



# PRESENT STATE

## *the news sheet of the Pugin Society*

January 2006 Number Four

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*The Church was not yet begun but the house was simply perfect ...two delighted days we passed there.*  
**Winifrede Wyse, about a visit to the Grange, c.1845, quoted in *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*,  
Volume 2 1843 to 1845, ed. Margaret Belcher**

**WELCOME** to our fourth and expanded *Present State*, with apologies for its slightly later than usual appearance. New members may like to know that this title is a reference to Pugin's *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* of 1843 and that the monogram 'AWP' is taken from the title page designed by him for his *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, first edition 1841. *Present State* will be followed in late summer by our Journal, *True Principles*, edited by Dr Timothy Brittain-Catlin.

### \*\*\* ST AUGUSTINE'S, RAMSGATE \*\*\*

## THE PUGIN CHANTRY APPEAL

This iconic space is in urgent need of repair. Metal cramps in the south wall of the chantry are swelling and helping to let in damp. As a result, mullions in the window in this wall are crumbling, stone dust rains down constantly on the effigy of A W N Pugin below, and there is danger that it could be damaged. Purcell Miller Tritton, the church architects, have been consulted and have now put the job of restoration out to tender. Once a suitable firm has been selected, work will commence, probably later this month. This will involve taking out the glass (which can be cleaned at the same time), replacing the cramps and restoring stone as necessary. This will be financed from church/parish funds.

HOWEVER, restoration of the tomb and surround, by an expert stone conservator, which will follow, and which will cost in the region of £9,000, is our responsibility. The Society will shortly be applying for funding from the 'Your Heritage' Heritage Lottery Fund scheme towards this work. Some fund-raising has already taken place locally, and the Society has opened a special account for the purpose.

To help swell the fund we are now asking all members to make a donation by cheque of £5.00 (or more, if you wish). If you have any questions about the work, or about the sums involved, please ring 01843 596401. The Grange is now in safe hands. It remains *our* task, however, to help preserve the Pugin chantry, surely a linchpin for all things that mean most to us, in our founder's own church next door.

**Please make your cheques out to The Pugin Society, mark the envelope APPEAL, and send to  
Hon. Treasurer Oonagh Robertson at: 32 St Mildred's Avenue, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 OHS**

**\*\*RESTORATION AT THE GRANGE: THE FINAL PUSH\*\*** Work is proceeding fast and furiously now as the Landmark Trust goes into the home straight to open in early summer and also, even more urgently, prepares for the house's appearance on Channel 4's *Time Team Special* hour-long programme on Pugin. This will be broadcast to coincide with the opening of the house. Inside, wallpapers are going up, outside bargeboarding is glowing, and altogether the building is acquiring the sort of sparkle that it must have evinced when it was first startling Ramsgate visitors in the 1840s. What a year this will be for Pugin - see page eight for our Events details with much more about the Grange and Ramsgate.

### NEW MEMBERS

**A warm welcome to:** Linda Booth, Jennifer Darling, Fraser Donachie, Frank Hayward, Robert Holland, Tim Howson, A C Hunt, David Thornton, Philip Savage, Ann and Rod Wood, and Mr and Mrs Christopher Wood. We also welcome new corporate members: The Bard Center New York, Erdington Abbey, the University of Bath and the University of Oxford Brookes.



**EAST KENT DISCOVERY** During the course of research undertaken by member Robin Fleet whilst preparing a talk on the stained glass of East Kent, which some of us recently enjoyed at the Society's Christmas gathering at Rochester, he was pleased to find out that the centre light of the three lancets of the East window of St Mary the Virgin at the village of Chislet, near Canterbury, was by Hardman & Co. This light dates from 1868 and the subjects depicted are the Ascension and the Crucifixion, plus two single-figure compositions. The designs are archetypically John Hardman Powell, with the flowing shapes, decorative quality and brilliancy of colour we associate with him.

#### Local connections

Robin has since traced the history of the commissioning and installation of this light, with which James Daniel (d.1888), who was A.W.N. Pugin's doctor and who continued to be a family friend of the Pugins after AWP's death, was closely involved. A Mrs Wilkie, a friend of Daniel's, wanted to erect a memorial in stained glass to her parents, Thomas and Anne Wood, who had died in 1848 and 1844 respectively, and had selected Chislet, where there were family connections, for the scheme. It seems likely that she consulted Daniel, who probably, as a knowledgeable admirer of all things Puginesque, recommended Hardman & Co, and it is also he who conducted the correspondence with John Hardman Powell concerning the job. Mrs Wilkie was the wife of Edward Hales Wilkie JP, who lived at Ellington House (now no longer existing) in Ramsgate. After the death of his successor, Kenyon Wilkie, in 1891, the house and grounds at Ellington were sold, and a charming public park created, which opened in 1892 and still exists.

#### Personal detail

Daniel's letters to John Hardman Powell contain enjoyable family references, such as his several times repeated fond wishes to 'Annie' – 'shall I ever learn to call her Mrs Powell' - Augustus Pugin's eldest child and Powell's wife. The letters also illustrate the problems of such work; a mistake (Hardman's were at pains to point out that the error was not theirs) was made on the inscription at the base of the light, and had to be altered. Also, there was fear of vandalism, even in such a remote place as Chislet, and discussion ensued about the need for 'copper wire guards' for the exterior of the East window (cost £4.10.0). In the end a 'galvanised iron wire screen' was erected. It is clear too that Mrs Wilkie commented freely on the design, insisting, for example, that there must be a 'perfectly plain' (underlined in Daniel's letter) cross. The existing cross is, in fact, slightly patterned, but the correction to the faulty inscription was duly made. It is this sort of close documentation that can bring so much enjoyment to looking at what had appeared before to be a good quality but relatively obscure window .

### A VERY SPECIAL GRAVESTONE

*In the south aisle the reader will not fail to notice a large slab of granite with a rudely carved cross at each corner, and another in the centre, and which, though now converted into a gravestone, in memory of Elizabeth Spencer, who died in 1583, is, nevertheless, one of the few remaining chantry altars in this country which escaped demolition, first at the Reformation, and afterwards at the hands of the Puritans – the five crosses being symbolical of the five wounds of the Saviour. When Pugin, the architect, visited St Clement's, he gazed for a moment or two on this, to him, interesting relic of the old religion, and kneeling reverently down before it, kissed it several times with fervour.*

How did the writer know this? Who told him, or did he witness Pugin's delight at first hand? This vignette, so characteristic of Pugin, comes from a publication called *All About Ramsgate and Broadstairs*, published in London in 1864. St Clement's church is in fact in Sandwich, but must have been included as an attractive nearby place to visit (which indeed it most certainly is). Pugin would have rejoiced to know that this 'gravestone', a massive slab, with incised crosses still visible, was returned to its true pre-Reformation position in 1936, and once again functions as an altar, as has also been the case with another, smaller, slab, which has been placed in a side chapel. So history repeats itself, and so liturgical usage reverts to former days. [I am most grateful to Mr David Senior, churchwarden, for his assistance in this matter. Ed.]

### JANE PUGIN

'Dearest Jane' as Pugin called her, lived another fifty-seven years after his death in 1852. How did she occupy herself during that long period? We know from her Journal how hard she tried to keep the family together in the unhappy days after Pugin's death, and we later get various tantalising glimpses of her, for example acting as a gracious hostess for her bachelor stepson Edward in the palmy days of the 1860s, when the family had recently returned to the Grange and he was a well-known and wealthy (at that time) architect. The weddings of Margaret and Agnes Pugin, and the engagement party of Mary Pugin (respectively daughter and stepdaughters) all took place under the wing of Jane, at the Grange.



**JANE PUGIN (continued)** However, as clouds gathered, and Edward eventually filed for bankruptcy and became frequently involved in court cases, finally dying in 1875, her life must have indeed become distressing. At the same time though, she was surely a strong and resilient personality. Her own son, Peter Paul, like his older half-brother Edward) a member of the Ramsgate Artillery Volunteers, and also an enthusiastic amateur actor, must have been a cheering companion. A local paper of 1873 reports of the Amateur Dramatic Company's performance at the Granville Theatre that: 'Mr P.P. Pugin then sang "Betsy Waring" in character, and if Mr Pugin had not been so well known to everyone in the theatre it would have been impossible to see through his disguise as the old charwoman, it being a most finished 'get up' even to the "drop of gin".' Intriguing!

In Shirley Nicholson's book *A Victorian Household*, about the Linley Sambourne family, she mentions that for Marion Sambourne one of the pleasures of holidaying in Ramsgate in the 1880s was renewing acquaintances with old friends, such as Mrs Pugin. It would appear that Jane Pugin was by now a distinguished and respected figure in the community. She was closely involved with the activities of St Augustine's College, the Catholic boarding school for boys, across the road from the Grange, which was designed by Edward, with later additions by Peter Paul. In 1894 the *Thanet Advertiser* comments that 'Mrs Pugin ... worked with extraordinary zeal and succeeded in disposing of a rare lot of tickets' for a charity football match, in which the College was taking part, in aid of funds for the Seamen's Infirmary. She also attended Prize Days and Sports Days and in 1889 it is reported that the 'egg and ladle' and high jump prizes were presented by her and that she attended the 'déjeuner à la fourchette' in a large marquee on the College lawn on this occasion. At the time of the fire at The Grange in 1904, which must have been an upsetting occurrence indeed, she was not living in the house, which was let to a Major Moore, but next door at St Edward's, and considerable sympathy was expressed for her. Strangely, her obituary in one of the local papers in 1909 was very brief, almost as if the Pugins were, in those Edwardian days, becoming past history.

In a long life, full of incident, grief and financial worry, Jane Pugin always seems to have found the strength to carry on. She was sustained by an abiding love for her late husband, (going even at an advanced age every day to pray in the Pugin Chantry), by pride in his achievements, by her faith, and also no doubt by her extended family of children, stepchildren and grandchildren. This fine-looking woman faced the world with dignity and courage, and these attributes can be seen both in the portrait of her by George Augustus Freezor, which now hangs in the Pugin Room in the Houses of Parliament, and also in later family photographs, where she looks no less impressive. We need, though, to know more about her. Should someone not be writing her biography?

## **'THE EERIEST HAUNT ON THE SOUTH COAST'**

We feel that members will enjoy the following extract from the *Westminster Gazette*, with headline as above, quoted in the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1923 *Isle of Thanet Gazette and Thanet Times*:

*Here in Ramsgate town, of all places, there is an anchorite's paradise, a cave dweller's retreat, the loneliest habitation in England. Visitors strolling along the extreme end of West Cliff promenade pass over it unsuspectingly for it is visible only from the slimy rocks and shallows at the foot of the cliff when the tide is out. High up on the cliff face one sees open casements, verandahs overgrown with fig trees, shrubs and rock flowers, the mouths of tunnels – all scooped out of the solid chalk and fortified by brick bastions. This romantic eyrie can be reached only by underground tunnels leading from the Grange, an old house on the cliff top behind.*

### **AS GOOD AS MENTONE**

*There is romance behind this place not generally known even to Ramsgate residents, although the tunnels were used as refuges from air raids during the war. The late Mr Welby Pugin, a studious man and lover of solitude, who lived at the Grange, used to go to Mentone every year. He came to this cliff top, beheld its vast prospect over Pegwell Bay to the Dover headland and across the Channel to France, and dreamed a scholar's dream. He had the cliff tunnelled. At the end of the tunnel a large chamber was excavated and beautifully furnished with windows opening onto the verandah where, owing to the equable climate, he raised fig-trees and subtropical flowers. And he never wanted to go to Mentone again.*

### **DERELICT NOW**

*Mr Pugin appears to have developed a passion for underground passages. The cliff is catacombed with them. It is the eeriest haunt on the South Coast. The dreamer has dreamed his dreams over these beautiful summer seas and passed. The dream is now derelict - a bare echoing, haunting burrow of a place hidden from the world, smelling of chalk and the weedy seashore, reverberating with the moan of sea winds. It is a Kubla Khan kind of place, awaiting its Coleridge. Certainly a wonder of wonders – for Ramsgate.*



**‘THE EERIEST HAUNT’ (continued)** Which Welby Pugin is the writer referring to? Presumably Cuthbert, although in 1923 he could not be described as ‘The late’. What a shame it is that our own Dr James Pugin Mackey, who died in 2003, could not have seen this, as it substantiates his own childhood memories of just such an elaborate cave/room in the cliff front. Curiously, Coleridge in fact *did* visit Ramsgate – but that is another story.

**THE EVIL OF THE RAPHAELESQUE** This compelling phrase is part of the title of an interesting article in the excellent *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, Vol 8, 2005. The full title is ‘Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in *Hide and Seek* [a Collins novel]’. We mention it because the line taken by the author, Aiofe Leahy, in the article, is that in this novel Collins implies, perhaps echoing Ruskin, that in art the concept of the ‘ideal’, or Classic perfection, as demonstrated in Raphael’s (particularly later) work, can lead only to artificiality. Adherence to nature, on the other hand, and hence to irregularity of form, (as in medieval art and architecture) portrays the truth, and is therefore a higher, and morally superior, concept. This point of view is skilfully connected by Leahy with elements of the plot of *Hide and Seek*. We feel that the argument advanced would be one sympathetic to Pugin, and, further, that the subject of A.W.N.P. and the fine arts is one that needs more exploration. He did, after all, express his views vigorously, as ever, on these matters on various occasions, not least in 1837, in *An Apology for a Work entitled ‘Contrasts’, in the second section, Some Observations on the State of the Arts in England*.

## A PUGIN REDISCOVERED



Photo: Michael Fisher

By a curious coincidence, **Michael Fisher** has sent us this remarkable photograph, showing us a Pugin we have never (or at least in this position) seen before, plus an account of the surprising whereabouts of this most unusual representation. This feature could hardly be better timed, considering the appeal on our front page.

While cataloguing architectural fragments and ornamental stonework stored in a basement room at Alton Towers, I came across a mysterious object covered with a sheet of tarpaulin. On removing the tarpaulin I came face to face with A.W.N. Pugin – or rather a full-size effigy of him – and quite a shock it was too. Closer examination and investigation revealed that it was in fact the replica of the tomb-effigy in St Augustine’s Ramsgate, which had been cast from the original for the 1994 Pugin Exhibition at the V&A, but why was he at Alton Towers, and how had he escaped my notice when I surveyed the buildings in 1998? Paul Atterbury has informed me that when the V&A Exhibition closed, Pearson PLC (the sponsors of the Exhibition and the owners, then, of Alton Towers) had insisted that it went to the Towers. On arrival, it seems the effigy had been taken to one of the store rooms on the theme-park, forgotten for a while, then subjected to the indignity of being used from time to time as a prop in the ghastly ‘Hallowe’en Spooktaculars’ staged at the Towers each October,

before being deposited- in the damaged and paint-sprayed state in which I found it – in the sculpture store. I requested that the effigy be removed immediately to prevent any further damage, and it was duly taken to the archive room for safe keeping until a decision could be made about necessary restoration work and a suitable new location. The figure was cleaned and expertly restored in the Towers workshop during 2005, and it is now located in the company’s on-site boardroom, presiding – amongst other gatherings - over our periodic Heritage Committee meetings.

The original life-size effigy at Ramsgate is recumbent on the tomb-chest which is itself recessed into the wall of the Pugin chantry, so it can only ever be seen sideways on. The replica now at Alton has been placed in an upright position, and so it is possible to have an all-round view of the figure and to appreciate what a very fine piece of sculpture it is. It was, quite clearly, the source for the figure of Pugin on the Albert Memorial. Standing in the boardroom today, A.W.N.P. looks figuratively over the theme-park rides towards the Towers which he once attempted to transform in ‘true-principles’ fashion. ‘I am sure I do not need much inducement to stay’, he once told Lord Shrewsbury, ‘for I am nowhere so happy.’ Would he say that now, I wonder? **MF**

**ELGAR AND PUGIN** A recent browse through a biography of Sir Edward by Michael Kennedy revealed that the great composer, as a young Catholic (his mother was a convert), attended Pugin’s small but charming school for Catholic children at Spetchley, just outside Worcester, where Elgar’s father ran a music shop in the High Street.

The Society visited this sequestered little building in 2003, during the Worcestershire/ Herefordshire trip led by Dr Rory O’Donnell, when we also saw Elgar’s grave at St Wulstan’s RC Church (B. Bucknall 1862), Little



**ELGAR AND PUGIN (continued)** Malvern. Sadly, we were not on that occasion able to see the also interesting, albeit Classical, Catholic chapel inside Spetchley Hall itself (John Tasker, 1811), home of the Berkeley family for many generations.

**NEWS FROM THE ANTIPODES** As a result of Brian Andrews' tireless work in Tasmania and Australia, he has now succeeded in establishing a non profit-making organisation there named The Pugin Foundation. It has been established to:

*assist in the conservation and maintenance of Pugin's Australian buildings and movable objects in a good and safe condition for the people of Australia. Its first major project, due to start early in 2006, will be the conservation of St Patrick's, Colebrook, Tasmania, towards the costs of which the Foundation has already gained a substantial grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund. Works will include the reinstatement of the splendid triple bellcote that sat astride the nave east gable until destroyed by a mini tornado in September 1895. The bellcote will be furnished with a peal of three bells. The beautiful rood screen, one of only a handful of Pugin's screens still in situ, will be restored. Also due for launch during 2006 are the Foundation's website and its Friends of Pugin in Australia organisation.*

The Pugin Foundation and its supporting Friends will be the perfect way of addressing the need for a specially focussed, close to home initiative which can concentrate exclusively on the very important work of conserving Australia's Pugin heritage. We wish the Foundation every success and congratulate all concerned.

**FROM THE PRINTING PRESS** We are very pleased to be enclosing fliers advertising Michael Fisher's *Staffordshire and the Gothic Revival* (Landmark Publishing) and A.W.N. Pugin's *A Treatise on Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts* (Gracewing), a facsimile reprint edited by Rory O'Donnell. Both these books, in their different but interconnected ways, will be of enormous value to all Puginites, and are very reasonably priced. We also enclose Thanet District Council's new *The Pugins: a Ramsgate Town Trail*, recently produced in conjunction with the Pugin Society.

**MEMBERSHIP** Subs are due on 1<sup>st</sup> July, for those of you who pay by cheque. Hon. Membership Jack Kleinot will be writing shortly to all those (we hope not many) who still owe subs for the period beyond June 2005. If this could be you, **please act now**, as you are already six months overdue. If you pay by Standing Order but wish to cancel the Order, **please inform Jack**. This will prevent material being sent unnecessarily to those who no longer wish to receive it. If you are on the internet **please let us know your e-mail address**, as this will facilitate further communications OR, better still, just send Jack an e-mail with your address on it to: [pamakapam@aol.com](mailto:pamakapam@aol.com)

**ONE LAST QUOTE** concerning Edward Pugin's celebrated Ramsgate speculation: *But the Granville is rather a jolly place to be at, and if you have any friends among celebrities and public characters you will have a good chance of meeting with them there. Anyhow, if you don't know them you may get a place opposite to them at dinner and stare them out of countenance.*

**Margate and Ramsgate: All about and Round about them. A Gossiping Guide to some Pleasant Places in the Isle of Thanet, 1882.**

## BUILDING AND CONSERVATION NEWS

### Bust of Edward Pugin, Ramsgate

Restoration of the bust itself is due to start next month, financed entirely by Thanet District Council. Work on the metalwork and plinth of the bust will be the subject of a grant application from the Ramsgate Seafront Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme, part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and part by Thanet District Council. **CB**

### Pugin Hall, Rampisham

Some years ago the original laundry block was sold off separately from the rectory and adjoining stable block. All were by A.W.N. Pugin. In recent years the owner of the laundry block has carried out various alterations and extensions, some against the gable end of the stable block. The Society has urged West Dorset District Council to take action against this illegal extension, and if they fail to do so the Society itself will apply for listed building consent for the extension, in order to bring the issue out into the open. **ND**



**BUILDING NEWS (continued)****Cotton College, Staffordshire**

The owners of the buildings have been obliged to carry out necessary repairs to the older parts of the former college which are now water-tight and secure. Later buildings (ie, of the 1930s) are being demolished. St Wilfrid's church is within the secured compound, guard-dogs are on patrol, and the church is presently accessible only at service-times and by prior arrangement. Discussions are still taking place about the long-term future of the college site. The owners want to build houses, but local residents and the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council wish to restrict the extent of the proposed new development. **MF**

**St Mary's RC Cathedral, Newcastle**

Two new windows by Joseph Nuttgens have been installed in the Cathedral, and the current issue under consideration in this laudable programme of restoration, overseen by Father Campion, Dean of St Mary's, is the replacement of inappropriate floor tiles with a more suitable and consistent Puginesque scheme throughout much of the building.

With regard to possible decorative/paintwork schemes in the Cathedral, our Buildings northern correspondent, James Jago, writes: *the mere repetition of certain motifs from other works by him [Pugin] does not suffice. By looking at the fulfilment of his experiments in paint decoration by the later Gothic Revivalists, and drawing upon their examples also, a sincere and a worthy affirmation not only of Pugin but also of his legacy in the field of ecclesiastical art and architecture could, potentially, be achieved.*

**The Monastery and Church of St Francis, Gorton, Manchester**

We are delighted that after nearly nine years work has begun on the restoration of Gorton Monastery. William Anelay Ltd of York have been appointed as the contractor and are currently carrying out enabling works to stabilise the Friary building, provide temporary roofing, and carry out detailed investigations prior to the main contract starting in April. **TH**

NB. For further update and information on the Gorton site members can do no better than watch BBC 2's 'A Passion for Churches' at 7.30 on Wednesday March 8th.

**The Convent and Chapel of the Holy Child Jesus, St Leonards, Hastings**

This extensive group of buildings is set within equally extensive walled grounds between the towns of Hastings and St Leonards. Amongst the buildings on the site is a chapel by E.W. Pugin with very high quality fittings, unaltered since the community of nuns left in the early 1970s. The whole site has been a language school for over thirty years but the owners are now considering alternative uses for the site. The Society was consulted with regard to the significance and importance of the chapel and is strongly of the opinion that it should be preserved as it is, preferably vested in a charitable trust. **ND**

**Stanbrook Abbey, Callow End, nr Worcester**

The Benedictine Community at Stanbrook have gained planning consent for a new abbey in Yorkshire and have the buildings at Callow End on the market. In 2004 the community engaged a specialist conservation practice to assess the historic and architectural significance of the site. Amongst the conclusions of the resulting document were that the EW Pugin chapel (1869) and the original chapel – subsequently the library (1830s) – were of much higher significance than was previously recognised and should not be converted. All the consultees, English Heritage, the Victorian Society, the Pugin Society etc have agreed the conservation plan, also that the extent of the listings is insufficient. Malvern District Council has indicated that they have no need for additional housing land. There is still much cause for concern however, and it is imperative that an appropriate use can if possible be found for this extraordinary collection of buildings, set in superb unspoilt countryside. **ND**

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**\*REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE\***

It is a matter of pride to some local members to keep the church of St Augustine's Ramsgate open from 2-4 on the first Sunday of every month, so that the public can enjoy its many beauties. Accessibility and bringing Pugin's work to as many people as possible, is surely what we are all about. However, we do need more assistants to help in this pleasant and rewarding task. Interest in Pugin and in church visitors, a friendly smile, and a few free hours are all that are required. If you can spare some time, please ring 01843 592012

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