

April 2008

Number 19

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- *Metalwork Marvels*
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- *Pugin's Australian Built Heritage—St Benedict's, Broadway (Part 2)*

Welcome to the nineteenth Friends Newsletter. Following up from last month's Newsletter I am providing you with more details of Executive Officer Brian Andrews' series of illustrated lectures for ADFAS in Victoria:

- ADFAS Central Victoria, Kyneton Town Hall, Thursday 29 May, 7.30pm: *'All Things Bright and Beautiful: A Ramble through Australian Ecclesiastical Art'*.
- ADFAS Mornington Peninsula, Peninsula Community Centre, Mornington, Friday 30 May, 5.30pm: *'Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52): in Australia'*.
- ADFAS Geelong, Geelong Heritage Centre Theatre, Monday 2 June, 6.00pm, *'All Things Bright and Beautiful: A Ramble through Australian Ecclesiastical Art'*.
- ADFAS Melbourne, Blackman Hall, University of Melbourne, Hawthorn Campus, Wednesday 4 June, 8.00pm, *'Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52): in Australia'*.

Please contact me if you would like to attend and I can give you the contact person/s for each of the lectures.

Early this month Gavin Merrington, Glass conservator, and his colleague Paul Johnston completed the installation of the conserved south clerestory windows in St Patrick's church, Colebrook. They look absolutely wonderful.

Our website receives about 30,000 hits per month from all over the world and most recently we have been contacted by the Art Director of a New York magazine – *The Magazine Antiques*, requesting images of St Giles' Church, Cheadle, to accompany an article being written about this building. So our website reaches far and wide and continues to ensure that Pugin's heritage in Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom is more widely known and better understood. The major change to our website in the last few weeks is an upgrade of the St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, conservation together with small changes to all pages.

We are delighted to have the first of the Pugin Foundation postcards from the printers. We have started with four images and have the next four ready for the printers. I will give you notification when they are ready for sale on our website.

Next month I will tell you about exquisitely half-leather-bound copies, with slip case, of Brian Andrews' prize-winning definitive work on Pugin's Australian oeuvre, *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, which will be available for sale from The Pugin Foundation. All proceeds from sales will benefit the Foundation.

Every best wish,
Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer



• ADFAS Yarra, Glen Eira Centre, Thursday 5 June, 10.00am and 2.00pm, *'Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52): in Australia'*.

If you are not a member of ADFAS you are more than welcome to any of these lectures for the payment of a small entrance fee, but **booking is essential.**

Paul Johnston completing the re-installation of a conserved clerestory window (Image: Brian Andrews).

Metalwork Marvels

Each issue we bring you an exquisite example of Pugin's astonishing creativity in reviving the spirit of medieval metalwork.

Ciborium: designed after mid 1847, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, c.1849–50; silver gilt, with champlevé enamel on the knot bosses and the foot; decorated with semi-precious stones including cabochon garnets and amethysts; 37.0cm high, 16.3cm diameter lid to the container, 20.6cm across the points of the octfoil foot.



Pugin's Designs

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

Baptismal Fonts (Part 3)

St Augustine's Church, Solihull, a little to the south east of Birmingham,¹ was amongst the earliest of Pugin's churches. Designed in 1838 and opened on 6 February 1839, it was a small and modest single compartment structure of Early English character.

A contemporary newspaper account of the opening reported that: 'The building is fifty feet by twenty-two. The altar, font, piscina and holy water stoups are carved from designs by Mr. Pugin, in Gloucester stone, by Mr. Roddis, of Sutton.'² The sculptor referred to was 'Thomas Roddis of the Sutton Coldfield firm of stonemasons who built Oscott College',³ Birmingham. Pugin used the highly talented Roddis for the figurative sculpture at Oscott as well as at St John's Hospital, Alton, and St Giles', Cheadle, where his work included the superb alabaster altars.⁴

The simple Solihull font didn't tax Roddis' stone-carving skills. Its octagonal bowl had moulded upper and lower edges and a protruding shield on each face. Four of the shields bore relief carvings of the Sacred Monogram IHS and a cross, the other four bearing the symbols Alpha and Omega in relief.⁵ Pugin added interest to the octagonal pedestal by placing short sections at the top and bottom at a forty-five degree angle to the main shaft and marrying them to it with pyramidal tapers. The octagonal plinth had a chamfered upper edge.



The St Augustine's, Solihull, baptismal font (Image: Brian Andrews).

The hinged octagonal wooden font cover had a moulded edge and metal fittings including a distinctive trefoil handle. This is the only instance we know of its use by Pugin on a font, but it was by far the most common form of handle for his many sacring bell designs. Indeed, its first documented appearance as a sacring bell handle dates from around the time of its Solihull use, being shown in a John Hardman & Co. advertisement submitted at the end of 1838 for the 1839 Catholic Directory.⁶

Originally the font would have stood near the west door of the church but it was moved into a massive extension, constructed in 1977, that left the original church as little more than an annexe. At some stage it has been painted, and it bears scars from its dislocation. Nevertheless, it makes an interesting comparison with Pugin's later more elaborate and archaeologically informed fonts.

Footnotes

¹ But now part of greater Birmingham.

² Quoted in Bernard Malley, *Solihull and the Catholic Faith*, Birmingham, 1939, p. 63.

³ Michael Fisher, *Pugin Land: A.W.N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury, and the Gothic Revival in Staffordshire*, Michael J. Fisher (Publishing), Stafford, 2002, p. 58.

⁴ Thomas Roddis died in 1845, a year before the opening of St Giles'.

⁵ Alpha and omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, are a traditional Christian symbol for God, the beginning and the end.

⁶ *The Catholic Directory, and Annual Register, for the Year 1839*, Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1839. We note, though, that the form appeared in designs for keys and escutcheons for keyholes in his 1836 *Designs for Iron and Brass work in the style of the xv and xvi centuries*, published in London by Ackermann.

Rood Screens (Part 3)

Last month we described the beautifully carved 1846 rood screen in St Peter's, Marlow. As we mentioned, its general form echoed one which Pugin had designed in 1843 for one of the three model churches brought out to Tasmania by Bishop Willson in 1844, that particular model being used to construct St Paul's, Oatlands (1850–51). These two screens bore in turn a close family resemblance to an even earlier screen in his 1842 Jesus Chapel, built for Mrs Elizabeth Tempest at Ackworth Grange near Pontefract, West Yorkshire.¹

As completed in 1851 St Paul's lacked its wooden furnishings, including sedilia, pews and rood screen. These were constructed c.1855 by Irish immigrant Patrick Lynch who arrived in Tasmania in 1854 with the requisite cabinet-making skills, having worked on the wooden furnishings for Pugin's and John Gregory Crace's scheme for the refurbishment and re-decoration of Lismore Castle, Co. Waterford, for the sixth Duke of Devonshire—an ideal apprenticeship.²

Like its English cousins the Oatlands screen is in the Flowing Decorated style. It is made from Australian Red Cedar (*Toona Australis*), often referred to as Colonial Cedar, and consists of three bays on either side of a central opening which has a traceried ogee-headed arch resting on attached cluster columns with moulded capitals and bases. Likewise the ogee-headed bays rest on cluster columns with moulded capitals and bases, above them being elongated ogee quatrefoil tracery. The moulded cornice was apparently designed with foliated bosses set into its face but Lynch substituted simple paterae, perhaps reflecting his competence as a cabinetmaker rather than as a woodcarver. At the base of the screen below the bays is an open arcade of trefoil-



headed arches, two per bay, under a moulded top rail. The screen gates are similarly treated.

The St Paul's, Oatlands, rood screen (Image: Brian Andrews).

Standing at the centre of the screen's top rail is a crucifix with moulded edges, blind quatrefoil and fleur de lis terminations to the arms and a blind quatrefoil sunk diagonally into the base of the post. It has two curved braces with moulded edges. The corpus, or figure, is one of at least fourteen of various sizes brought back to Tasmania in 1847 by Bishop Willson and intended inter alia for use on rood screens. They were carved to a Pugin design from White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*) by craftsmen employed by George Myers, then coated with gesso, rubbed back and polychromed.³ This corpus has regrettably been re-painted at some stage. The glory of rays behind the head of Christ would appear to be an original Patrick Lynch touch.

Footnotes

¹ The chapel was demolished in 1966. The screen itself was illustrated in [A. Welby Pugin], 'the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. XII, February 1842.

² Vera Fisher, *A Time to Remember 1850–2000*, Oatlands, 2000, p. 8.

³ George Myers was Pugin's favoured builder in England..

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 continue our examination of St Benedict's, Broadway, on the outskirts of Sydney's central business district.

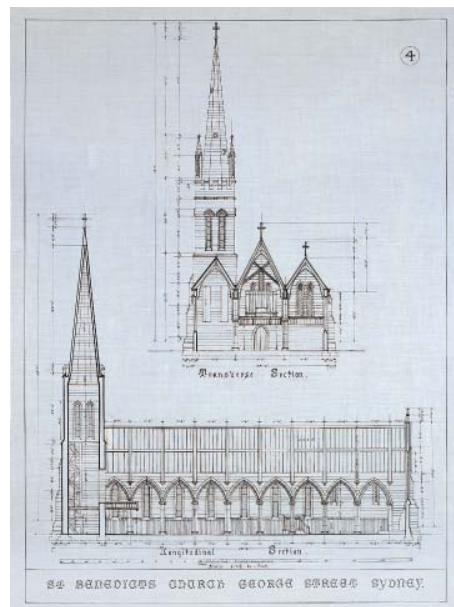
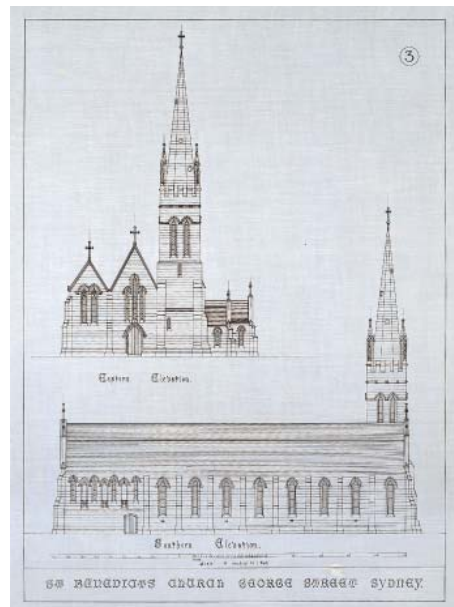
St Benedict's, Broadway (Part 2)

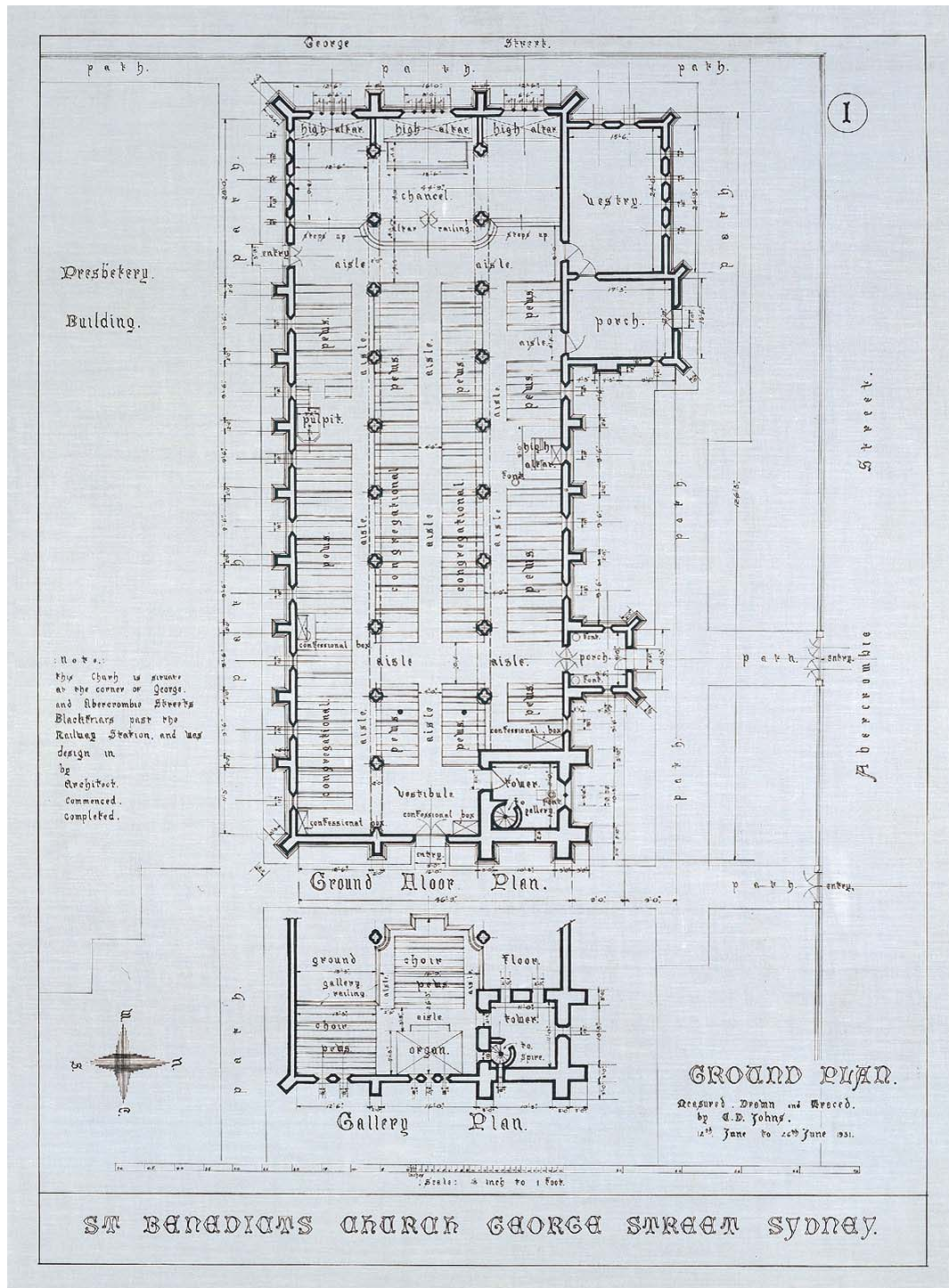
The design (continued)

We can be thankful that St Benedict's is one of a small handful of Pugin's churches for which there is a set of plans. In this case they are not the Pugin originals but are measured drawings made in 1931 by E.D. Johns. They were done during the Great Depression as part of a scheme undertaken between 1929 and 1932 to measure buildings—mainly historic churches—in New South Wales through the Architect's Relief Scheme, under the direction and at the expense of the Board of Architects of New South Wales.¹

We are grateful to the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, for permission to reproduce the drawings. Although they are not entirely accurate, particularly in relation to the upper parts of the building, well beyond Johns' tape measure, they give a very good indication of the composition, proportions and detail of the church. It needs to be noted that the plans show two additions not in Pugin's original design. They are a western gallery and the structure at the south-east corner labelled 'Vestry' on the plan. The latter had been a later nineteenth-century addition because the original sacristy had evidently proven to be too small. The original sacristy is the structure immediately to the west of the later sacristy and, as is clear from the label on the plan, had been converted into a second south porch. In passing, it should be noted that the original south porch would have been shown on Pugin's drawings as a north porch.² Presumably it was constructed on the south side to face Abercrombie Street.

The style of the building was largely Early English, but with its eastern parts in the Flowing





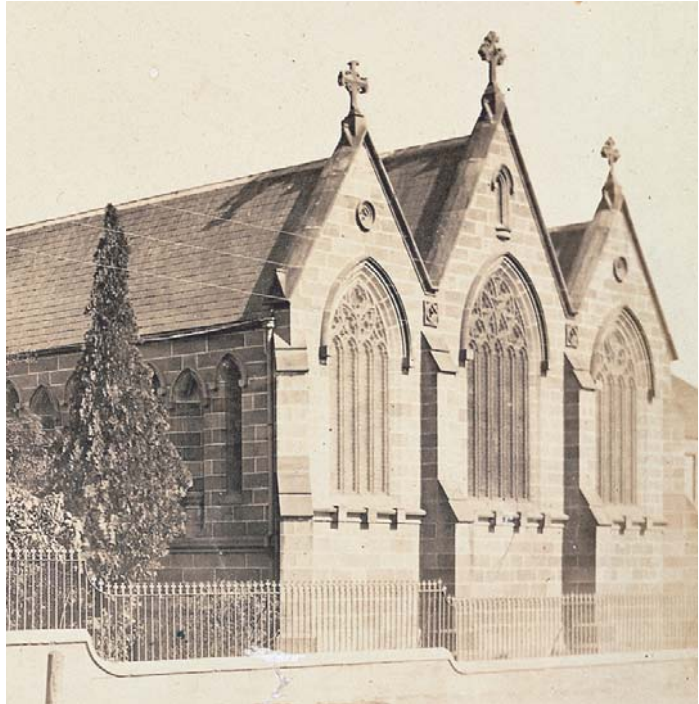
Decorated idiom. In addition, the buttress set-offs on the porch with their reverse-curve faces were Flowing Decorated and the priest's door had a four-centred arch characteristic of the even later Perpendicular period of English Gothic. Now Pugin, for his time, had an unrivalled mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of English medieval architecture and could design a building entirely and accurately reflecting any of that period, so we may conclude that such application of various details was deliberate, particularly in

the light of his dictum on the very first page of his highly influential 1841 work, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, that: 'In pure architecture the smallest detail should *have a meaning or serve a purpose* ... [Pugin's emphasis].'³ His use of the more elaborate Flowing Decorated style for the chancel and eastern chapels is a typical example of his principle of propriety, namely, 'that the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with, the purpose for which it is destined [Pugin's

emphasis]'.⁴ Treatment of the east end of many of his churches in this hybrid way reflected his belief that this, the location of the altar, was the more solemn or sacred part of the building.⁵

As for the porch buttresses and the priest's door the purpose here might perhaps have been to claim a re-appropriation of the whole of medieval England to resurgent Catholicism, an approach evident in Pugin's design for Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire.⁶

The church had angle buttresses to the nave west, north and south walls, the chancel east wall and south-west tower, with diagonal buttresses to all the building's corners. The nave was lit by single lancet windows in its north and south walls while the north aisle west wall had paired lancets and the nave west wall a trinity of lancets. The latter, with the central light stilted well above the flanking lights, may well have been another reference to the Temple Church, London, where this is the composition of the nave windows. Likewise, the cluster



columns of the nave arcade reflected the Temple Church arrangement.


Detail of the chancel and eastern chapels, last quarter c.19 (Courtesy: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).

Pugin's treatment of the east end was both elegant and, in the case of the north and south walls of its eastern chapels, unique in his oeuvre. These latter had alternating single lights with traceried heads and trefoil-headed statue niches. The eastern chapels had four-light windows of differing tracery and the chancel had a five-light east window. The whole eastern wall composition, including the statue niche above the chancel east window and the string course embellished with foliated bosses, can be seen to be a close relative of his St Mary's, Islington, model illustrated in our Newsletter 18. Pugin had similarly embellished string courses in his 1837 St Mary's, Derby, design.

The tall elegant steeple had a two-light window with late Early English tracery in its head inserted in south wall of the base stage while the belfry stage had two lancets in each face, their dripstone mouldings continuing around the tower as a string course. Above the belfry stage the top of the tower was defined by a strong string course with foliated bosses and its crenellated parapet had tall pinnacles at each angle. Later Pugin would terminate his tower on St Thomas of Canterbury's, Fulham, with a parapet and pinnacles.



String course embellished with foliated bosses, St Mary's, Derby (Image: Brian Andrews).



The St Benedict's pinnacle arrangement shared a powerful similarity with his steeples on St Barnabas', Nottingham, and the incomparable St Giles', Cheadle, even though these two churches had broach spires, namely, diagonally placed statue niches in the pinnacles. All in all the St Benedict's design included twelve statue niches, underscoring its position as the major parish church scheme furnished to Archbishop Polding.

The original drawings would have shown a wooden rood screen across the chancel west end and, in line with it, a pair of parclose screens across the entrances to the eastern chapels.⁷ Such was Pugin's normal treatment of this genre of triple-gabled churches. The narrow spans of the nave and aisles allowed Pugin to use simple roof trusses consisting of just arch braces resting on corbels.

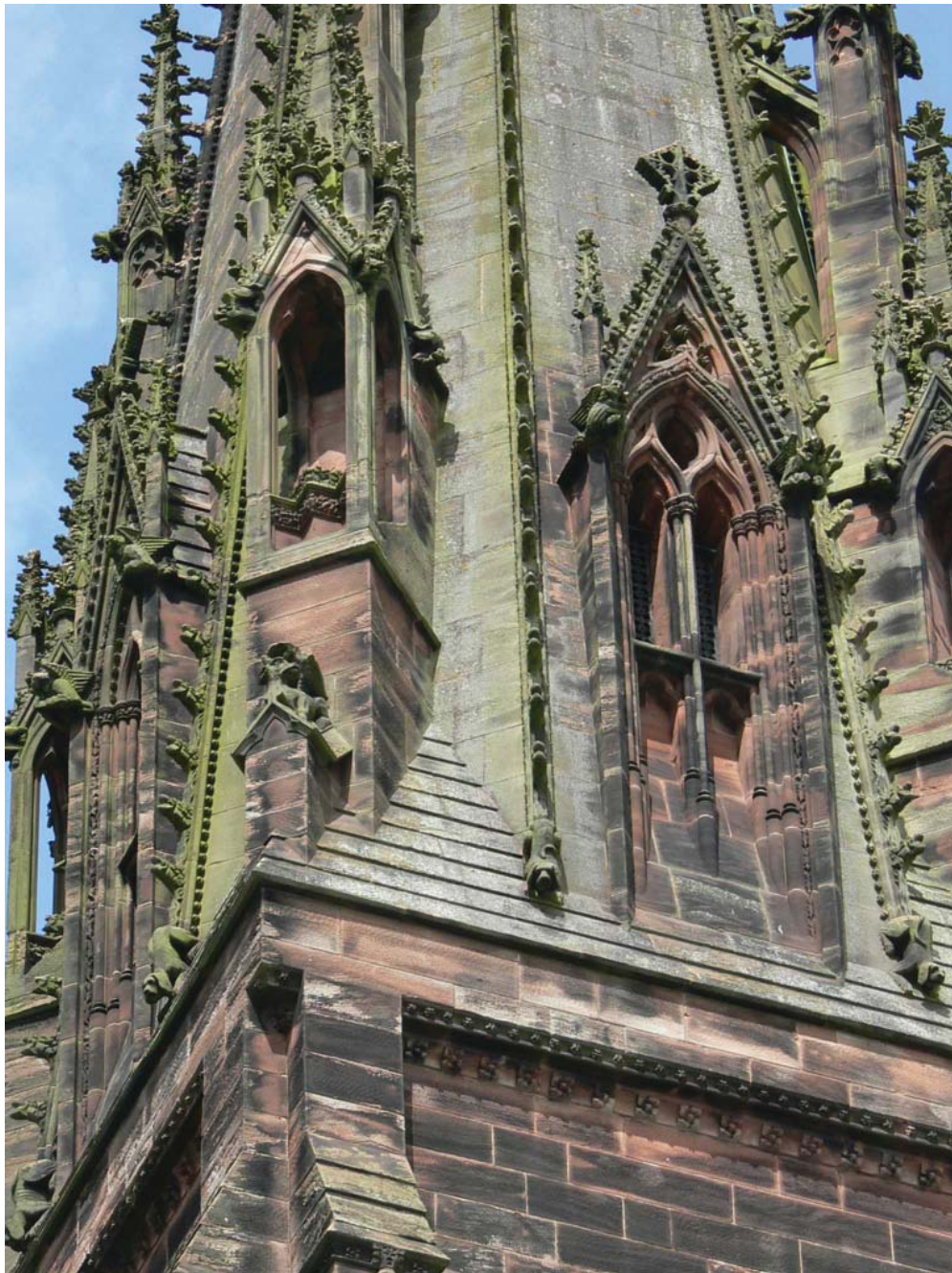
To be continued.



*The spire, St Thomas of
Canterbury's, Fulham
(Image: Brian Andrews).*



*The spire, St Barnabas'
Cathedral, Nottingham
(Image: Brian Andrews).*



*Detail of the spire, St Giles', Cheadle
(Image: John Maidment).*

Footnotes

¹ Information from Richard Neville, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

² In medieval England the entrance was on the south, or sunny side, of the church. This therefore dictated a north porch at the antipodes.

³ A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, John Weale, London, 1841, p. 1.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵ A majority of his Australian churches were so designed. Also, a number of his earlier English churches and his St Mary's, Tagoat, Co. Wexford, design of 1843 were similarly treated.

⁶ See Brian Andrews, 'The Significance of Architectural Style at Mount St Bernard Abbey', *True Principles: The voice of the Pugin Society*, Vol. 2, No. 5, Summer 2003, pp. 38–40.

⁷ From the material and documentary evidence associated with two of Pugin's designs for Archbishop Polding as well as from his own consistent practice we can safely assert that St Benedict's plans would have included a rood screen and—doubtless—parclose screens.

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Ms Lesley Gulson & Mr John Miller

Neika, Tasmania