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Included in this edition:

- *Metalwork Marvels—Chalice*
- *Pugin and Medieval Antiquities—Introduction*
- *Pugin's Designs—Baptismal Fonts (Part 13)*
- *Pugin's Australian Works—St John the Evangelist's Church, Richmond (Part 4)*

Welcome to the thirty-first Friends Newsletter.

Planning is already underway between the Pugin Foundation and the Better Welcome Group in Cheadle, Staffordshire, the home of Pugin's magnificent St Giles' Church, to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of Pugin's birth in 2012. The planning will be completed by 2009 with town signs in Cheadle, similar to Colebrook, to promote Pugin's gem. Along with the Pugin Society in England, Mr Ivan Wozniak, Chairman of the Better Welcome Group, has invited us to offer ways in which Pugin's heritage can be celebrated at festivities in the UK and in Australia. I will keep you informed about this exciting planning.

Pugin's Tasmanian churches received a wonderful double-page centre spread, including four large coloured photos, in the *Sunday Tasmanian* on 19 April. The featured article, under the heading 'Tassie celebrates a Gothic genius', highlighted the uniqueness of these village churches, all within an easy drive of each other. The Foundation and its works at Colebrook received particular praise, and the excellent coverage included the Foundation's plans for a Pugin Trail. I will reproduce the article for you in the next Newsletter.

In this issue we conclude our series on St John the Evangelist's, Richmond, and bring you the first of a new series on Pugin's use of medieval antiquities in his work.



St Giles', Cheadle (Image: John Maidment)

With kind regards,

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 1854 by John Hardman Powell, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, 1854; silver, gilt with Ballarat gold, decorated with champlevé enamel; 25.7cm high, 12.1cm dia. bowl, 17.5cm across the points of the complex sexfoil base. Note: although designed by Powell, all the elements of this chalice were from existing Pugin designs.



Pugin and Medieval Antiquities

Introduction

Throughout his professional life Pugin was a prolific collector of antiquities, principally medieval.¹ Largely acquired on his frequent trips to the Continent, these beautiful objects were by no means the aesthetic acquisitions of a dilettante. They served a serious purpose in his endeavours to


re-vivify the physical and spiritual fabric of the medieval English church in his own time.

Thus, objects he acquired might serve as illustrations in his lectures on the 'True Principles of Christian Architecture' to students at Oscott



¹ Pugin's own collection, sold by auction at Sothebys on 12 February 1853, amounted to some 136 lots. For a by no means comprehensive introduction to Pugin as a collector see Clive Wainwright, 'The Antiquary and Collector', in Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (eds), *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1994, pp. 91–103.

Christ in the Praetorium. Late medieval polychromed and gilded woodcarving, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, collection (Image: Nicholas Callinan)



College, Birmingham. They could be used as exemplars for craftsmen working on his designs in wood, metal and glass, so that their efforts might re-capture the letter and the spirit of the old work. Pugin would use them as inspiration for his own design creativity and he would also return many to their original purpose, installed in the chapels, churches and cathedrals which he designed. Even fragments of medieval metalwork would be given new life through the restoration of missing elements made to Pugin's designs.

In coming issues of the Friends Newsletter we will look at some examples of this significant element of Pugin's vision, drawing principally on examples that became part of our Australian heritage.

A lovely example of Pugin's collecting, appropriate for the Easter season, is illustrated on the preceding page. It belongs to St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, a building with a number of significant medieval furnishings supplied by Pugin. The late medieval polychromed and gilded woodcarving depicts Christ in the Praetorium, robed in a cloak and crowned with thorns, being mocked and struck by the Roman soldiers.

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.

Baptismal Fonts (Part 13)

Pugin poured his heart and soul into the design and furnishing of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, which was consecrated on Monday 21 June 1841 in a ceremony full of colour and splendour the likes of which had never been experienced by English Catholics. The building had a glorious rood screen with medieval figures, much colour and gilding to the walls and ceiling, and a suite of medieval furnishings which included the canons' stalls, the pulpit, a screen behind the provost's chair and a polychromed and gilded Virgin and Child statue.

There was a baptistery opening off the north aisle in which Pugin's baptismal font was installed.

St Chad's Cathedral didn't escape the mania for 're-ordering' which swept away so much of the historic interiors of Catholic churches during the 1960s and '70s. In 1967 it lost its magnificent rood screen and the walls were painted cream. Pugin's font was—thankfully—left the baptistery and replaced by a modern creation towards the east end of the north aisle. In time this latter has gone and the Pugin font now stands in its place within an interior that has had at least part of its historic Pugin wall decoration reinstated.

The octagonal bowl has a chamfered top edge and carved symbols of the four Evangelists sunk in roundels on its cardinal faces. There is a moulded transition to its octagonal shaft and the octagonal base has a concave chamfered upper edge.



*The baptismal font, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham
(Image: Nicholas Callinan)*

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

St John the Evangelist's, Richmond (Part 4)

Subsequent history

By 1880 the spire was reported to have developed a dangerous lean.² It was a wooden structure of indeterminate cladding. Whether it fell down or was dismantled is not known, but it was replaced in 1893 by a much shorter spire.



A turn of the twentieth century photo of the Alexander North spire which replaced the original in 1893 (Image: Richmond Parish collection)

² Handwritten text on the back of a historical photograph in the Richmond Parish collection.

Designed by the eminent Launceston Arts and Crafts architect Alexander North,³ this squat slate-covered spire had bands of darker imbricated slate and four over-scale lucarnes, a charming composition topped off by a foliated iron cross. It was an intelligent match for the proportions of the Thomas tower below. In time, North's spire had also seriously deteriorated and it was replaced in 1972 by a copper-clad version of the original model three spire, designed by Hobart architect Rod Cooper but reduced in size to better match the tower height. It is capped by the North cross.



The 1972 spire (Image: Brian Andrews)

In 1928–29 there was a major renovation of the building.⁴ Although much of this concerned the furnishings, works were carried out on the structure, including repair and re-pointing of the stonework, installation of a wooden ceiling replacing the plaster one, remediation of the

³ After Henry Hunter, who had a virtual monopoly on Tasmanian Catholic church commissions from 1854, departed for Brisbane in 1888, North did much church work including: Star of the Sea, Burnie; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Ross; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Mangana; St Canice, Glengarry; and the eastern half of The Apostles, Launceston.

⁴ A comprehensive account of these works is given in 'Ceremony at Richmond: Beautiful Additions and Decorations Blessed. *The Catholic Standard*, 2 May 1929, pp. 8–9, 12.

chancel floor and the cutting of a door in the west wall of the sacristy replacing the original two windows.⁵

Alone of all Pugin's churches in England, Ireland and Australia, his Tasmanian designs had no external doors to the sacristy and could only be accessed from the interior of the church. It is interesting to speculate whether this was because of any views on the wild and uncivilized nature of Van Diemen's Land, with its convict population, that might have been communicated to Bishop Willson by his colleague William Bernard Ullathorne OSB at around the time of Willson's acceptance of the See of Hobart Town in 1842.⁶

Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mr Ian Wakeley

Chirnside Park, Victoria



The 1859 sacristy showing the doorway inserted during the 1928 renovations, replacing the paired lancet windows of the original design (Image: Brian Andrews)

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 9, 12.

⁶ Ullathorne had a key role in Willson's acceptance of the appointment and had experience of Tasmania dating from his years in Australia in the 1830s.