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Welcome to the thirty-third Friends Newsletter.

This month we celebrate over 700,000 hits on our website since June 2007. The Pugin Foundation website is extremely successful, with an average of over 30,000 hits per month, and this month we have reached over 45,000 hits. We are heading for the one million mark!!!! For those of you who regularly visit our website, you will notice that there is a new heading, *Pugin Trail*. The first of the guides for this trail, namely, St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, is ready to download. It provides seventeen pages of detailed material to enable the visitor to take a self-guided tour. We hope that you will direct interested parties to the information on our site.


You may not know that the beautiful 1859 chancel window in St John's Church, Richmond, Tasmania, is unique in Australia because of the combination of its likely designer, John Hardman Powell of the famous Birmingham firm of John Hardman & Co., and its maker, Joseph Bell of Bristol, this being his only Australian work. There is an article on the window in this issue of the Newsletter.

The Foundation's Executive Officer, Brian Andrews, has been becoming concerned at the noticeable continuing deterioration of this window, as the accompanying images show, so he recently arranged to have leading Tasmanian stained glass conservator Gavin Merrington carry out an examination of the window and provide a condition report. The report made alarming reading.



The central light of the St John's, Richmond, Tasmania, chancel window showing the panel dropped down from its surrounding stonework (Image: Gavin Merrington)





Gavin described the window as ‘a potential disaster waiting to happen’. In effect, we have simply been lucky that we have not had a strong gust of wind in such a direction as to impact directly on the glass, causing it to collapse. Just like Humpty Dumpty’s egg, it would not be able to be put back together again.



An alarming image showing the glass completely separated from its lead came due to a combination of cracking and distortion of the window’s stone tracery putting stress on the window panel. The tracery problem has arisen from a century and a half of strong wind-loading on the chancel roof causing spreading of the chancel side walls (Image: Gavin Merrington)

The only sensible course of action has been to have the central light removed into storage pending conservation of the entire window and adjacent stonework. We must do everything possible to ensure that this splendid window in Australia’s oldest continuously used Catholic church is properly conserved for future generations.

Brian has applied for a grant from the Tasmanian Heritage Council towards the cost of the conservation works to a maximum figure of one third, this being their limit. Our generation now needs to make its contribution, as others have done over the past more than 170 years, to ensure the long-term integrity of this beautiful church.



Dangerous buckling of the central light caused by the dropping of the panel and failure of saddle bar supports (Image: Gavin Merrington)

We will keep you informed as we support the Richmond Parish Priest, Fr Terry Rush, a Friend of Pugin, in raising funds needed for this essential work.

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.

Reliquary: designed c.1848, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, c.1848; silver, parcel gilt, decorated with cabochon moonstones and citrines; 61cm high, 28.5cm across the lobes of the complex octfoil base. The reliquary normally houses a relic of the True Cross, but its container has been removed from the glazed compartment in the image presented here. 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

Bishop Willson's Virgin & Child Statue

In our last Newsletter we gave an example of Pugin inserting medieval fabric into one of his buildings. Here we look at his use of a medieval artifact as an inspiration for design.

From time to time Pugin gave items from his collection of medieval antiquities to churches which he designed. A statue of the Virgin and Child in St Mary's, Brewwood, Staffordshire, consecrated on 13 June 1844, would appear to be an instance of such a donation. 112 cm tall, it is a painted and gilded late medieval woodcarving, possibly Flemish.¹ The Virgin's left forearm and a lily which she held in her left hand are now missing.



The Brewwood Virgin and Child (Image: Michael Fisher)

¹ Michael Fisher, *Pugin-Land*, Michael J. Fisher (Publishing), Stafford, 2002, p. 142.

Pugin himself paid for restoration of the statue by Hardmans. This consisted of its painting and gilding as well as the manufacture of a metal lily and two crowns.²



A detail of the statue (Image: Michael Fisher)

Writing to his patron Lord Shrewsbury regarding what appears to have been his first visit to the area in 1843, Pugin praised Fr Robert Richmond, the priest in charge of the Brewwood mission, observing that he 'is a most holy man, a real old parish Priest of venerable aspect, and if you saw his grief and anxiety for the Catholic population over which he is pastor, your Lordship would feel as I do. I will serve him from my heart for the love of God and blessed S. Chad ...'³ This may be an indicator of Pugin's subsequent gift.

Fr Richmond was delighted with the statue. In a letter to Hardmans dated 26 April 1844 he wrote:

² 19 April 1844, Hardman Metalwork Day book: Painting and gilding of Blessed Virgin for Brewwood, £18-10-0, entered for Pugin; Metal Lily and Crowns, £0-17-6, entered for Pugin (Information from Fr Michael Fisher).

³ Quoted in Fisher, op. cit., pp. 137-8.

‘The image of our B. Lady is just come, & put up in its place. It is beautiful, indeed.’⁴

Clearly Pugin was also taken with the statue, because it is evident that he must have made a detailed sketch of it. This would have become the design document for two limestone statues carved in 1847 by men in the employ of George Myers, his favoured builder. One of them was placed in a niche above the entrance to Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire, constructed in 1847 to Pugin’s plans by George Myers.



Pugin’s 1847 Virgin and Child, Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire (Image: Nicholas Callinan)

The other statue, 67.5 cm tall, was for Bishop Willson, who brought it back to his Macquarie St, Hobart, residence after his 1847 trip to England. There it remained, being bequeathed with his other possessions to his successor Archbishop Daniel Murphy. Murphy’s sister was the founding head of the Presentation Sisters in Tasmania, and when a convent was being constructed in 1866 next to St

Mary’s Cathedral to plans by Henry Hunter he gave the statue to be placed in a purpose-designed niche in the entrance porch gable. There it remained for nearly 140 years, covered in dirt, bird droppings and layers of white paint.

We recently identified it as Pugin’s work and had it conserved. A cement copy cast from it now stands in the niche. Damage evident, for example, on the Christ Child’s face is the result of its long period outdoors.



Willson’s 1847 Virgin and Child (Image: Richard Eastwood)

There are obvious differences between Pugin’s design and the Brewood statue, such as the crown, the Virgin’s very English face, and the apple in her hand in place of the lily.⁵ But far greater are the similarities. The following aspects are virtually identical: the pose; the composition; the garments on the Virgin and on the Child; the actual folds in the garments; the Virgin’s girdle, except for its decoration; and the Virgin’s hair. Bishop Willson’s Hobart statue is, if anything, even closer to the Brewood exemplar than the Ratcliffe College one.

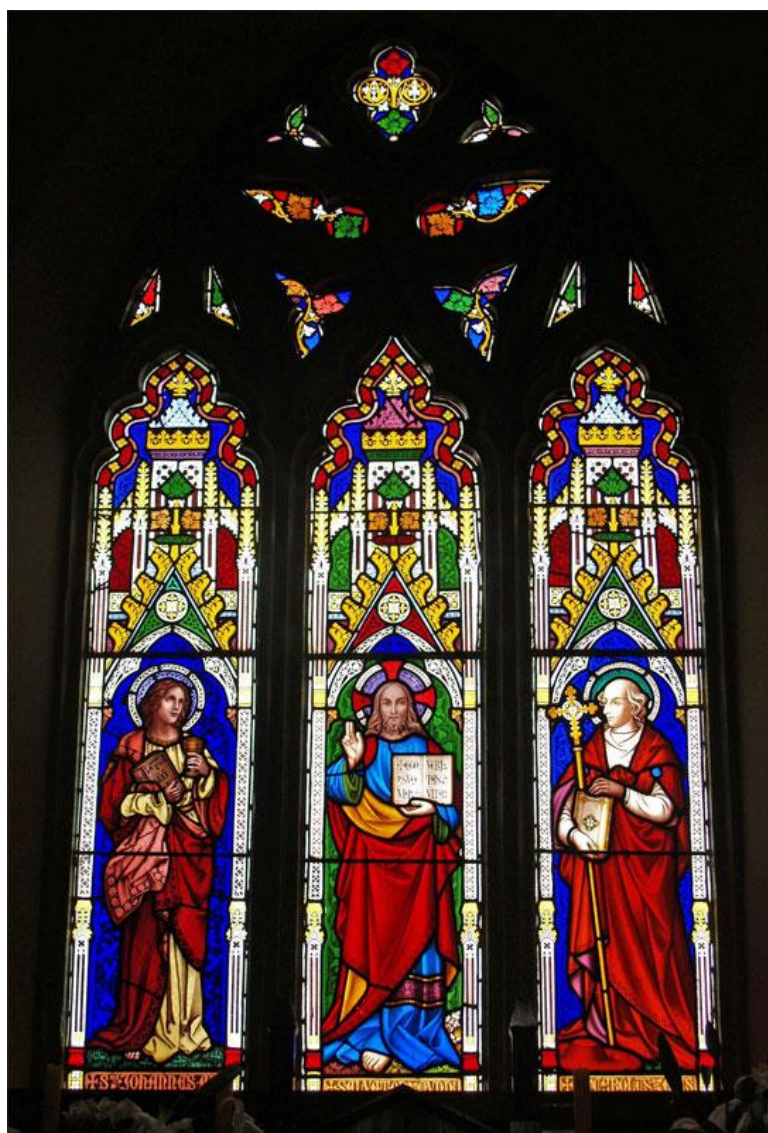
⁴ Fr Robert Richmond to John Hardman, 26 April 1844, Birmingham City Archives, Hardman Archive, Metalwork Letters 1844.

⁵ The apple, often seen in medieval iconography, is an allusion to Mary as the second Eve.

Richmond's Mystery Window

In our series on St John the Evangelist's Church, Richmond, Tasmania, which spanned Newsletter issues 28 through 31, we described how parts of Pugin's third and largest church model for Bishop Willson were adapted and used to construct a chancel, sacristy and steeple. The extensions were opened on 15 February 1859.

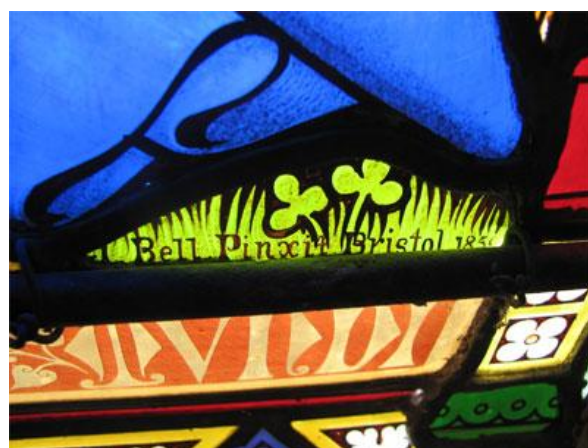
The chancel east window was an elegant three-light design in the Flowing Decorated idiom, its tracery head containing eleven elements. Its subjects were, from the left: St John the Evangelist; Salvator Mundi (Christ Saviour of the World); and St Charles Borromeo, patron saint of diocesan clergy.



The chancel window (Image: Brian Andrews)

Overall, the window had a strong flavour of the famous Birmingham firm, John Hardman & Co., which enjoyed a virtual monopoly on new work—particularly stained glass and metalwork—in the Diocese of Hobart Town during Bishop Willson's tenure from 1844 to 1865.

Some time back we had the window professionally examined and a startling detail was found. Hidden behind a saddle bar in the grass below Christ's feet was painted the inscription **J. Bell Pinxit Bristol 1859'** [Tr: J. Bell painted Bristol 1859]. The following account is an attempt to unravel the mystery connecting the Hardmanesque character of the window and its inscription.



The Joseph Bell inscription (Image: Gavin Merrington)

Firstly, so as to avoid confusion about the elements in the window, it is necessary to explain that the figure of St John the Evangelist is not original. It had been badly damaged in the 1920s and needed to be replaced. This work was carried out in 1929 by the well-known Melbourne stained glass firm of Brooks Robinson & Co. which was making new stained glass windows for the nave, tower and sacristy of St John's at that time. Brooks Robinson's Job Book entry of 7 February 1929 recorded that an existing cartoon was used for the window.⁶

⁶ Brooks Robinson & Co. Job Book No. 1, p. 278, 7 February 1929: 'St John's RC Richmond Tas. Window of 'St. John' ordered by Father Shaw, measuring 39 x 16 inches. Figure of St. John. From Warwick cartoon reduced from B10 ... and part of base painted.' (Information: courtesy Dr Bronwyn Hughes)

This particular cartoon was used many times by the firm over more than a decade from before 1923, the accompanying images showing the Richmond light alongside that of 1930 in Sacred Heart Church, Hindmarsh, South Australia.



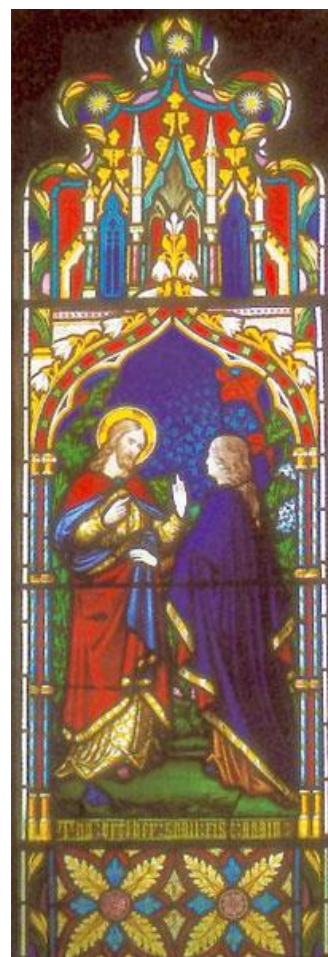
Two St John windows from the same cartoon (Brian Andrews and Bronwyn Hughes)

Joseph Bell (1810–95) was a glass painter based in Bristol who built up a flourishing stained glass business from the early 1840s.

To the best of our knowledge the Richmond window is the only work by Joseph Bell in Australia.⁷ This is understandable given that his business was largely localised in south-west England and south Wales,⁸ in contrast to the major English trade firms, all of which had a flourishing overseas business as a significant component of their production, alongside commissions from across Britain.⁹ It is pertinent to note that with no

export trade Joseph Bell was not in competition in this area with Hardmans, unlike the big trade firms.

Bell's work and style have been studied in detail,¹⁰ and it is clear that his Richmond window is utterly unlike any other examples of his work either before or after the Tasmanian job.



Detail from Bell's south chancel window, The Blessed Virgin Mary, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Somerset, c. 1861 (Source: Cheshire, 'Stained Glass', Plate 16)

⁷ He is not to be confused with the major English trade firm of Clayton and Bell which manufactured much stained glass for overseas clients, a notable example being the windows in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.

⁸ 'Between the mid 1830s and the mid 1850s Joseph Bell's glass-painting business developed from nothing into a studio that dominated the market in West Somerset, Gloucestershire and South Wales.' Jim Cheshire, 'Joseph Bell and the Revival of Glass-painting in the Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of Stained Glass*, vol. XXII (1998), p. 31.

⁹ Firms such as: Ward & Nixon (later Ward & Hughes), 1836 to late 1920s; James Powell & Sons, 1844–1973; Clayton & Bell, 1855–1993; Heaton, Butler & Bayne, 1855–1953; Lavers, Barraud & Westlake, 1855–1921; Morris, Marshall & Faulkner (later Morris & Co.), 1861–1940; Burlison & Grylls, 1868–1953; and C.E. Kempe, 1869–1934; and of course John Hardman & Co. which started manufacturing stained glass in 1845 and continues to this day as John Hardman Studios.

Jim Cheshire has the following to say about Bell's style at around the time our window was made, referring to the above image:

'... the manner of the figures remains Renaissance rather than medieval, and the expressive nature of the faces points towards pictorial realism rather than a formalised medieval style. The canopies

¹⁰ Cheshire, 'Joseph Bell', op. cit., pp. 31–50; Jim Cheshire, *Stained Glass and the Victorian Gothic Revival*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004, pp. 107–41.

here are very flat and the architectural work in the window seems to be performing a decorative, rather than an archaeological function, as is suggested by the lily flowers replacing the usual crockets on top of the canopy.¹¹

By contrast with the canopy work in the abovementioned window, the Richmond canopies fall precisely in type and detail within the idiom created by Pugin and continued from 1852 by his successor as chief designer for Hardmans, John Hardman Powell.



At left: Pugin's St Peter light, St Peter's, Marlow; at right: the canopy of Powell's St John the Baptist light, St Joseph's, Hobart (Images: Brian Andrews)

Typical examples are Pugin's c.1846 St Peter light in his St Peter's, Marlow, and Powell's 1871 St John the Baptist light in St Joseph's, Hobart, illustrated above.

Notable too in the Richmond window are the formalised poses of the figures and the alphabets used. The labels below the figures use characteristic Puginesque lettering, unlike Bell's windows, while the lettering in the book held by Christ, and

particularly the Alpha and Omega letters of the topmost tracery light, have the more angular attenuated character typical of Powell's work.

How then to reconcile the reality of this Joseph Bell window with the internal evidence of its style, composition and detail? In July 2005 we trawled the Joseph Bell & Son Archives held in the Archive of Art & Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.¹² Probably because of the very patchy nature of the early records we found no item—sketch, design or correspondence—relating to our window that might have shed light on the mystery.

Could the window design have been passed to Bell by Hardmans for some reason? Bell enjoyed a good reputation as a glass painter and by having him execute it there would be no threat to Hardmans' overseas trade. But why would Hardmans do this, something unheard of in their long history? If this were indeed the case, then the job must have been transferred as the actual cartoons, with Bell selecting the glass to the designated colours on the cartoons, painting the glass, firing it and assembling the panels. A pointer to this is that the only aspect of the window atypical of Hardmans is the painting of the faces, hands and feet which has the more naturalistic character typical of Bell's figures.

The extensions to St John's Church were opened in February 1859 and it seems plausible that the window was ordered for installation before the opening. But given Bell's inscription dated 1859 there is no way that he could have finished it and have it arrive in Tasmania before February of that year. Was there pressure perhaps to complete and deliver it in time for the opening which Hardmans could not meet, nor Bell in the event?

Unfortunately, our research in the Hardman Archive, Birmingham City Archives, failed to come up with any evidence to validate our hypothesis or otherwise. Like the Bell archive, the Hardman archive is patchy in the early years of its stained glass production. There are no surviving sales ledgers, order books or day books for 1858 and 1859, and the Stained Glass Costs records for those

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 125–7.

¹² The firm founded by Joseph Bell only ceased in 1996. Its extensive archive is very comprehensive for the later years but fragmentary for the first few decades.



years have no relevant material. Regrettably, the Glass Estimate Letter Book 1857–59 was contaminated with mould and could not be made available.

Regarding the possibility of Hardmans being pressed with orders, the Hardman Collection Indexes reveal that there were 95 stained glass jobs in 1858 and 116 in 1859, a 22% increase in one year. But this is unfortunately too crude a measure because Hardmans' work ranged from small jobs like repairing breakage or altering a date on an inscription at no charge up to large multiple-light windows. We thus cannot know what workload the job figures represent.

Thus, our hypothesis remains unproven, and the mystery of Richmond's unique Joseph Bell window must perforce remain just that, at least for the time being.

New Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mishka, Joseph, Henrietta & baby Tristan Gora
Mrs Lydia Horsburgh
Fr Glen Tattersall
Mrs Kaye & Mr Leighton Wraith

Pierson's Point, Tasmania
Caroline Springs, Victoria
Caulfield North, Victoria
Dunkeld, Victoria

Donations

Our thanks to Mrs Kaye & Mr Leighton Wraith for their kind donation.

