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Welcome to the eighty-ninth Friends Newsletter.

The Pugin metalwork with which St Patrick's, Colebrook, was furnished for its opening in January 1857 continues in use. Recently, the asperges bucket was part of a moving ceremony in the cemetery adjacent to the church when the mortal remains of Judith Dowling (+ 23 June 1856), an Irish convict who had suffered a tragic life, were exhumed from nearby church land and re-interred there.

A strip of land encompassing her grave with its primitive headstone had been acquired by the Tasmanian Main Line Company in 1873 when railway tracks were laid through Colebrook. So, for almost 160 years she was isolated, some 50 metres away from the cemetery and her fellow pioneering Catholics.

Richmond Parish Priest and Friend of Pugin Fr Terry Rush was unable to officiate due to a last-minute engagement, so Claremont priest Fr Suresh kindly undertook to commit Judith to the earth with a dignity she had been denied when alive. The Latin prayers and blessings were identical with those which would have been recited over her in 1856 by the then Richmond Parish Priest Fr William Dunne who built St Patrick's.



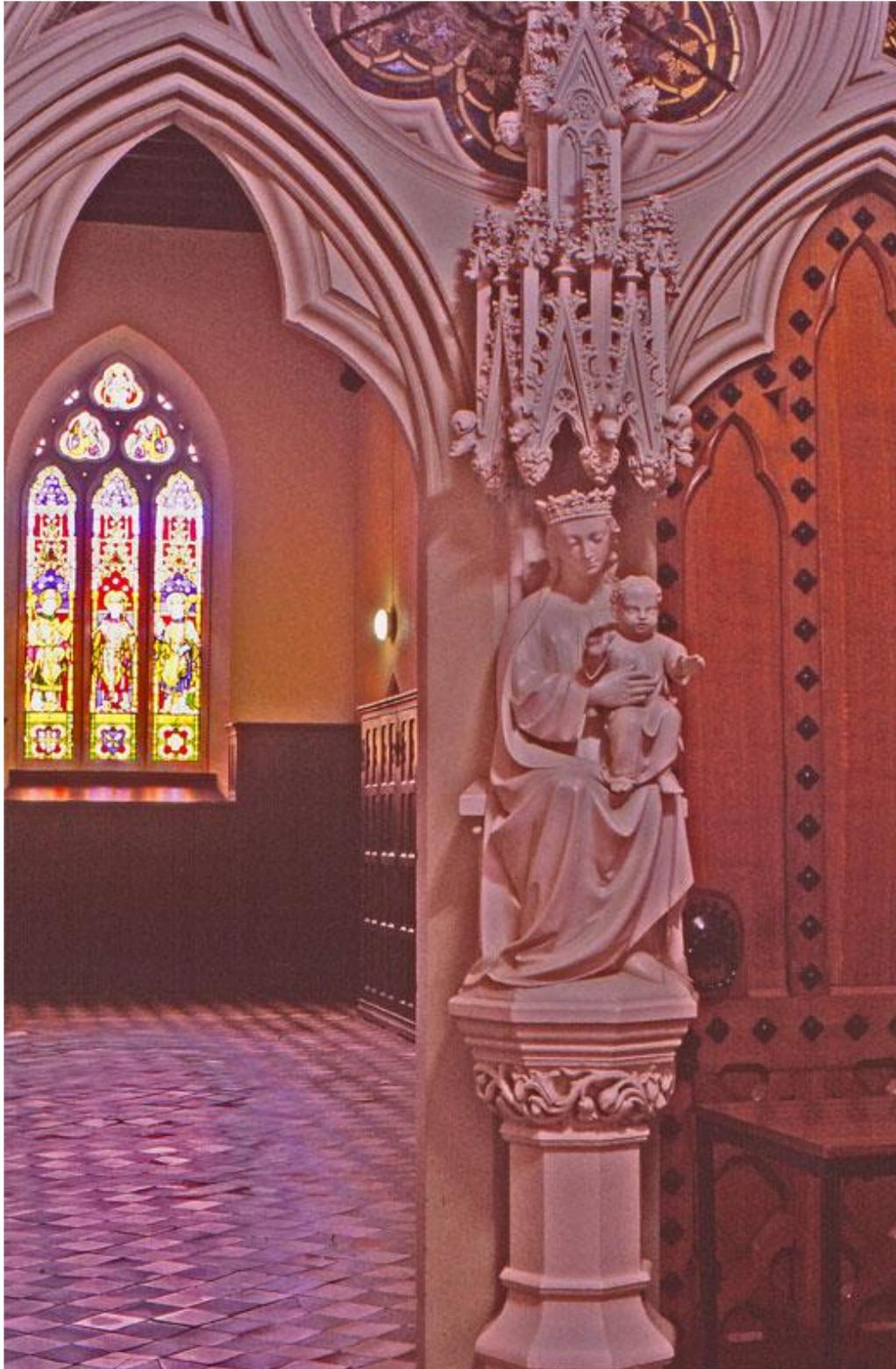
*On 17 February 2015 Fr Suresh blesses a new grave in the St Patrick's, Colebrook, cemetery prior to the re-interment of Irish convict Judith Dowling who died on 23 June 1856  
(Image: Brian Andrews)*

With kind regards,

**Jude Andrews**  
Administrative Officer



# Ushaw College



‘The entrance to the Cloister, as seen from the great Corridor, is particularly striking, presenting as it does a distinct departure from the homely style of the old quadrangle. Designed by Pugin as the approach to his Chapel, it still serves the same purpose for the new structure. It is a deeply-moulded arched doorway, divided by a centre pillar supporting a sitting figure of the Blessed Virgin holding the child Jesus, which is surmounted by an octagonal canopy, enriched with crocketed gables and pinnacles, over which is a perforated sexfoil filled with stained glass. The doors are of oak, fastened together with wrought bolts and hinges.’ Henry Gillow, *The Chapels at Ushaw College, with an Historical Introduction*, Geo. Newsham, Durham, 1885, pp. 69–70.

## *Metalwork Marvels*

In this issue we bring you another exquisite example of Pugin's astonishing creativity in reviving the spirit of medieval metalwork. This plated base metal parcel-gilt benediction crown with its crystal ornamentation belongs to the outstanding collection of liturgical metalwork at Ushaw College, Durham. 41cm high and 41.5cm in diameter it is embellished with fruiting vines and has an elegant crest of stars, cinquefoils, trefoils and fleurs de lis. Around its circumference is a band with the applied inscription "Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus" [Holy Holy Holy Holy], a reference to Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ under the appearance of bread, placed in a monstrance for exposition on the altar beneath the benediction crown. As always with Pugin 'the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose.



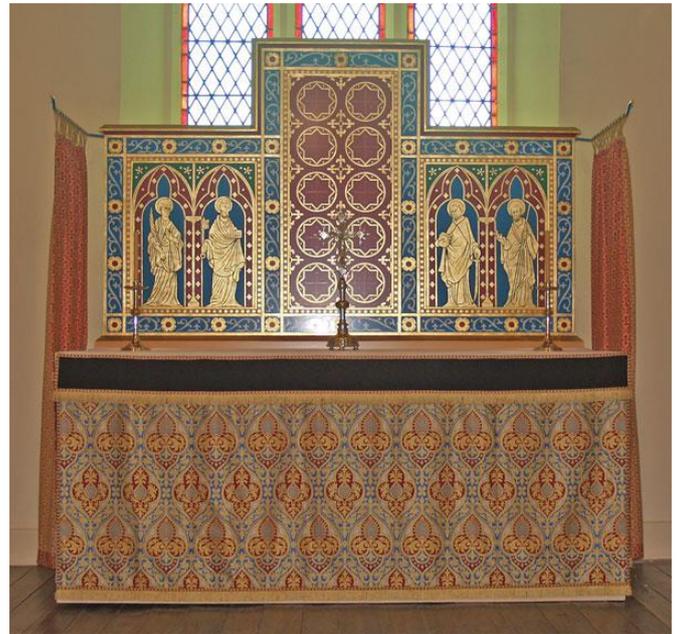


Above is the asperges bucket used by Fr Suresh during the re-interment of Judith Dowling, as reported on the front page of this Newsletter. It forms part of the original complement of Pugin metalwork purchased by Fr William Dunne for the opening of St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, on 21 January 1857. Designed in the early 1840s, it was manufactured by Hardmans c.1850–54. The original sprinkler had long since vanished, so on this occasion one was fashioned from fresh Rosemary twigs and string by Jude Andrews, our Administrative Officer.

## *The Colebrook Reredos Re-visited*

In our Newsletter 63 of December 2011 we described the genesis of the design for the reredos of the new high altar in St Patrick's, Colebrook, tracing it to a detail in Rogier van de Weyden's c.1445–1450 *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece* which Pugin had sketched in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, during a visit in August 1843. This sketch would be the inspiration for the reredos illustrated in Plate 71 of his 1844 *Glossary of Ecclesiastical*

*Ornament and Costume*, the source of our Colebrook reredos, illustrated below.<sup>1</sup>



*The Colebrook high altar (Image: Brian Andrews)*

Recently while selecting illustrations for our series on Pugin's altars and altarpieces we came across the image below, being the reredos originally from Pugin's Convent of Mercy, Handsworth, chapel.



*The Handsworth Convent church reredos (Image: Brian Andrews)*

<sup>1</sup> A. Welby Pugin, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1868, Plate 71.

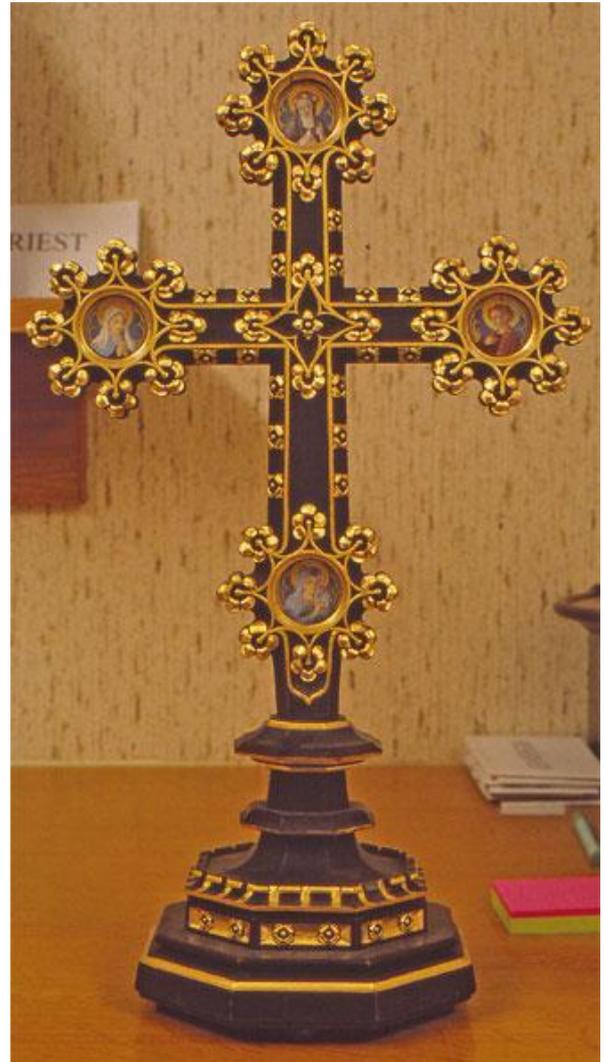
It has the same form as the Colebrook and *Glossary* reredoses. The Handsworth convent was built in stages from 1840 to 1850, and the convent chapel, belonging to the first stage of construction, suffered damage in World War II. A photograph predating the War shows the reredos in place in the chapel's sanctuary.<sup>2</sup> The sanctuary was enlarged and extended after the War,<sup>3</sup> and this may have been the occasion to have the reredos removed and mounted on a wall in the convent where it remains, as shown in our illustration on the preceding page.

Was the reredos by Pugin or was it by the same hand as painted and gilded its face? This latter by its style can be confidently attributed to a member of the Pippet family, talented artists and designers resident in Solihull on the outskirts of Birmingham. Joseph Aloysius Pippet joined the Hardman firm in 1854 as an apprentice 'and stayed with it until his death in 1903'.<sup>4</sup> His sons Elphege, Oswald and Gabriel undertook commissions for Hardmans during the first third of the twentieth century, but which member of the family was responsible for the Handsworth reredos is unknown to us. The family's artistic output was indisputably in the Pugin tradition.

A great deal of design work was done for their parish church of St Augustine, Solihull, one of Pugin's first churches, begun in April 1838 but progressively extended and altered beyond recognition between 1878 and 2003. The family's designs there included murals, stained glass windows, statues and their canopies, and a reredos for the original Pugin altar, along with liturgical items such as a processional cross and a sacristy crucifix.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most frequently illustrated example of Pippet family work is the stunning re-decoration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham, executed by Elphege

Pippet in 1933 and often mis-attributed to Pugin, the Cathedral's designer.



*A Puginesque Pippet sacristy crucifix in St Augustine's, Solihull (Image: Brian Andrews)*

Another interesting example of Pippet family work is a 1909 poster design aimed at raising funds for the then Benedictine Abbey of St Thomas of Canterbury, Erdington, a foundation contiguous with Charles Hansom's church of the same name which we examined in Newsletter 76, January 2013. The romantic image depicts St Thomas of Canterbury and the abbey buildings with Hansom's church at lower left.<sup>6</sup>

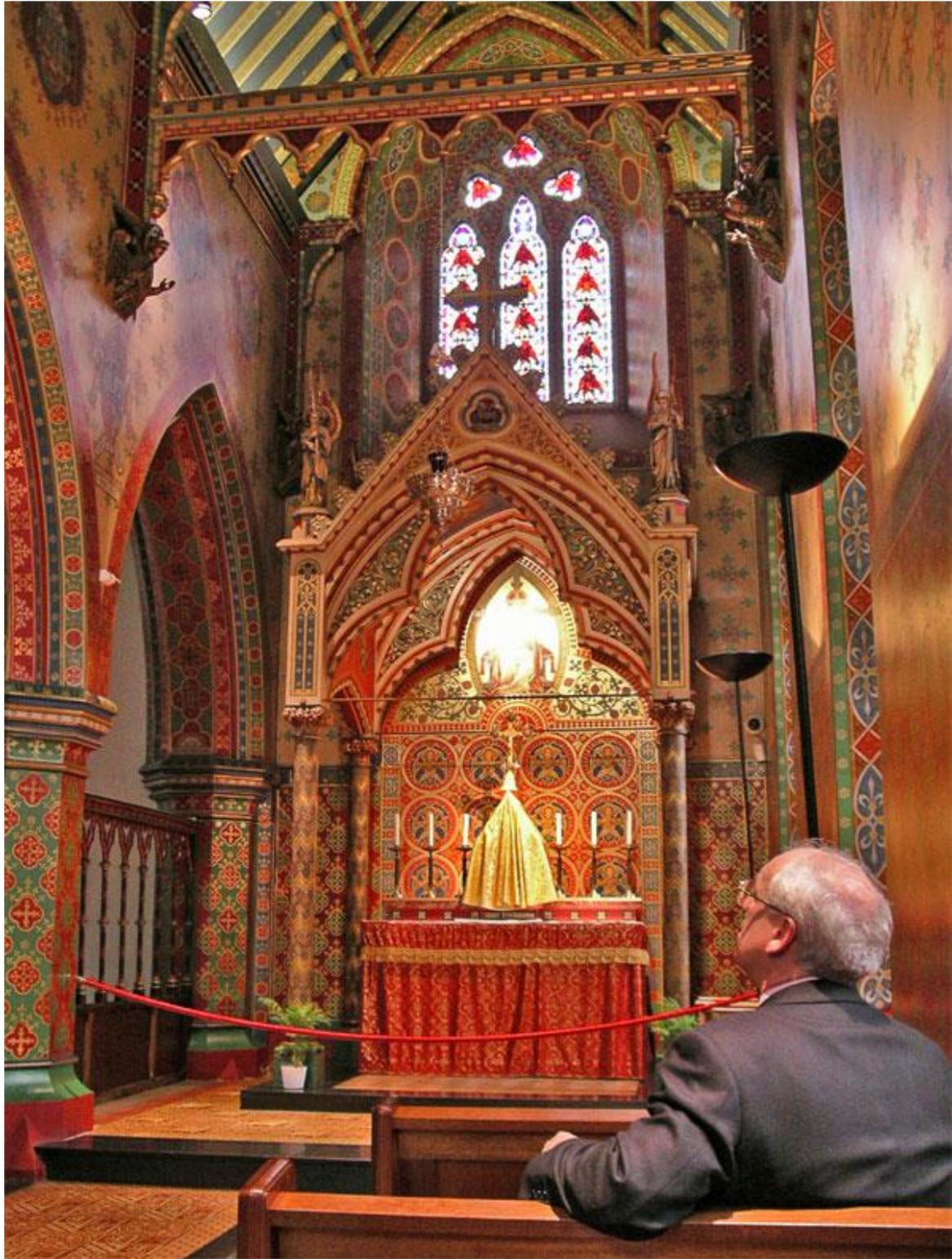
<sup>2</sup> Roderick O'Donnell, *The Pugins and the Catholic Midlands*, Gracewing, Leominster, 2002, between pp. 46 and 47.

<sup>3</sup> G.J. Hyland, *The Architectural Works of A.W.N. Pugin*, Spire Books Ltd, Reading, 2014, p. 116.

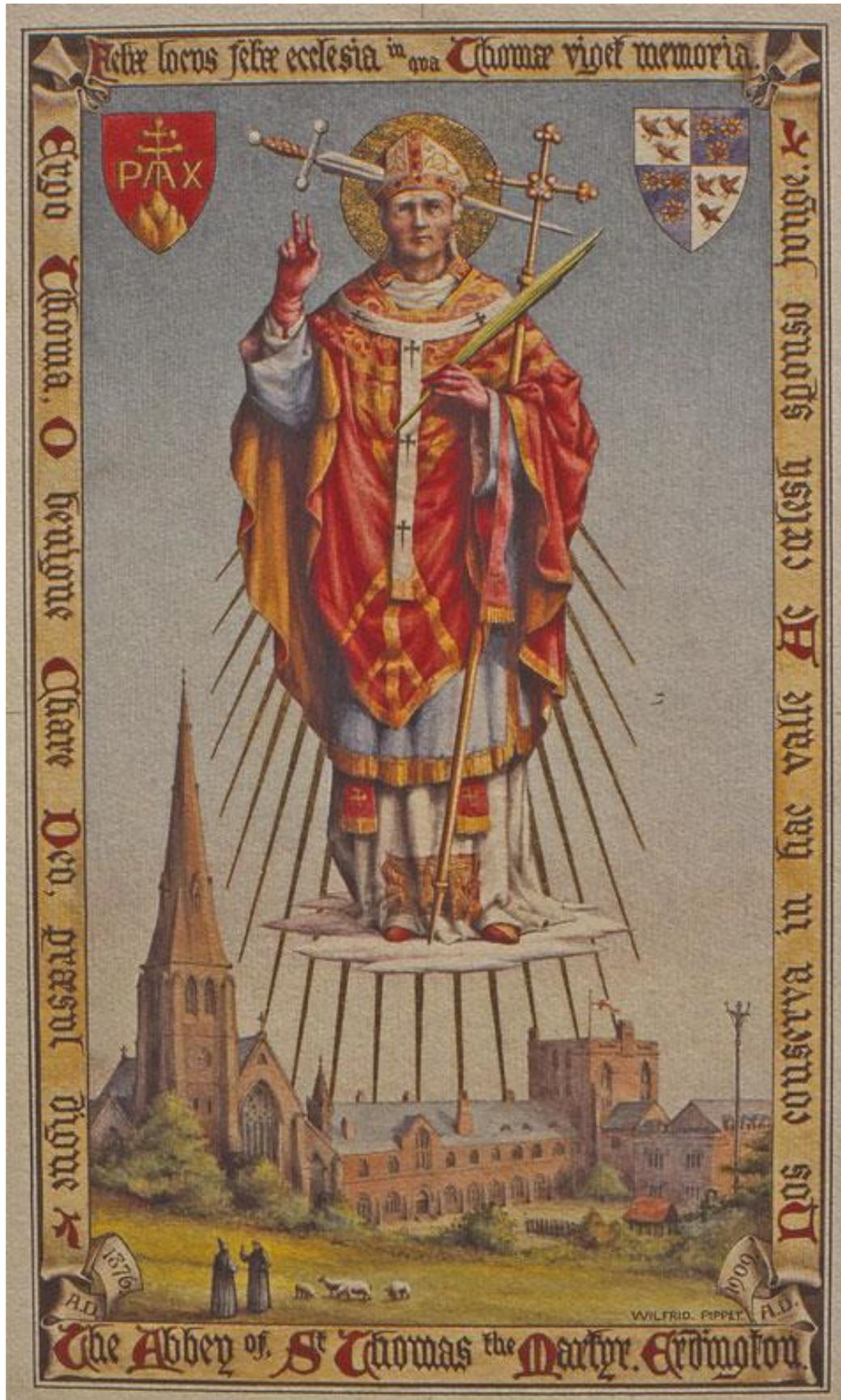
<sup>4</sup> Brian Doolan, *The Pugins and the Hardmans*, Archdiocese of Birmingham Historical Commission, Birmingham, 2004, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Malley, *Solihull and the Catholic Faith*, Birmingham, 1939, Chapter X.

<sup>6</sup> Benedictine monks from Beuron Abbey, Baden-Württemberg, founded a daughter house at Erdington in 1876, having been expelled from Germany during the Prussian Kulturkampf (1871–78), a government policy aimed at reducing the role of the Catholic Church. After World War I a majority of the still predominantly German community returned to Germany.



*Elphege Pippet's 1933 re-decoration of the Blessed  
Sacrament Chapel, St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham  
(Image: Nicholas Callinan)*



Wilfred Pippet's 1909 poster design for Erdington Abbey (Image: courtesy Weingarten Abbey)

# *Pugin's Altars & Altarpieces*

## *(Part 4)*

In our last Newsletter we considered examples of altars constructed according to the first two of four altar types which Pugin considered 'may now be constructed with equal propriety' in England.<sup>7</sup> Let us now examine his third and fourth types:

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.<sup>8</sup>

To the best of our knowledge Pugin didn't design any type 3 altars, although his follower Charles Hansom did, as illustrated in our article on St George's, Buckland, in Newsletter 85, p. 11. As for type 4 altars, they were his most extensively designed, despite their relative rarity in medieval churches. Note that in his description of such altars Pugin cited the example in Cologne Cathedral, an image of which is given in Newsletter 85, p. 14. The face of this altar consists of an arcade of gabled statue niches, commonly known as tabernacle work, and this was the form which perhaps a majority of Pugin's altar faces took.<sup>9</sup> Note that in the examples which follow, the date given is only a guide based on the building's construction, the actual date when the altar was designed not being known.

Type 4 altars were being designed at least as early as 1841, as the example of the high altar in St Austin of England's, Kenilworth demonstrates.



*The high altar, St Austin of England's, Kenilworth, detached from its reredos following re-ordering (Image: Brian Andrews)*

The tabernacle work consists of six-winged seraphim, traditionally regarded as the highest level of the angelic hierarchy, attendant at the throne of God, continuously singing 'Holy Holy Holy'. Pugin placed seraphim on his altars and in stained glass windows as a statement of Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the altar.<sup>10</sup>



*The altar of the Chapel of Sts George & Patrick, Oscott College Chapel (Image: Brian Andrews)*

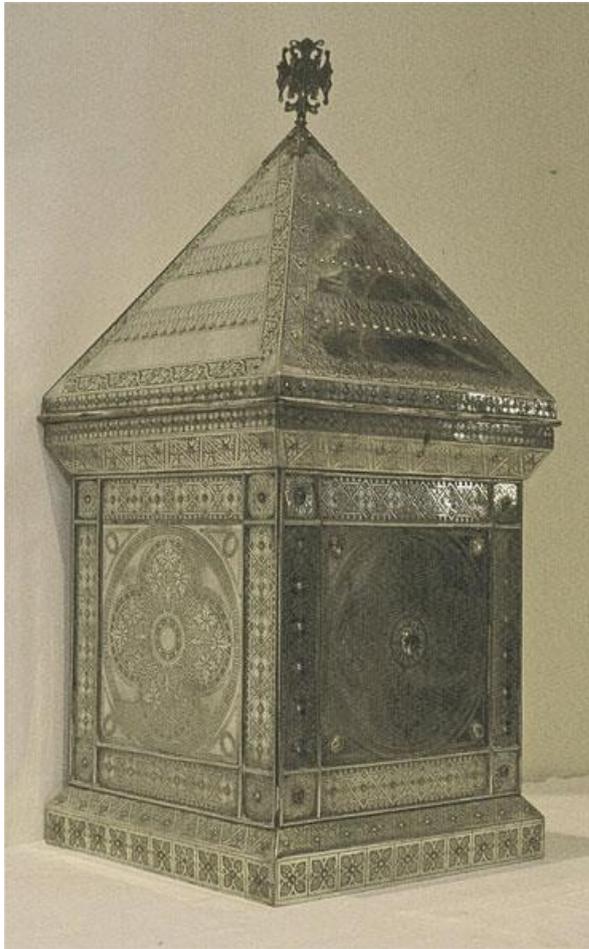
<sup>7</sup> Pugin, *Glossary*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Cologne altar the gabled niches extended to its sides.

<sup>10</sup> Yet another illustration of Pugin's dictum that 'the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose' (*True Principles*, p. 1).

The 1842 altar in the Chapel of Ss George & Patrick, Oscott College Chapel, has no reredos. It was Pugin's gift and his last design, dating from 1841, for Oscott College.<sup>11</sup> The tabernacle work contains angels holding shields, the spandrels of the gable enclosing shields bearing the cross of St George and shamrocks. Of particular interest is the extensively engraved metal-clad tabernacle on the altar, being a step away from Pugin's earlier tower tabernacles but not as yet being built into the altar fabric.<sup>12</sup> It consists of plated base-metal sheets embellished with semi-precious stones over a wooden framework.



*The tabernacle, Chapel of Ss George & Patrick, Oscott College Chapel (Image: Brian Andrews)*

<sup>11</sup> Judith Champ, *A Temple of Living Stones*, St Mary's College Oscott, 2002, p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Note that the word tabernacle is applied both to niches with figures therein and to the container in which consecrated Hosts are placed, normally within a ciborium.

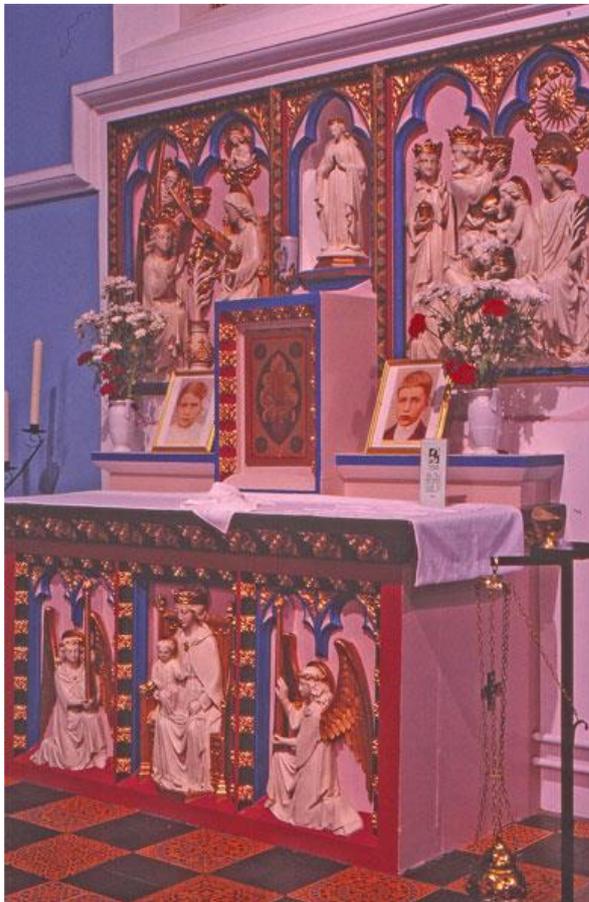
We note another form of c.1842 for Pugin's altar fronts, namely three deeply-sunk quatrefoils containing sculpted imagery, the example below being the high altar in St Mary's, Brewwood, but also to be seen inter alia on the c.1844 high altar of St John the Evangelist's, Kirkham. This form is also of added interest, being that of several altars in New South Wales, derived, we contend, from an 1842 Pugin design. They will be the subject of a future Newsletter article.



*The high altar, St Mary's, Brewwood (Image: Brian Andrews)*

The Brewwood quatrefoils contain an Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) flanked by adoring angels swinging censers (incense burners). Note that the gable-topped painted and gilded tabernacle—as for the Oscott example—is not integral with the altar but stands upon it. Pugin's singular reredos has rows of diagonally-set quatrefoils bearing the symbol 'MR' (Maria Regina), relating to the dedication of the church, and set beneath a strong but simple cornice. The reredos also has a deep plinth within which is recessed the tabernacle.

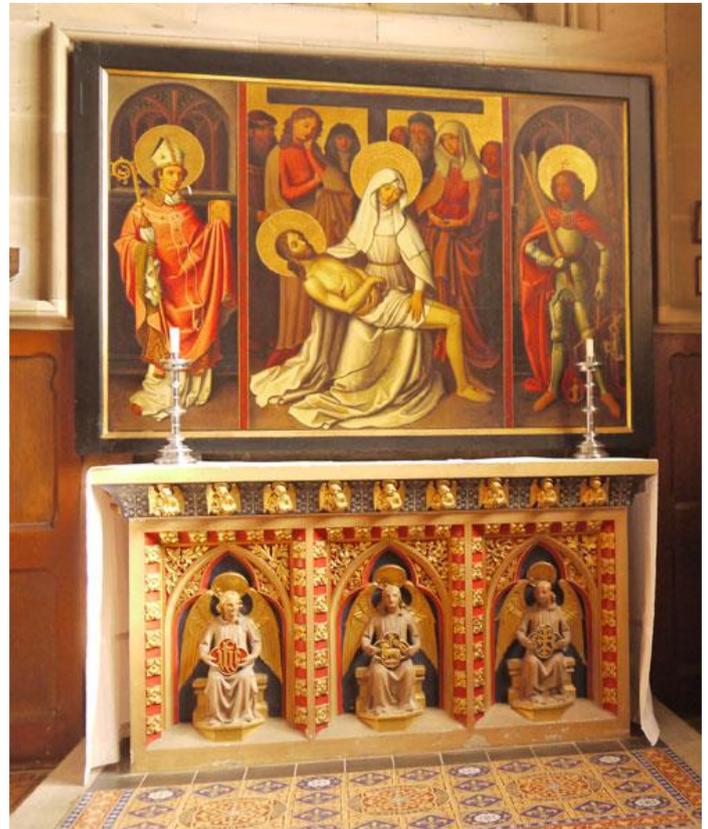
Pugin's 1842 high altar for St Peter's, Woolwich, has a characteristic tabernacle work face with seated angels bearing sculpted quatrefoil shields, but his Lady altar, depicted below, features three richly-sculpted rectangular panels containing a seated Virgin and Child flanked by angels. The reredos also has sculpted panels with scenes of the Annunciation and the Visit of the Magi flanking an integral stone tabernacle above which is an image of the Virgin set on a bracket. The cornice of the reredos is formed by part of a string course on the Lady Chapel east wall. A stone gradine, or ledge, flanks the tabernacle along the rear of the altar, a component applied inconsistently to Pugin's altar ensembles.



*The Lady altar, St Peter's, Woolwich (Image: Brian Andrews)*

For the oratory in his house, The Grange, at Ramsgate, Pugin designed c.1843/4 an exquisite small Caen stone altar rich in sculpted, painted and gilded detail with tabernacle work to its face

enclosing seated angels bearing quatrefoil shields upon which were carved the Sacred Monogram IHS, an Agnus Dei and the Maria Regina monogram MR. This altar is now in the Pugin Chantry of his St Augustine's Church next to The Grange.<sup>13</sup>



*The altar from the oratory in The Grange, presently in the Chantry Chapel, St Augustine's, Ramsgate (Image: Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett)*

The richness of painted and gilded sculptural work on Pugin's oratory altar is a good introduction to his three near-contemporary alabaster altars in St Giles', Cheddar, where, thanks to the munificence of his patron Lord Shrewsbury, the apogee of their design complexity was matched by the prodigious talent of their sculptor Thomas Roddis. All three altars had fronts featuring tabernacle work, but around and within this common element there was great inventiveness and beauty.

<sup>13</sup> The painted reredos above the altar in the Pugin Chantry was never in the oratory of The Grange.

We will describe these exquisite altars using Pugin's own words.<sup>14</sup>



*The Lady altar, St Giles', Cheadle (Image: Brian Andrews)*



*The Blessed Sacrament altar, St Giles, Cheadle (Image: Brian Andrews)*

The Lady Chapel altar: 'The altar is cut in alabaster and divided into three front and two angle niches, containing angels bearing emblems, richly painted and gilt. The centre of an ancient oak triptych, of exquisite workmanship, of the Flemish school of the fifteenth century, is fixed over the altar; it

<sup>14</sup> *Lord Shrewsbury's New Church of St. Giles, in Staffordshire: being a description of the edifice, and an account of the Consecration and Opening. By the editor of Dolman's Magazine.* Charles Dolman, London, 1846, pp. 6–13.

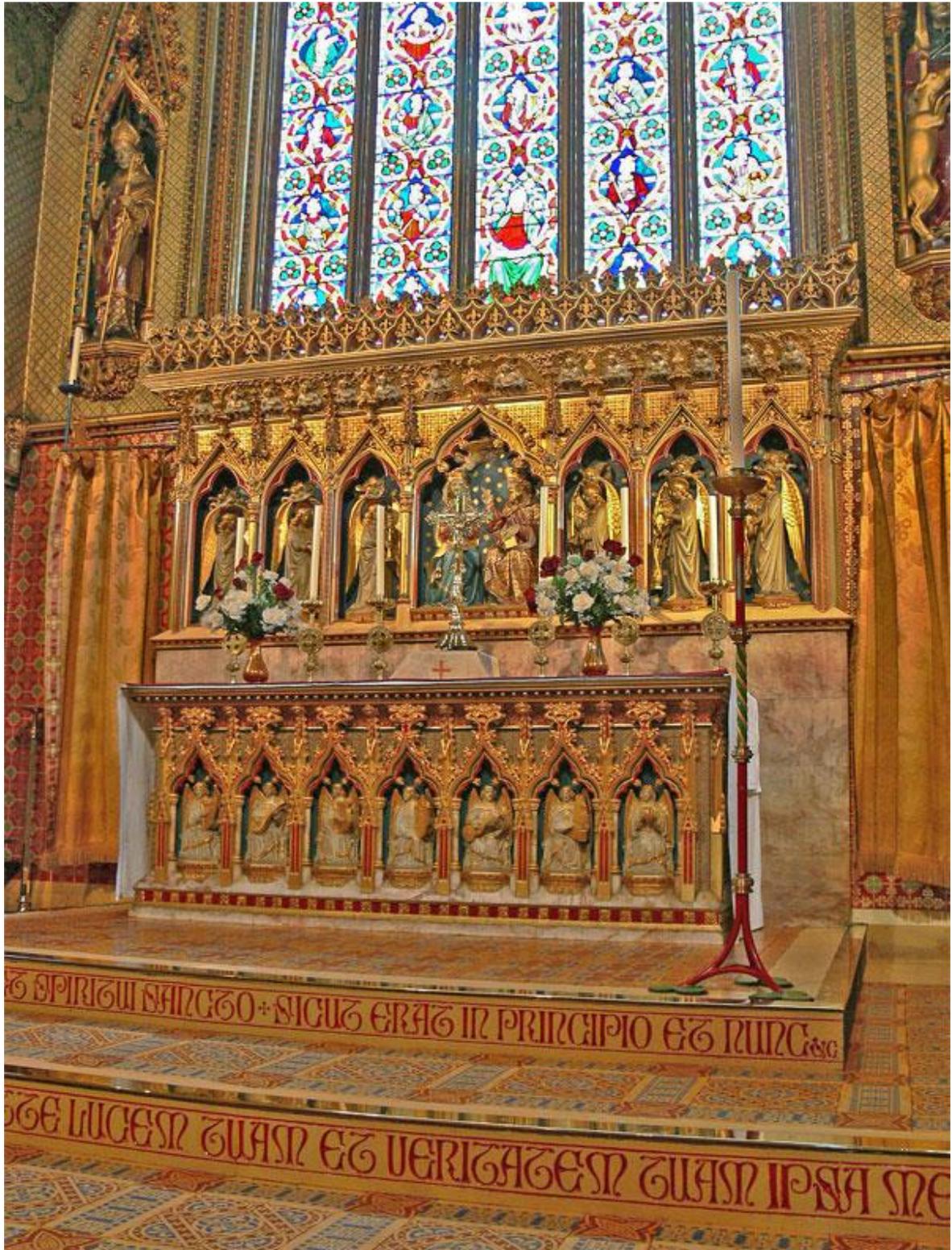
represents the passion of our Lord, and is divided into three larger subjects, and a number of small groups.'

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel altar: 'The reredos of the altar is entirely composed of encaustic tiles, heightened with gold. In the centre is the tabernacle of metal gilt, covered with enamels. The altar is carved in alabaster, and is divided into five compartments, filled with winged cherubim.'

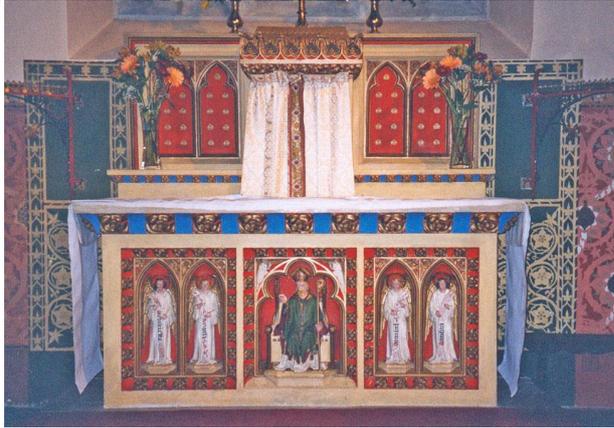
The high altar (image overleaf): 'The high altar is carved in alabaster; the front is filled with angels seated on thrones under elaborate tabernacle work, playing diverse instruments, relieved by gilding and colour. The reredos represents the coronation of our Blessed Lady. This subject fills the centre compartment, while three niches on either side contain angels bearing thuribles and tapers. A stringcourse, richly carved with angels, runs above the tabernacle work, surmounted by perforated brattishing level with the syl [sic] of the east window. At either end metal brackets support curtains of tapestry with cipherings.'

From 1845 to 1847 Pugin designed a series of small asymmetrically-planned churches—Marlow, Rugby, Salisbury—whose high altars and reredoses differed in their composition and details but which all had a substantial rectangular stone tabernacle built into the centre rear of the altar. In every case the flat top of the tabernacle could serve as a platform upon which to place a monstrance for the increasingly frequent service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The 1847 high altar in St Osmund's, Salisbury, is a good example. Its simple reredos has two pairs of trefoil-headed arches flanking a tabernacle of massive proportions in relation to the overall size of the altar and reredos. The altar front of tabernacle work depicts a seated St Osmund of Salisbury flanked by pairs of angels. Here, the riddel curtain cranes are bracketed off the chancel east wall.

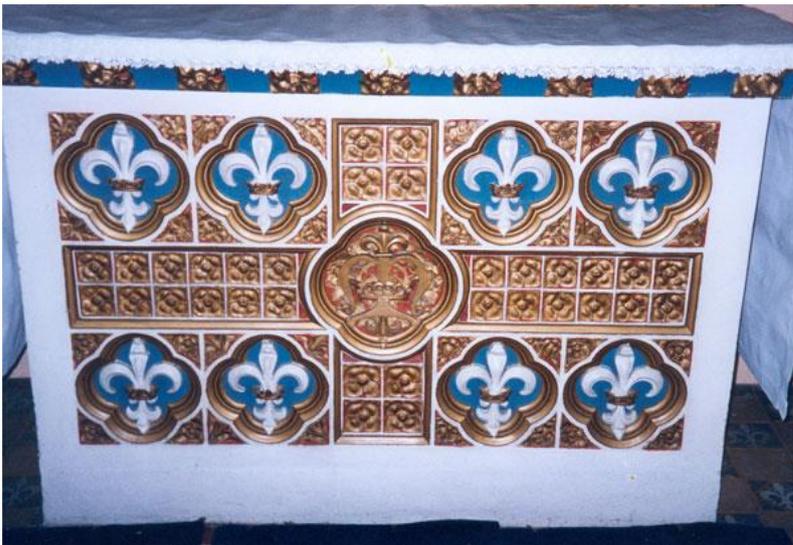


*The high altar, St Giles', Cheadle (Image: John Maidment)*



*The high altar, St Osmund's, Salisbury (Image: Brian Andrews)*

Whilst the St Osmund's high altar and reredos are simple variants on a common Pugin design theme, the Lady altar is unique in his oeuvre. A matrix of crowned fleurs de lis set in quatrefoils flank a diapered cross at the centre of which is a quatrefoil carved with an 'M'.

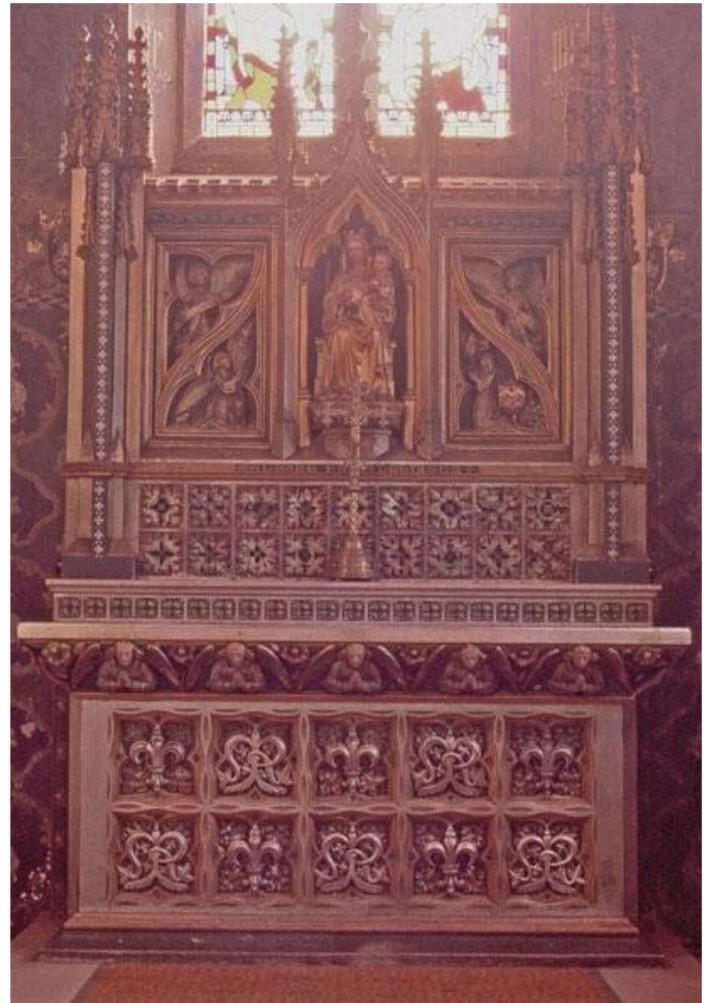


*The Lady altar, St Osmund's, Salisbury (Image: Brian Andrews)*

Equally idiosyncratic, if substantially more elaborate, are his c.1846 Lady altar and reredos in Ushaw College Chapel, Durham. It is described thus:

The Altar is finely wrought in Caen stone. Its front is composed of alternate *fleur-de-lis* and monograms. Above is a row of projecting angels supporting the Altar stone. At each side of the Reredos are clusters of

pinnacles surrounding a stanchion which supports an angel bearing a torch. The space between them is filled with a canopied niche, flanked by deeply-cut panels. A figure of the Holy Virgin and Child occupies the niche, and from the trefoil tracery of the panels are issuing angels—one holding a censer, and the others bearing labels inscribed—**Salve Regina—Mater Misericordiæ**. In the corner of the reredos, on the epistle side, is an image of Mrs. Leadbitter Smith, of Flass Hall, Durham, the pious donor of this Altar. The arms of the family are painted on a shield.<sup>15</sup>



*The Lady altar, Ushaw College (Image: Brian Andrews)*

Lastly, we consider Pugin's final altar development which took account of the aforementioned increase in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament by incorporating a canopied exposition throne above

<sup>15</sup> Henry Gillow, *The Chapels at Ushaw with an Historical Introduction*, Geo. Neasham, Durham, 1885, pp. 83–4.



the tabernacle to create the so-called Benediction altar. This form was taken up by his early Catholic architect followers like Charles Hansom and William Wardell, becoming before long a virtual template for Catholic high altars for a century or more. Pugin's supreme examples are his high altars in Ushaw College of c.1846 and St Edmund's College, Ware of 1846/7.



*A detail of the high altar in the St Edmund's College Chapel, Ware, showing the gabled and pinnacled exposition throne surmounting the tabernacle (Image: Nicholas Callinan)*

This aspect of the Ware high altar was described in 1903 as follows:

On the altar is the stone Tabernacle with its brass doors ornamented with six bosses of crystal. Above this is an open throne for the Blessed Sacrament, the pinnacles being angels, and the top being surmounted by the pelican feeding her young with her own blood. At the back of the throne is a stone crucifix, the cross bearing the emblems of the Evangelists. Beneath are Our Lady and St John. Above, in the vaulting of the canopy, is an adoring angel.<sup>16</sup>

**Concluded.**

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard Ward, *St Edmund's College Chapel: An account, historical and descriptive, written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening*, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1903, pp. 84-5.

## *New Friends of Pugin*

We welcome:

[Mr Mark & Mrs Beth McRae](#)  
*Murrumbateman NSW*

## *Donations*

Our thanks to the following for their kind donations:

[Mr Mark & Mrs Beth McRae](#)  
[Fr Donald Richardson](#)  
[Mr Leighton Wraith](#)

