PUGIN FOUNDATION
FRIENDS OF PUGIN

Newsletter

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Welcome to the thirty-fourth Friends Newsletter.

Thank you so much for your membership of Friends of Pugin and for your kind and generous donations. It is now renewal time for membership 2009-2010 for some of our members. If your membership is due for renewal you will receive a renewal letter and membership form with this Newsletter. If you do not receive advice of renewal, you have membership for the next year. Membership subscriptions and donations are our only means of funding the ongoing requirements of the Friends of Pugin and we are most grateful to you.

Executive Officer Brian Andrews was recently asked to examine a disused font in Tasmania to see if it could be returned to use. It had been discarded in the 1970s and has been out in the weather ever since. He made an exciting discovery. It is the second known local copy of a Pugin exemplar font carved in England and brought out to Tasmania by Bishop Willson in 1844.

It is hoped to have the font conservatively restored, after which it will be placed in a Hobart church designed by Henry Hunter, Pugin's talented disciple.

We hope that you enjoy this edition.

With kind regards,

Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer

Above, the exemplar font in St John's, Richmond, (Image: Brian Andrews); below, the bowl of the copy.

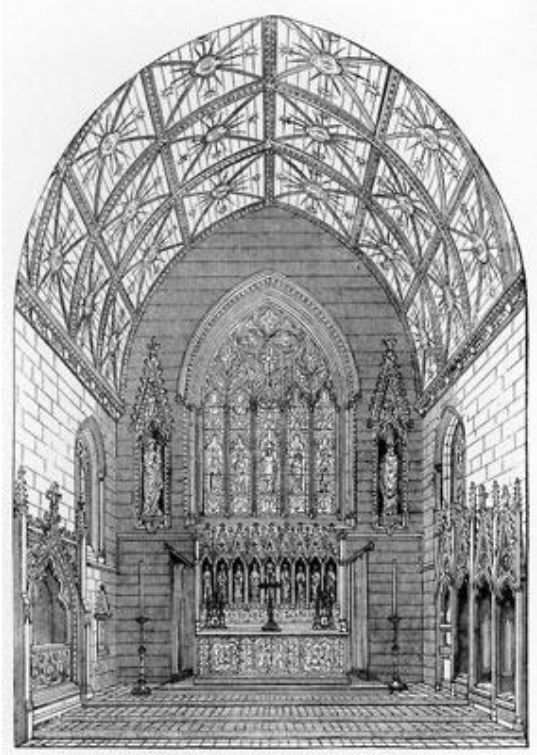
Metalwork Marvels

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

Ciborium: designed c.1844, made by John Hardman & Company, Birmingham, c.1847; silver, gilt, decorated with engraving, cast detail and applied champlevé enamel quatrefoil plates, the subjects including a foliated cross, an Agnus Dei and a cherubim; 35.5cm high, 11.0cm diameter container. The vessel design was developed from a late medieval ciborium illustrated in Pugin's 1841 work, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, which is reproduced below.

Pugin's Designs

Sedilia (Part 1)



Pugin's vision to revive the fullness of English medieval life went beyond the mere fabric of his cathedral, church and chapel structures to include those furnishings necessary for the liturgy, principally the Mass. For much of the British Isles in the late Middle Ages the liturgical Use of Sarum prevailed,[1] and this dictated Pugin's arrangements unless he was specifically prevented from so doing, as we shall see in due course.

The chancel of a fully furnished Pugin Sarum Use church would include an altar, a tabernacle (if there was no Blessed Sacrament Chapel), a pair of standard candlesticks on the pavement, a piscina, sedilia and an Easter sepulchre, plus a rood screen across the chancel entrance. The form, function and placement of these furnishings were described at length in his May 1841 *Dublin Review* article 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England',[2] here shown at right as applied to his design for St Giles', Cheadle.

Regarding sedilia Pugin wrote: 'On the epistle side of the altar, either on the ascent of the steps leading up to the altar, or on the level pavement, three arched recesses are invariably built, for the officiating priest, deacon, and sub-deacon, to sit in during the chaunting of the Gloria and Credo.'[3] He was well aware that both stepped and level sedilia were to be found in medieval English churches. Examples here are from Westbere (above) and Preston-Next-Faversham, both in Kent.

In the Use of Sarum the priest always occupied the easternmost seat, that is, the one closest to the altar, with the deacon next to him. This meant that even with stepped sedilia the priest would be highest. By contrast, in the Roman Rite the priest occupied the central seat, meaning that stepped sedilia could not be used. This had implications for Pugin's sedilia designs, as we shall see.

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[1] The Use of Sarum was an English variant in non-essentials—one of a host of such variants—of the Roman Rite which prevailed throughout late medieval Western Christendom. Before the English Reformation it was widespread throughout southern England, Scotland and Ireland.

[2] [A. Welby Pugin], 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. X, May 1841, pp. 301–48.

[3] ibid., p. 333.

Pugin and Medieval Antiquities

Sienese Chalices (Part 1)

In 1965 the noted English authority on church plate Charles Oman published a paper exploring the chalices made by Sienese goldsmiths in the fourteenth century.[4] After describing in detail what he categorized as three grades of such chalices, he noted in reference to the cheapest grade that: 'There are quite a number of these cheaper chalices still in existence.'[5]

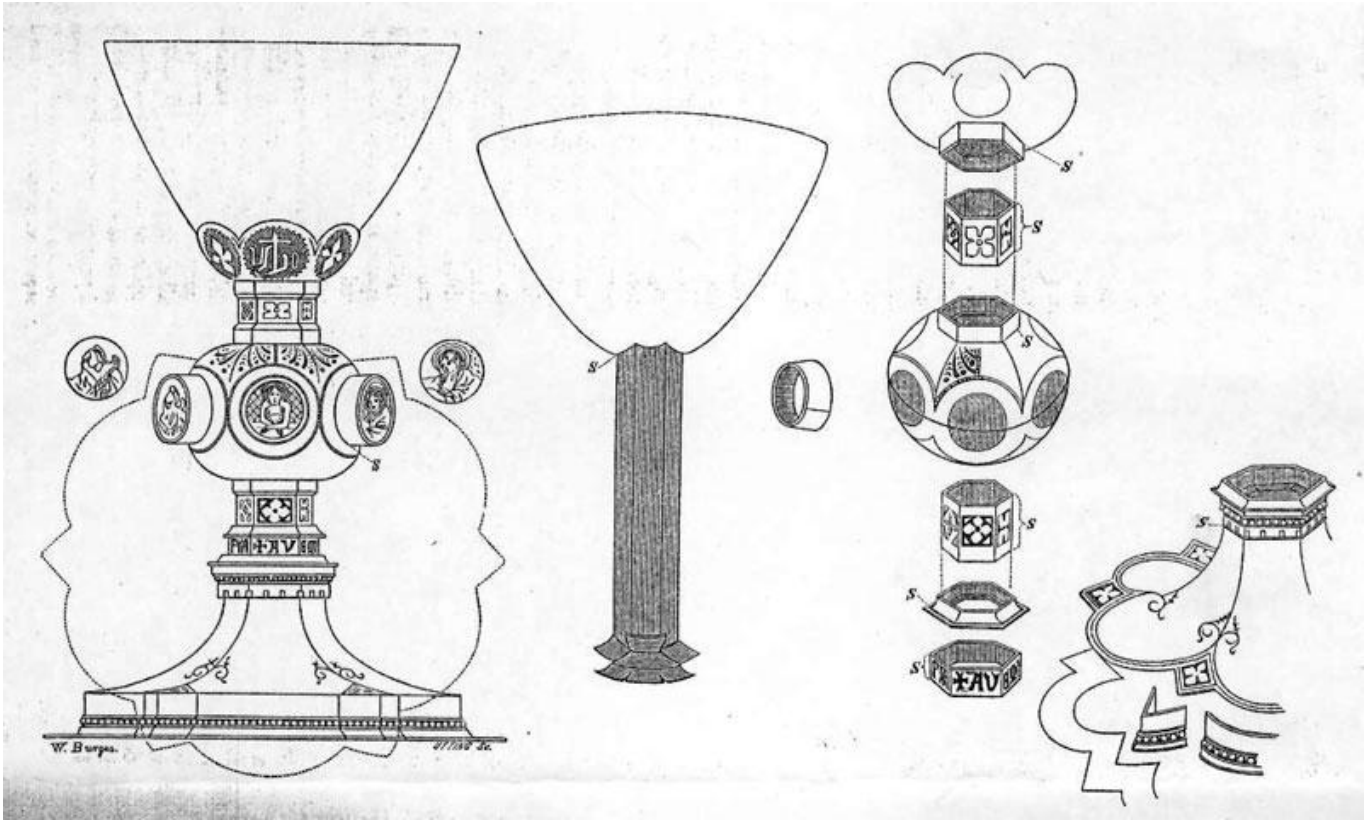
It is clear that this was the case in Pugin's time. He provided several of them to his churches, either refurbished or in original condition, as we shall see. But firstly it is necessary to establish that these chalices were indeed the work of Sienese medieval goldsmiths. This can be ascertained from the general appearance of the vessels and, more importantly, from their construction.

In 1858 the eminent English High Victorian architect William Burges published an article on altar plate which included the results of a detailed investigation into the construction of a fourteenth-century Sienese chalice.[6] The article was accompanied by an exploded diagram, reproduced below.

The key points about the chalice's decoration and construction were as follows:

1. The spine of the chalice was a hollow hexagonal copper tube soldered to the silver bowl, its lower end slotted to form six fingers.

2. The stem was made up from two short flat rectangular pieces that had been hammered to form patterned indentations, which were then filled with champlevé enamel. These pieces were bent up into a hexagonal tubular form, their seams were soldered and they were slipped over the



[4] Charles Oman, 'Some Sienese Chalices', *Apollo*, vol. 81, 1965, pp. 279–81.
[5] ibid., p. 281.

[6] W. Burges, 'Altar Plate', *Ecclesiologist*, vol. XIX, 1858, pp. 221–8.

spine on either side of the knot.

3. The knot had six bosses whose faces were also champlevé enamelled.

4. The junction of the stem and foot was covered with a hexagonal collet, sometimes with a champlevé enamelled band of inscription. The bottom of this collet had fingers, like inverted castellation in appearance, which were hammered tight against the foot after assembly of the chalice,

5. The outcurving hexagonal foot had a sexfoil base with intermediate points, and it was engraved. The more expensive chalices also had ornamented strapwork and champlevé enamel decoration.

6. With all the parts of the chalice assembled, the fingers at the lower end of the spine were hammered down against the underside of the foot, making the whole unit tight.

The major difference between such Sienese chalices and those designed by Pugin, and manufactured by Hardmans, lies in the form of the chalice spine and the means by which it is tightened onto the chalice assembly. Hardman chalices have a cylindrical rod for a spine, soldered to the cup and threaded at the other end, as seen below.

The underside of an 1847 Pugin chalice purchased by Bishop Willson for Tasmania (Image: Brian Andrews)

A circular washer is slipped over the spine, resting against the incurving foot of the chalice. A nut is then screwed onto the spine, bearing against the washer and forcing it up hard against the tapered underside of the foot, thus tightening the assembly.

Having described the salient aspects of Sienese chalices, and a key difference with Pugin/Hardman chalices, we will now look at an example of Pugin's refurbishing of a defective one so as to bring it back into liturgical service. Fortunately, this particular item, illustrated below, had failed structurally due to faulty modifications in 1897 and was still in pieces when examined by us in 1997.

A Sienese chalice refurbished by Hardmans and provided with a new Pugin-designed bowl in 1847 (Image: Private collection)

The chalice had been acquired by Bishop Willson of Hobart Town during his 1847 visit to England. It is not surprising, given the very close relationship which existed between Willson and Pugin, that the

latter would have arranged for a Sienese chalice to be repaired for his friend.[7] The chalice was restored to its 1847 condition in 2002, however, photos taken of it before this work was done incontestably reveal its Sienese provenance as well as the method used by Hardman to attach a new Pugin-designed bowl.

A detail of the damaged chalice with its foot removed, revealing the internal construction (Image: Brian Andrews)

The above image shows the hexagonal Sienese spine. Hardmans had soldered it to the new Pugin bowl and cut off the six fingers at its lower end. To this they had soldered a hexagonal plate with a short threaded piece attached. This converted the spine to the usual Hardman type, allowing for their normal assembly method with a nut and circular washer, as described above.

The close-up image at right also reveals several other characteristics of Sienese chalices.

The collet at the base of the stem has the castellation-like fingers but not a band of enamel-filled engraving, the chalice being of the cheapest variety.

Originally, the deeply indented pattern on the stem above and below the knot was filled with enamel but this has all disappeared. An examination of the stem components when the chalice was disassembled showed that they had indeed been made from flat rectangular plates, which had then been bent up into hexagonal tubes and the seams soldered.

It is probable that the original faces of the six circular bosses on the knot, almost certainly bearing champlevé enamel decoration, have been replaced well before the Hardman intervention by the present faces with their crudely engraved cinquefoils. **To be continued**.

Friends of Pugin

We welcome:

Mr Robert Parsons *South Yarra, Victoria*

Donations

Our thanks to Miss Julia Farrell for her most generous donation.

[7] The Hardman 1845–49 Metal Day Book entry is: '6 December [1847], p. 261: 'Rt Revd Bishop Willson Hobart Town 'A Chalice repaired &c [illegible] richly Gilt Cup & Paten put to Foot sent £6 18 0'.