period the Pugin family funeral hatchment is now back from the restorers, Arte Conservation Ltd of Faversham. It was well worth the wait to see the Pugin arms so well restored and looking so proud and vibrant. There are still questions to be asked about the approach to heraldry the hatchment shows, the technique used, when it was painted, and by whom. Currently, the Somerset Herald at the College of Arms is looking at it and we at St Augustine’s await his comments; we would also welcome further thoughts from members. The Pugin Society contributed £500 towards the cost of restoration, which was £4,506, inclusive of VAT. Before and after images opposite.







## A W N Pugin by David Frazer Lewis

We have just received a review copy of the above and a review will either appear in a future edition of the e-newsletter or ideally in the next edition of True Principles.

David was the editor of True Principles before returning to the USA, where he now works in Notre Dame University in Indiana. We understand that he will shortly be taking up a position in Oxford.

The book has been published by Liverpool University Press on behalf of Historic England and the Victorian Society. There are 160 pages, and lots of photographs. You can buy it on Amazon for £30.

It is very nicely produced with good design and good printing. My only quibble as an ex-publisher is that it was printed in the Czech Republic. This is a bit sad as life is really hard for UK based litho printers. In recent years many have gone out of business (Alden & Information Press for example) and those who remain struggle financially because the cost of the large printing presses.

