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Welcome to the forty-second Friends Newsletter.

On Sunday 28 March a wonderful concert was held in St John's Church, Richmond, to raise funds towards the chancel window conservation. Works by J.S. Bach, Handel and Grieg were performed by a chamber orchestra led by eminent Australian violinist Peter Tanfield. \$4,000 was raised.

Work will begin after Easter and will include the removal and conservation of the window, repair to adjacent stonework and strengthening of the chancel roof. New high quality screens will be installed—one for each of the fourteen separate parts of the window—to protect it against vandalism, which is vital as the figure of St John was broken and repaired in the 1920s. The present 'screen' is a piece of chicken wire!

The adjacent image shows the window with the central panel already removed—it was literally on the verge of collapse.

Many visitors to Tasmania, as well as local people, have remarked how disappointed they were that St Patrick's, Colebrook, was closed when they went to visit. It will now be open every Sunday between 2pm and 4pm starting on 11 April. This is possible through the generosity of our Tasmanian Friends of Pugin who have agreed to be rostered on as guides and as a presence during the opening hours.

We are flagging the date of 1 March 2012, which is the bi-centenary of Pugin's birth. We are planning celebrations in Australia at several venues as well as in the United Kingdom. Planning has already



The St John's, Richmond, chancel window with the central light removed (Image: Brian Andrews)

commenced and we will be exploring with you ways of celebrating this significant milestone.

We wish you a peaceful Easter.

With kind regards,

Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer



Metalwork Marvels

In this issue we bring you another exquisite example of Pugin's astonishing creativity in reviving the spirit of medieval metalwork.

Tabernacle: designed 1841, made 1842 by John Hardman & Co. Engraved plated base metal sheets over wooden framework, embellished with semi-precious stones, 67.0cm high x 28.5cm wide x 28.8cm deep.

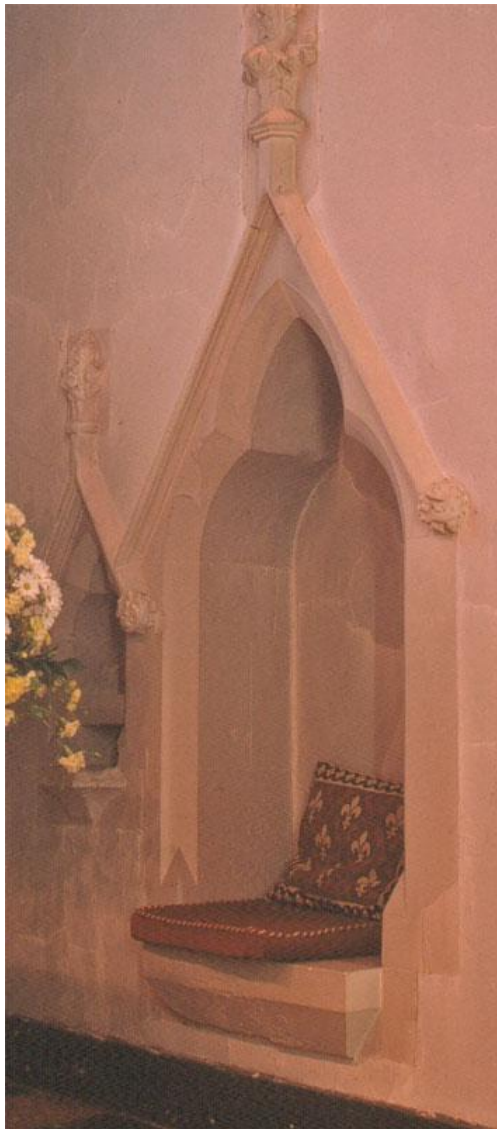


Pugin's Designs

Sedilia (Part 8)

As we have seen so far in this series Pugin normally furnished his churches with sedilia having three seats for the priest, deacon and sub-deacon. Such an arrangement, whether in the Roman Rite or the Use of Sarum, was to accommodate the celebrants during certain parts of a Solemn Mass.

Now the reality in Pugin's time was that there was normally only one priest assigned to a mission. It is likely, therefore, that the sedilia were not able to be used for their intended purpose, nor have the overwhelming bulk of them been so utilised since. An exception is the sedile in St Mary's, Brewwood.



The sedile, St Mary's, Brewwood (Image: Brian Andrews)

Here, Pugin simply provided one seat for the officiating priest, an arrangement very rare in English medieval churches but not unknown.

The sedile's late thirteenth-century style matched that of the church and consisted of a trefoil-headed recess with plain chamfered face terminating in a favourite device of Pugin's—on structure and furnishings—a pyramidal stop. The projecting seat also had a simple chamfer to its edge. Over the sedile was a moulded triangular hood with foliated bosses and finial.

The piscina, immediately to the east of the sedile, as in many English medieval churches, was treated in an identical manner, making for a modest but beautifully composed and balanced ensemble.

Pugin and Medieval Antiquities

The Solihull Triptych

St Augustine's, Solihull, was the first of Pugin's churches to be completed. Begun in 1838, it was solemnly opened on 6 February 1839.¹ Pugin was the cross-bearer for the opening ceremonies.²

It was a simple single-cell building in the Early English style, a mere fifty feet long by twenty-two feet wide, having nave and chancel under the one roof and with a blank east wall. Against this wall was a stone altar designed by Pugin and carved by Thomas Roddis of Sutton Coldfield.³ Along with the altars proper of his churches Pugin usually designed their reredoses, but in this case he donated a particularly fine late-medieval Flemish triptych to be used as an altarpiece, showing to advantage against the blank wall behind the altar.

¹ Oscott College Chapel had been opened in 1838, but here Pugin came on the scene after the chapel had been designed by Joseph Potter of Lichfield and his involvement comprised the addition of an apsidal chapel to Potter's design the furnishing and the decorating, including the initial stained glass.

² Contemporary newspaper account cited in Bernard Malley, *Solihull and the Catholic Faith*, Birmingham, 1939, p. 66.

³ Roddis went on to carve much important stonework for Pugin including alabaster altars in St John's Hospital Chapel, Alton, and St Giles', Cheadle.



The late-medieval Flemish triptych in St Augustine's, Solibull (Image: Brian Andrews)

The central panel of the triptych is a Calvary scene with the figures of Christ, his Mother, St Mary Magdalene and St John the Evangelist, set against a background typical of this genre of a medieval city, a river, woodlands, plains and distant hills. A tiny opening in the clouds reveals the head of God the Father. On the left-hand panel is St Jerome accompanied by St John the Baptist, while the right-hand panel depicts St Anthony the Hermit with St Francis of Assisi.

It is likely that the present colouration and gilding to the frame is the work of one of the Pippet family of artists who were prominent members of the parish in later years and who were designers for Hardmans. Amongst the furnishings of St Augustine's are a processional cross and an altar crucifix, both Puginesque in character and by one of the Pippets.

The triptych has been moved several times over the past 161 years. When a stained glass window was inserted in the east wall it was re-hung on the chancel north wall. Then when a separate chancel

was built in 1878 it was placed within it, again on the north wall.⁴ Its latest move was in 1977 when the old church became a mere annex to a modern and completely unsympathetic structure constructed against its north flank. The triptych now hangs on the liturgical east wall of this addition.

Pugin's Irish Works

St Alphonsus', Barntown (Part 3)

Construction

Fundraising for the church got under way in 1842 and the foundation stone was laid in July 1844.⁵ As for so many of Pugin's Irish buildings, Richard Pierce of Wexford was the clerk of works.⁶

⁴ Malley, op. cit., p. 73.

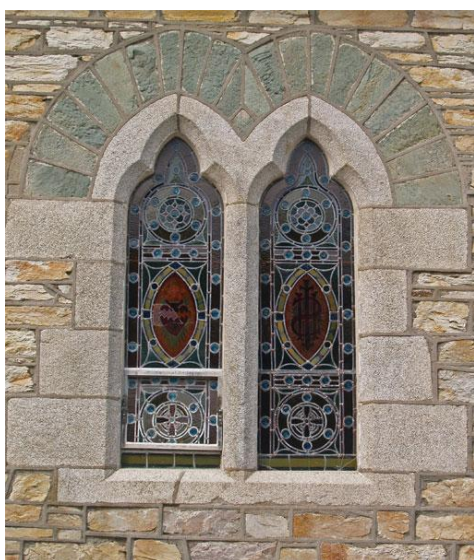
⁵ Diocese of Ferns, *Churches of the Diocese of Ferns: Symbols of a Living Faith*, Booklink, Ireland, p. 77.

⁶ Barry O'Leary, 'Richard Pierce: architect and acolyte of the Gothic Revival', in Michael McCarthy & Karina O'Neill (eds), *Studies in the Gothic Revival* Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2008, p. 169.

That Pugin's trust in Pierce was well placed is evident in the high constructional quality of his work inter alia at St Peter's College Chapel, Wexford, St Michael's, Gorey, St Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy, St Mary's, Tagoat, and of course St Alphonsus', Barntown. Indeed, Pugin regarded Pierce's involvement in his Irish work as virtually a pre-requisite to undertaking designs, as is shown in the following extract from his June 1840 letter to Fr Thomas O'Sullivan of Killarney regarding the possibility of designing a cathedral there:

I could not undertake your church without a person whom I should approve being constantly on the spot ... Mr Pierce of Wexford must be employed to see the work properly carried out and for which service he will agree to a proper remuneration with the parties.⁷

Rubble stone for the walls was carted by local people from a quarry at Newtown while the granite for the dressed work was from Carlow.⁸ The varied colouration of the rubble stone with tough dressed granite set into it has imparted to the Barntown church a variety of texture and a delicate polychromy which contributes greatly to the pleasant articulation of an otherwise severe exterior.



Colour and texture in the Barntown walls (Image: Brian Andrews)

⁷ Pugin to O'Sullivan, 29 June 1840, quoted in O'Leary, op. cit., p. 170. Fr Thomas O'Sullivan was a curate in Killarney under Dr Cornelius Egan, Bishop of Kerry, there (*The Catholic Directory and Annual Register, for the Year 1839*, London, 1839, p. 135).

⁸ Tom & Teresa Wickham, 'St Alphonsus' Church Barntown', *Journal of the Taghmon Historical Society*, no. 4, 2001, p. 6.

Fr Murphy's detailed financial records for the construction of the church have survived and it is interesting to see the amounts expended.⁹ These may be summarized as follows:

Exterior (walls)	£767-12-7
Exterior (roof & windows)	£495-12-5
Extras (gutters, chimney tops)	£9-8-4
Interior	£255-7-7
Movable furniture	£104-10-10½

The interior costs included items such as plastering, staining of the roof and all fixed timber, tiles and fixed furnishings. These latter included holy water fountains, a piscina (illustrated below) of granite, and the 'Altar of the Blessed Virgin'.



The now disused granite piscina, clearly put to a novel use in recent times (Image: Brian Andrews)

Missing from Fr Murphy's list of fixed furnishings was the main altar, simply because it was not an incurred cost, having been one of several donations to the new church by its benefactor John Hyacinth Talbot.¹⁰

The altar was designed by Pugin and carved in Caen stone. The front consisted of a series of panels with bas-relief carved figures set into them, a type widely used by him.¹¹

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ For example, in Alton, Cadogan Street, Cheadle, The Grange, Kenilworth, Oscott, Ramsgate, Salisbury, Ware and Woolwich.



Pugin's altar. The tabernacle and the Caen stone and marble reredos are not by Pugin, dating from 1899. (Image: Brian Andrews)

The iconography and detailing of the figures are typical of Pugin. A row of angels holding shields bearing the Sacred Monogram flank, from left: St John the Evangelist; a Sedes Sapientiae, or seated Virgin and Child; and St Anne teaching the young Virgin the scriptures. (Note that the altar has been crudely re-painted.) This latter, as Pugin would have well known, was a popular devotional subject in the later Middle Ages.



St Anne with the Virgin (Image: Brian Andrews)

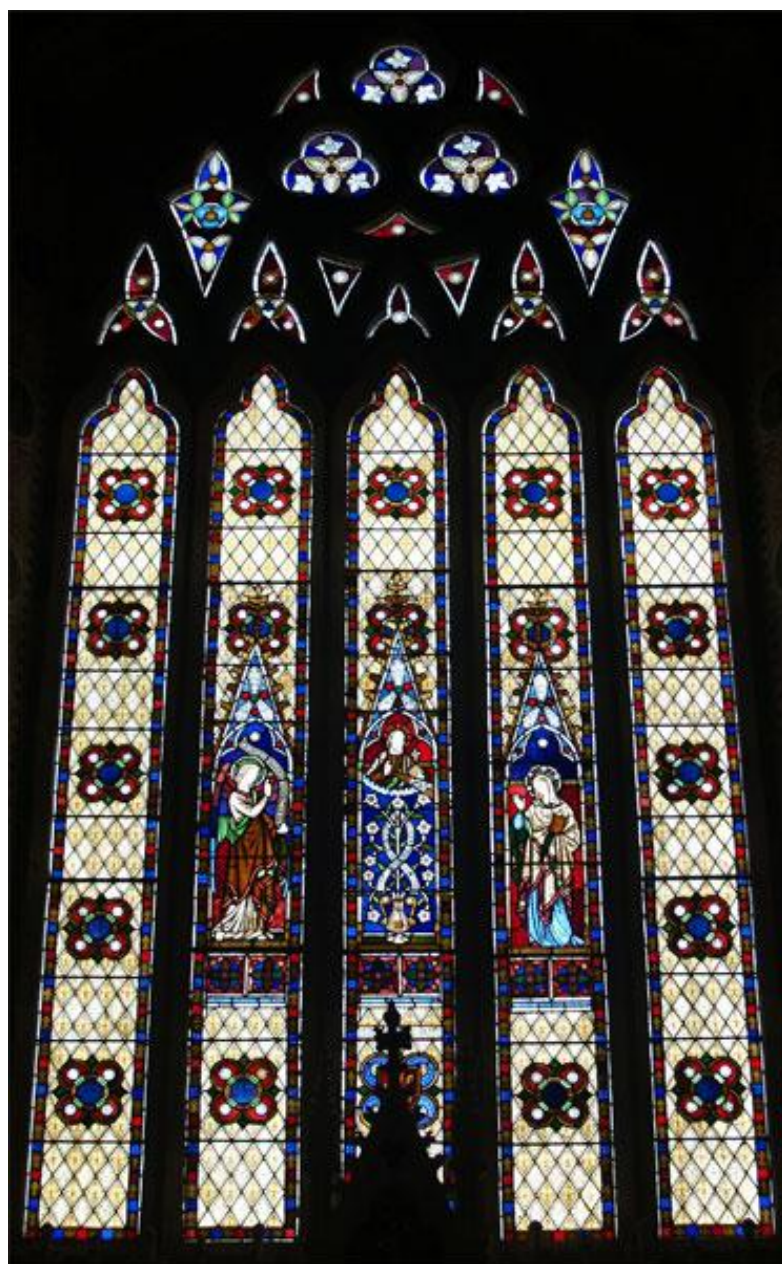
Fr Murphy's list of movable furnishings included a sacring bell at a cost of £2-10-0, a rather more spartan one than the general run of Pugin's sacring bell designs. This and several other items were provided by Hardmans at Murphy's request, their order being filled on 30 August 1848 and received safely by mid October of that year.¹²



The spartan sacring bell (Image: Brian Andrews)

¹² In a letter to Hardman dated 15 August 1848 Pugin detailed items requested by Fr Murphy, whom he described as a 'most dependable and excellent person', and included a sketch of the type of bell he wanted made. Pugin to Hardman, 15 August 1848, with accompanying footnote, in Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, volume 3: 1846 to 1848, OUP, Oxford, 2009, p. 569.

John Hyacinth Talbot's other major gift to St Alphonsus' Church was the five-light chancel east window.



The chancel east window (Image: Brian Andrews)

Hardmans recorded the order for the window in their first Glass Day Book, 1847, f.27, Feb. 26, as follows: 'A Window of .../.../5 lights with 3 Figures & Quarries/Stained Borders &c &c/13' 4" x 1' 6½"/.../15 pieces of Tracery for do.'¹³ The charge for the window, paid by Talbot, was £97.¹⁴

¹³ Stanley A. Shepherd, *The Stained Glass of A.W.N. Pugin*, Spire Books Ltd, Reading, 2009, p. 385.

¹⁴ Belcher, op. cit., p. 204, n. 7.

The principal subjects of the window are set in the three central lights under canopies and consist of God the Father flanked by an Annunciation scene comprising the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. Below the figure of God the Father is a Marian symbol, a lily in a vase, entwined by a scroll bearing Gabriel's salutation to Mary: 'Ave Maria Gratia Plena Dominus Tecum' (Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee).¹⁵

The greater part of the window's area is taken up with simple silver-stained quarries having alternating fleurs-de-lis and roses, being further traditional Marian symbols, and the tracery lights have floriated decoration. It is clear that costs were carefully minimized, and this becomes apparent in correspondence relating to the window's production. In a revealing letter to Pugin dated 14 October 1847 Talbot wrote:

You have the exact dimensions &c. of this window from Pierce. You promised me it should be Simple and My Dr fellow as Cheap as you Can—first for my Pocket, and Secondly for Good Example for Simplicity & Cheapness to encourage others and above all with Expedition as he is badly off for it right Now—Put the Talbot arms in it—in Some way as it is but right to Mark our faith hereafter, to our descendants.¹⁶

Pugin did indeed include the Talbot arms, in the quatrefoil near the base of the central light (obsured by the top of the high altar in our illustration at left).

The window is unusual in having the two subjects of the Annunciation scene separated by an intervening light. We shall return to the Barntown Annunciation depiction in a future issue of this *Newsletter* when dealing with Bishop Willson's Pugin-designed acquisitions during his 1847 trip to England from Hobart Town.

The reason for the presence of God the Father in the central light is given by John Hardman Powell to Hardman in a letter likely written late in 1847. He says that Pugin intends putting 'the Eternal Father' there 'or he says it will be miserable'.¹⁷ Clearly, the central light design up to this point had only included the lily, vase and scroll, all related to the Annunciation but making for a weak central light composition. It ought to be noted that the

¹⁵ Luke 1:28. The word 'Mary' is an interpolation.

¹⁶ Belcher, loc. cit.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

amended subject is not arbitrary, for proceeding from the right hand of God the Father is the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove, its trajectory directed at the Virgin, as can be seen in the enlarged central section of the window below. Thus the central light becomes an integral element of the scene, graphically depicting a further passage in St Luke's narrative of the Annunciation where Gabriel says 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee'.¹⁸

There appears to be a further exercise in cost-cutting in the window's production. Pugin had dispatched the cartoons for the Barntown window to Hardman on 14 December 1847. Then on 20 December he wrote to Hardman saying: 'I have just got your Letter. cut as much as you like out of the barn town window. all the *upper part of canopies*—can be left out Easily.'¹⁹

This is precisely what was done. A comparison with the Annunciation window delivered to St Mary's, Creswell, Staffordshire, and manufactured from the same cartoons as for the Barntown Annunciation lights, reveals that the original canopies were over twice the height of the truncated Barntown ones.²⁰

St Alphonsus' Church, Barntown, was solemnly dedicated on 8 December 1851 and it has—thankfully—remained structurally unaltered ever since.



Chancel east window detail (Image: Brian Andrews)

¹⁸ Luke 1:35.

¹⁹ Pugin to Hardman, 20 December 1847, in Belcher, op. cit., p. 358.

²⁰ See Shepherd, op. cit., Plate 10.31 and pp. 339–40.