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Welcome to the eighty-eighth Friends Newsletter.

You will be pleased to hear that good progress is being made on the construction of the Pugin Bicentenary organ towards the cost of which many of you so generously donated. We visited the Launceston workshop of the builder Hans Meijer recently and were gratified to note the extensive use being made of local timbers. It will be a truly unique Tasmanian instrument to grace the interior of St Patrick's, Colebrook, a truly unique Pugin church.

Technical oversight of the project is in the hands of Melbourne Friend of Pugin John Maidment, who also prepared the specification for the organ. John is Chairman of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia, and has extensive experience in pipe organ history, technology and restoration. He has expressed satisfaction with the work to date and stated that the overall quality is really excellent.

We look forward with much anticipation to the inaugural recital of the new organ, hopefully before the middle of 2015.

With kind regards,

Jude Andrews
Administrative Officer



Launceston organ builder Hans Meijer stands beside the partly-built Tasmanian Blackwood case for the Pugin Bicentenary organ (Image: Brian Andrews)



St Paul's Church, Oatlands



This lovely portrait of the bellcote atop the nave west gable of the little church highlights the astringent but elegant lines of this 1843 Pugin design. One of the three 'simple buildings that can be easily erected' which he provided for Robert William Willson, first Bishop of Hobart Town, it was not commenced until 1850 on account of the poverty of Willson's Tasmanian flock, over half of whom were convicts at the time of his arrival from England.

Metalwork Marvels

In this issue we bring you another exquisite example of Pugin's astonishing creativity in reviving the spirit of medieval metalwork. These cruets were part of the original 1847 metalwork furnishings for St Marie's, Rugby, all due to the generosity of Captain Hibbert, the donor of the church. The lid handles have the letters V and A (vinum and aqua) in lovely Pugin characters to designate their contents—wine and water. Their function is further differentiated by the use of ruby glass for the wine and clear glass for the water.





St John's, Richmond, Churchyard Cross



In our February 2012 Newsletter we reported on the work of Tasmanian stonemason Edrei Stanton in carving a new shaft and cross to replace the original, shown at right, destroyed due to the collapse of an adjacent vault in the cemetery many decades ago. The difficult task is at last complete, and the admirably Puginesque result is a credit to his skills. (*Images: Above and upper right, Fr Terry Rush; lower right, Philippa Brettingham-Moore*)



Pugin's Altars & Altarpieces (Part 3)

So far we have examined the form and structure of medieval altars and altarpieces, noting how this was one area in which Pugin departed from his fidelity to medieval precedent in his own designs. We also set out his mature views on the subject, published in his *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*, which are repeated below:

In this country altars may now be constructed with equal propriety in the following different manners :—

1. Of four stone walls, supporting a stone slab, with a frontal of embroidery, chased metal or mosaic work. ...
2. Four or six low pillars of stone, marble or metal, standing on a raised base, supporting the slab.
3. Stone corbels projecting from the wall, with angels or other imagery, on which the altar stone rests. This method is only available for small altars.
4. Stone walls, with the front divided into compartments, with niches and images somewhat after the fashion of a high tomb. The first example of this kind, is the high altar of the Minster, Cologne.¹

Let us now consider his altar and altarpiece (reredos) designs in relation to the above altar types.

Pugin's early altar designs were variants of type 1 above. The overall construction was as per that type, and where any of them were of wooden construction as for example in Oscott College Chapel (c.1838) and St Peter's College Chapel, Wexford (c.1839), the form was identical with the stone designs. The significant departure of these

and other early altars from Pugin's type 1 was that they were not furnished with 'a frontal of embroidery, chased metal or mosaic work'.² Instead, their front faces bore painted and gilded designs, often in low relief, acting—perhaps—as a permanent frontal. Yet in his detailed description of altars in his 1843 work *On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* unambiguously prescribed frontals:

The front of an altar, if solid, should be furnished with, at least, an antependium with appropriate ornaments, and a purple frontal for Lent; but, if means would permit, a complete set of frontals of the five colours should be provided.³



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

¹ A. Welby Pugin, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*, 3rd edn, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1868, p. 9.

² *ibid.*

³ A. Welby Pugin, *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England*, Charles Dolman, London, 1843, p. 40. This material had earlier appeared in his *Dublin Review* article 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', Vol. X, May 1841, p. 340.

The Wexford altar face is a good example of this early Pugin approach. St Peter's College Chapel originally had a rood screen, long since demolished, with flanking altars at the west end of the chapel proper, as still exists in St Edmund's College Chapel, Ware. These altars also bore the same painted decorative treatment to their faces.⁴



One of the Wexford rood screen flanking altars, still held in storage (Image: Brian Andrews)

In common with many of these early altars the Wexford high altar had a triptych altarpiece of Continental inspiration, in this instance incorporating several medieval statues sourced and supplied by Pugin.⁵

For St Augustine's, Solihull (1839), the altar was of the modified type 1 and the triptych altarpiece was itself medieval Flemish in origin and supplied by Pugin. As constructed, St Augustine's was a small single-cell building with a blank east wall against which stood the altar with its medieval altarpiece. The church has been altered and extended beyond recognition over the past century and three-quarters, however both the original altar and its altarpiece survive, although separated and not fulfilling their original functions.

⁴ The pictured flanking altar was dedicated in honour of St Aidan (+626), first bishop of the Diocese of Ferns in which Wexford lies. Interestingly, the reliquary of St Aidan at the centre front of the altar has a Classical design. This was the style of Pugin's reviled 'revived Paganism', but the availability of the relic for placement in the altar presumably outweighed his abhorrence of its reliquary.

⁵ A common practice of Pugin's throughout his career was the provision of medieval statues, liturgical metalwork, furnishings and so on for his buildings. Notable examples in Tasmania include a c.1200 baptismal font and a fourteenth-century Siennese chalice.



Above: the Solihull altar; below: its Flemish altarpiece (Images: Brian Andrews)



A near contemporary of Solihull was St Mary's, Uttoxeter (1839). It too had a type 1 altar of similar form and a triptych altar piece, but this time to Pugin's own design.

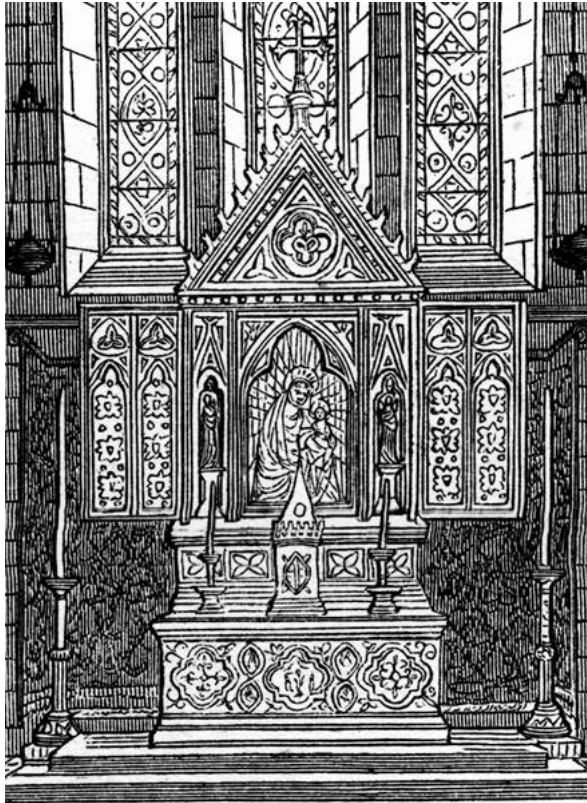


The Uttoxeter altar (Image: Brian Andrews)

Pugin gave a lengthy description of the Uttoxeter altar and altarpiece in his *Present State*:

Here the altar is of the ancient triptic [sic] form, with the doors to be closed during the latter part of Lent; in the centre is a picture of our blessed Lady, copied from one of the true Christian school; on either side are two

damask curtains, hung on rods, between which and the altar stand two large candlesticks to hold tapers, lit from the Sanctus to the Communion. The front of the altar is of stone, gilt and painted, with the Crucifixion at the centre, and the emblems of evangelists in the angles.⁶

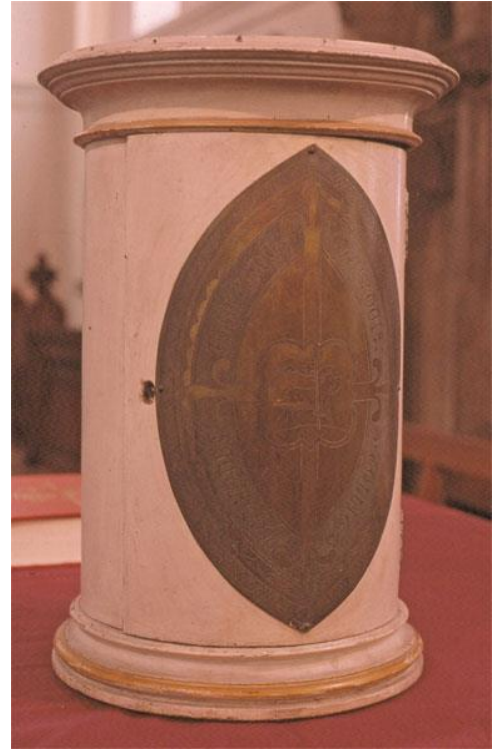


The triptych altarpiece above the altar in St Mary's, Uttoxeter, a detail from the illustration in Present State, Plate XV

To be noted on the above illustration is a tower tabernacle. Pugin also wrote about these in his *Present State*:

The present tabernacles are by no means ancient, nor did they exist in the old English churches. The blessed sacrament was either reserved in the above-mentioned [a suspended pyx], in a dove, or a small metal tabernacle in the form of a tower. These towers are frequently mentioned by the old ecclesiastical writers.⁷

Like Sollihull, the Uttoxeter church has been greatly altered and expanded, and its tower tabernacle has long-since been replaced by a conventional rectangular one. However, it survives in storage minus its spired top.



Above: the Uttoxeter tabernacle minus its top; below: the engraved vesica-shaped door (Images: Brian Andrews)



⁶ Pugin, *Present State*, op. cit., p. 32.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 38.

The engraved design on the vesica-shaped tabernacle door incorporates an Agnus Dei at the centre of a foliated cross surrounded by the words 'Ecce Agnus Dei [ecce] qui tollit peccata mundi', yet another example of Pugin's dictum that 'the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose'.⁸ The text and the imagery attest to Catholic doctrine regarding the nature of the Mass, the words being those spoken by the priest as he turns to the communicants and holds up the consecrated Host before them.⁹

Tower tabernacles have largely disappeared from Pugin's churches although a fine example remains in the Blessed Sacrament chapel of the St John's Hospital, Alton, Chapel.

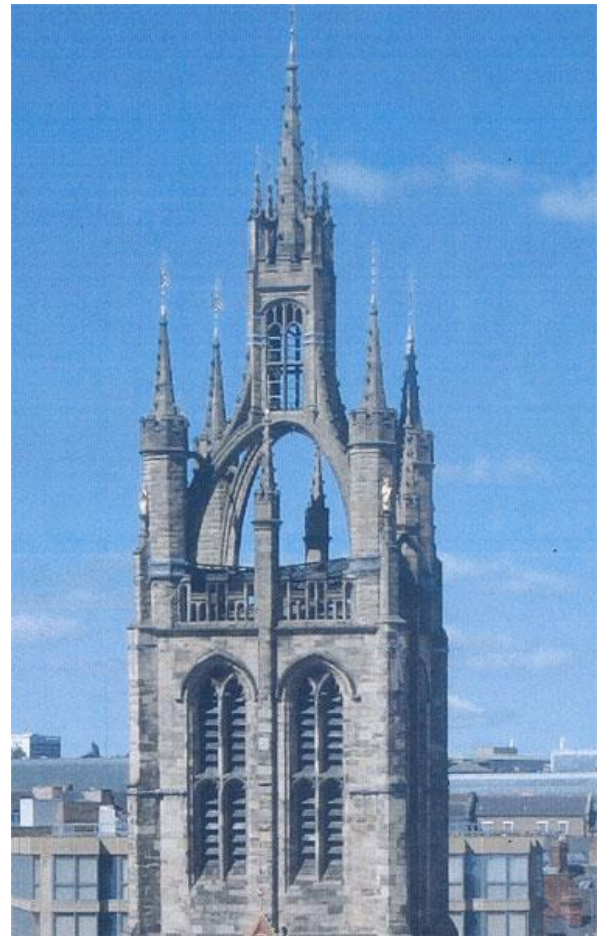


*The tower tabernacle, St John's Hospital Chapel, Alton
(Image: Nicholas Callinan)*

⁸ A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, John Weale, London, 1841, p. 1.

⁹ *Saint Andrew Daily Missal*, abbey of St Andrew, Bruges, 1958, p. 834.

Pugin describes the set-up thus: 'On the gospel side of the chancel is a small chapel, containing an altar for reservation of the most holy sacrament, which is placed in a gilt tower surmounted by a cross.'¹⁰ His treatment of the 'spire' on the tabernacle is fascinating, being evidently derived from that on St Nicholas' Church, Newcastle Upon Tyne, a city which he had visited in the Summer of 1840.¹¹



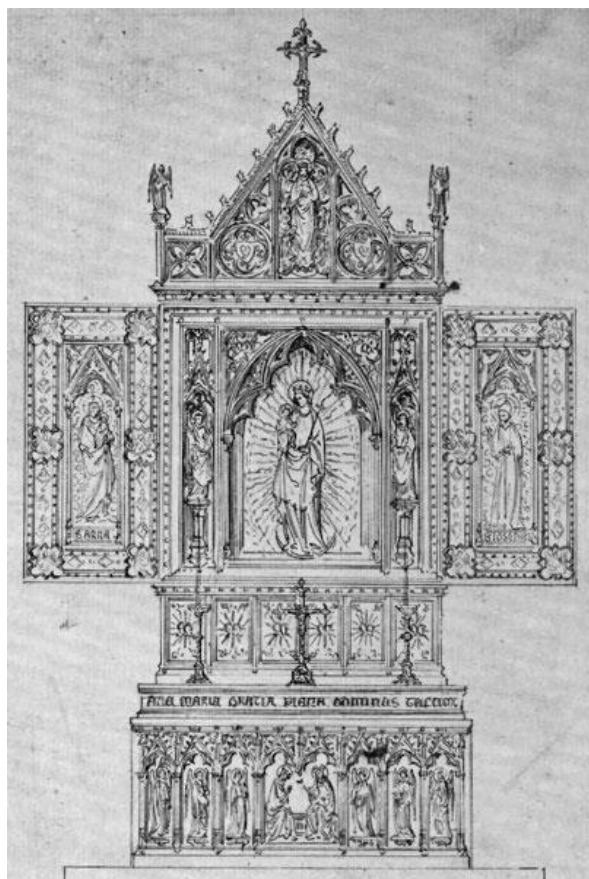
St Nicholas' Church (later Cathedral) spire, Newcastle upon Tyne (Source: Wikipedia)

In completing the description of St Mary's, Uttoxeter, it remains to say that the original triptych altarpiece was replaced by a more

¹⁰ *Present State*, op. cit., p. 89.

¹¹ A better-known example of this type of spire is on St Giles', Edinburgh. Pugin did not visit this city until July 1842, after he had written the abovementioned description which had originally appeared in the second part of his *Dublin Review* article 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', Vol. XII, February 1842, p. 119.

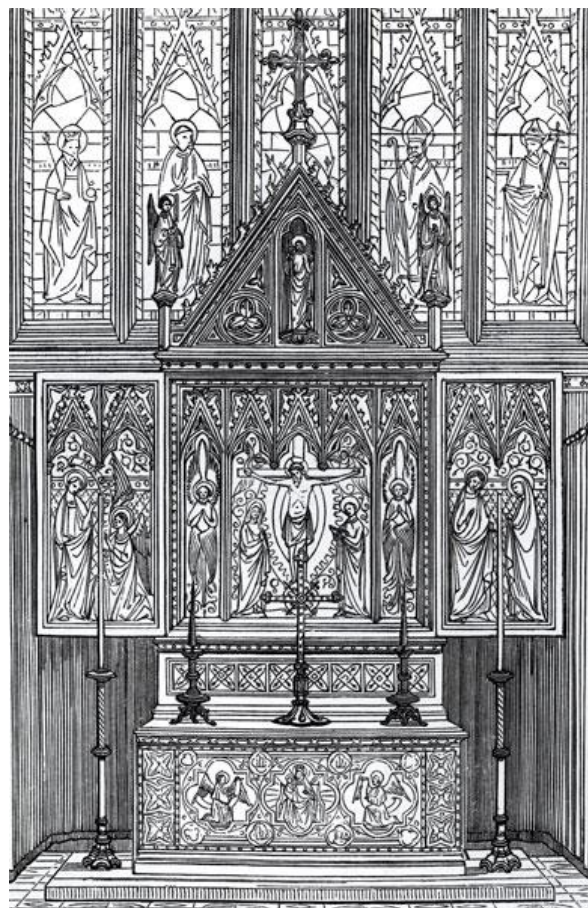
conventional reredos of 1879 designed by Pugin's youngest son Peter Paul, leaving the Wexford altarpiece as the only survivor of this form in his oeuvre.¹² He did in fact design another altarpiece similar to the Uttoxeter one, and also in 1839, for the Lady Chapel of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, but it was not executed.¹³ The altar itself was based firmly on the high altar of Cologne Cathedral (See image in Newsletter 85, Autumn 2014, p. 14).



Unexecuted design for the Lady Chapel altar, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham (Source: Wedgwood, Pugin and the Pugin Family, 1985)

That this type of altarpiece surmounting a type 1 altar remained an ideal for Pugin at least as late as 1841 is clear from one of the illustrations in his second edition of *Contrasts*, published in that year, an image which had not appeared in

the first edition of 1836. It is one of a pair of altars with the title 'Contrasted Altars'. He describes it as 'the true Catholic one—every portion breathes the spirit of purity and reverence'.¹⁴ The other, in the Classical style, he calls 'an altar used for Catholic purposes, but of a debased and profane style'.



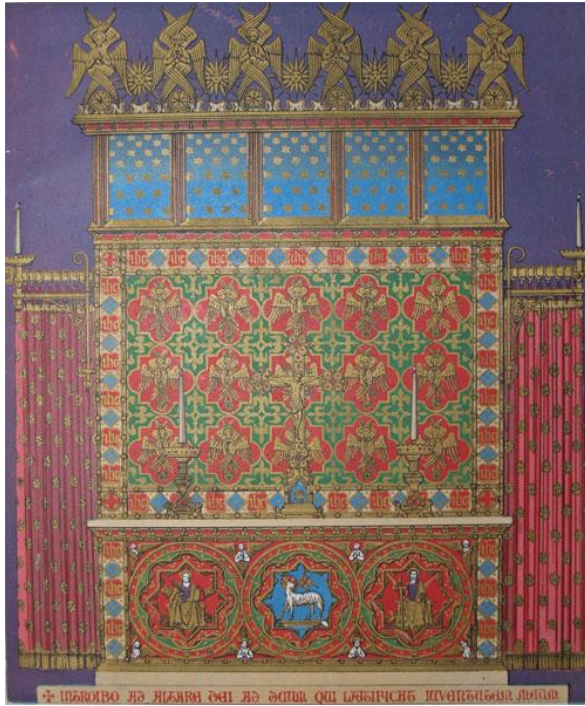
A 'true Catholic' altar (Source: Contrasts, 1841)

Mention should be made of the two illustrations for altars which appeared in Pugin's *Glossary*, the first edition of which was published in 1844. Setting aside the altarpieces shown in the illustrations, we note that Plate 70 had a type 1 altar and Plate 71 a type 2, the latter albeit with a variant which Pugin occasionally employed, namely, the rear pillars being replaced by a wall, pierced or otherwise, extending the width of the altar.

¹² Michael Fisher, *Pugin-Land: A.W.N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury and the Gothic Revival in Staffordshire*, Michael J Fisher (Publishing), Stafford, 2002, p. 51.

¹³ See Alexandra Wedgwood, *A.W.N. Pugin and the Pugin Family*, Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1985, pp. 180–1.

¹⁴ A. Welby Pugin, *Contrasts: or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, Charles Dolman, London, 1841, p. 14.

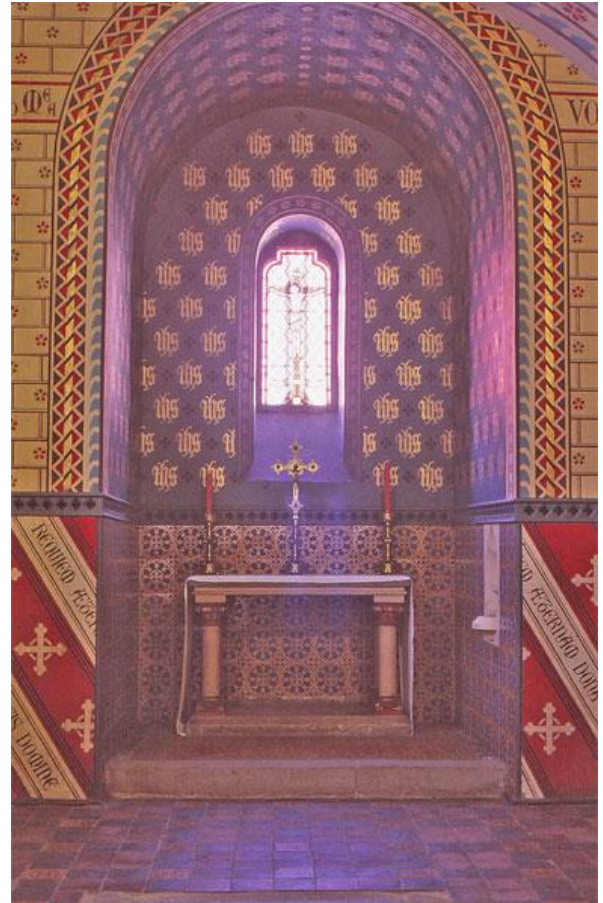


Above: Pugin's Glossary Plate 70; below: Plate 71



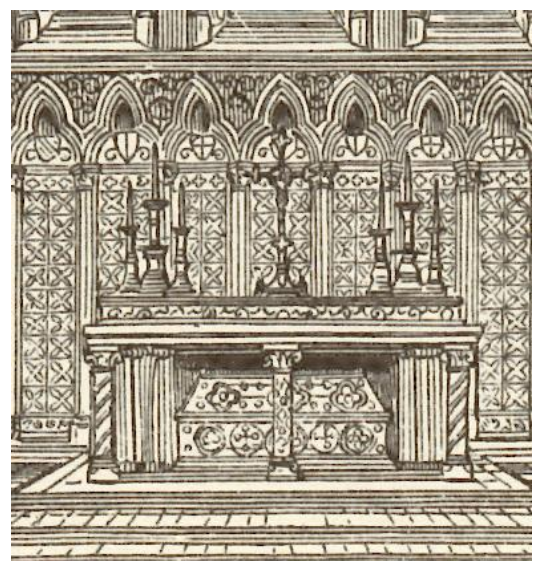
Amongst the earliest of his type 2 altars was that in the crypt of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham (1841). It was situated in the Hardman family chantry chapel and was described by Pugin as follows: 'the altar is of stone, supported on four pillars with foliage caps'.¹⁵ It was intended that a small shrine would be deposited beneath it.

¹⁵ *Tablet*, No. LVIII, 19 June 1841, p. 6.



Hardman chantry chapel, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, crypt (Image: Brian Andrews)

A near contemporary of this was his high altar for St Wilfrid's, Hulme, Manchester.

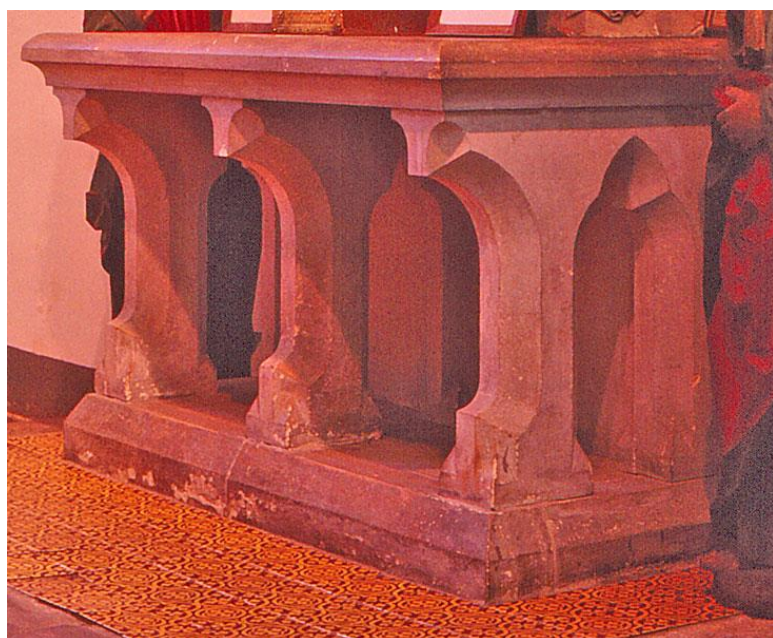


St Wilfrid's, Hulme, high altar (Source: Present State, 1841)

It was near identical with his later *Glossary* Plate 71 illustration and was described by him as follows:

Here the altar is of a very early form, the front being open, and the top slab supported by stone pillars, three in number, gilt and painted. Under the altar is deposited a shrine with relics, around which a velvet curtain is occasionally drawn.¹⁶

Pugin also created several variants of the type 2 altar which dispensed with columns in favour of simple arched supports. One such is in the Poncia chantry chapel beneath St Chad's Cathedral.

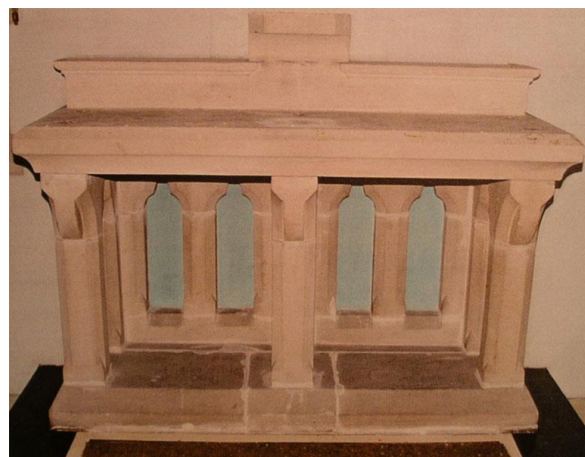


The Poncia chantry chapel altar, St Chad's Cathedral crypt
(Image: Brian Andrews)

Because this version did not require the complex carving required for foliated capitals to columns it would have been a less expensive option for churches designed to a minimal budget. One such church was St Winefride's, Shepshed, designed in 1841, its high altar being similar to that in the Poncia chantry but with its back wall pierced by trefoil-headed arches.¹⁷

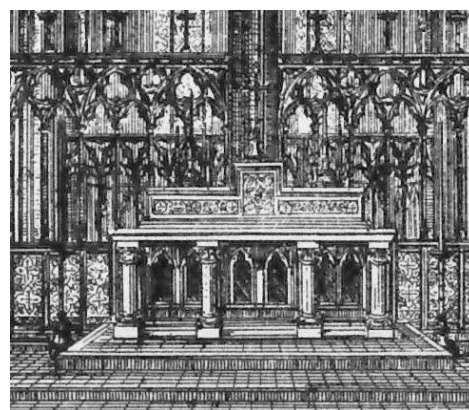
¹⁶ *Present State*, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁷ When the church was closed in 1928 this altar was transferred to a new larger church with the same dedication on a new site in Shepshed.



The Shepshed high altar (Image: courtesy Dr Philip Whitehead)

Perhaps the greatest concentration of Pugin's type 2 altars is to be found in St Barnabas Cathedral, Nottingham, built as a church for Fr William Willson—later Bishop of Hobart Town—and opened in August 1844. Altars of this type included the High altar, Lady altar, the south-east and north-east chapel altars and the crypt altar.¹⁸ Of these all but the original high altar survive, the present one being the fifth on site. The loss of the original Pugin altar was deplored by Nottingham's fifth bishop Thomas Dunn (1916–31) who described the florid altar which replaced it as 'enough to make the angels weep at its unsightliness'.¹⁹



The Nottingham Cathedral original high altar (Source: Present State, 1841)

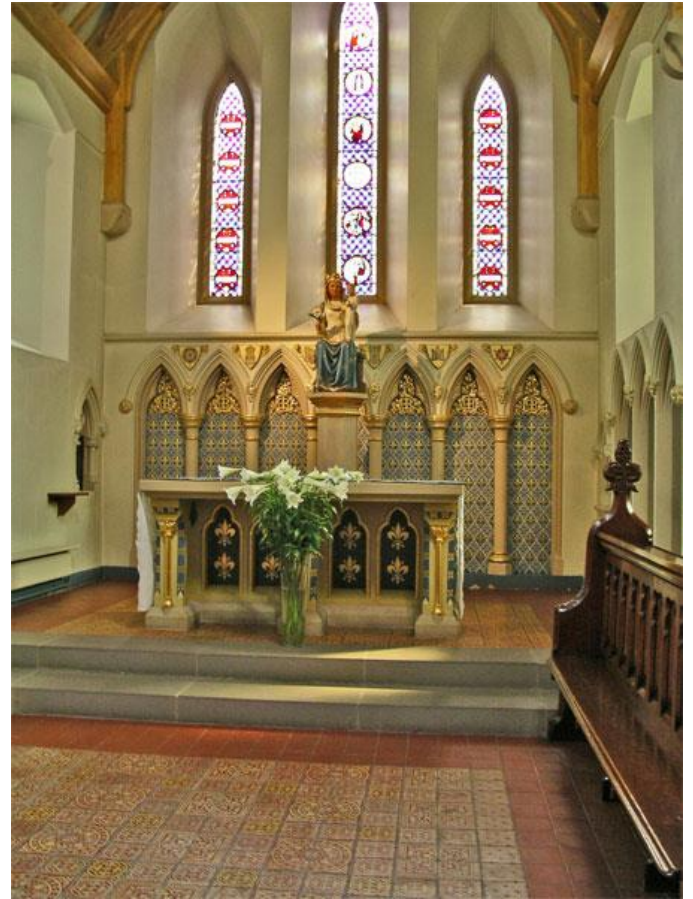
¹⁸ The Blessed Sacrament chapel altar may well also be of this type but I have never seen images of it without a frontal.

¹⁹ Martin Cummins, *Nottingham Cathedral, a History of Catholic Nottingham*, Diocese of Nottingham, Nottingham, 3rd edn, 1994, p. 51. This altar had been installed by Bishop Edward Bagshawe (1874–1901).

Pugin described his high altar thus: 'The high altar will consist of a single slab of stone, supported by eight shafts of Petworth marble, with gilt caps and bases.'²⁰

Of the other type 2 altars in St Barnabas', that in the north-east chapel, originally dedicated in honour of St Alkmund, had the altar slab supported by six pillars with foliated capitals and bases, and with a reliquary beneath. The others had columns at the front and a solid rear support, the Lady chapel and the south-east chapel, originally dedicated in honour of St Thomas of Canterbury, with carved detail to the rear supports. With the exception of the crypt altar, dedicated in honour of St Peter, these altars had a reredos consisting of an enriched blind arcade constructed in the thickness of the east wall.

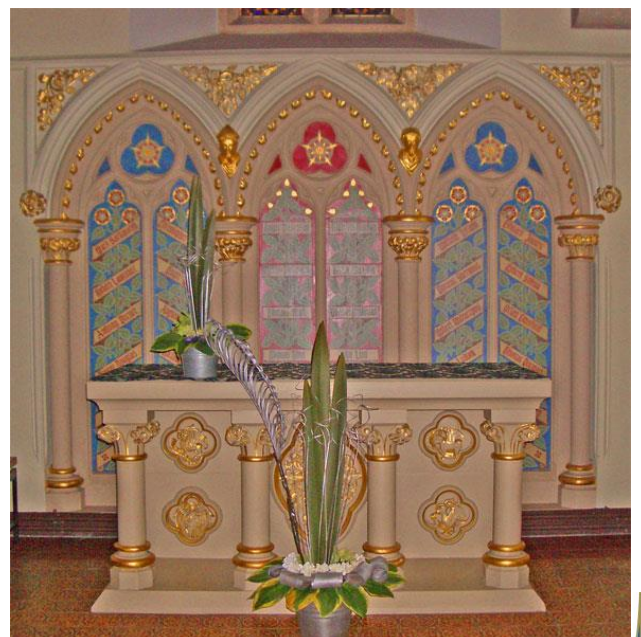
The altars and their reredoses in St Barnabas' Cathedral are a remarkable example of how Pugin could create a set of variations on a single theme, namely, his type 2 altar, all in a scholarly Early English idiom befitting the style of the building itself.



Above: the Lady chapel altar and reredos (Image: Nicholas Callinan); below: Original St Thomas of Canterbury's altar and reredos (Image: Brian Andrews)



Original St Alkmund's altar with its reredos set within the chapel's east wall (Image: Nicholas Callinan)



²⁰ *Present State*, op. cit., p. 59. Petworth marble is a freshwater limestone material, grey in colour, which is referred to as 'marble' because it polishes very well.



The St Barnabas' Cathedral crypt altar (Image: Brian Andrews)

To be continued.

Donations

Our thanks to the following for their kind donations:

Mr Kevin & Mrs Kerry Morgan
Lady Alexandra Wedgwood