

Included in this edition:

- *Pugin's Present State (Part 4)*
- *The New High Altar, St Patrick's Church, Colebrook (Part 2)*
- *Wind Braces in Pugin's Churches (Part 6)*

Welcome to the sixty-second Friends Newsletter.

We had already put together the contents of this issue when a couple of days ago we received an exciting phone call from David Mulholland who is painting and gilding the reredos of the new High Altar for St Patrick's, Colebrook, informing us that the job was finished. We had expected that David's work would only be completed just before it was due for uplifting on 1 December from his studio at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island off the south-east coast of Tasmania.

David remarked to us that one is fortunate if the opportunity of working on such a commission comes along once in a lifetime.

This issue deals with our choice of the High Altar design and with its construction. However, in the light of David's news we have decided to include at right an image of his putting the final brush strokes in place. Our December issue is planned to include an image of the new altar in situ, and we must say that having seen the completed reredos, which is quite magnificent, we really look forward to sharing the result with you.

It will have its first use at our Bi-centenary Mass on Sunday 4 March, the music for which will be provided by the choir of Newman College within the University of Melbourne directed by noted early music specialist Dr Gary Ekkel. It is therefore appropriate, we feel, to draw to your attention the 2011 Advent Festival to be staged at Newman College, Melbourne, from 2 to 4 December 2011, for which Gary is the Artistic Director. Those of you who receive this Newsletter by email are

receiving a copy of the Festival brochure as an attachment, and those who receive a paper copy are receiving a paper brochure.

With kind regards,

[Jude Andrews](#)
Administrative Officer



Finis coronat opus (Image: Brian Andrews)

The Present State of Pugin's Ecclesiastical Architecture in Australia

(Part 4)

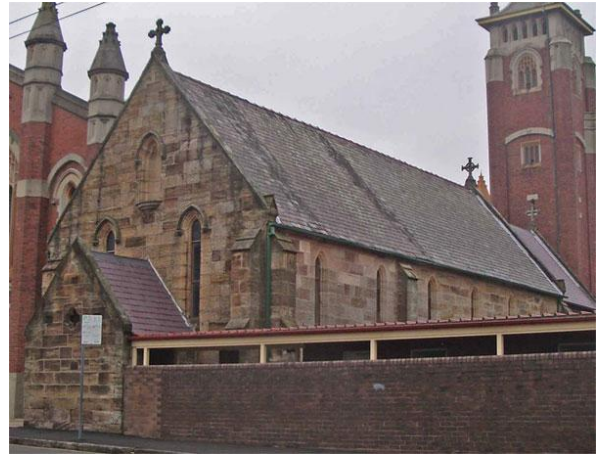
4. St Augustine of Hippo's, Balmain

This church was built to the same plans as St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, but with the addition of a steeple against the chancel north wall. A door in the base of the steeple gave access to a priest's door, a feature of Pugin's design omitted from the Berrima church as constructed.

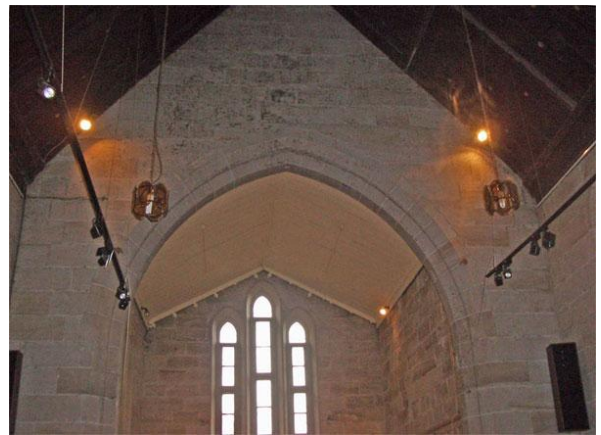


*St Augustine's Church (Source: Eris M. O'Brien, *Life and Letters of Archpriest John Joseph Therry*, Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1922, vol. II, facing p. 260)*

In 1864 a two-bay western extension was made to the nave, the original west wall being reconstructed two bays westward and a west porch added. In 1901 the north porch was removed to make room for a much larger church immediately to its north. The spire over the priest's entrance was also removed. The sacristy was removed in 1922 to make room for a new presbytery to the south of the old church. The interior was gutted at the time of opening of the new church next door and the building is currently in use as a hall. **To be continued.**



The exterior (Image: Jude Andrews)



The interior in 2006 (Image: Jude Andrews)

The New High Altar, St Patrick's Church, Colebrook

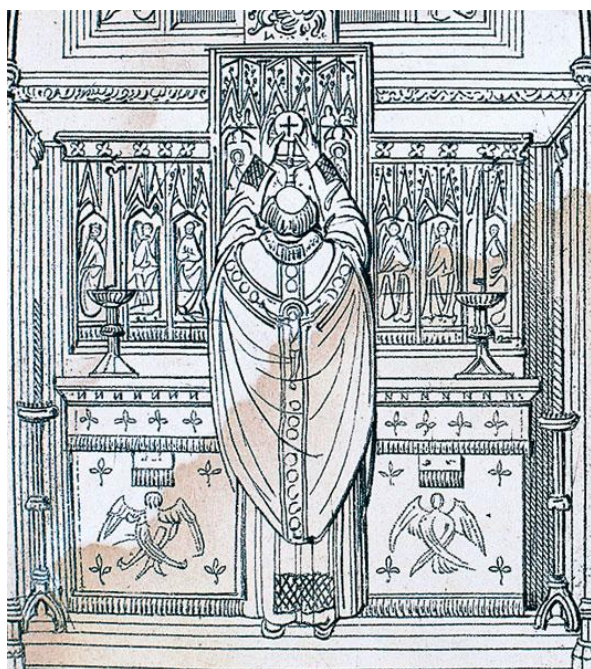
(Part 2)

High Altar 4

This is the altar presently being constructed. In the absence of an image of the first Colebrook high altar, but in the knowledge of the form of similar altars by Henry Hunter, we decided that the best course of action was to replicate an altar and reredos design by Pugin of this general form.

As far as we can ascertain an altar and reredos by Pugin of this form was never constructed, yet two

illustrations of his show it. The later of the two, illustrated below, appeared as the frontispiece in an 1847 *Missal for the Laity*, published by Thomas Richardson of Derby.



This illustration is little more than a sketch but it portrays two Pugin furnishings relevant to our decisions on the new high altar, namely, a frontal and riddel curtains. Regarding frontals Pugin wrote: ‘The front of the altar, if solid, should be furnished with, at least, an antependium [i.e. frontal] with appropriate ornaments ...’,¹ and on riddel curtains he stated: ‘A pair of curtains should be hung on each side of the altar, nearly of the same projection from the wall ...’.²

The earlier illustration appeared as Plate 71 in his splendid chromolithographic publication, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*,³ a work widely mined for decorative and other details in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴

The form of the Plate 71 reredos had a precedent in late medieval England in the Sutton Valence altarpiece, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.



Plate 71 from Pugin's Glossary



The Sutton Valence altarpiece (Image: Brian Andrews)

This highly mutilated altarpiece—originally with two additional outer panels—dating from the mid-fourteenth century was removed from Sutton Valence Church, Kent, when it was demolished in 1823 and moved to 7 High Street, Maidstone. In 1921 it was purchased by the V&A from William Day & Son.⁵

¹ [A. Welby Pugin], ‘On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England’, *Dublin Review*, Vol. X, May 1841, p. 340.
² *ibid.*

³ The work ran to three editions, in 1844, 1846 and 1868.

⁴ Including by Henry Hunter the designer of Tasmanian Puginesque reredoses of the form shown in Plate 71.

⁵ Jonathan Alexander & Paul Binski (eds), *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1987, exhibition catalogue, p. 511.

It cannot be determined whether Pugin in his travels around England researching and sketching medieval architecture and furnishings sighted this altarpiece, but its similarity to his *Missal for the Laity* illustration is striking. Be that as it may, we have decided to replicate the Plate 71 reredos for Colebrook, but not the altar itself. For this latter we have chosen a simplified version of the other altar illustrated in the *Glossary* at Plate 70.

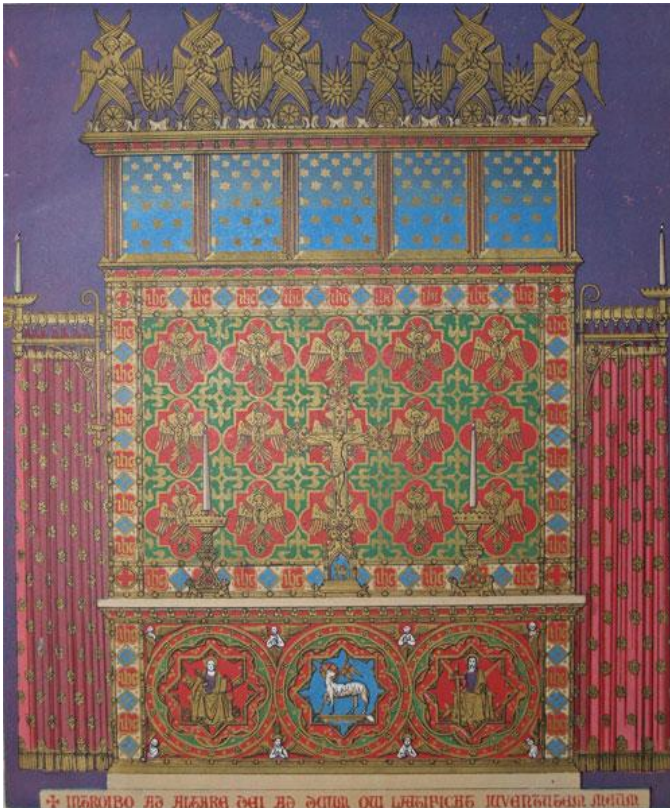
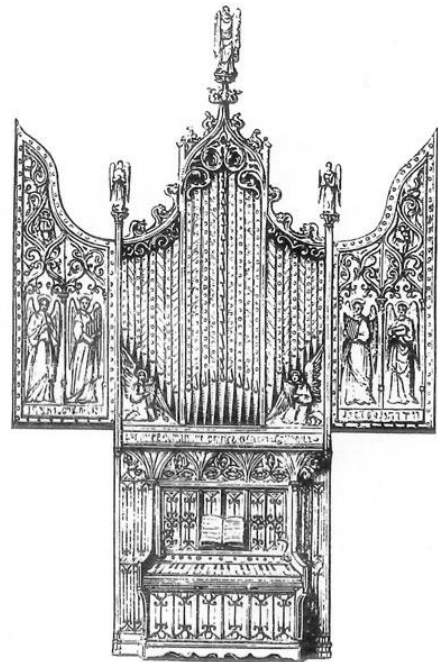


Plate 70 from Pugin's Glossary

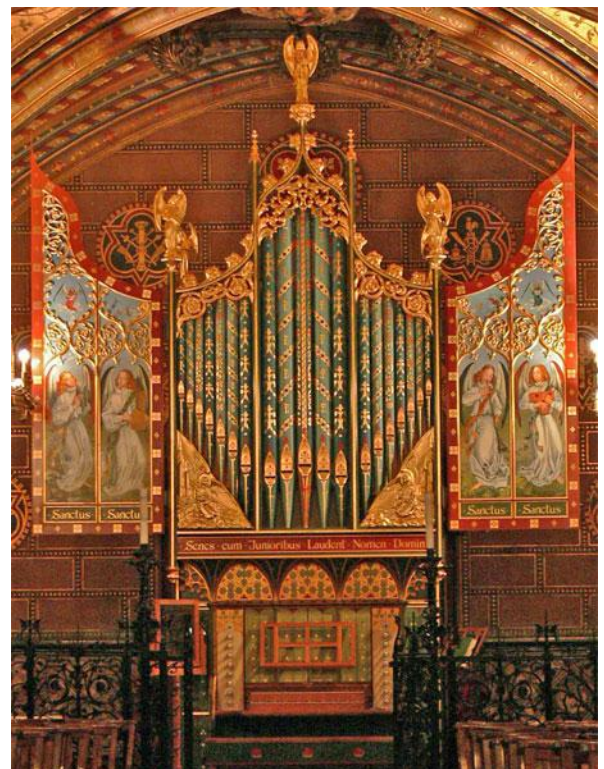
This altar, like almost all of Pugin's altars, has a decorated face.⁶ We are constructing it with a simplified upper moulding and a plain face. We note that neither altar illustrated in the *Glossary* has ever been constructed.

An interesting precedent for using unexecuted Pugin designs was set in 1999 with the construction of a painted and gilded organ case for the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft at the Palace of Westminster. It was based on one of a number of illustrations of organ case designs supplied by

Pugin for inclusion in a work by Sir John Sutton entitled *A Short Account of Organs Built in England from the Reign of King CHARLES the Second to the present Time*. In this publication the Pugin designs were the merest of sketches. Nonetheless they furnished the basis for the splendid case.



Above, the Pugin design; below, the result



⁶ Either by way of flat decoration or relief carving.

By contrast, for our Pugin reredos from Plate 71 we have much more detail which can be accurately scaled to fit an altar 2286mm wide (this figure makes more sense when translated as 7ft 6in). Nonetheless, we have discovered inconsistencies in the Plate which have had to be addressed, a result in all probability of Pugin's well-documented speed in producing drawings.

It is virtually certain that Pugin saw these designs as exemplars for altars of stone, painted and gilded. For reasons of economy and availability of craft skills we have opted to construct the Colebrook altar of wood. There is a small precedent for this amongst altars constructed from Pugin's designs. The first altar was for the Oscott College Chapel, Birmingham, and its design dates from late 1837 or early 1838. It was a composite of medieval elements supplied by Pugin along with others of his own design, the whole being sparingly decorated with colour and gilding, with the addition of paintings of St Augustine and St Athanasius by John Rogers Herbert RA.⁷



The Oscott College Chapel reredos (Image: Nicholas Callinan)

The second painted and gilded altar was also designed early in Pugin's career and stands unaltered in St Peter's College Chapel, Wexford.⁸

⁷ Rogers painted the best known portrait of Pugin which hangs in the Palace of Westminster.

⁸ The two painted and gilded altars which stood before the now-demolished rood screen in the Chapel have survived and are in storage.



The St Peter's College, Wexford, altar (Image: Brian Andrews)

This splendid altar, dating from c.1838, also has medieval elements supplied by Pugin in the form of three statues.

We deem it a privilege and a responsibility to be adding to this tiny group of painted and gilded wooden altars and reredoses by constructing the selected Pugin design some 168 years after it was drawn, and around 161 years since the construction of any previous altar of his.⁹

Construction

The altar and reredos have been constructed by Friend of Pugin and antique furniture conservator Tony Colman. Tony has already been responsible for the excellent restoration of the Colebrook rood screen with its 1847 Pugin corpus, as well as the conservation of the sedilia and the careful rehabilitation of the Tasmanian hardwood floors there. It has been painted light stone in colour and will always be vested in a frontal of Pugin fabric.

⁹ Probably the high altar in the Chapel of St Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, c.1850.



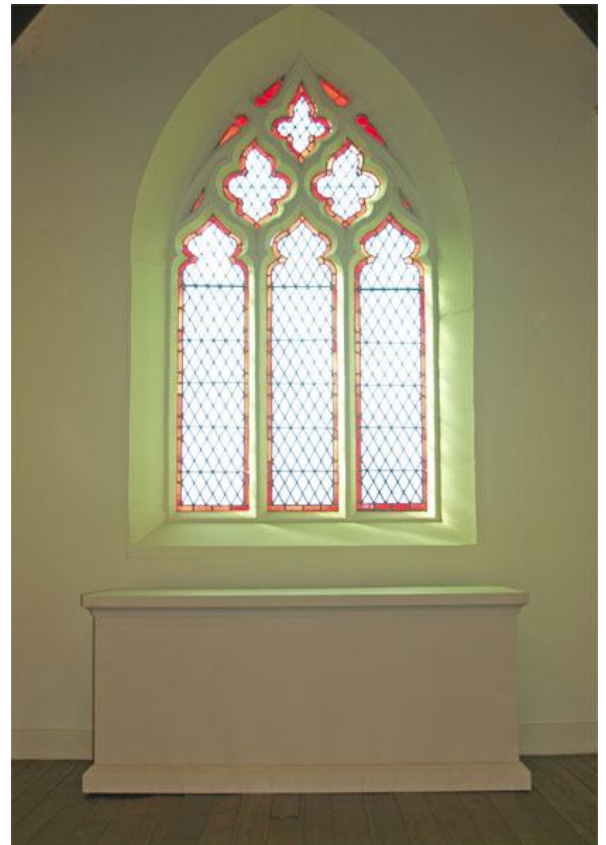
Above, the altar under construction; below, Tony Colman working on the reredos (Images: Brian Andrews)



We have already placed the altar in the chancel of St Patrick's Church in advance of the installation of the reredos so that folds and creases in the frontal can drop out. The altar is well scaled to the chancel proportions, as the next image demonstrates, and its simple form well matches the pared-back character of Pugin's interior.

The frontal and the riddel curtains have been made by the celebrated English church furnishing firm of Watts & Co. using Pugin ground fabric designs and edging braid. The frontal fabric was first re-woven some years ago according to a sample from Pugin's

St Augustine's Church, Ramsgate, for riddel curtains for the high altar of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. It was predominantly in red and gold and Watts named it their 'Talbot' fabric. Subsequently Watts have re-woven it in other colourways, and we chose 'Talbot Blue' for the frontal. It is predominantly in red, gold and blue, which will harmonise well with the reredos colours.



The new altar in situ (Image: Brian Andrews)

For the painting and gilding of the reredos we chose the prestigious Melbourne, Victoria, firm of Mulholland Restoration and Decorating whose many fine projects have included the restoration of the historic painted decorative finishes in St Patrick's Cathedral, the Exhibition Building and the Lady Chapel in St Francis Church, Lonsdale Street, all of these in Melbourne. To our great good fortune we discovered that David Mulholland, the long-time principal of the firm, now lives in semi-retirement on Bruny Island just off the coast of south-east Tasmania. This is making liaison, monitoring and decision-making about progress of the work, which he is undertaking, much easier.

David is well aware of the Pugin bright heraldic colour palette, as he visited St Giles', Cheadle, several years ago and studied the flat decoration there as a preparation for doing the St Francis' Lady Chapel job.

Translating Pugin's illustration into reality is proving to be an interesting exercise, not least because of the aforementioned errors we have found in the *Glossary* picture. Thus, there is an error in part of the cornice which has had to be corrected in the manufacture by Tony Colman. Further, small anomalies in the picture like inconsistent positions of dots in borders and patterns in the central panel being truncated at the bottom of the panel have needed correcting. More difficult has been visualising what would have been the design behind the crucifix and candles portrayed against the reredos. This has most impact where parts of the four saints are obscured. It will need all David's skills to interpolate here. Incidentally, the saints from the left are: a generic martyr (with symbol of a palm), St Peter, St Paul and St James the Greater. For the actual colours we are starting with those on the image (constrained by the inherent limitations of the c.19 chromolithographic process) and adjusting them in accordance with actual Cheadle colours.

David's first step was to make up a two-dimensional section of just over half of the face of the reredos and then to make a first attempt at the colours, with some detail roughly placed. This is shown below. With this 'mock-up' we were able to make decisions on adjusting colours where necessary, harmonising these as well with a sample of 'Talbot Blue'. The next step has been for David to start applying the base colours to the actual reredos as well as gilding the reredos cornice so as to gauge the affect against the colours. This gilding has yet to be burnished, but it enabled David to make a suggestion that the reredos sides also be gilded. Given that the *Glossary* illustration is two-dimensional and cannot thus show Pugin's intentions for the sides, we were 'winging it' here, but the enhancement of the reredos consequent upon gilding the sides became obvious at this stage.

To be continued.



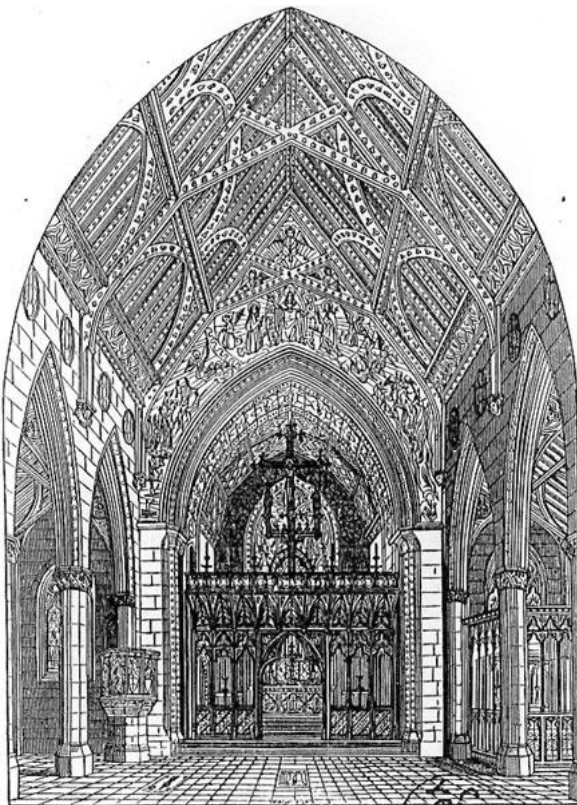
Above, the two-dimensional mock-up; below, the reredos with some base colours & gilding (Images: Brian Andrews)



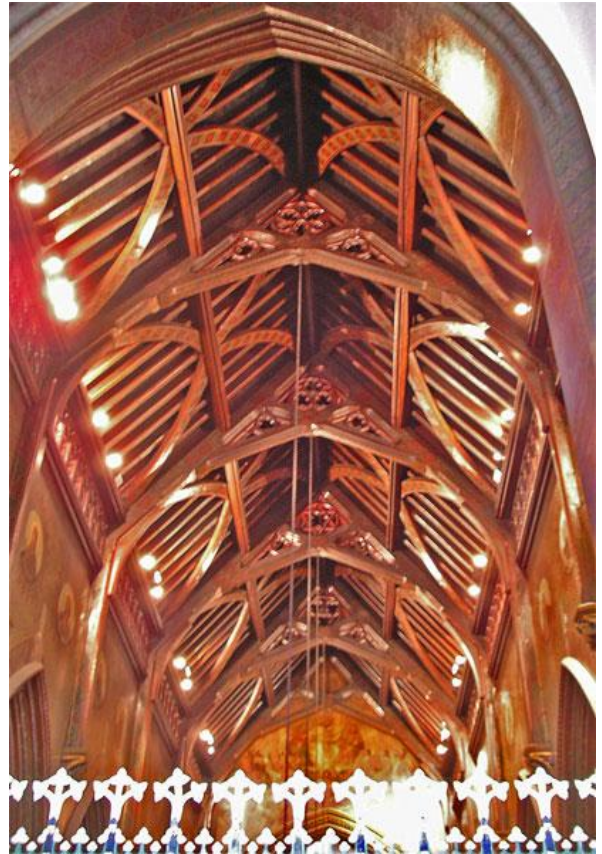
Wind Braces in Pugin's Churches (Part 6)

St Giles', Cheadle

Undoubtedly Pugin's most celebrated church, it was designed in 1840 and paid for entirely by his munificent patron John Talbot, sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury. The building underwent progressive structural and decorative enhancement as its construction progressed, finishing up as Pugin's most elaborately and comprehensively decorated building. His first (1841) sketch of the interior (see below) showed that the church was intended to have a wind-braced nave roof and a coved and ceiled chancel roof. This was carried through to the finished product.



St Giles' interior (Source: [A. Welby Pugin], 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', Dublin Review, vol. X, May 1841, Plate XIII))



The nave roof in St Giles', Cheadle (Image: Nicholas Callinan)

Given the nature of the Cheadle church and its extraordinary level of structural and decorative elaboration it seems certain that the inclusion of wind bracing was in this instance a part of that laborative endeavour.

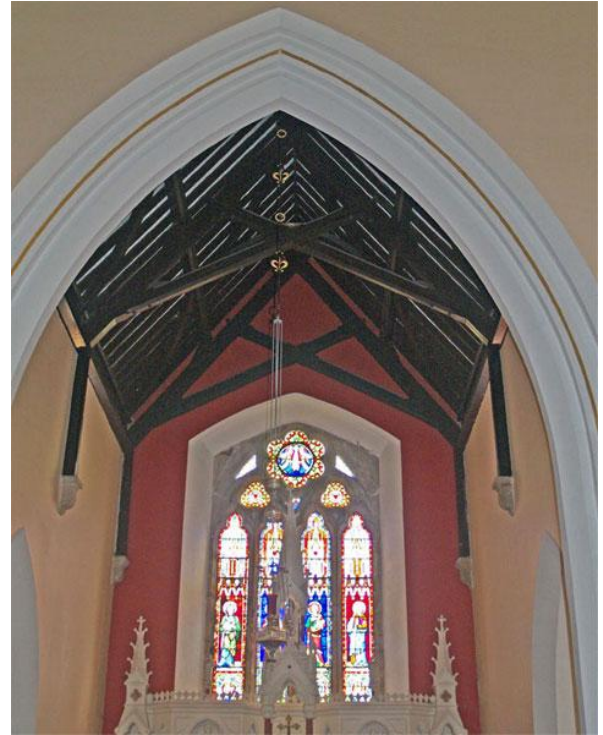
St Mary's, Tagoat

This County Wexford church was designed in 1843. Smaller than other Pugin Irish churches and cathedrals we have so far considered—Wexford, Ramsgrange, Gorey, Enniscorthy—all with arch braces, it nonetheless had wind braces.

St Mary's has wind bracing to the nave, transepts and also the two-bay chancel. While this appears to support the view that Pugin applied wind bracing to his medium and large Irish churches for structural reasons, the bracing in the relatively short chancel was perhaps applied more from motives of design harmony with the rest of the main roofs in the building.



Above, the Tagoat nave roof; below, a view along the nave looking east, showing the wind bracing in the transepts (Images: Brian Andrews)



The Tagoat chancel roof (Image: Brian Andrews)




In assigning structural motives to Pugin's Irish church wind bracing we need to bear in mind that his designs did not always fall neatly into logical consistency categories, witness St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney, his largest Irish church. Designed in 1842, before either Enniscorthy or Tagoat, it has no wind bracing.

Summary

Pugin's most probable reasons for including wind bracing in the thirteen examples considered in this series are summarized in Table 4 overleaf, in chronological order of the church design dates.

Conclusion

Pugin applied wind bracing to his church roofs for a variety of reasons. In general, his early designs (1838–39) had them for decorative purposes or for reasons of propriety. They were not used in his small designs for structural reasons, and his only medium-sized designs that had them were destined for Ireland where he may have perhaps anticipated higher wind loads. His larger buildings, including two Irish examples, can be said to have had them for structural reasons in general. But even here



their application was not consistent, witness St Barnabas Cathedral where they were clearly included in the chancel roof for reasons of propriety. **Concluded.**

Table 3
Wind Bracing Motives

<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Most Probable Motive</u>
Uttoxeter, St Mary	1838	Small	Propriety
Southport, St Marie on the Sands	1838	Small	Decorative
Macclesfield, St Alban	1838	Medium	Decorative
Wexford, St Peter's College Chapel	1838	Medium	Structural
Ramsgrange, St Mary	1838	Medium	Structural
Alton, St John's Hospital Chapel	1839	Small	Propriety
Gorey, St Michael the Archangel	1839	Large	Structural
Hulme, St Wilfrid (as designed)	1839	Medium	Propriety
Cheadle, St Giles	1840	Medium	Decorative
Mt St Bernard's Abbey Church	1840	Large	Structural
Nottingham, St Barnabas' Cathedral	1841	Large	Propriety
Enniscorthy, St Aidan's Cathedral	1843	Large	Structural
Tagoat, St Mary	1843	Medium	Structural

Donations

Our thanks to the following for their kind donations:

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