



PRESENT STATE

the news sheet of the Pugin Society

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'How I wish your Lordship could see this delightful country. It is quite enchanting, wonderfully beautiful, I never saw anything like it.' A.W.N. Pugin, writing from Killarney to the Earl of Shrewsbury, 1843.

WELCOME to our seventh *Present State*. 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 Timothy Brittain-Catlin. We apologise for the absence of a *Present State* as such last year, but are now back on track. Please note that this issue is numbered Seven, for consistency with the year 2009 (ie, there is no number Six).

ST AUGUSTINE'S RAMSGATE: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

From January 2009 St Augustine's ceased to function as a parish church. The parish has been merged with that of the church of St Ethelbert and St Gertrude (P.P. Pugin, 1902). A conventual Mass (one for the Benedictine Community, but which lay people may attend) is still held on Sundays at 10.00 and there are also conventual services on weekdays. Parish activities as such have, however, ceased to exist. The Benedictine Community act as custodians only of St Augustine's; it is not owned by them, but by the Archdiocese of Southwark. The Benedictines have indicated that they wish to focus exclusively on their monastic activities, and not on pastoral work. The parish priest at St Augustine's has always been supplied from the Community, but this practice has now been discontinued, and no other priest has been appointed by the Archdiocese. It is not unthinkable that the Community could therefore at some point either retreat from the church entirely and hand it back to Southwark, since they have a chapel of their own within the monastery, or that they could eventually move away; they are well aware that they are only eleven in number, living in a monastery designed for forty. The situation at St Augustine's is all the more unfortunate in the light of the high-profile work achieved by the Landmark Trust at the Grange, which has done so much to attract attention to Pugin, this whole site, and Ramsgate generally. Also, 2012 will be the bicentenary of Pugin's birth, and will be a time when we hope that major attention will be focused not only on the Grange but also on St Augustine's.

St Augustine's is a church of key importance, Grade I Listed, internationally significant and the creation and burial place of its founder Augustus Pugin. It is hardly to be expected, therefore, that lovers of architectural, religious and art history will not want to see it. Existing access (Wednesday afternoons by appointment, and on the first Sundays of the month from 2-4) is to be retained, and we are grateful for this. The Society would also like to take this opportunity to thank the retiring parish priest, Father Benedict Austen OSB, for his ongoing, always good-humoured, readiness to communicate with us re church visits, etc.

Forewarned is forearmed. We all know in our Society that closure can often be the beginning of a disastrous train of events. The long-term future of St Augustine's is vitally important and in the eventuality of the Community ever announcing that it intended to hand over the church to Southwark, or that it was moving away, we would not hesitate to involve the national press, major funding bodies such as English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and key amenity societies, such as the Victorian Society, Ancient Monuments Society, and others in every effort to secure its future.

PUGIN PORTRAIT TO GO ON DISPLAY The Society is delighted to report that following an intermittent correspondence of some years with the National Portrait Gallery we have recently received a most encouraging communication from Peter Funnell, Curator of Nineteenth-Century Portraits and Head of Research Programmes. He says that the NPG's enigmatic and compelling portrait of Pugin as a young man, artist unknown, has now been restored, as much as is appropriate or possible, and that it is soon to be hung in Room 24 (earlier Victorian artists and writers), in place of a portrait of the artist James Ward, RA. We have often wondered why this lovely portrait of Pugin has not been on show for so long, particularly in view of his much increased pre-eminence in the public eye, and have on various occasions pressed for it to go on display. Sorry, James Ward, and we hope you have had a good innings, but welcome, and En Avant, Pugin.

PUBLICATIONS

Society members are, as ever, distinguishing themselves in this field. The Society looks forward with keen anticipation to the appearance in March (ignore date on enclosed flier) of the third volume of **Margaret Belcher's** *Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, which covers the years 1846-48. This outstanding work of scholarship and dedication will be reviewed in our Journal *True Principles*, later this year. It will also be most exciting to see **Stanley Shepherd's** *The Stained Glass of A.W.N. Pugin*, to be published by Spire Books within the next six months; this is a wonderful subject, a book about which was greatly needed. The Hardman/Pugin connection, from the Pugin period to now, has been excellently documented and celebrated by **Michael Fisher**, in *Hardman of Birmingham: Goldsmith and Glasspainter* (Landmark Publishing). *True Principle's* Editor, our own **Timothy Brittain-Catlin**, had a very successful 2008 in publishing, with his impressive *The English Parsonage in the early Nineteenth Century* (Spire Books), and also the handy guidebook *Churches* (Collins), a smart bookmark for which is included with this mailing. We are also very pleased to be able to include a flier for **David Meara's** *Modern Memorial Brasses 1880-2001* (ShaunTyas Publishing). Over on the Society's website, the indefatigable **Gerard Hyland**, with the assistance of our web designer Michael Pennamacoor, is working towards the completion of what amounts to an on-line publication, his comprehensive *E.W. Pugin Gazetteer*.

To crown all, **Rosemary Hill's** *God's Architect* has gone into paperback, as many members will know. It is a heartwarming sight to see a major book about Pugin so widely distributed and so relatively inexpensive. The book has now received three awards; the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Biography, the Wolfson History Prize and the Elizabeth Longford Prize for Historical Biography. This is a great accolade for Pugin and for the author, and the Society offers warm congratulations.

AUGUSTUS PUGIN AND WOODCHESTER

Liz Davenport, *archivist of the Woodchester Mansion Trust*, has written a new Pugin-related leaflet/article for visitors to Woodchester; she tells us here something about how the new building at Woodchester was intended to evolve, and outlines what the Pugin/Woodchester connection was, and how it came about.

William Leigh was a wealthy Catholic convert who purchased the Woodchester Park in Gloucestershire in 1845. He consulted Augustus Pugin about plans for replacing the existing Georgian house in the park, and for a Catholic Church and monastery at the edge of the estate. Neither scheme was implemented, as Pugin withdrew from the commission in August 1846, probably due to a combination of poor health and Leigh's limitations on the budget. The church was built by Charles Hansom, and Leigh later engaged the young architect Benjamin Bucknall to design Woodchester Mansion for him. Bucknall was much influenced by the French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, and between 1856 and 1870 produced a gothic revival masterpiece which was never completed. The house, even though incomplete, is now Grade I Listed, owned by the Woodchester Mansion Trust and open to the public some days in summer months.

The Trust owns three letters from Pugin to the Leighs, dating from February and June 1845, and January 1846. In addition, there are another eight letters from 1846 concerning the plans for the church and monastery, now in the US. These have been used to write a short leaflet for visitors to the Mansion, describing Augustus Pugin's ideas for Woodchester.

Woodchester Mansion is outside Stroud in Gloucestershire. Details of opening times are available at www.woodchestermansion.org.uk or tel 01453 861541. Please check before visiting.

FOR SALE with Strutt & Parker, near Tenterden in Kent, 'Pugin's Hall'. This property, constructed as a 'medieval' hall/ballroom some time in the late 1850s for Lady Georgiana Chatterton, is an addition to the adjacent Grade II* Listed Finchden Manor. This was also owned by the characterful Lady Georgiana, a Catholic convert, and her second husband Edward Dering, a couple famously connected later with Baddesley Clinton, in Warwickshire. The Manor, and the separate 'Pugin's Hall', were let to the Benedictine monks of St Augustine's, Ramsgate for a period, commencing c.1867, when it seems that the monks turned Pugin's Hall into a chapel and refectory. Could there be some association with Edward Pugin here, perhaps? The Ramsgate monastery archives may be a source of further information, although it must be said that a recent visit to Pugin's Hall, converted long since to a private home, sadly revealed very few Puginesque traces.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to: H.M.B. Busfield, G.M. Cerasale, Laurence Cunnington and Canon Jeremy Pemberton, Malcolm Higgs and Elizabeth Williamson, Kay Horne, Jamie Jacobs, Thomas McGlynn, Anne Miglorine, Corinna Wagner, Stephen Wise, Fiona Young.

SOME NEWS FROM 'PUGIN-LAND'

Our correspondent **Michael Fisher** reports on some encouraging Puginian activities up in the Midlands.

The significance of Christian burial, and the importance of a well-ordered churchyard with fitting memorials, is outlined by Pugin in *The Present State*, pp19-20 [see our own *Present State*, p.1, initial para, for full title of this work]. As part of the churchyard arrangements at **St John's Hospital, Alton**, Pugin erected a large wooden Calvary with a tiled roof. According to the Abbé Vandrival, who visited Alton in 1847 in the company of Ambrose Philipps, this was only the second such Calvary to have been erected in England since the Reformation, the first being the one at the Philipps' Leicestershire home, Grace Dieu (Abbé Vandrival, *Pèlerinage en Angleterre*, 1847, p.217: unpublished MS in the possession of the Squire de Lisle). Exposed to the wind and rain of its Staffordshire moorland location, the Alton Calvary had become badly eroded, rotten and dilapidated, and in 2008 a decision was taken to restore it. Funded by J.C. Bamford, the celebrated excavator firm in nearby Rocester, the renovation has included sensitive work on the cross, retaining as much as possible of the original oak timber, and the restoration of the wooden *corpus*.

Meanwhile, at **Alton Towers**, work is in progress on the house conservatory which links the Octagon Hall (remodelled by Pugin in 1841-2) to the Great Drawing Room. Designed by Thomas Hopper (1776-1856), the conservatory was re-roofed in 1846 by Pugin, who also gave it a pavement of Minton tiles. Following the asset-stripping of Alton Towers in the 1950s the conservatory fell into disrepair, losing its roof and entrance doors. Restoration work began in 2008 with the replacement of broken glass in the sides of the conservatory, and during 2009 the whole structure will be re-roofed in accordance with the original, as shown on historic photos. New doors are to be fitted to the drawing-room entrance so that the conservatory can once more become a part of the principal entrance-route into the house. **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council** are aware that 2012 is the bicentenary of Pugin's birth, and in conjunction with St Giles's church and other agencies they are planning to promote this aspect of their heritage more vigorously and to make 2012 a year of celebration. Details of this will emerge in due course.

In Birmingham, **John Hardman & Co** are busy executing important stained-glass commissions for large new churches in the U.S.A., and the firm is set to move from its present location in Lightwoods Park to premises in Frederick Street, Birmingham, close to the site of their former Newhall works which were destroyed by fire in 1970. Right across the road stood no. 44 Frederick Street, a house occupied for a time by Jane Pugin and her family after her husband's death in 1852. This new location means that Hardman's are now back in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, close to St Chad's cathedral and the Pugin convent at Handsworth. This move has the useful advantage of making the firm more readily accessible to city centre visitors as a high-profile element in the 'Pugin Trail'.

WHO WAS CARL BLAAS? Members who remember going with Rory O'Donnell on a Society outing based at York in 2002 will recall that we visited the Duke of Norfolk's Carlton Towers, worked on externally and internally by E.W. Pugin and J.F. Bentley respectively. While there we saw a portrait, signed 'Carl Blaas, Palermo 1851', of John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, which was subsequently made into an engraving by Joseph Lynch. Perhaps we can learn something about a particular circle of friends and associates by the artists they choose to depict them. J.R. Herbert, who was particularly important to Pugin and his acquaintance, was a celebrated painter. However, Carl Blaas is not, perhaps, an artist whose name immediately springs to mind. Why did the Earl, wealthy and distinguished, choose him, in particular? Some searches on the internet have revealed what follows.

The Earl owned a villa, the Villa Belmonte, at Palermo (see Michael Fisher's *Alton Towers* 1999), and it was presumably here that Carl Blaas, or Karl Von Blaas as he is sometimes known, painted him. Indeed, the house that can be seen behind the Earl in the painting at Carlton Towers is in all probability the Villa Belmonte. Carl Blaas, 1815-1894, long outlived Shrewsbury and Pugin. He was born at Nanders in the Tyrol and was the first of a family of Austrian artists; his two sons, Eugene and Julius, also became well known. He worked as a history painter, a fresco painter and a portrait painter, and eventually obtained professorships at the Academies of both Vienna (1850) and Venice (1855). Although not known to us today, at least in Britain, he became a celebrated and successful artist, living and working in Vienna in his later years. Initially, however, he studied in Venice and Rome, where he became known as a painter of Roman society, and where he also, importantly for us, became involved with the artists known as the Nazarenes and under their influence painted various religious subjects, including a Visitation and a work entitled 'Jacob's Journey through the Desert'. Pugin, and Shrewsbury also, greatly admired the Nazarenes and their leader Overbeck, whose artistic and religious aims were so close to their own. Such an artist as Carl Blaas would therefore have been sympathetic indeed to the Earl. Perhaps, too, this choice reflects something of the cosmopolitan, European-based, outlook of aristocratic Catholics at this time.

THE HARDMAN ARCHIVE: GLAD TIDINGS

Siân Roberts, *Head of Collections Development at Birmingham Central Library's Archives and Heritage*, describes the riches of the Hardman Archive, and reports on the good things about to happen.

Birmingham Archives & Heritage has been awarded a grant by the National Cataloguing Grants Programme for Archives to employ an archivist for 12 months to complete the cataloguing of the extensive company records of John Hardman & Company, the Birmingham based manufacturers of stained glass and ecclesiastical furnishings, 1838-1980. The company was founded in 1838 by John Hardman (1811-67) in partnership with A.W.N. Pugin, the firm's chief designer until his death. Initially the firm produced metalwork in a mediaeval style, but with Pugin's encouragement it rapidly expanded its activities to produce monumental brasses, stained glass and decorative painting.

It is a large and unusually complete collection. It comprises long series of records such as ledgers, estimate and invoice books, day books, order books, letter books etc., and around 300,000 loose pieces of incoming and outgoing correspondence, including letters from Pugin himself and correspondence with Charles Barry (1846-60), relating to the Hardman's work for the Palace of Westminster. Separate sequences of records exist for the different elements of the business (glass, metal, brass and decoration), and for some of the main sequences of records there is also a complementary 'rough' sequence. Separate sequences also exist for the London office, known as London House, and for the business agents in Ireland. Similarly, separate series of correspondence exist for particular projects such as Thomas Quarme's work on New Palace, Lambeth, and the windows for Rugby School and Sydney Cathedral, Australia.

A significant amount of cataloguing work was undertaken on the collection in the 1990s and this grant will enable that work to be completed, and make it possible for a detailed listing of the material to become available online. The archivist will also produce detailed guidance describing how the different complicated sequences of records relate to one another, information which should make it easier for researchers to navigate their way through the material. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery holds original drawings and full size cartoons of stained glass, and information about their holdings will also be included in the completed catalogue, although at a less detailed level than the documents held in the Archives. The launch of the finished catalogue and the completion of the project will be marked by an exhibition at Birmingham Central Library in Spring/Summer of 2010, and the Centre for Birmingham and Midlands History at the University of Birmingham will also be holding a day conference on Hardman and their work. Recruitment for the archivist post is currently underway and a qualified archivist will be in place by the summer.

TREASURES COME TO LIGHT The Society's Chair has been contacted by a retired architect who at one time worked for Charles Purcell, of Pugin & Pugin, in Liverpool. He writes: 'A year before his death I was helping Mr Purcell sort through contents of an old roll top desk that used to sit in the corner of the office, when I unearthed an envelope which had got caught in the roll top. Mr Purcell emptied three small sketches out of the envelope and handed them to me, saying 'You may like to keep these – they are original Pugins.' He scanned the drawings to us, and indeed it seems that they certainly *are* Pugin's work. More news about this exciting discovery will follow, and we will hope to reproduce the drawings in due course.

SOCIETY WEBSITE (www.Pugin-society.1to1.org). Site Controller Keith Andrews and text editor Catriona Blaker are anxious to build and improve the site at all times. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is being frequently accessed and used. Please therefore, when you have a moment, help us by reading and commenting on it, and (best of all) by contributing brief text and/or colourful and sharp images. This way, we can be proud of the site, and its usefulness can continue to grow. We shall be greatly in your debt if you can assist us. Keith can be contacted at: aksandrews@aol.com and Catriona at: catrona@tiscali.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY We would like, in the gentlest possible way, to remind members that in order to maintain the excellent reputation of the Society generally it is extremely important, when on visits etc, to remember not to take any photographs of sites, inside or out, however tempting, unless it has been made quite clear that permission has first been granted.

† Laus Deo ! †