

May 2009

Number 32

*Included in this edition:*

- *Metalwork Marvels—Reliquary*
- *Pugin and Medieval Antiquities—An Irish Fragment*
- *Pugin's Designs—Baptismal Fonts (Part 14)*
- *The Pugin Trail*

Welcome to the thirty-second Friends Newsletter.

I am delighted to tell you that the roof re-cladding of St Patrick's Church, Colebrook which followed on from the structural strengthening of the building, is finally completed. And it is wonderful!

The massive re-cladding work was due for completion by the beginning of December 2008 and the extended delays have caused us much stress and worry. The re-roofing was to be done by a sub-contractor of the builder; extremely slow progress over several months followed by the disappearance of the sub-contractor who, it has been learned, was going insolvent, proved extremely stressful. Much of the work done by him was condemned by the project manager. After legal consultation by the builder a new roofing sub-contractor was engaged. The work, including the re-doing of the condemned work, is of very high quality and the appearance of this gorgeous building is just beautiful. I am very pleased to report that the building is no longer home to the swallows and sparrows, as the bird proofing is now in place. The sealing under the ridge capping and new flashing has totally sealed the building from the noise of the wind and the sounds of the countryside and the acoustics in the church are splendid.

We are very grateful to Friends of Pugin Pip Brettingham-Moore, Michael Wadsley, Gail Hughes-Gage and Mark Tuckett who did the final cleanup from the builder's rubble with us and for Michael, Gail and Friend of Pugin Bruce Slade,

who pruned, raked and tidied the garden and cleared builder's debris. St Patrick's Church is now ready for the many visitors, some who come prepared with material from our website, to delight in the restoring of Pugin's gem in the antipodes. While showing interstate visitors around after the working bee we rejoiced in just how beautiful the building is, despite the need for plastering, re-painting and floor restoration, and we know that many generations will be able too to rejoice in the results of the conservation made possible by the Pugin Foundation and the generosity of Maria and Allan Myers.

We have reproduced the article on the Pugin Trail from the *Sunday Tasmanian* for you in this issue.

With kind regards,

[Jude Andrews](#)

Administrative Officer



*These two delightful dripstone terminations, together making up an Annunciation scene, flank the Lady Chapel window in St Giles', Cheadle (Images: John Maidment)*



## *Metalwork Marvels*

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

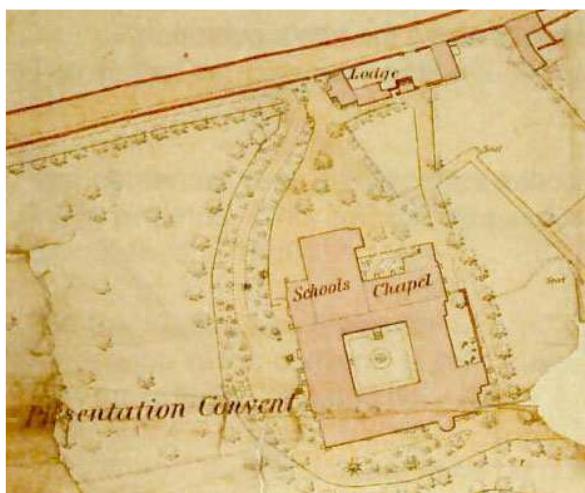
**Reliquary:** designed 1848, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, c.1849; engraved, pierced and gilt brass, decorated with enamel and jewels; 72cm high; cost £120; identified: Roderick O'Donnell. The reliquary contains part of the skull of St Thomas of Canterbury, obtained from the Bishop of Verona by the donor, the Reverend the Honourable George Talbot, in 1847 (Ref: *The Tablet*, vol. IX, no. 433, 19 August 1848, p. 529, c. 3). Exhibited: *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1994; *A.W.N. Pugin Master of Gothic Revival*, The Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York, 1995–96.

# Pugin and Medieval Antiquities

## An Irish Fragment

In 1841 Pugin prepared plans for a convent for the Irish Presentation Sisters, to be constructed on five and a half acres in the townland of Clowne, Lisduggan, close to Waterford City.<sup>1</sup> (The site now lies within the greatly expanded City.) The foundation stone was laid on 10 June 1842, the builder being Richard Pierce of Wexford who Pugin used for a number of his Irish works.<sup>2</sup>

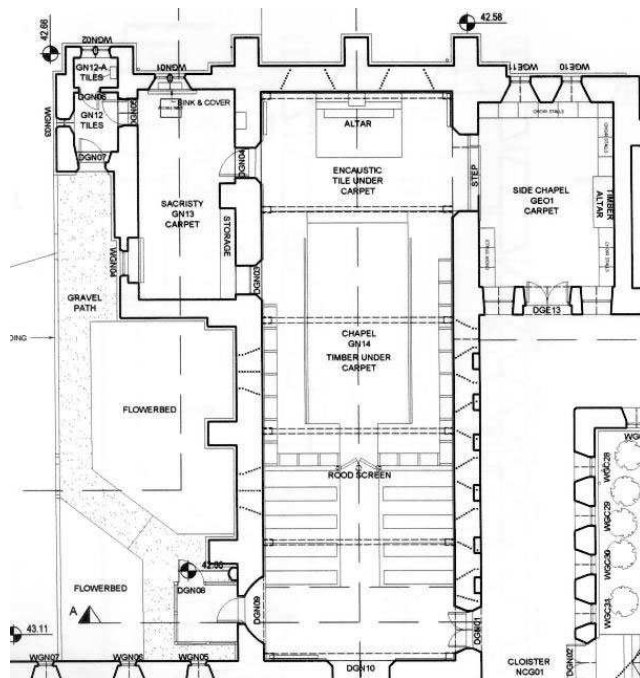
Progress was slow, particularly from 1845 due to the effects of the famine. On 3 May 1848 the sisters took official possession of the 'Convent of the Holy Cross' although much of it remained unfinished. The fabric itself was essentially complete but much of the interior remained unfurnished, and the chapel was just a shell. The chapel was finally blessed and consecrated on the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, 1863, the completion works on the convent having been carried out by Edward Pugin.



*Detail from an 1872 Ordnance Survey map showing Pugin's convent with its buildings ranged around a typical medieval quadrangular cloister.*

Like a number of Pugin's other designs for religious communities,<sup>3</sup> the convent was set out in typical medieval fashion around a central quadrangular cloister and garth, its various spaces in this case ranging over two floors and a basement, with the exception of the convent

chapel which occupied the east end of the north range and was more or less oriented.



*The chapel ground plan (Courtesy: dbb Architects)*

The chapel was a single vessel of five bays with a north-east sacristy and a south-east side chapel, the latter giving onto the chancel via a wooden screen. The chancel occupied the easternmost bay, to the west of which was the sister's choir with typical monastic antiphonal seating, and then in the westernmost one and a half bays was public seating with pews. Separating the sisters' choir from the public seating was a rood screen, miraculously still in place.

Entrance to the chapel for the public was gained via a door in the westernmost bay of the chapel's north wall. As was Pugin's unvarying practice he placed a holy water stoup outside the door, in this case building it into the wall fabric on the left. As he had noted in 1841:

Holy water stoups were generally hollowed out of the porch walls, and frequently built in niches on either side of the external arch, as at Bury St Edmund's; all stoups for

<sup>1</sup> dbb Architects, 'Presentation convent, Waterford, A Protected Structure: Conservation Report', Waterford, December 2006, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Such as Downside Priory, Mt St Bernard Monastery, later Abbey, and the Convent of Mercy, Handsworth.



hallowed water should be placed *outside* [Pugin's emphasis] the building.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the Waterford chapel as designed there was no porch. It was here that Pugin inserted medieval carved limestone fragments to serve as the stoup.

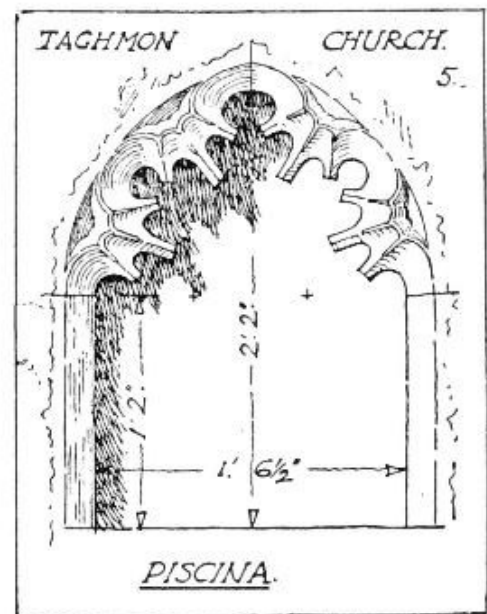


*Above: the north flank of the chapel, the public entrance being behind the conifer on the right; below: the holy water stoup (Images: Brian Andrews)*



This writer has not to date determined the source of the medieval fragments, which have been vandalized by being hacked back to accommodate a late twentieth-century wooden porch,<sup>5</sup> although it is probably pretty safe to speculate that they are Irish.<sup>6</sup>

The stoup is an interesting ad hoc marriage of a multi-cusped arch fragment with a fragment of stoup or a piscina. It is conceivable that both elements may be parts of a piscina or piscinas. Leask in his three-volume treatise, *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings*, gives a drawing of the piscina niche in Taghmon Church, the multi-cusped arch of which has a convincing affinity with that of the Waterford stoup.<sup>7</sup>



*The piscina, Taghmon Church (Source: Leask, p. 161)*

### Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Fintan Duffy of ddb Architects, Waterford, for giving me a detailed tour of the former Presentation Convent in 2007 and to the owner Dr Rowe for permission for that visit. Fintan kindly gave me access to the architectural documentation of the building, set out in admirable detail in the firm's 2006 Conservation Report.

<sup>5</sup> The appearance is not enhanced by the galvanised pipe which flanks the stoup on the left.

<sup>6</sup> Pugin visited Ireland in 1838, 1839 and 1842, the latter year including visiting Waterford on 10 May when the first stone of the convent was laid.

<sup>7</sup> Harold G. Leask, *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings*, 3 vols, Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, 1960, vol. 3, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> [A. Welby Pugin], 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, Vol. X, May 1841, p. 320.

## *Pugin's Designs*

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

### *Baptismal Fonts (Part 14)*

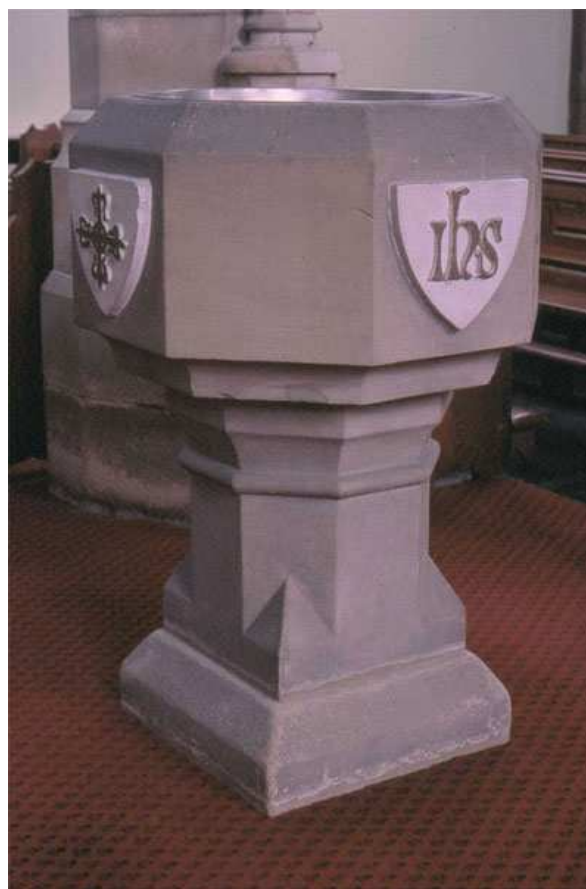
Like a number of Pugin's English churches, St Anne's, Keighley, has suffered much change since the 1840s.

Designed in May 1838,<sup>8</sup> the building suffered the collapse of its triple bellcote astride the nave east gable during construction in December 1839. 'The arches for the bell were ready to be closed when the immense weight forced the north buttress and let in the arch, causing the belfry to fall into the nave of the church.'<sup>9</sup>

By 1895 the church had become too small for the Catholic community but a considerable enlargement was not undertaken until 1906–07. The building was then doubled in length and reversed in direction, the old chancel becoming a new entrance porch. A side aisle, new chancel and confessionals were added, and the old sacristy became a baptistery, housing Pugin's original baptismal font.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the font is the only significant original furnishing to have survived, although it now is situated in the nave. Its original cover is missing.

The octagonal bowl has a chamfered top edge and shields on its cardinal faces bearing foliated crosses and the Sacred Monogram IHS. There is a moulded transition to its octagonal shaft and the square base has a chamfered upper edge, the transition from the shaft being by pyramidal

chamfer stops similar to Pugin's treatment of the nave arcade in St Patrick's, Colebrook.



*The baptismal font, St Anne's, Keighley (Image: Brian Andrews)*

## *The Pugin Trail*

For some time the Pugin Foundation has been slowly working towards the establishment of a Pugin Trail linking the two-and-a-bit Pugin village churches in Tasmania—St Paul's, Oatlands, St Patrick's, Colebrook, and St John the Evangelist's, Richmond—with an eventual extension to the marvellous Pugin objects in the Archdiocese of Hobart Museum, North Hobart. This activity has involved discussions with many parties including Tourism Tasmania. Recently we were invited through Tourism Tasmania to provide material to go into a feature article in the *Sunday Tasmanian* on Pugin, these churches and the Trail.

<sup>8</sup> Pugin's diary for 11 May 1838 records 'Sent off Keighley drawings', National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Pressmark 86 MM 57, L5159 1969.

<sup>9</sup> P. Berry, *Keighley Catholic Church 150 Years Anniversary Celebrations 1835–1985*, Keighley, 1985, p. 5. The present writer is unsure whether it was re-erected,

<sup>10</sup> Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 21.



We thought you might like to see the excellent publicity which the Foundation and its work received in the resulting centre-spread article that appeared in the *Sunday Tasmanian* of 19 April 2009. Accordingly, we reproduce below the article with its original title and picture captions, figuring that the odd mistake (like attributing all of St John's to Pugin) is more than counterbalanced by coverage that one couldn't buy. Here goes!

## Tassie celebrates a Gothic genius

Augustus Pugin's extraordinary creativity has been likened to Mozart and Leonardo da Vinci. **Greg Clarke** salutes a genius

If you were told that Australia – and more specifically Tasmania – is one of just three places in the world with a certain internationally classified asset do you think you know what it might be?

If the answer doesn't immediately come to mind, almost certainly you know Tassie well enough to take an educated guess, right?

Even with a few clues – it's nothing to do with ancient wilderness, not old growth forests or endemic wildlife and the island's food and wines are not in this exclusive mix either – I still came up wrong.

Brian Andrews is a Hobart-based architectural historian who has been published internationally in peer reviews. It is his toil, his years of research, which gave light to my nebulous darkness.

Incredibly his answer includes a direct line to the Palace of Westminster, seat of the British Houses of Parliament, "England's greatest nineteenth-century building". And that is just the outside. "Inside is a trove of furnishings all designed with consummate brilliance," notes Mr Andrews.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852) designed every piece of the bespoke interior. In the world of design Pugin is a colossus. Tasmania has direct links to this prolific and hugely influential giant.



**SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL:** St John's Church, Richmond, is pure Pugin creativity.

Pugin is widely known as the father of the mature phase of the Gothic Revival style of design. Hobart's St David's Cathedral is for example built in the Gothic Revival style. Pugin didn't design St David's, but any church anywhere in Tassie with pointy doors and windows has been built in the style. So too are many of the older school buildings across the state. The Gothic Revival style has been described as one of the greatest social and artistic forces of the Victorian Age.

Pugin's works can only be found in England, Ireland and Australia. Pugin lived to just 40 years old and never made it to Australia, presumably there just wasn't a spare second in his diary let alone time for three months at sea, but he was friends with Robert William Willson (1794–1866), first Bishop of Hobart Town.

Willson helped Pugin's designs emigrate. Mr Andrews is of the opinion that the purest forms of Pugin's work are found in village churches – Pugin converted to Catholicism in 1835 – and specifically three in Tasmania: at Richmond, Oatlands and



Colebrook (St Patrick's Church was designed in 1843 and constructed 1855-56).



### **INNER BEAUTY: St Patrick's, Colebrook.**

Elsewhere, many of Pugin's village churches were drastically altered or destroyed as villages expanded to towns and cities. The three churches in Tasmania are largely in original condition.



**BEST EXAMPLE:** St Patrick's Church in Colebrook is inspiration for the Pugin Foundation.

Pugin's rationale, the spur for his design, is thunderously resonant today. Pugin had a vision of improving social conditions in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and perceived the Middle Ages (where the Gothic style was nurtured and flourished) to be a more just and equitable society. Everything he designed was in effect turning the clock back to create a society that was in his opinion better and more just. "It was a radical vision".

Mr Andrews is still flummoxed by Pugin's brilliance after drinking, eating and sleeping him for decades. "His work wasn't motivated by aesthetic considerations. His work is absolutely beautiful just because he's a brilliant designer."

According to Mr Andrews, Pugin is one of those extraordinary creative geniuses, like a Mozart or a Leonardo da Vinci, whose prodigious output seems beyond comprehension. When Pugin died he was reportedly drained in mind and body.

Of the effects of his fertile inventiveness and unstoppable industry he had remarked to a friend, "I have done the work of a hundred years in forty, and it has worn me out". Many of the leading figures of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture stand on Pugin's almost impossibly broad shoulders.

Mr Andrews is a director of the Pugin Foundation which has helped finance the restoration of St Patrick's, Colebrook. "A lot has been done [A storm destroyed the bellcote in 1895. It has recently been reinstated and rings the Angelus each day at noon, then at 2pm it plays a bell tune] but there is more to be completed to make sure these buildings survive for another 100 years," he says. The Colebrook church is the Pugin Foundation's exemplar for conservation work.

The Foundation has plans for a Pugin Trail. As part of this the three churches will be opened on a regular basis, there will be interpretative signage and a Pugin Trail guide. "People like to make a point of Tasmania's unique flora and fauna. What we've got here with these village churches all within an easy drive of each other is another unique feature of Tasmania. Nowhere else in the





world are three Pugin village churches in such close proximity.”

The Foundation hopes the trail will open later this year.

## *Friends of Pugin*

We welcome:

[Miss Teresa Balogh](#)

*Kedron, Queensland*



**GOTHIC CLASSIC:** The church at Oatlands.

