January 2009   **Number 28**

Included in this edition:
- *Metalwork Marvels—Sacrying Bells*
- *Pugin's Designs—Baptismal Fonts (Part 10) & Rood Screens (Part 8)*
- *Pugin's Australian Works—St John the Evangelist's Church, Richmond (Part 1)*

Welcome to 2009, may it be a happy and healthy one for you, and welcome to the twenty-eighth Friends Newsletter.

We are pleased to inform you that one of the Pugin Foundation's patrons, Archbishop Adrian Doyle of Hobart, was made a member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia. His citation reads: *For service to the Catholic Church in Australia and to the community, particularly as Archbishop of Hobart and through Caritas providing programs supporting international aid to developing countries.*

The accompanying image, sent to us by Friend of Pugin Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett of Lismore, is of the Coat of Arms of Robert William Willson, first Bishop of Hobart Town, the man responsible for the entirety of Tasmania's magnificent Pugin heritage. It is in a south aisle window in St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham, the Pugin church built for Willson when he was in charge of the Catholic mission there. He lies buried in its crypt. On the right is the Willson family crest, comprising a wolf rampant and three stars. On the left are the original arms of Willson's Diocese of Hobart Town, a beautiful Sedes Sapientiæ, or seated Virgin and Child. We cannot help noticing

Bishop Willson's arms, St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham (Image: Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett)

the similarity of this Pugin-depicted Sedes Sapientiæ with that recently installed as Our Lady of Colebrook, an image of which appeared in our June 2008 Newsletter. In more recent times the Hobart Archdiocesan arms have been simplified to a Marian monogram surmounted by a crown, but in Hobart two 1860s era stained glass windows contain the original Willson episcopal arms. Both windows are by Hardmans, and were designed by Pugin's pupil and son-in-law John Hardman Powell. One is in St Joseph's Church and the other is in St Mary's Cathedral.

Before Christmas we had a wonderful response to our offer of the first twenty-five Newsletters, bound in buckram, and orders are still coming in. We continue to offer this opportunity and again enclose the order form. Please allow three weeks for processing and delivery.

During 2009 we plan to make a start on the reinstatement of the historic environs around St Patrick's, Colebrook. Our hope is that we can plant several trees of the same species and in the same locations as can be seen in two early 1890s photographs of the site. We also intend to re-erect the perimeter picket fence and its iron gates, relying on the excellent material researched and produced by Friends of Pugin Lesley Gulson and John Miller in their Landscape Conservation Management Plan for St Patrick's. Lesley and John have a landscape architecture practice. This exciting project is one in which we want to involve Friends of Pugin in coming months.

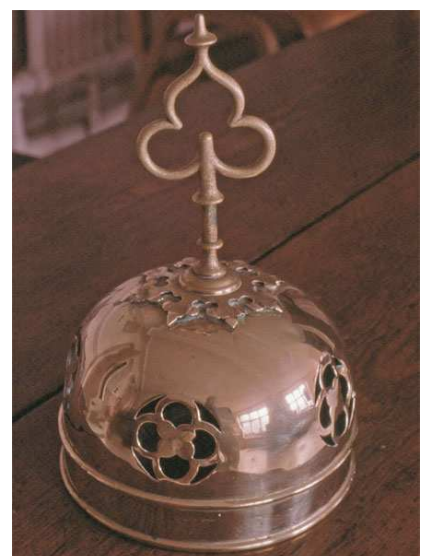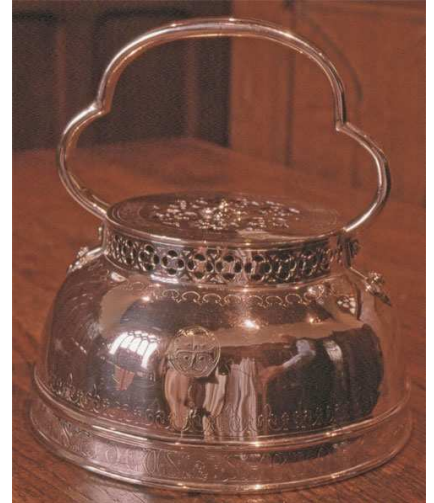We look forward to another year of Friends of Pugin Newsletters.

Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer

Bishop Willson with his episcopal arms, St Joseph's, Hobart (Image: Brian Andrews)

Metalwork Marvels

A selection of Pugin's more than twenty sacrying bell designs, vividly illustrating the
extraordinary fertility of his creative genius (Images: Brian Andrews)

Pugin's Designs

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

Baptismal Fonts (Part 10)

Pugin generally matched the style and decorative elaboration of his furnishings to their churches, and his baptismal fonts were no exception.

In our Newsletter issues 12 through 14 we examined St Michael the Archangel's, Gorey, Co. Wexford, touching briefly on its long-abandoned Pugin font. Pugin designed St Michael's in the Romanesque idiom and its font reflected the simplicity of design and detail characteristic of English examples dating from around the time of the Norman conquest, such as that in St Peter's, Wolfhamcote, Warwickshire.[1]

The Gorey baptismal font (Image: Brian Andrews)

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[1] Francis Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers*, OUP, Oxford, 1908, pp. 37–8.

Devoid of any ornament, the font was entirely composed of plain geometric forms. The circular bowl was tub-shaped with a chamfered upper edge and tapered sides. This rested on a short section of similar circular tapered form with chamfered top, which interpenetrated a stubby square stem. The base was square with a chamfered transition to the stem. All in all a design of exemplary chasteness.

It would appear that this remarkable font only remained in St Michael's for as little as a decade and a half from around 1843, the year of the church's dedication. A notable local Catholic convert and benefactor Stephen Ram donated a new cast iron baptismal font, most likely of Belgian origin, to the church, possibly around 1858.[2] Pugin's font was removed from the church to just outside the sacristy door where it has endured the elements for some 150 years. In the long run Ram's iron font suffered the same fate and now stands rusting in the grounds of the parochial house.

Rood Screens (Part 8)

Pugin's magnificent screens in St Edmund's College Chapel, Ware, and St Giles', Cheadle, which we presented in our issues of June and November 2008 respectively, show how he could revive these furnishings in all their decorative and structural complexity. At the other end of the scale, because of his passionately held conviction that they were an essential element in all Catholic churches, he was obliged to design rood screens of the simplest character for buildings where available funds were minimal. Perhaps the best example of such a screen was that for his St Winefride's Church, Shepshed, Leicestershire (1842).

Apart from St Patrick's, Colebrook, St Winefride's was the most stripped-down church that Pugin ever designed, being constructed by his favoured builder George Myers for a contract sum of just £500.[3] Its rood screen was equally pared back and consisted of two bays on either side of a central opening. Unusually, the plain top beam was not

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[2] Walter Forde, *St. Michael's Church, Gorey, 1839–1989*, Gorey, 1989, p. 32.
[3] Alexandra Wedgwood, *A.W.N. Pugin and the Pugin Family*, Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1985, p. 54.

continuous but was stepped over the central opening, being supported by a shouldered arch standing on attached moulded columns. The side posts of the opening continued up to support moulded capitals upon which stood Our Lady at left and St John at right, forming with the central crucifix the usual Calvary group of Pugin's rood screens. The crucifix had the typical curved braces so often associated with screens in his churches.[4]

In 1928 a new larger Catholic church was opened in Shepshed and Pugin's little building was abandoned. Over time the furnishings including the screen disappeared. Since 1985 the church itself has found a sensitively regarded and much appreciated new role as a private residence and engineering consultancy.[5]
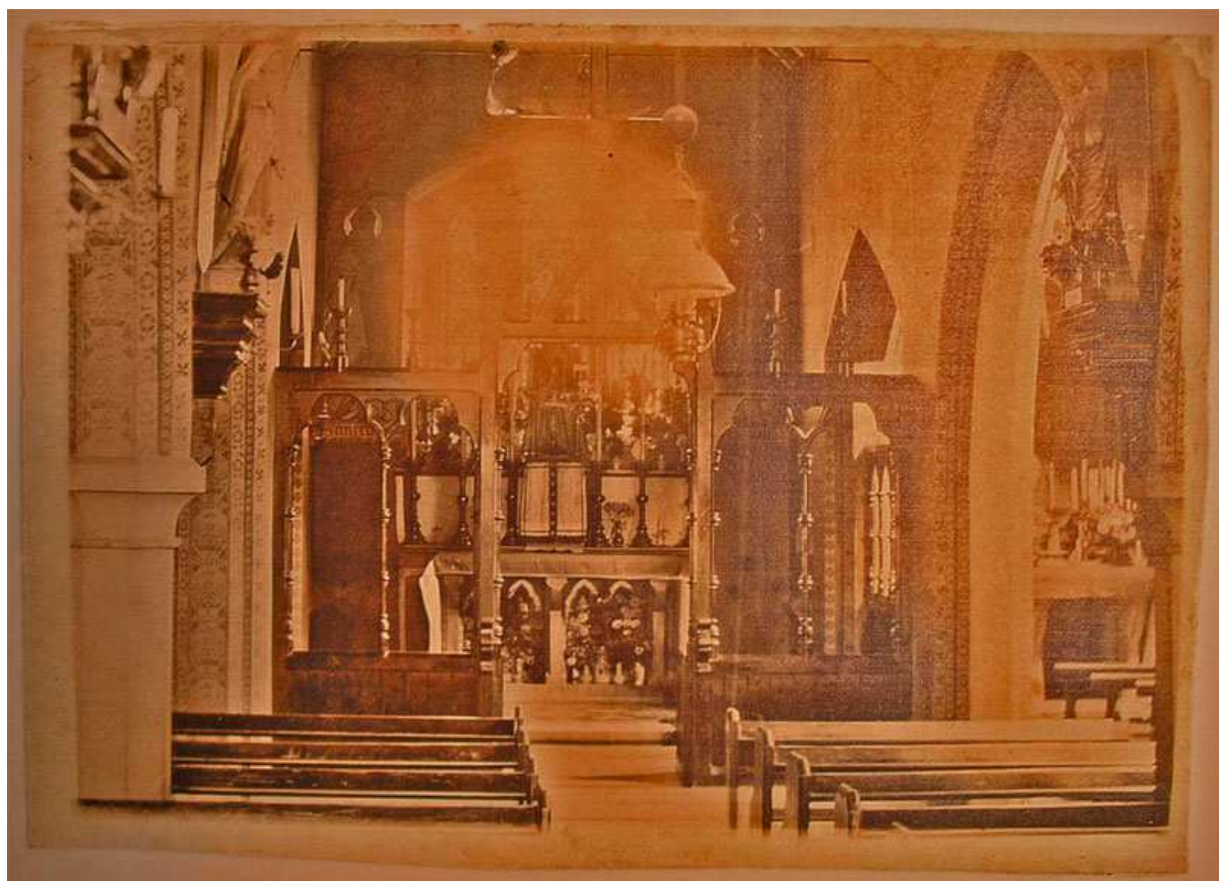
The interior of St Winefride's Church, Shepshed, pre-1928 (Courtesy: Michael Wortley)

Integral with the top beam on either side of the central opening were moulded wooden candlesticks, being, one suspects, an inexpensive alternative to metal ones. The side bays also had shouldered arches resting on moulded columns, the base of the screen being of wooden panelling beneath a plain rail with curved top.

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 Australia's

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[4] They are or were to be found inter alia in his churches, chapels and cathedrals in Alton, Birmingham, Cambridge, Colebrook, Kenilworth, Macclesfield, Nottingham, Oatlands, Pontefract, Southport and Warwick Bridge.

[5] Information from Dr Phillip Whitehead.

oldest continuously used Catholic church, St John the Evangelist's, Richmond, Tasmania. Additions derived from one of Pugin's 1843 designs for Bishop Robert William Willson were made to it in 1859.

St John the Evangelist's, Richmond (Part 1)

Background

The roots of St John's Church can be traced back to Australia's first Catholic bishop, John Bede Polding OSB (1794–1877) who visited Van Diemen's Land, as Tasmania was then known, in 1835 en route to taking up his posting in Sydney.

Polding OSB was an English Benedictine monk from the Downside Priory community. In 1814 this centuries-old English community from Douay in Flanders had completed its odyssey back to its homeland via Acton Burnell in Shropshire, finally settling in the Bath district on the outskirts of the village of Stratton on the Fosse and naming their new home Downside Priory. Within less than a decade the monastery and its school had outgrown the small Georgian country house and farm building on the site and plans were made for more substantial and appropriate monastic accommodation. Of the three designs considered, that chosen was by a local architect Henry Edmund Goodridge (c.1800–63).

Goodridge was a Bath architect whose practice was centred on that city and whose works are largely to be found within a radius of some 25km of it. Amongst the more significant of his designs were: a huge Classical church of 1834 in Clifton for Bishop Baines, Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District, which never progressed beyond a half complete shell; a folly, Lansdown Tower, of 1825–26 for the eccentric William Beckford; and a monastic building for Downside Priory.[6]

Containing both monastic and school rooms, as well as a chapel, the Goodridge design was favoured by the community because it was in 'our national style'.[7] In fact, it was in what is nowadays referred to as the Gothick style, namely, the superficial application of the elements of medieval Gothic in isolation from their structural, compositional and liturgical basis, in competition with other fashions of the era such as Chinese and 'Hindoo'. Nevertheless, the choice reflected a growing interest in things medieval in the wake of the Romantic Movement and a trend towards the view that Gothic was appropriate for ecclesiastical architecture. This trend would culminate in the earnest archaeologically-based approach of the Gothic Revival in the late 1830s.

Goodridge's Downside Priory design

The T-shaped block which was erected in 1823 abutting the country house looked for all the world like a large church. It had Early English detail, and the chapel which occupied part of the first floor made, with the apartments below it, a rather attenuated composition surmounted by a group of slender pinnacles. At the time of its construction Polding occupied the office of Prefect at Downside. Amongst his duties he had the responsibility of raising loans and extending the buildings.[8] He was thus intimately involved with Goodridge's efforts at Downside. It is therefore not surprising that when he was preparing for the Australian mission in 1834 he would turn to this

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[6] The controversial and erratic Beckford used his immense fortune to build the greatest Gothick house of the 18th century, Fonthill Abbey, in Wiltshire between 1796 and 1807. In 1822 he sold Fonthill and had Goodridge build a 47 metre tower on the 248 metre summit of Lansdown, from the top of which he could see the great

tower of Fonthill some 42km away, at least until its third and final collapse in 1825.

[7] *Downside Review*, vol. IX, pp. 125–55, quoted in Bryan Little, *Catholic Churches Since 1623*, Robert Hale, London, 1966, p. 62.

[8] Frances O'Donoghue, *The Bishop of Botany Bay: The Life of John Bede Polding, Australia's First Catholic Archbishop*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1982, pp. 6–7.

architect for plans for several small churches.

The design used at Richmond would appear to be one of a small portfolio that Polding obtained from Goodridge prior to sailing for Australia on 26 March 1835.[9] All of these designs were for small rectangular Gothick boxes with Early English detail and pinnacled buttresses at the corners. Because the 1859 additions derived from one of Pugin's church models obliterated the west and east ends of the nave,[10] as well as resulting in replacement of the corner buttresses, it is difficult to have precise knowledge of some of the design details, particularly as the only known image of the original church is a small detail in a c. 1845 drawing.

The Richmond church measured internally 50 ft 6 in (15.4m) long by 19 ft (5.8m) wide. It had four windows in each side with typical wooden Gothick Y-tracery. A door at the east end of the north wall opened into the sacristy which was merely a screened-off area behind the sanctuary. On the façade was a three-light Early English window reminiscent of that on the façade of the Downside Priory chapel. Below it was the entrance door with typical Gothick panelling under a four-centred arch. The corners of the building had deep diagonal buttresses which merged about halfway up the wall into clasping pinnacles of indeterminate section, these rising to above the height of the nave ridge. At the apex of the west gable was a rectangular bellcote surmounted by a cross.

Bishop Polding landed in Hobart on 7 August 1835, on his way from England to Sydney. The following is Cardinal Moran's 1896 recounting of Polding's visit to Richmond:

> The Bishop, having heard that there were some Catholic families at Richmond, fourteen miles distant, resolved to bring to them the consolations of religion. The

Governor attempted to dissuade him. There were but few Catholic families, he said, and these scattered throughout the district. There was as yet no road to Richmond, but only a bush track, and this was infested by the aboriginals, men of such a fierce character that the Bishop would require a small troupe of soldiers to protect him. Nothing daunted, Dr. Polding set out on his missionary expedition, having first obtained a promise from the Governor that he would on the part of the Government contribute for the building of a church at Richmond an equal amount to that which the Bishop would collect from his flock and other residents at Richmond.[11]

In fact, as early as 1825 the Richmond district had the largest Catholic population outside Hobart and Launceston.[12]

On 23 August 1835 Polding celebrated Mass in the homestead of John Cassidy's property *Woodburn*, a little to the north-east of Richmond village. One of a handful of Catholics in Van Diemen's Land of that period to become large landholders, Cassidy had acquired *Woodburn* on the banks of the Coal River in 1833. He 'had served in the 23rd Fusiliers, then the 4th Veterans Battalion, and through the 102nd, 73rd and 46th regiments. His recommendation from Governor Macquarie resulted in his initial land grant.'[13] Polding gave the Richmond Catholics one of his Goodridge church plans and Cassidy generously donated a parcel of land from the south-western corner of his estate, adjacent to the Coal River, upon which to build a church.

Before leaving Richmond Bishop Polding blessed the foundation stone for the new church, making this event the first formal act of an Australian

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[9] Art historian Joan Kerr attributed three of Polding's buildings to Goodridge, namely, St Mary & All Angels, Geelong, St Bernard's, Hartley, and St John's, Richmond. See Eleanor 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.
[10] Throughout this Plan directions are given as though the altar is at the east end irrespective of the actual geographical orientation of the church.

[11] Patrick Francis Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, Oceanic Publishing Company, Sydney, 1896, p. 248.
[12] Peter MacFie, 'Silent Impact: The Irish Inheritance of Richmond & the Coal River Valley 1840–1970', 2000 re-print of paper published in R. Davis (ed.), *Irish-Australian Studies, 8th Irish Australian Conference*, Crossing Press, 1995, p. 486.
[13] ibid., p. 489.

Catholic bishop.[14] He departed Hobart Town for Sydney on 5 September 1835.[15]

On 21 September a meeting was held to pursue the raising of money to build the church, local residents subscribing some £700 within weeks. The Colonial government promised a further £500. On 1 January 1838 a notice appeared in the *Colonial Times* as follows:

> Tenders will be received by — Cassidy, Esq., Richmond (post paid) until Saturday, the 16th instant, for the erection of a Roman Catholic Church in that township. Parties tendering will be required to name two responsible persons as sureties for the due performance of their contract. All offers to be headed, 'Tenders for erection of a R.C. Church at Richmond.' For particulars apply by letter (paid) to the Rev. J. Cotham, Hobart Town, or to — Cassidy, Esq., Treasurer, Richmond.[16]

The successful tenderer, as announced in the *Colonial Times*, for 22 March 1836, was a Mr. Buscombe.[17]

St John's the Evangelist's Church was opened on 31 December 1837. The first pastor, Fr James Ambrose Cotham OSB, who had accompanied Polding out from England in 1835, preached at the Mass which was celebrated by Fr James Watkins. Watkins was at that time temporarily in charge of Richmond while Fr Cotham resided in Launceston.[18]

A 'sumptuous repast' at John Cassidy's residence completed the ceremonies. **To be continued.**

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mr Michael Sternbeck   *Wallsend, NSW*
The Tallis Foundation   *Mornington, Vic*

Donations

We thank the Society of Christian Doctrine for their kind donation following a guided tour given by Executive Officer Brian Andrews.

Thomas Chapman's c.1845 sketch of the Richmond Catholic church and presbytery. Goodridge's little church is on the far right-hand side (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery)

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[14] At this time the laying of a foundation stone was a symbolic act and did not necessarily mean that construction of a church was actually starting. It was more an occasion for stimulating the giving of donations towards the project through a rousing address.
[15] Moran, loc. cit.
[16] 'The Catholic Church in Tasmania. Collections and Recollections', No. XXVI, *The Catholic Standard*, August 1883, p. 129.
[17] ibid.

[18] ibid.