

July 2006

Number 1

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Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Friends of Pugin

We are especially honoured to have as our Patrons: **The Hon. William Cox AC**, Governor of Tasmania, **Most Rev. Adrian Doyle DCL**, Archbishop of Hobart, **Dr Gerard Vaughan**, Director, National Gallery of Victoria, and **Mrs Dianne Weidner OAM**, Chairman, National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

It is our intention to publish a Newsletter every month. This inaugural Newsletter will give you a taste of the fascinating conservation activities being assisted by the Foundation, supplying you with detailed and up to the minute information not available elsewhere. We will also be bringing to you original material by noted Pugin scholar Brian Andrews on Pugin's work in both Australia and overseas. It will only be available in our Newsletter. We will be reporting on events and giving notice of future activities of the Foundation and its Friends.

Pugin's Australian heritage is truly unique and as Friends of Pugin you are its ambassadors. Through this Newsletter and future events, such as lectures and guided tours, we will equip you to make this marvellous heritage better known and appreciated by the people of Australia and overseas.



Brian Andrews points to distinctively Pugin characteristics of St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, after his lecture on 17 June 2006.

Brian Andrews, Executive Officer, Pugin Foundation, recently gave an illustrated lecture in Pugin's Church of St Francis Xavier, Berrima, as part of the

175th anniversary celebrations of the village. Over 80 people attended the most interesting talk which was followed by a wonderful afternoon tea. Special thanks to Linda Emery of Bowral who organized the event. A donation of \$600 to the Pugin Foundation was generously provided from the proceeds. The Foundation depends on donations and sponsorship for its ongoing conservation program.

Brian Andrews has been invited to speak about Pugin and his Australian and English works in Mudgee, NSW on 7 October 2006. He is speaking on the Gothic Revival for the Historic Houses Trust of NSW on 19 August, 2006.

A core objective of the Foundation is to involve the local community at all levels of conservation. We have been meeting with the Colebrook and wider community to share our plans, to listen to its views and to encourage its involvement. Consultants engaged in the 'Renaissance of St Patrick's, Colebrook' are a key part of this dialogue.

Please visit our new website
www.puginfoundation.org

With kind regards,
Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer



Colebrook residents Lyn and Mary-Anne Munnings with, at right, landscape architect Lesley Gulson of Ferndene Studio.



Damian Mackey, Manager, Development & Environmental Services, Southern Midlands Council, with Colebrook resident Gail Hughes-Gage.

The Renaissance of St Patrick's, Colebrook

The Pugin Foundation has selected this historic church in the Coal River valley, Southern Tasmania, as the initial focus for its activities in conserving Pugin's Australian heritage.



St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, early 1890s, before the fall of the bellcote.

Because of its unique position within Pugin's oeuvre, St Patrick's, Colebrook, designed in 1843 and constructed 1855-56—his last work to be built,

and that posthumously—is a building of international significance. This is for the following principal reasons:

1. The building as constructed was typologically unique amongst Pugin's churches. It was the only one with both an aisled clerestoried nave and a bellcote on the nave east gable.
2. It is one of only two Pugin churches constructed from a scale model, as opposed to architectural drawings.
3. On the continuum of Pugin's churches in terms of structural and decorative elaboration, St Giles, Cheadle, Staffordshire, arguably England's finest nineteenth-century church, occupies one extreme and St Patrick's, Colebrook, the other.
4. It is one of only a handful of Pugin churches with their rood screen still in situ. A rood screen is an open screen, surmounted by a crucifix, between the nave and chancel of a church, and is a furnishing which Pugin regarded as essential.

Over the past one and a half centuries the church has suffered the loss of its historic environs and also its unique bellcote. (Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read a contemporary account of the destruction of the bellcote by a mini tornado in September 1895.) The building is also in need of a range of structural and other remediation.

A Conservation Management Plan, based on internationally-recognised standards for the conservation of historic places, has been prepared for St Patrick's and its environs. Its policies will guide the Foundation's activities at Colebrook.

Works planned for the place include:

- Restoration of the rood screen
- Conservation of the furnishings
- Rehabilitation of the floors
- Structural remediation
- Conservation of the windows
- Reinstatement of the triple bellcote
- Production and installation of three bells
- New wiring and upgraded security
- New internal and external lighting design and installation
- New guttering and downpipes
- Repainting of the interior
- Production and installation of interpretive material & signage
- Re-integration of the cemetery with the church
- Reinstatement of the historic environment

To provide a rigorous basis for several of these works, consultancies have been set up dealing with:

- Reverse engineering of the bellcote drawings
- Bellcote structural analysis
- Landscape architecture
- Internal & external lighting
- Historic decorative finishes

In coming newsletters we will be sharing with you the findings of these consultancies, as well as providing you with an up to the minute account of the actual conservation activities.

This month we bring news of work to date on the conservation of the rood screen; but firstly, some background.

It was carved in Australian Cedar by Patrick Lynch, builder of the church. An Irish immigrant, Lynch arrived in Tasmania in 1854, having recently been engaged on the furnishings for Pugin's and J.G. Crace's decorative program for the Duke of Devonshire at Lismore Castle, County Waterford. The screen remained intact until the early 1970s, when it was transferred to the west end of the church. In that process its top beam was removed, and the crucifix was sawn from it and hung from the chancel arch. Some time later the screen, minus its top beam, was returned to its proper location and set up on carpet recently laid on the chancel floor. This is how it remained until early this year.

With the assistance of Colebrook resident and local historian Gail Hughes-Gage we were fortunate to track down two wedding photographs from c.1969 which showed the screen in its original condition. They provided the vital evidence about the missing top beam and triangular foot to the crucifix, essential to a faithful restoration.



Furniture restorer Tony Colman helps lower the rood screen crucifix to the floor.

The conservation task was placed in the hands of leading Tasmanian antique furniture restorer Tony Colman. On 20 March 2006 the screen was dismantled and transported by Artfast Removals to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery's furniture restoration workshops in Moonah, a northern suburb of Hobart.



The cleaned and French polished main section of the rood screen.

The screen has been lightly cleaned and minor repairs carried out. The patina of the woodwork has been respected and the evidence of its history, including several dents most likely caused by the collapse

of the chancel roof under the weight of the falling bellcote in 1895, retained. French polishing has returned a beautiful depth of lustre to the woodwork.

One of the two gates in the screen had lost its original cast iron hinges made in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, so two new copies have been cast locally from one of the original hinges and attached.

A new triangular cedar foot with carved blind trefoil to the face has been made and attached to the base of the crucifix, and the corpus (figure) on the cross has been carefully cleaned. This Pugin-designed corpus is of considerable interest, being one of some fourteen of varying sizes carved in White Pine and polychromed in 1847 by craftsmen employed by George Myers, Pugin's favoured builder, at his Ordnance Wharf, London, workshops. They were brought back to Tasmania in that year by Robert William Willson, first Catholic Bishop of Hobart Town, for use on rood screens.

Only two corpuses to this design are known to exist in England.

Work will start on the carving of the screen's top beam once Australian cedar of suitable dimensions has been sourced. We hope to have the fully restored screen reinstalled in St Patrick's before the end of 2006.



The rood screen crucifix with its re-made triangular foot.

The Fall of the Colebrook Bellcote

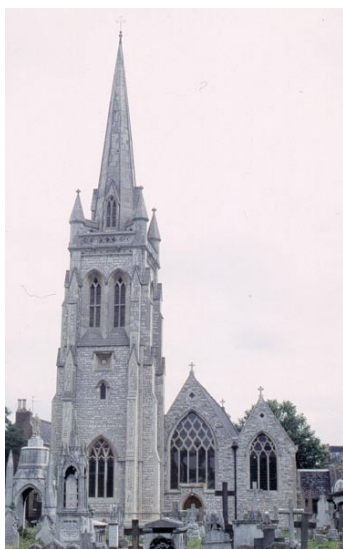
The following account, written by a correspondent in Jerusalem (the former name for Colebrook) on 12 September 1895, was published in the Launceston, Tasmania, Catholic newspaper, *The Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 25, Friday, 20 September 1895, Supplement, n.p., c.2-3:

JERUSALEM. *Your readers will feel interested in news about our church here, as, no doubt, they were grieved to read a brief account of it being wrecked by the terrific storm of Sunday last. I am glad to be able to say that the damage due is not near so bad as we feared, the sanctuary being the only part that has suffered much damage, at least as far as we can judge at the present. The storm rushed in all its fury at a few minutes after 11 a.m., its force being in a line a few chains wide. Unfortunately, St. Patrick's beautiful church was in the course. It brought down the bell turret, which was about 18 feet high, and placed over the sanctuary arch. This crashed on the sanctuary, bringing down the whole roof and a large portion of the walls with it; the concussion cracked part of the main building, but, I think, not much injuring the stone work. Two very large statues (of the Blessed Virgin and St. Patrick) at either side of the altar were completely smashed. The altar, a very fine one by Mr. P. Sheehy, Hobart, escaped; and the rood screen, with its fine crucifix above, is also uninjured. It was a providential thing that it was not our Mass Sunday, else the priest and the altar boys would have been killed.*

Pugin News Worldwide

St Thomas of Canterbury's, Fulham

This church in London's inner south-west was opened on 30 May 1848. In a Flowing Decorated idiom, it had a triple-gabled composition that Pugin had previously used for: St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne; St Joseph and St Mary's, St Peter



St Thomas of Canterbury's Church, Fulham.

Port, Guernsey; a design for Archbishop Polding of Sydney, used for St Benedict's, Broadway; and an unexecuted design for Bishop Willson of Hobart. The Fulham church had a graceful north-west tower and spire and a contiguous presbytery, also designed by Pugin.

A substantial re-ordering of the interior was undertaken around 1970 in a response to the liturgical documents promulgated at the Second Vatican Council. At this time Pugin's high altar and screens were removed. As has happened in many Catholic churches that underwent substantial re-ordering in the late 1960s and 1970s, often accompanied by removal of historic furnishings and over-painting of decorative finishes, a second re-ordering has been carried out at Fulham. Pugin's cathedrals at Nottingham, Newcastle and Birmingham are examples of this process where effort has been expended to reinstate—as far as practicable—elements of the original decorative scheme and furnishings. At Fulham the earliest decorative scheme post-dated Pugin's involvement, but recently-completed works have introduced a Puginesque decorative program that in its style and placement honours the spirit of his own oeuvre. A new high altar replaces the 1970 one, its decorative idiom drawn from the Pugin-designed carvings in the building.

An account of the re-opening of the church on Sunday, 25 June 2006, can be found at:

www.rcdow.org.uk/diocese/default.asp?library_ref=4&content_ref=821

The Grange, Ramsgate

Now you can stay for a holiday in Pugin's own house that he built atop the cliffs overlooking Pegwell Bay, Ramsgate, next to his Church of St Augustine.

Between 1843 and his untimely death in 1852 he built and furnished what is now recognised as a highly significant milestone in the development of English domestic architecture. By 1998, having had a number of uses and owners since the death of Pugin's son Cuthbert in 1928, it was facing an uncertain future. In that year it was acquired by the Landmark Trust, 'a charity founded in 1965 that rescues and restores historic buildings at risk and gives them a new life by offering them for holidays'.



Pugin's residence, The Grange, Ramsgate.

Over the past two years The Grange has undergone an extensive and not uncontroversial restoration aimed essentially at removing the accretions and alterations of later generations—including those of his architect son Edward—and returning the building, as far as practicable, to the structural and decorative state of Pugin's own time.

Fragments of Pugin's original wallpapers have been discovered during the restoration works and used as a basis for replication in the refurbished rooms. An interesting account of research conducted by the Victoria and Albert Museum into the chemical and other characteristics of these wallpaper fragments can be found at:

www.vam.ac.uk/res_cons/conservation/journal/number_50/pugin/index.html

The Grange restoration project is now complete. To book it for a holiday visit:

www.landmarktrust.org.uk

Pugin's Designs

In this series we will be looking in detail at Pugin's designs for buildings, furnishings and objects. The series starts with an examination of some of his churchyard crosses.

Churchyard Crosses (Part 1)

Pugin's views on 'what is to be regarded as forming a complete Catholic parish church for the due celebration of the divine office and the administration of the sacraments, both as regards architectural arrangement and furniture' were comprehensively set out in his 1843 book *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England*. The material had previously been published anonymously, its authorship thinly disguised, in the May 1841 and February 1842 issues of the *Dublin Review*.

After noting that the enclosure within which medieval churches stood 'was set apart by solemn consecration for the burial of the faithful', he observed: 'It was customary to erect a stone cross, raised on steps, on the south-western side of the church, to mark the hallowed ground.' Such was Pugin's own practice in England.

His churchyard cross adjacent to the Chapel of St John the Baptist's Hospital, Alton, Staffordshire, is illustrated. Designed c.1841, it was described by Pugin in the *Present State* as: 'a stone cross raised on steps; the base is quadrangular, with an Evangelist [symbol] within a quatrefoil on each face; the upper part of the shaft terminates in a foliated cap supporting a quadrangular niche containing an angel bearing emblems of our Lord's passion on every side; at the summit of which is a floriated cross of stone.' This elegant and beautifully detailed cross is in the same Perpendicular style as the Chapel itself.



The churchyard cross, St John's Hospital Chapel, Alton.

Pugin's Australian Built Heritage


In this and forthcoming issues of the Newsletter we plan to treat the surviving Australian buildings to Pugin's designs in some detail, describing their construction history and analysing them, including later additions and modifications. We start with his delightful little village Church of St Francis Xavier, Berrima, in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales.



St Francis Xavier's, Berrima (Part 1)

St Francis Xavier's is a building whose stylistic and planning roots can be traced to the ideals and impact of the Englishman John Bede Polding OSB, first Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, and of the great English early-Victorian architect, designer and theorist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852).

John Bede Polding OSB (1794–1877), a Benedictine monk, formerly of Downside Priory, Somerset, was the pioneering Catholic bishop in Australia and, from 1842, Archbishop of Sydney and founder of the Australian Catholic hierarchy. His attitude towards church architecture and furnishing, allied to his belief in the importance of beauty, dignity and reverence in the setting and performance of the liturgy, was quintessentially Benedictine.¹ This attitude can be seen in his choice of the fashionable Bath architect Henry Edmund Goodridge to furnish the plans for small churches that he brought out to Australia in 1835.² Goodridge had previously designed Gothick monastic buildings for Downside, a project in which Polding had been involved.³



Polding's consistent motivation for seeking only the best for his churches was well captured by his Vicar-General, Henry Gregory Gregory OSB, in a c.1850 report to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda,⁴ when he wrote:

*As regards the style of [church] building also, we may without boasting congratulate ourselves. The Archbishop has expended considerable pains and anxiety on this point; not only because churches built with propriety and good taste, formed upon, though with no servile adherence to models of acknowledged authority, are eventually the cheapest, but because in a new community unhappily but too much engrossed in material pursuits, it is of no inconsiderable importance, in its due place, to present even to men's senses, the forms and suggestions of other beauties and more lasting interests.*⁵

In June 1841 Polding landed in England on his first trip home from Australia. Pugin was riding the crest of a wave of approbation, building churches with stunning interiors filled with colour and imagery the likes of which had not been seen since the Reformation. Polding was to experience this bold assertion of the power and magnetism of emancipated English Catholicism within days of his arrival when he attended the dedication of Pugin's St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, on 20 June in the company of a great gathering of prelates. The conviction of its architecture, the glowing colour of its painted and stencilled surfaces, its genuine medieval pulpit, statues and fittings, its splendid stone altar and reredos under an

elaborate canopy and especially the glorious rood screen would have stood in stark contrast to Goodridge's romantic sham at Downside which had been his former inspiration and to the feeble boxes of local architects in Sydney. Polding would have another opportunity to admire this radical new building when, on 27 October 1842, he consecrated Robert William Willson there as first Bishop of Hobart Town. Doubtless Willson would have told Polding of the great church of St Barnabas, the largest Catholic church in England since the Reformation, which he was in the course of building to Pugin's designs in Nottingham.

But perhaps the greatest stimulus for Polding to approach Pugin seeking designs for Australian buildings would have come from contact with his brethren at his old home Downside Priory. The community was in possession of a marvellous design prepared by Pugin for a vast new monastery in the Early English style on a scale surpassing a great many English medieval abbeys. The monastic buildings were arranged around four large courtyards and included a huge cruciform church with a trinity of spires. Surely, the psychological impact of Pugin's visionary scheme on the Downside monks and on Polding must have been immense.

On 10 December 1842, a month after Polding set sail from Liverpool, Pugin's diary recorded delivery of drawings for Sydney to Fr Thomas Paulinus Heptonstall OSB, Polding's London agent.⁶ **To be continued.**

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Ms Mary Elizabeth Andrews *Marrickville, New South Wales*
Mr Carl Phillips *Bowral, New South Wales*
Fr Terry Rush *Richmond, Tasmania*
Mr Ken Sheahan *Camberwell, Victoria*
Mrs Diana & Mr William Taylor *Berrima, New South Wales*
Mrs Shirley Wyatt *Bowral, New South Wales*

Sponsorship

The 'Friends of Pugin' thank

Devotee Design, (Tasmania) for the design and production of this newsletter.

¹Benedictine monastic houses throughout history have been distinguished in this regard. St Benedict, in his sixth-century Rule, enjoined his monks when intoning the psalms and antiphons to do so 'with humility, gravity and reverence'. (Justin McCann (ed. & tr.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London, 1952, p. 109.)

²Eleanor Joan Kerr, *Designing a Colonial Church: Church building in New South Wales 1788–1888*, PhD, University of York, Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, 1977, vol. 1, pp. 151–63.

³These and other ecclesiastical buildings designed by Goodridge were in an idiom termed 'Gothick', denoting a superficial application of Gothic elements and details without the framework of archaeological and ecclesiological understanding of medieval churches that would be later successfully championed by Pugin.

⁴The then Roman Congregation that directed and promoted the Catholic faith in missionary territories throughout the world. Australia was at that time deemed to be a missionary territory.

⁵Henry Norbert Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, 2 vols, Herbert & Daniel, London, 1911, vol. II, p. 172.

⁶Pugin's diary for 1842, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Pressmark 86 MM 61, L5163 1969.