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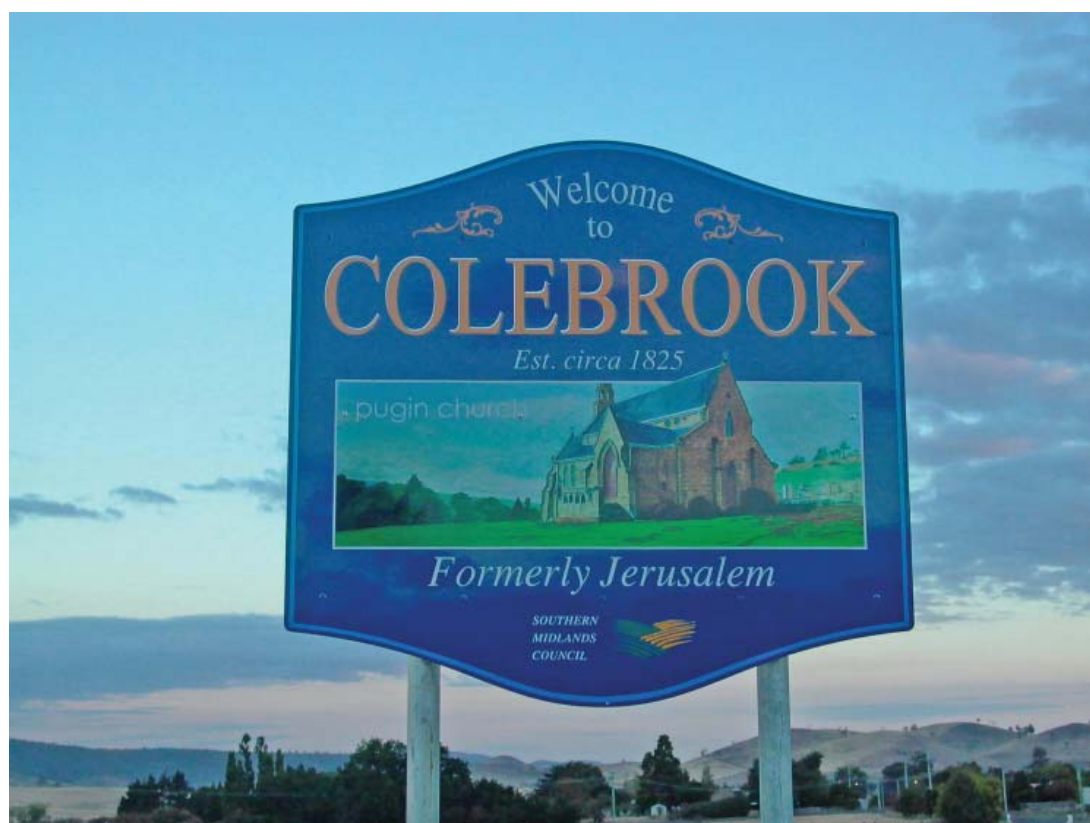
- *St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, New South Wales*
- *Pugin's Designs—Baptismal Fonts & Rood Screens*
- *Pugin's Australian Built Heritage – St Patrick's, Colebrook (Part 4)*

Welcome to the seventeenth Friends Newsletter and to a new year of significant growth and development for the Pugin Foundation; a year where we can make a marked contribution with our academic pursuits and conservation activities, and a year where we can strengthen our funding through acquiring major benefactors and additional Friends. In this way can continue our endeavours to secure the future of the incredible treasure that is Pugin's Australian heritage.


The Foundation has been fortunate in attracting funding from grants and small donations from Friends of Pugin but the major funding has come from our most generous of benefactors, Maria and Allan Myers. We trust that the Foundation will attract strong leadership and financial support from other major benefactors during the coming year.

We begin 2008 with special thanks to all the donors for the St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, bellcote appeal, to our Patrons, to the Pugin Foundation Board who are committed to the conservation and promotion of Pugin's heritage and who give many hours to the ongoing works of this Foundation, and to all the 90 Friends of Pugin, along with Friends membership from 5 organizations. We ask you all to tell everyone about the wonderful work of the Pugin Foundation and the significant impact that it will continue to have both nationally and internationally. More Friends and benefactors will certainly strengthen us and ensure a successful future to fulfil our mission.

It has been most rewarding to work with Mayor Tony Bisdee and Damian Mackey from the Southern Midlands Council with the erection of the town signage for Colebrook, depicting St Patrick's Church, and in continuing the establishment of the Pugin Trail in Southern Tasmania.



Colebrook's new town sign featuring St Patrick's Church (Image: John Miller).



Executive Officer Brian Andrews has recently been successful in having St Francis Xavier's Church, Berrima, New South Wales, placed on the NSW Heritage Register.

He has also written a major submission to have the three Tasmanian Pugin churches placed on the National Heritage List. Our thanks to Board member Dr Jane Lennon for

her assistance with the latter submission.

We look forward to you our Friends continuing to be our ambassadors and thank you for your feedback, supportive emails and letters and phone calls.

Every best wish,
Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer

Pugin News Worldwide

St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, New South Wales

This exquisite small village church, which was the subject of a series in Friends Newsletters 1 through 4, was placed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 25 January 2008. The listing was published on that date in the New South Wales Government Gazette No. 12.

This important recognition was the end result of a detailed submission to the New South Wales Heritage Office by Executive Officer Brian Andrews in February 2006.

*St Francis Xavier's, Berrima
(Image: Ian Stapleton).*



Pugin's Designs

In this continuing series we are looking in detail at Pugin's designs for buildings, furnishings and objects. In this issue we commence an examination of some of his baptismal fonts and also some of his surviving rood screens.

Baptismal Fonts (Part 1)

In May 1841 the first of two parts of a highly influential article by Pugin—although published anonymously—appeared in the *Dublin Review*.¹ He dealt in considerable detail with 'what is to be regarded as forming a complete Catholic parish church for the due celebration of the divine office and administration of the sacraments, both as regards architectural arrangement and furniture'. This naturally included material on the position and construction of baptismal fonts.

'On proceeding through the southern porch, and entering the church, the first object that arrests our attention is the font. ... The font may be made either of stone or lead, sufficiently large to admit of immersion, with a wooden cover secured by a lock, to protect the baptismal water from any profanation.'² Pugin's font designs invariably followed these criteria and, as he noted in the same article, they corresponded 'in style and ornament to that of the building'.³ They ranged in elaboration and decorative detail from simple works designed to confirm his view that 'the poorest church should be provided with a regular stone font' and that 'it is possible to erect one under £10' through to fonts of considerable complexity.⁴

Regrettably, many of Pugin's fonts have lost their wooden covers and not a few have been displaced from their original locations due to the vagaries of ecclesiological fashion, particularly since the 1960s. One such is the fine Decorated font in St Thomas of Canterbury's Church, Fulham (1847–48). Originally sited in a baptistery beneath the north west tower, it migrated in 1973 to the vicinity of the north east side chapel.⁵ Then, during the extensive renovations completed

in mid 2006, it was again moved, this time to the south aisle just east of the south porch door.

Carved by craftsmen in the employ of George Myers—Pugin's favoured builder—who constructed the church, the octagonal

font has symbolic sculpture sunk in its eight principal faces including a dove, an Agnus Dei, a foliated cross, angels and the Sacred Monogram IHS. There is foliated carving on the moulded underside of the bowl proper and symbols of the four evangelists stand on the plinth against the diagonal faces of the base.

Rood Screens (Part 1)

'The great intention of these screens and lofts is ... to mark the separation between the faithful and the sacrifice, the nave and chancel, emblematic of the church militant and the church triumphant, into which latter we can alone enter by the merits of Christ's passion on the cross, whose image, as crucified for our sins, is affixed on high above the centre of the screen.'⁶

These 1842 words of Pugin's would remain his passionately-held position on rood screens throughout his turbulent career, culminating in *A Treatise on chancel Screens and Rood Lofts, Their Antiquity, Use and Symbolic Significance*,⁷ his final book and parting shot in an unsuccessful struggle to convince his English Catholic colleagues—and whoever else would listen—that screens were an essential architectural, liturgical and theological component of churches. As early as 1840 he had threatened to walk out as architect of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, if his screen were removed. 'I am fully resolved to carry out the real thing or resign.'⁸



The baptismal font, St Thomas of Canterbury's, Fulham (Image: Jude Andrews)..

The problem was that Pugin's position on this 'antient Division between the priests & people'⁹ ran counter to three hundred years of evolving post-Reformation liturgical and devotional practice. Yet it was integral to his vision for the English church. Most of Pugin's English medieval chancel fittings—sedilia, Easter sepulchre, elevation candlesticks—could be ignored by a clergy largely apathetic about, if not antagonistic towards, his agenda. But screens were a symbolic impediment even more than a physical one to those who believed that the future of resurgent English Catholicism lay not in the resuscitation of the past but in full integration with contemporary European Catholic practice.

Not surprisingly, given the above attitudes, Pugin's rood screens have not fared well. A mere two stone and five wooden screens remain in situ in Catholic churches, two of the wooden ones—Oatlands and Colebrook—being in Tasmania. Given the screens' status as a leitmotiv of the underpinning philosophy that fuelled Pugin's creativity, the importance of his surviving rood screens cannot be over-emphasised.

The rood screen in St Alban's, Macclesfield (1839–41), was perhaps Pugin's second executed design for this all-important furnishing. (His very first appears to have been for the now-demolished screen in St Peter's College, Wexford, pre-dating that for Macclesfield by perhaps six months.) It is a graceful, well-developed essay for so early in Pugin's career, beautifully proportioned to fill the tall chancel arch of this Perpendicular style building. The screen consists of two double bays with transitional Flowing Decorated/Perpendicular tracery either side of wide double doors, the whole surmounted by an open traceried parapet upon which is the rood group consisting of Christ on the cross flanked by statues of Mary his mother and St John the

beloved disciple. The cross has symbols of the four evangelists in quatrefoils at its extremities and the three figures are of late medieval German origin, said to have been obtained by Pugin in Louvain.¹⁰

Although a significant number of medieval chancel screens survive in English churches, their surmounting rood groups had without exception been destroyed during the Reformation. For a source of design inspiration for these latter Pugin had to look abroad. In July 1839 he visited a number of cities in Belgium, including Louvain.¹¹ There, in the Collegiate Church of St Pierre, he would have seen the glorious medieval rood screen whose supporting structure for its rood group would appear to have been the basis—in highly simplified form—of that at Macclesfield.¹² The curved braces for the Macclesfield crucifix had already appeared in Pugin's Wexford design and would be a near constant in his many subsequent rood screens.



The rood screen, St Alban's, Macclesfield (Image: Brian Andrews).



The medieval rood screen in the Collegiate Church of St Pierre, Louvain.

Footnotes

¹ [A. Welby Pugin], 'The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. X, May 1841, pp. 301–48.

² *ibid.*, p. 323.

³ *ibid.*, p. 324.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 323.

⁵ Denis Evinson, *St Thomas's Fulham: A History of the Church and Mission*, Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society, London, 1976, p. 33.

⁶ [A. Welby Pugin], 'The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. XII, February 1842, p. 100.

⁷ A. Welby Pugin, *A Treatise on chancel Screens and Rood Lofts, Their Antiquity, Use and Symbolic Significance*, Charles Dolman, London, 1851.

⁸ Pugin to Daniel Rock, 13 December 1840, Southwark Archdiocesan Archives, Tierney-Rock Papers, 179, in Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 1: 1830–1842, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 174.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Michael J. Ullmann, *St. Alban's Macclesfield*, *St Alban's, Macclesfield*, 1982, p. 16.

¹¹ Pugin's diary for 1839, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Pressmark 86 MM 58, L5160 1969.

¹² Such a rectangular supporting structure above the screen proper was also used by Pugin for his large rood screens in: St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, where this structure most closely follows the Louvain exemplar; St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham; St George's Cathedral, Southwark; and St Giles', Cheadle.



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 conclude our examination of St Patrick's, Colebrook.

St Patrick's, Colebrook (Part 4) Construction

In the 1840s the village of Jerusalem (now Colebrook), situated on one of two roads linking Hobart with Launceston, seemed destined to become an important centre in southern Van Diemen's Land. Catholics within the district were served by the priest resident in Richmond some twenty-seven kilometres to the south. In the early 1850s Bishop Willson moved to make permanent provision for the local Catholics, acquiring two parcels of land for a church reserve on the south side of Maconochie Street (now Yarlington Road) and situated on either side of Arthur Street.¹ On the larger, more westerly, of the two parcels—7,891 m² in area—he determined to erect a church and cemetery. Willson himself purchased the adjacent 1,998 m² parcel on Arthur Street.

The Pugin model chosen by Willson for erection in Jerusalem was the middle-sized of the three, but nonetheless of imposing appearance to suit the growing importance of the settlement.² And it would gain added presence by virtue of the church site dominating the slope on the western edge of the village.

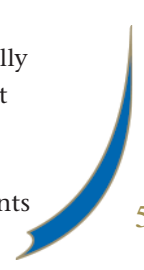
The task of converting the model into working drawings and supervising the erection of the church was given by Willson to Hobart architect Frederick Thomas (1817–1885). Thomas had been sentenced to transportation to New South Wales in 1834 for swindling. He was further sentenced in 1842 to fifteen years in a penal settlement for stealing and arrived in Hobart Town in February 1843. While still on probation he was assigned as an unqualified draftsman and clerk to the Public Works Department on 1 July 1847, then was later promoted to Senior Draftsman

and eventually Clerk of Works. He evidently had the right to private practice, for Willson entrusted Pugin's models to him.³

The selected builder was Patrick John Lynch (1804–1889) who had arrived in Tasmania as an assisted migrant from Ireland in 1854. He set himself up in the building trade, undertaking government work in Jerusalem and Oatlands.⁴ Lynch was a skilled cabinetmaker who had been engaged on the wooden furnishings of Pugin's and John Gregory Grace's decorative program at Lismore Castle, County Waterford, for the Duke of Devonshire.⁵ By the time of his engagement on the Jerusalem church he had already (1854) carved the pews and rood screen in St Paul's, Oatlands, the first Tasmanian church to be built from a Pugin model.

Work on the church started in early 1855 after Willson's return from a visit to England. It was a difficult site because of its sloping nature, the ground level falling over four metres from the south-west to the north-east corner of the land. The building was therefore not oriented but laid out with its main axis generally along the contour line. Even so, there is a 1.94 metre fall from the liturgical south-west corner of the south aisle to the north-east corner of the chancel, and the church is oriented more or less geographically south-east. This necessitated the construction of a substantial sub-floor structure of random rubble to level the church, the sandstone for which was material salvaged from the former convict probation station boundary wall in Jerusalem. Poor Pugin had encountered similar problems in England, exclaiming in his exasperation over the sloping site for a church he was designing at Woodchester, Gloucestershire,⁶ 'I am the most unfortunate man in existence for scites [sic] of ground'.⁷

Sandstone for the church was quarried locally from a site some 750 metres away to the east north-east on the far side of the village.⁸ It was laid in 12 inch (30 cm) regular squared rubble courses, bedded in site soil,⁹ the joints



flushed up with lime mortar. The windows were glazed with crown glass diamond quarries,¹⁰ and the interior was plastered, as was the case for almost all of Pugin's churches.¹¹ Shingles for the roof were split locally, and the rood screen, sedilia, pews and sacristy press were constructed and carved from Colonial Cedar by Patrick Lynch.¹² A bell was hung in the top opening of the triple bellcote.

Bishop Willson supplied a Pugin-designed figure of Christ for the cross atop the rood screen. Carved in White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*), coated in gesso, rubbed back and then polychromed, it had been made in 1847 by craftsmen in the employ of George Myers, Pugin's favoured builder.¹³

St Patrick's Church was opened on 21 January 1857. Its beauty captivated the correspondent who covered the event for the *Tasmanian Daily News*, sentiments already expressed by the church's first pastor, Fr William Dunne, who had written to a priestly colleague during its construction, declaring, 'it will be the most beautiful church in the Island, and cost over £1500 cash. The style is Gothic—real Middle Age—and the site is admirably chosen'.¹⁴

Subsequent history

At a few minutes past 11 am on Sunday 8 September 1895 a violent mini tornado, tore through the outskirts of Jerusalem. St Patrick's Church was directly in its path. The bellcote was thrown down onto the chancel roof, destroying it, the falling stonework and roof timbers damaging the chancel north wall, the floor and the altar, as well as destroying

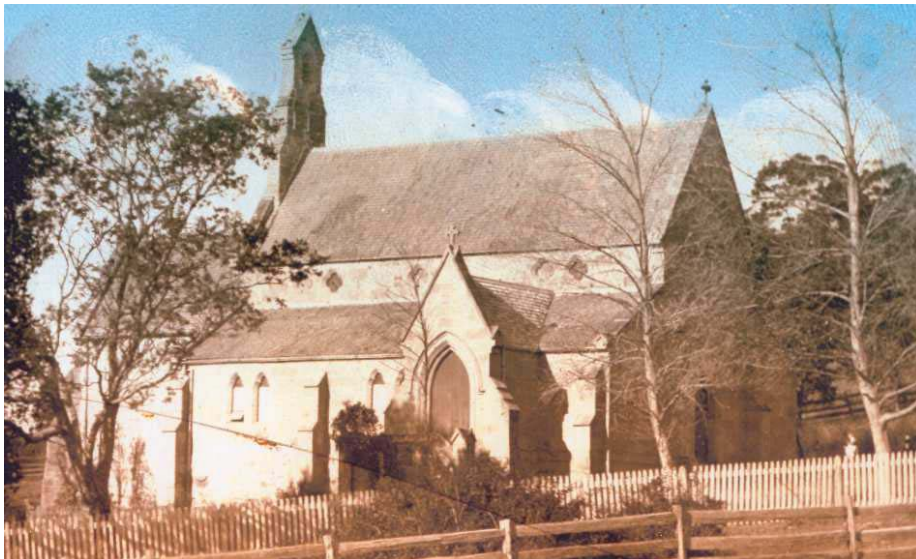
two statues and breaking much of the glass in the chancel window. Due to the direction in which it fell no damage was caused to the sedilia and the chancel arch remained intact, protecting the rood screen beneath it.¹⁵ Mercifully there was no loss of life, for, as the local correspondent reporting the event noted: 'It was a providential thing that it was not our Mass Sunday, else the priest and the altar boys would have been killed.'¹⁶

When the damage to the church was repaired the bellcote was—prudently one feels—not reinstated, the nave east wall being simply carried back up to a plain gable and surmounted by a copy of the cross atop the nave west gable. The roof was rebuilt, new glass inserted in the chancel window and the chancel walls 'nicely coloured'.¹⁷

Although the repair work was completed by early winter 1896, the church was not re-opened until 4 April 1897.¹⁸ Conceivably, the roof was covered in corrugated iron at the time of the repair work.¹⁹ It was certainly in place by November 1903, as a photograph in a contemporary newspaper shows.²⁰

In the 1970s the rood screen was moved to the west end of the nave, minus its top beam and crucifix. The crucifix was crudely cut from the beam and suspended from the chancel arch. Later the screen was returned to the proper position, however the top beam was not reinstated and the crucifix was thus left hanging from the chancel arch. In 2006 the Pugin Foundation fully restored the rood screen. Further significant work was undertaken by the Foundation in 2007 when it reinstated

the triple bellcote atop the nave east gable, equipping it with Pugin's intended complement of three bells.²¹ Conservation of the building is ongoing.



St Patrick's Church in the early 1890s (Image: courtesy Archdiocese of Hobart Archives).

Significance

Because of its unique position within Pugin's oeuvre—and given his status as the pre-eminent designer of the era—St Patrick's, Colebrook, designed in 1843 and constructed 1855–56, 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.²²
2. It is one of only two Pugin churches constructed from a scale model and exemplar stonework.
3. On the continuum of Pugin's churches in terms of structural and decorative elaboration, St Giles, Cheadle, arguably England's finest nineteenth-century church, occupies one extreme and St Patrick's, Colebrook, the other.

These reasons will now be examined in more detail.

1. Typological uniqueness

Pugin only designed one other church with a clerestoried nave, pent-roof aisles and no steeple, namely, Our Blessed Lady & St Thomas of Canterbury's, Dudley, that design dating from 1839. The proportions and composition of this church are decidedly

inferior to St Patrick's, a key factor being the size and position of the bellcote. The bellcote on the Dudley church is on its nave west gable. Taking all the building's constituent elements and—critically—their placement, St Patrick's is literally unique amongst Pugin's more than seventy-six designs for churches, chapels and cathedrals.

2. Construction from a scale model and exemplar stonework

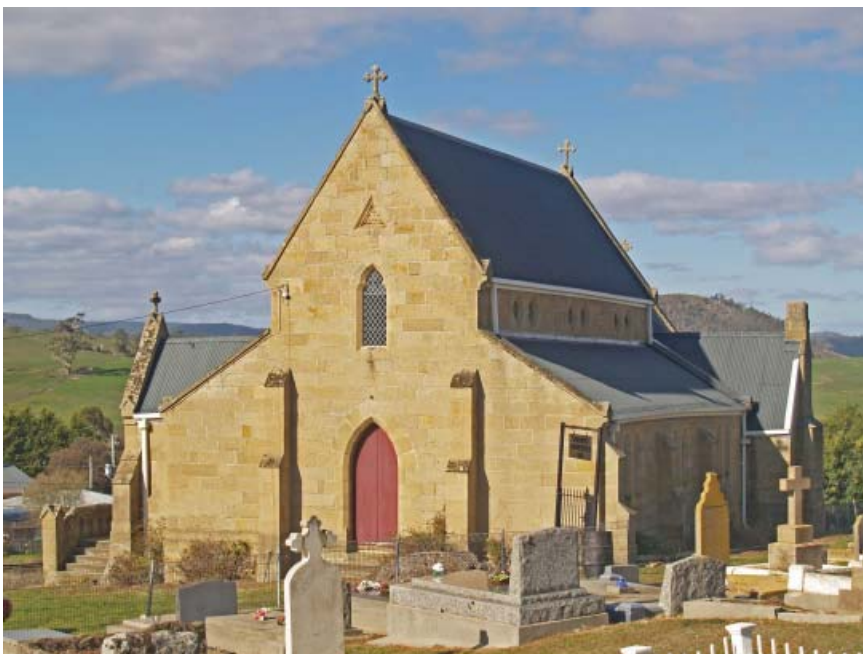
Only two of Pugin's church designs were ever constructed from a scale model, with complex carved details being copied from exemplar stonework, the other being St Paul's, Oatlands (1850–51). However, as it stands, St Paul's integrity is severely compromised through the 1930s enclosure of the nave west end by a stone addition to house the church choir and by the removal of the plaster from its interior in 1959.

In its construction St Patrick's demonstrates Pugin's unique solution to a perceived lack of craft and interpretive skills in Tasmania, and also the at times ungainly interpretation by the local supervising architect of details too small on the model for accurate reproduction.²³


3. Colebrook's position in Pugin's church oeuvre

St Giles', Cheadle, Staffordshire (1840–46), is Pugin's most structurally and decoratively elaborated church. It is a veritable paradigm of

an English fourteen-century parish church, probably more perfect and comprehensive in its furnishings and decoration than any church of that era, to which it is such a brilliant homage.



St Patrick's, a few months before the reinstatement of its bellcote in 2007 (Image: Brian Andrews).



Its spire is widely regarded as the most beautiful of the nineteenth century, and the building as a whole is accepted by many to be England's finest nineteenth century church.²⁴ It represents one pole of Pugin's design genius.

At the other extreme, where detail and decoration are pared down to the absolute minimum and the building relies for its

design brilliance on pure line and form, is St Patrick's, Colebrook, representing the opposite—but one would argue, comparably significant—pole of that design genius. Given the position of Colebrook at one extreme of the continuum of his church designs it occupies a key position in the comprehensive understanding of Pugin as the greatest designer of the early-Victorian age.

Footnotes

- ¹ The parcel on which the church is situated is: Title Reference 4481/69, Property ID 5894832. The other parcel was sold by the Trustees of the Property of the Roman Catholic Church in Tasmania late in the twentieth century.
- ² The smallest model had been used for St Paul's, Oatlands (1850–51) and elements from the largest model would be used as a basis for 1858 additions to St John the Evangelist's, Richmond.
- ³ Thomas' biographical details are largely drawn from E. Graeme Robertson, *Early Buildings of Southern Tasmania*, 2 vols, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1970, vol. 1, p. 19.
- ⁴ Vera Fisher, *St Paul's: A Time to Remember*, 1850–2000, Oatlands, 2000, p. 8.
- ⁵ Executed after Pugin's death.
- ⁶ Pugin lost the job and the church was erected to a design by Charles Francis Hansom.
- ⁷ Pugin to William Leigh, n.d. [1846], in 'Letters of A. Welby Pugin', *Aylesford Review*, vol. 1., no. 4 (Summer 1956), p. 59.
- ⁸ The disused quarry is on a local farm property.
- ⁹ Site soil is literally that, a not uncommon practice in Tasmanian colonial building construction. Information from structural engineer Peter Spratt.
- ¹⁰ I am grateful to stained glass conservation Gerry Cummins for identifying the glass.
- ¹¹ Notable exceptions are St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, and Pugin's own Church of St Augustine, Ramsgate, Kent.
- ¹² I am grateful to Hobart antique furniture conservator Tony Colman for identifying the wood type.
- ¹³ Willson had acquired at least fourteen such figures when in England in 1847. They varied in size from around 33 cm from head to toe to over 130 cm. They were intended inter alia for use on rood screens and at least six of them were, in churches by Pugin and Willson's architect protégé Henry Hunter.
- ¹⁴ Dunne to McEncroe, c.1855, quoted in Cullen, 'The Late Very Rev. W.J. Dunne', *Catholic Standard*, vol. VII, no. 78, 2 April 1883.
- ¹⁵ A detailed account of the event is given in *The Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 25, Friday, 20 September 1895, Supplement, n.p., c.2–3.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *The Monitor*, vol. IV, no. 2, Friday, 9 April 1897, pp. 15–16.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ The shingles may still be under all roofs but the chancel. This has not yet been investigated, but it was common to leave the shingles in place when re-roofing in corrugated iron.
- ²⁰ *Tasmanian Mail*, 21 November 1903, p. 22.
- ²¹ The reinstated bellcote has internal stainless steel reinforcing to prevent a re-occurrence of the 1895 disaster.
- ²² Of his three other churches with a nave east bellcote—all typologically different from Colebrook—St Anne's, Keighley, West Yorkshire, was reversed in orientation and greatly enlarged in 1907, losing its bellcote at that time; Jesus Chapel, attached to the Tempest family seat of Ackworth Grange, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, was demolished in 1966; St Austin's, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, had its nave extended to the west and a north aisle added by architect Gilbert Blount in 1851–52. The bellcote is intact.
- ²³ Frederick Thomas lacked the requisite knowledge of Gothic to be able to 'read' the small details correctly.
- ²⁴ Simon Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches*, Penguin Books, London, 1999, gives its top rating to just eighteen churches. Seventeen of them are medieval; the other is St Giles', Cheadle.

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mrs Penny & Dr Michael Wadsley
Mrs Jane & Mr Daniel Hill

Richmond, Tasmania
Culburra Beach, New South Wales

Donations

Our thanks to:

Mr Donald Sponberg
Mrs Penny & Dr Michael Wadsley
Mrs Jane & Mr Daniel Hill
Mrs Patricia Spencer-Silver

for their kind donations.