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*The spire of St Giles', Cheadle,
Staffordshire (Image: John Maidment).*

Welcome to the twenty-second Friends Newsletter. We are pleased to report that the strengthening of the floor of St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, is progressing well under the skilled workmanship of stonemason Edrei Stanton of Tasmanian Heritage Masonry and his offsider Ronnie O'Neill in preparation for the next phase of conservation works to be undertaken on this site. Details of the floor strengthening will be given in our next issue.

Recently our website was found by an American publishing company. We were approached by the editor of *The Magazine Antiques* for images to accompany an article by G. Beard entitled 'Pugin's "Perfect" Church – Saint Giles' in Cheadle'. All eighteen photographs which accompany the article are from the Pugin Foundation, yet another indication of the far reaching influence of www.puginfoundation.org. The article looks splendid thanks to our great image collection.

A professional development symposium, consisting of a workshop and conference, presented by The Association for Preservation Technology International, together with the University of Melbourne, and the National Trust with support from Heritage Victoria, is taking place at the end of July. The topic is 'Victorian Interiors: Conservation of applied decorative finishes and furnishings in Victorian places'. Executive Officer Brian Andrews has been asked to give an illustrated presentation 'Pugin Rediscovery and Revival'. All of the presentations will be published as a volume with colour illustrations.

The Society of Architectural Historians of Australia & New Zealand (SAHANZ) has just awarded Brian Andrews life membership to recognise and acknowledge his distinguished contributions through publications, teaching, supervision, mentorship and service to societies in the SAHANZ discipline. Brian was honoured to accept the Society's acknowledgement.

I hope that you enjoy this all Australian Friends Newsletter.

Every best wish,
Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer





Metalwork Marvels

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

Chalice: designed 1847, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, 1847; silver bowl, parcel-gilt, plated base metal body; 18.5cm high, 8.7cm dia. bowl, 11.5cm across lobes of sexfoil base. Hardman Metal Day Book entry dated 6 December 1847: 'Rt Revd Bishop Willson Hobart Town 10 Chalices & Patens gilt inside @ 80/- 40 0 0'. Exhibited: *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, September–November 2002, thence travelling to Bendigo, Canberra and Sydney.



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 6)

Amongst the shipload of Pugin-designed furnishings which Bishop Willson brought out to Hobart Town in 1844 was a baptismal font. This font, like the other stone items in the cargo—headstones, gable crosses, piscinas, holy water stoups and so on, was an exemplar carved by George Myers' craftsmen and was intended for local copying. As Willson explained to his clergy in October 1844, it was 'a font rightly constructed and fitted which will serve as a model for all other churches'.¹

The bowl is octagonal in form with a chamfered upper edge and has quatrefoils set in squares sunk in the cardinal faces, one enclosing a foliated cross. The lower edge of the bowl is moulded and seats on an octagonal shaft. At the lower end of the shaft is a moulded transition to a splayed octagonal base. Originally the font was furnished with an oak lid having foliated metal hinges and latch but this has long gone. The present lid is not original.² The font bears many scars from having been moved a number of times throughout its 165 year existence and is presently sited in St John the Evangelist's Church, Richmond, Tasmania.

The general form for this 1843 design would be used again by Pugin for free-standing holy water stoups in his Ushaw College Chapel as well as his own St Augustine's Church, Ramsgate. In both cases they stand just outside the entrance to the church proper. The Tasmanian font was indeed copied as Willson had intended, for St Mary's Church, Franklin, in 1856. However, as with local copies of other exemplar stonework such as headstones, the dimensions of the original were not strictly adhered to and the proportions of the copy do not do justice to the original. Amazingly, the Franklin copy was itself copied after a fashion for the neighbouring St Joseph's, Geeveston, in 1864, and this latter is truly awful.



The limestone exemplar font in St John's Church, Richmond, Tasmania (Image: Brian Andrews).



The exemplar font's copy in St Mary's Church, Franklin, Tasmania (Image: Brian Andrews).

Rood Screens (Part 6)

Pugin's screen in St Paul's, Oatlands, was described in our April 2008 Newsletter. His other surviving Australian screen, in St Patrick's, Colebrook, has already been documented and illustrated in our issues No. 1 of July 2006 and No. 7 of January 2007 in conjunction with its restoration. We thought it would be interesting to bring you 'before and after' images to underscore the magnitude of the restoration task and the excellent results.

It was constructed from Colonial Cedar by Patrick Lynch, St Patrick's builder, who also built the Oatlands screen, and consists of three bays on either side of a central opening. The opening has a traceried ogee-headed arch with quatrefoils in the spandrels, 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 base of the screen below the bays is panelled with blind tracery. The screen gates are similarly treated.

Standing on the moulded top beam are four candlesticks and a crucifix with blind quatrefoil terminations to the arms and a blind trefoil sunk into the moulded triangular base of the post.³ It is supported by two curved braces with crockets on the upper edges. As with the Oatlands screen the corpus, or figure, was brought back to Tasmania in 1847 by Bishop Willson and was carved to a Pugin design from White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*) and polychromed by craftsmen employed by George Myers.

A delightful small detail, probably by Lynch, is a set of moulded wooden buttons on the back of the screen. They were to take tape loops attached to white linen cloths that would be draped over the moulded top rail of the screen's base at communion time during the Mass.

Footnotes

¹ Draft for a speech by Bishop Willson to the clergy on 23 October 1844 on 'the state of church temporalities', Archdiocese of Hobart Archives, CA.6/WIL.12.

² It is intended to make a new oak lid with metal fittings based on examples in England on Pugin fonts.

³ The candlesticks are modern copies of Pugin-designed originals, formerly in St Mary's, Franklin.



Top R.

*The St Patrick's,
Colebrook, rood screen
before restoration
(Image: Brian Andrews).*

Above R..

*The St Patrick's,
Colebrook, rood screen
after restoration
(Image: Brian Andrews).*



*Buttons for
attaching
communion
cloths to the
rood screen,
St Patrick's,
Colebrook
(Image: Brian
Andrews).*

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 Benedict's, Broadway, on the outskirts of Sydney's central business district.

St Benedict's, Broadway (Part 4)

Subsequent History

Archbishop Polding had attended the solemn consecration and opening of St Giles', Cheadle, on 31 August and 1 September 1846, staying as an honoured guest of the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury with a numerous body of the hierarchy, nobility and gentry at nearby Alton Towers.¹ The stunning stencilled and decorative schemes of St Giles' interior cannot have failed to make a huge and lasting impression upon him, and so, with the fabric of St Benedict's completed in 1856, it is not surprising that he turned his mind to the decoration of its chancel walls. This decision would have also been in accordance with his philosophy regarding church architecture and furnishing, namely: '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.'²

For this task he turned to Fr Anselm Curtis OSB, a monk of the St Mary's Benedictine monastery attached to St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.³ Curtis' artistic talents were well recognised in the monastic community for he had earlier bronzed the seven three-foot high plaster statues produced by fellow monk Fr Jean Gourbeillon for the great Pugin-designed organ case in St Mary's Cathedral.

The decorative work was carried out in mid 1861, and a contemporary description leaves us wondering whether the examples in Pugin's highly influential *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* might have been a source for some of it:

The panelling is executed in red diapered patterns upon a white ground, with the pax and other symbolic devices in gold and colours in the centres, and the pediment borders, and framework of the paintings in blue upon a white ground, and the tracery of the frames which are Gothic-shaped, in gold with red borders. The cresting in the same style, but of richer design and a greater variety of colour is employed, the different compartments being divided by bands of gold surmounted by *fleur-de-lys* forming crosses.⁴

All very Puginesque. The writer considered that the 'completion of the decorations of the sanctuary is certainly a very great improvement to the appearance of the church, and reflects very great credit on the artistic skill of Father Curtis'.⁵ Just how long this decoration remained in place is not clear. A photograph of the chancel, dating from later than 1896,⁶ only shows figurative wall paintings and decorative work above wooden panelling.

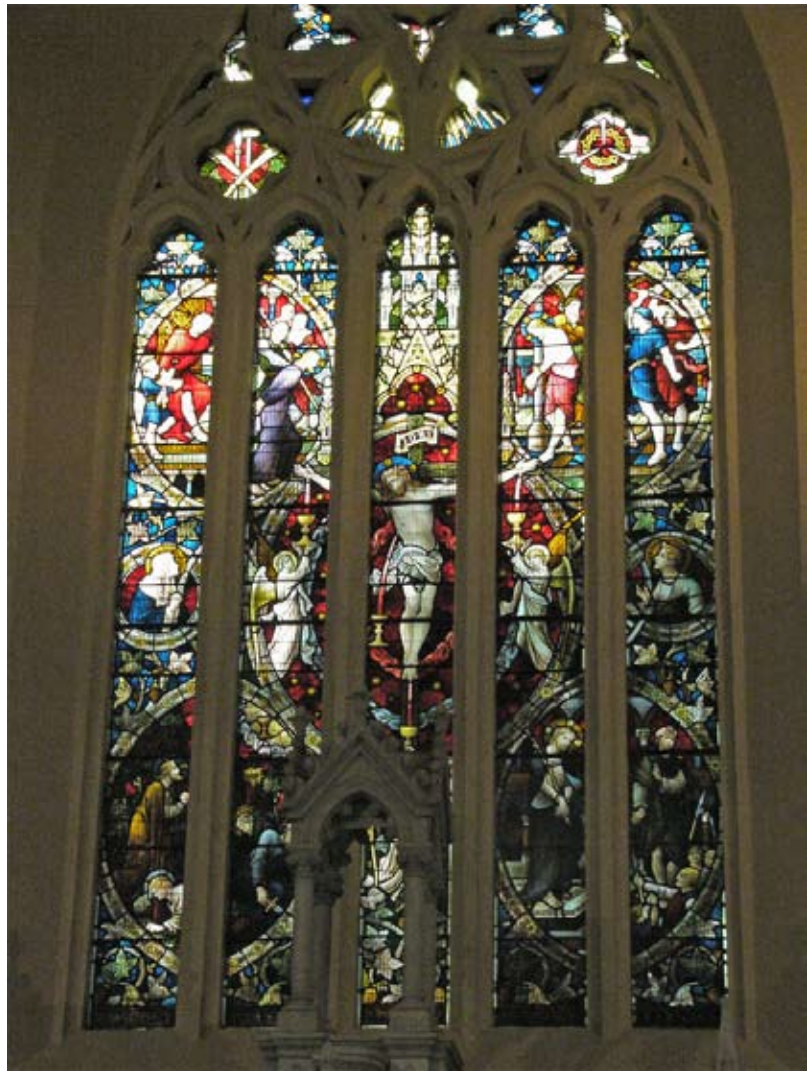
The interior looking east, probably early c.20 (Courtesy St Benedict's Parish).



In the 1890s an organ and choir gallery was constructed over the two westernmost bays of the nave and the westernmost bay of the north aisle, with access via the tower base, and it was opened in May 1893. Two years later the five-light chancel east window received new stained glass from John Hardman & Co., Birmingham, on the theme of the Crucifixion, an appropriate addition to a Pugin church given his role as chief designer for Hardmans up until his death in 1852.

By 1910 Pugin's original sacristy had proved inadequate for the needs of the church so a new one was constructed in the angle between the chancel south wall and the existing sacristy, which latter was converted into an additional porch. Its main axis was east-west so that its gabled roof landed on the chancel south wall below the existing windows.⁷ This modest change to the external appearance of the church would be dwarfed by the radical re-build that would take place around three decades later.

In 1929 the Sydney Municipal Council gazetted seven blocks for resumption on the south side of George Street West between Railway Square and City Road in order to widen the inner end of this major thoroughfare to the city's west. It was to be re-named Broadway.⁸ The most difficult of these resumptions involved the land upon which St Benedict's stood, as it would have necessitated the demolition of the church. Legal complexities involving the title to the land, along with a claim for £127,000 to fully rebuild the church, caused the negotiations with church authorities to be protracted, and it was not until 1939 that a compensation agreement



The chancel east window by John Hardman & Co., Birmingham (Image: Fr Don Richardson).

was reached. This entailed removal of 26 feet from St Benedict's land frontage, a westerly extension to its frontage and the provision of £40,623 in funds to rebuild the church and erect a new presbytery. This agreement had come in the wake of church authorities separately commissioning Sydney Catholic architects Clement Glancey and Austin McKay to prepare plans and cost estimates for rebuilding St Benedict's.

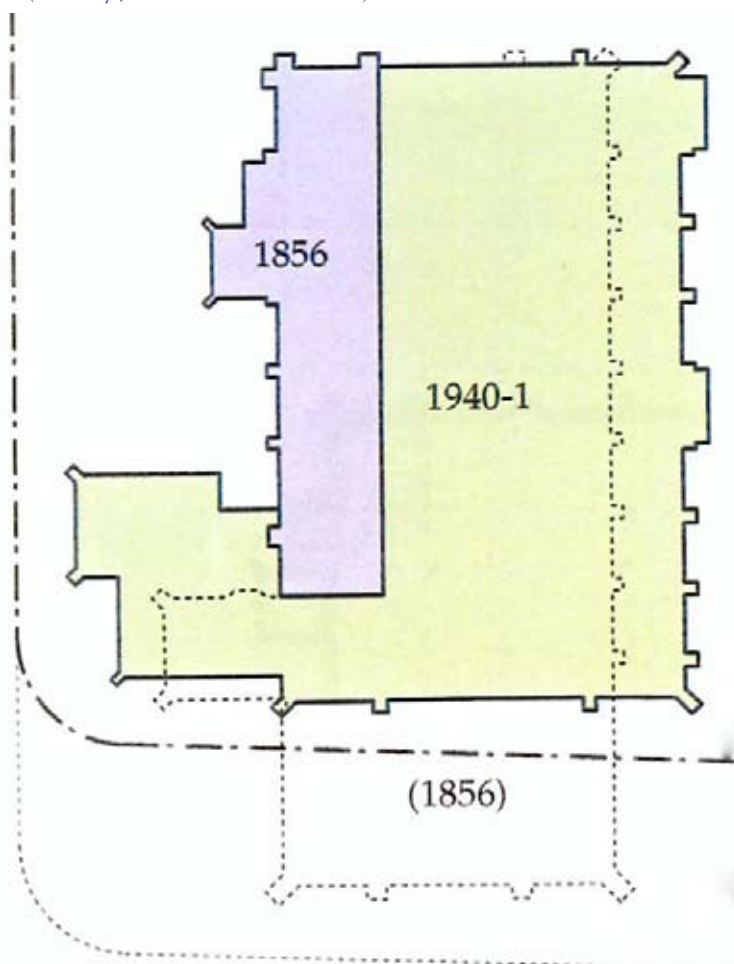
Both architects had independently come up with the same solution, namely, reducing the length of the church by lopping off Pugin's chancel and its flanking chapels, widening the nave towards the north by the width of the north aisle and rebuilding the north aisle, an effective increase in nave width of 11 feet. Widening the building by 11 feet northwards would require demolition of the existing presbytery, hence the need to include the cost

of constructing a new one. McKay's estimate was the lower of the two and this was accepted. An artist's impression of McKay's reconstructed church was published in the *Freeman's Journal* issues of 26 September 1940 and 19 June 1941.

Partial demolition of the church started in late November 1939. Most of the structure was dismantled, with each stone 'carefully numbered for the re-building'.⁹ The only section of the original structure to be left standing was the westernmost seven bays of the south aisle,




St Benedict's ground plan before and after the 1940-41 reconstruction (Courtesy John Graham & Associates).



the south porch and the steeple. These works were completed before the end of January 1940, followed by the reconstruction, and the drastically reconfigured church was re-opened in June 1941.

Austin McKay's scheme for the reconstruction of St Benedict's (Source: Freeman's Journal, 26 September 1940).

Although almost all of the original materials had been re-used, with the notable exception of the chancel north and south walls with their windows, statue niches and priest's door, the new shorter and wider composition made a radical difference to the appearance. In particular, the wider nave with extra windows inserted in its east and west walls obliterated the Pugin external proportions. And this change was even more drastic inside because McKay had covered the wider nave with a boarded ceiling, making the nave both wider and lower. He also built thick ugly trusses in the aisles, tying the walls together below the wall plate



level, as a substitute for Pugin's simple scissor trusses, again lowering the effective height. It requires a great deal of imagination nowadays to see the hand of Pugin in the interior.

The stonework in St Benedict's tower and spire has not weathered well, necessitating attention including stone replacement. Regrettably, this has included removal some time before the early 1950s of the tower string courses and their replacement with plain

flush stonework, to the visual detriment of the tower's articulation and the proportions and integrity of Pugin's original design.

Most recently the St Benedict's parish infrastructure has become one of the Sydney campuses of the University of Notre Dame Australia and a restoration of its buildings, including the church, has been completed. St Benedict's future, albeit in a form that Pugin would not have recognised, seems assured.



*The interior looking east, April 2006
(Image: Fr Don Richardson).*

Footnotes

¹ [Charles Dolman], *Lord Shrewsbury's New Church of St Giles, in Staffordshire: Being a Description of the Edifice, and an Account of the Consecration and Opening*, Charles Dolman, London, p. 22.

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

³ Anselm Curtis was the first Sydney-born Catholic to become a priest. See Kevin Livingston, 'Anselm Curtis', *Tjurunga: An Australasian Benedictine Review*, no. 8, December 1974, p. 195.

⁴ 'St. Benedict's Church', *Freeman's Journal*, 28 August 1861, p. 3, cited in 'St Benedict's Broadway Conservation Management Plan, John Graham & Associates, April 2005, p. 26.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ It shows marble sanctuary furnishings supplied by the French church furnishing firm of Louis Gille, and these were installed early in 1896. See St. Benedict's Church: Consecration of the High Altar: Mr W.J. Dixon's Gift, *Freeman's Journal*, 4 April 1896, p. 14, cited in John Graham & Associates, op. cit., p. 38.

⁷ This addition can be seen in the measured drawings of St Benedict's published in our Newsletter 19.

⁸ A detailed account of the process, including the reconstruction of St Benedict's, is given in Graham & Associates, op. cit., pp. 47–52. I am indebted to the firm for permission to draw extensively from this account.

⁹ John Graham & Associates, op. cit., p. 49.

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mrs Frances Clancy

Mr G. Nelligan

Ashwood, Victoria

Redfern, New South Wales