

December 2006

Number 6

Included in this edition:

- *The Renaissance of St Patrick's, Colebrook (continued)*
- *A Pugin Nativity*
- *Pugin's Designs - Churchyard Crosses (Part 6)*
- *Pugin's Australian Built Heritage - St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde (Part 2)*



Welcome to the sixth Friends Newsletter. As I write to you bushfires are raging in Tasmania and in NSW in drought stricken countryside and natural forest areas, with up to 24 houses lost on the East coast of Tasmania. Fortunately there has been no loss of life.

And today the joy of the reinstatement of Pugin's glorious restored rood screen and a new forward altar in St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, returning the chancel to its original dignity of 150 years ago. Your January Newsletter will bring you a detailed account with images of today's rewarding activities.

This week I am mailing your invitation to the 150th anniversary celebrations for St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, on Sunday 21 January 2007 at 11.00 am. We hope to see many of our Friends at this significant event.

I want to thank you for your support and enthusiastic membership of the Friends of the Pugin Foundation. We are an international group of Friends with memberships from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, New South Wales, Canberra, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Our website statistics reflect the international interest in the Foundation and its work. We have been visited from the UK, USA, Canada, Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Spain, NZ, Ireland and every State of Australia. And this in just less than six months!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a peaceful Christmas and a most enjoyable Christmas holiday season.

With kind regards,
Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer

Fifteenth-century German polychromed oak statue of the Virgin and Child, an 1841 gift of Pugin, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham (Photo: Nicholas Callinan).

The Renaissance of St Patrick's, Colebrook

Continuing our news of conservation activities, we report on the lighting consultancy recently completed by David Bird of Vision Design, Melbourne. He has had significant experience in the design of lighting schemes for historic churches, having been responsible for new lighting in St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral and St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, both in Melbourne, Victoria. These are buildings of considerable heritage significance, the former by William Wilkinson Wardell, Australia's greatest Gothic Revival architect, and the latter by William Butterfield, the English ecclesiastical architect whose early churches were landmarks in the progress of High Victorian Gothic.

David paid a visit to St Patrick's, Colebrook, on 20 April 2006 where he was briefed on the heritage values of the building and had an opportunity to experience its uniquely pared back yet harmoniously composed interior. We talked about the need for the lighting scheme to reflect this key characteristic of the building, particularly through the unobtrusive nature of any fittings. He was taken by the beauty of the Pugin roof, with its big arch-braced collar tie and king post trusses, and felt that some uplighting would be dramatically beautiful. We agreed that this would be a feature not normally used for services but could be marvellous if the church was used as a concert venue from time to time.

Regarding external lighting David is opposed to the harsh nature of so much floodlighting—the name says it all—where buildings are blasted with harsh light, a bit like a startled rabbit caught in the headlights of a car. He prefers to 'paint' with light using low power fittings to gently illuminate key areas such as doors as well as architectural features, in St Patrick's case obviously the planned reinstated triple bellcote.

Having proposed a draft scheme as a result of his visit, David returned to Colebrook for lighting mock-up trials on 12 July, accompanied by Stuart Hamilton of Hobart lighting firm Casa Monde.



The tests started a little before dusk so that the components of the scheme could be tested in a range of natural light conditions. By and large the trials confirmed the draft scheme, although the uplighting fittings, all of which will be concealed on top of the wall plates, will differ from those first proposed. The tests of the external lighting were most impressive.



Test illumination of the west door, St Patrick's, Colebrook.

In the approved scheme, interior lighting, all dimmer-controlled, will provide general illumination, accenting of architectural features—such as the splendid rood screen—and highlighting of liturgical and devotional areas like the new painted and gilded Hunteresque forward altar and the Marian shrine. The exterior lighting will be of security benefit as well as revealing some of the building's astringent beauty even at night.

All being well, the new external and internal lighting should be installed by the end of August 2007, along with complete re-wiring of the building.

David Bird of Vision Design, on the right, and Stuart Hamilton of Casa Monde preparing a lighting test rig in St Patrick's on 12 July 2006.

A Pugin Nativity



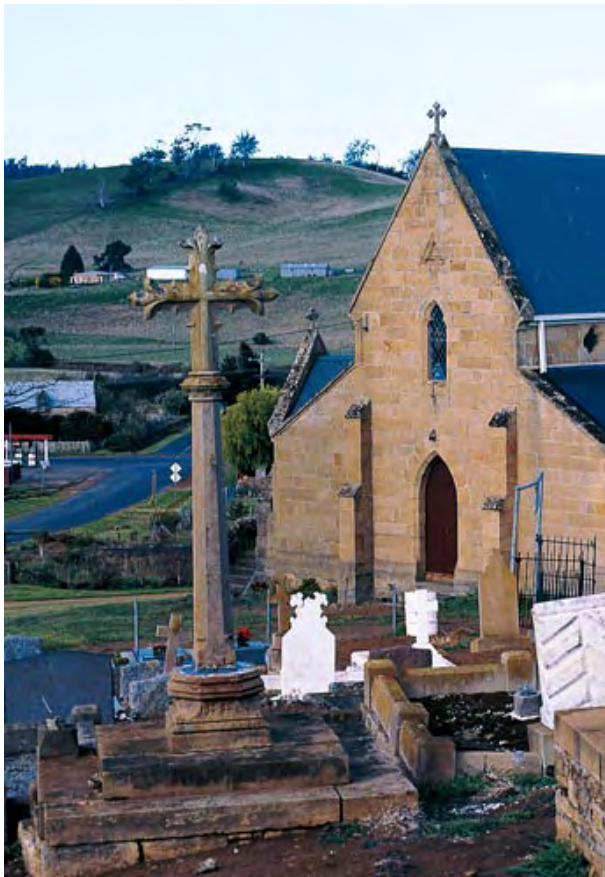
For this Christmas 2006 issue we have reproduced for you the charming Nativity scene carved into the central front panel of the Lady Chapel altar in Pugin's own Church of St Augustine, Ramsgate. It was photographed by Pugin Foundation Board member Nicholas Callinan in 2004.

Pugin's Designs

In this series we are looking in detail at Pugin's designs for buildings, furnishings and objects. An examination of some of his churchyard crosses continues in this issue.

Churchyard Crosses (Part 6)

Because Robert William Willson, first Bishop of Hobart Town and very close friend of Pugin, so comprehensively subscribed to Pugin's philosophies, ideals and their practical implementation, it comes as no surprise to find churchyard crosses in Tasmania associated with churches built or adapted from the detailed models brought out from England by Willson in 1844. One such cross was erected in the St Patrick's, Colebrook, churchyard.



This cross stood from the 1850s until late 1997 when it was destroyed by vandals, leaving just the stub of the column, the base and plinth. The shattered fragments were gathered up and stored inside the church with a view to their eventual replication when the cross is restored. The Pugin Foundation intends to undertake this as part of the 'Renaissance of St Patrick's, Colebrook', some time soon.

The Colebrook churchyard cross proper, capital and shaft can be seen as an elaboration of the one at St Austin's, Kenilworth, described and depicted in the August 2006 Newsletter. It is also incorrectly oriented, as was the Kenilworth cross initially, in this case being aligned with the graves whose axes follow the slope of the site.

The cross is foliated and has clearly been accurately copied from a full-sized English limestone exemplar. It stands on a moulded octagonal capital with foliated carving to the bell. The tapered octagonal shaft has a pretty moulded stop in its transition to a square section above the moulded octagonal upper part of the base. Between this and the moulded square lower part of the base is an interesting transition with sunk quatrefoils to the cardinal faces. The whole stands on a two step square plinth.

Next month we will look at two crude local copies of this Tasmanian churchyard cross.

The churchyard cross, St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, 1997.

Pugin's Australian Built Heritage

This series deals in some detail with the surviving Australian buildings to Pugin's designs, describing their construction history and analysing them, including later additions and modifications. In this issue we commence our examination of St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde

St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde (Part 2) ***Construction***

The area now known as the Sydney suburb of Ryde was the third area of European settlement in the Colony of New South Wales, dating back to 1792.¹ Efforts in the early 1840s to provide a permanent place of worship for Catholics in the district did not bear fruit, and it was not until July 1849, when Daniel McMahon donated land east of the village of Ryde for a church, that plans could be revived.²

Archbishop Polding provided drawings for a small church to be called St Joseph's, one of the set furnished by Pugin in 1842, and works got under way late in 1851, the chosen contractor being John Crotty, a local builder and stonemason.³ On Monday 8 December Polding, accompanied by his coadjutor Bishop Charles Henry Davis OSB, attended the site to set out the foundations. *The Freeman's Journal* reported that: 'Several Catholics of the neighbourhood attended with spades, &c., to assist the Venerable Prelate in the Godly undertaking, and in the course of two or three hours the ground was fully prepared for the mason.'⁴ On Sunday 4 January 1852 Bishop Davis returned and laid the foundation stone 'with the usual ceremonies so imposing and instructive'.⁵

Work on the building proved slow. By mid 1854 this had amounted to just the laying of the foundations, erection of several of the lower courses of the walls and buttresses, and dressing of some stone for columns, jambs and reveals, at a cost of £1,215-11-8.⁶ In the light of the fact that the north porch was never constructed it is interesting to note that the list of work done included moulded jambs and reveals for the porch.⁷

Building activity accelerated after the care of the Parish of Ryde was placed by Polding in the hands of the French Marist Fathers from 1 April 1856.⁸ By April 1857 *The Sydney Morning Herald* could report that the stonework with the exception of the western gable was complete, adding that: 'It will when completed be a very neat building ...'.⁹ In this report the church was referred to as St Charles', indicating that its re-naming as St Charles Borromeo's Church had been done by Polding in honour of his much-loved coadjutor Charles Henry Davis who had died on 17 May 1854.

Work completed between mid 1854 and July 1857 had amounted to £1,325-0-0, bringing the building to near completion. A report to the Colonial Secretary's office seeking the balance of a government grant towards the erection of the church stated:

The masonry of the walls are completed in a substantial and Workmanlike manner, including dwarf flank, clearstory end and gable walls, Bell Turret and stone crofs,s
The Carpenters are erecting the roof timbers, & laying the plates for the flooring joists –
The Battens for slating and Six thousand Countys slates are on the premifs,s¹⁰

St Charles' church was dedicated on Sunday 8 December 1857. *The Freeman's Journal* in its report of the day remarked that: 'it is, indeed, the neatest and prettiest country church which we have seen, and is a most fitting specimen of the handy-work of that creature whom God made to "his own likeness" in a lovely district where He has himself exhibited so much of the beautiful in His own works'.¹¹

Pugin would surely have approved of such sentiments.



St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde, c.1870 (Private collection, courtesy Margaret Farlow).

Less than fifty years later the building needed extensive repairs due to the ravages of white ants which had badly damaged the floors and the pulpit. A new concrete floor was laid and the interior wall surfaces, still in their rough state, received their intended coat of plaster.¹² The church was re-dedicated on 28 June 1903.

Enlargement

A significant alteration to the proportions and appearance of the building occurred between 1903 and 1912 when a three-bay nun's chapel in a crude Gothic idiom was constructed in rock-faced sandstone against the chancel north wall. By this time the need for an entrance porch had clearly been felt (the designed north porch having never been constructed), so one was added to the west front and the two-light window displaced from the chancel north wall by the construction of the nun's choir was inserted in the west wall of the new gabled porch. This would be the first of many re-arrangements of the elements of the original church.

These additions were dwarfed by a major enlargement project for the building in 1934, increasing its seating capacity from 250 to 600. The Ryde church was about to suffer the same fate of mutilation as many of Pugin's small English churches, such as those at Southport, Uttoxeter, Keighley and Solihull, when the district and its population far outgrew the needs and expectations of its founders.

At first it was intended to demolish the existing building, but the Sydney architects Messrs Fowel and McConnell, backed by the then Parish Priest Fr Edward Gell, son of the Bathurst architect Edward Gell, decided upon a radical plan that would enable Pugin's beautiful west front to be preserved while re-cycling all of the remainder of the original church into the new one.



*St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde, June 2006
(Photo: Jude Andrews).*

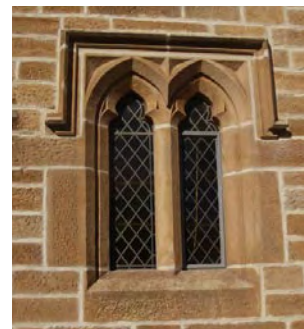
In their account of the project the architects explained the rationale for the new building:

The design of [the enlarged 1934] St Charles', Ryde, was inspired by the delightful little old church across which the new church has been built ... The old church had a very beautiful West End ... By placing the axis of the new church across that of the old, this façade was preserved in its entirety as a side porch.¹³

They stated that this approach had preserved 'some of the features, the character and all of the materials of the old church ... at a cost which was certainly no more than that of the proposed brick church'.¹⁴ Most of the external stonework for the new aisled clerestoried church was obtained by splitting the old stone in halves, thus doubling the available quantity, and then facing the new interior with cream brick. All the old aisle windows were re-used, along with new copies, and the old three-light chancel east window was inserted into the centre of the new apse. Similarly, the nave arcades were recycled and copies added to produce the extended length of the new nave, the span of each bay being also increased by the addition of extra stones to the arch voussoirs. The old chancel was largely used to make the new front porch and the old two-light square-headed sacristy window was inserted into its liturgical south wall.



*The chancel east window from old St Charles' in the apse of the present church
(Photo: Jude Andrews).*



*The former sacristy window now in the porch liturgical south wall of the present church
(Photo: Jude Andrews).*

Thus the building has remained. Pugin's little village church is still there, it's just that most of it is now distributed throughout its 1934 replacement.

To be continued.

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mr Mark Tuckett

Rosetta, Tasmania

Miss Philippa Brettingham-Moore

Richmond, Tasmania

¹ Margaret Farlow, *A History of Catholicism in the Ryde District: The early years*, Ryde, 1999, p. 3.

² *ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

³ John Crotty is buried in the Ryde churchyard near the church he built.

⁴ *The Freeman's Journal*, 11 December 1851, p. 11.

⁵ *The Freeman's Journal*, 4 January 1852, p. 10.

⁶ Letter Bishop Davis to Colonial Secretary, 8 May 1854, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence Received 54/4053, filed with 57/3141, SRNSW 4/3362. Margaret Farlow, *op. cit.*, attributes the slowdown to the depopulation of the district occasioned by the discovery of gold near Bathurst in 1851.

⁷ So the decision to omit it must postdate 1854.

⁸ Farlow, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1857, quoted in Farlow, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁰ Colonial Architects Correspondence re Roman Catholic Church, Ryde 1857, SRNSW 2/647.

¹¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, Saturday 14 November 1857, p. 2.

¹² *The Catholic Press*, 2 July 1903, p. 25.

¹³ 'A Tale of Two Churches: St Anne's Shrine, Bondi, and St Charles', Ryde', *Building*, 12 January 1935, pp. 21–27.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 25.