A Note on Pugin's Use of the Perpendicular Style

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1. Introduction

Many writers about Pugin's buildings have asserted that his use of the Perpendicular style was an early phenomenon that he soon abandoned in favour of his 'preferred' style, namely, the Decorated. This note documents the incorporation of Perpendicular elements in his designs, ranging from windows in a transitional idiom, characteristic of the emergence of Perpendicular in English Gothic of the years after around 1330, through to complete buildings in the style.[1] Whilst not claiming to be an exhaustive catalogue it demonstrates a use of the style that is a continuous, if minor, thread in his design vocabulary encompassing most of his mature career.

The conclusion emerges that this aspect of a view of an inexorable progress in Pugin's design sophistication is an altogether too simplistic one, yet again showing that he was a far more complex designer, the depths of whose creative mind—and whose motives for using various design elements—are still a long way from being fully plumbed and understood.

2. The Uses[2]
2.1 St Mary's College, Oscott, Chapel, 1837

Along with furnishing the chapel Pugin is generally believed to have added the apsidal chancel to architect Joseph Potter's rectangular design for the building and to have altered the square heads of Potter's south windows to more correct four-centred arches.[3] This design work followed the Perpendicular idiom of Potter's plans for the chapel.

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[1] A comprehensive study of the Perpendicular style, documenting its transition from the Decorated style is to be found in John Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style 1330–1485*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1978.
[2] Dates given are the year of design.
[3] See, for example, Roderick O'Donnell, 'Pugin at Oscott' in Judith Champ (ed.), *Oscott College 1838–1988: A volume of commemorative essays*, Oscott College, 1988, p. 49.

## 2.2 St Mary's Church, Derby, 1837

Given that the Oscott chapel followed the idiom of Potter's pre-existing design, St Mary's, Derby, was Pugin's first fully independent essay in the Perpendicular style.

In general both the composition and the details are Perpendicular, with the exception of the vaulted apsidal chancel of Continental character. Pugin's original scheme had envisaged a more substantial east end with transepts, square-ended chancel and eastern chapels, an English concept that proved too ambitious.[4] A spire atop the west tower was never constructed.

The tall nave elevation with slender piers is reminiscent of the Perpendicular wool churches of East Anglia.


2.2 St Alban's Church, Macclesfield, 1838
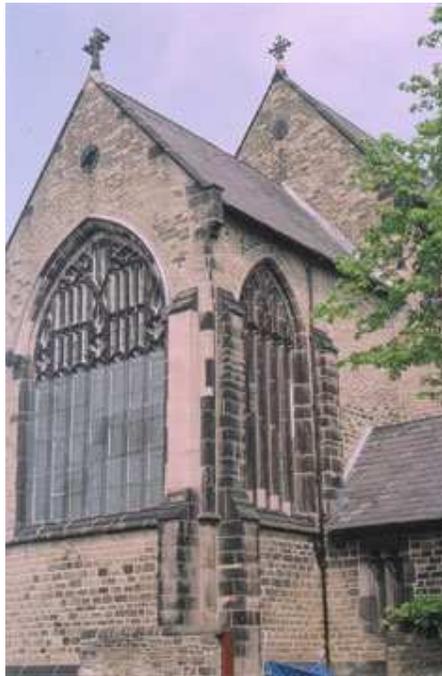
In this design both the composition and—generally—the details were fully in a mature Perpendicular idiom. Again, East Anglian wool churches provide a strong point of comparison with the tall nave elevation, the slender cluster columns of the nave piers reminiscent of those in Salle Church, Norfolk.

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[4] W.J. Lilley, *St. Mary's Church, Derby (1839–1989)*, Derby, 1989, p. 5.

### 2.3 St John's Hospital and Chapel, Alton, 1839

Both the chapel and the hospital buildings make extensive use of Perpendicular Gothic elements, including windows, doors and buttress set-offs. Some of the windows are transitional Perpendicular and others mature Perpendicular.
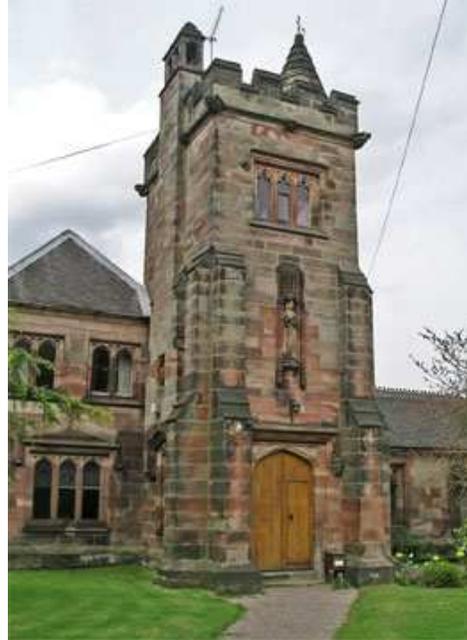
2.4 Mount St Bernard Abbey, 1840

The monastic buildings were designed in a range of styles from Early English to transitional Perpendicular, suggestive of a developing and maturing medieval monastic establishment. This concept and its possible meaning have been recently explored.[5]

The transitional Perpendicular element is the two-light square-headed abbot's chapel window in the west range of the cloister, part of separate accommodation for the abbot that in medieval times was of relatively late occurrence.

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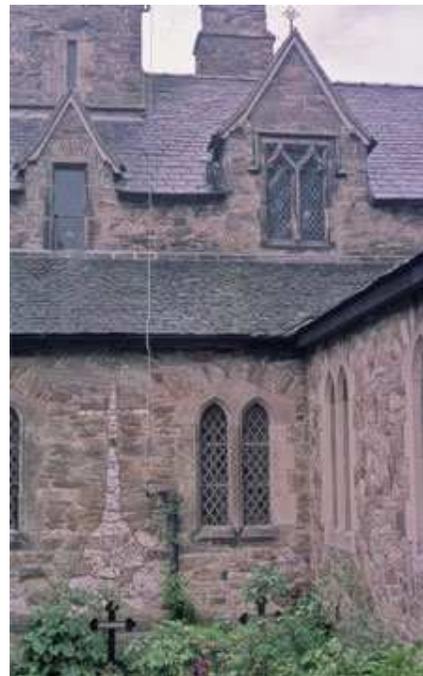
[5] See Brian Andrews, 'The significance of Architectural Style at Mount St Bernard Abbey', *True Principles: The Voice of the Pugin Society*, vol. 2, no. 5, Summer 2003, pp. 38–40.

2.4 St Augustine of England's Church, Kenilworth, 1841

The bulk of this little two-compartment church was designed in a late Decorated idiom but the chancel east window was mature Perpendicular.[6] As with a number of Pugin's other small church designs this stylistic change for the chancel east window may have been done for reasons of propriety.[7] Insofar as this required that the form and degree of elaboration of a building's constituent parts should be expressive of their function, the chancel being the most solemn or sacred part of a church was always given greater emphasis by Pugin, hence in this case a stylistically later, more elaborate window.
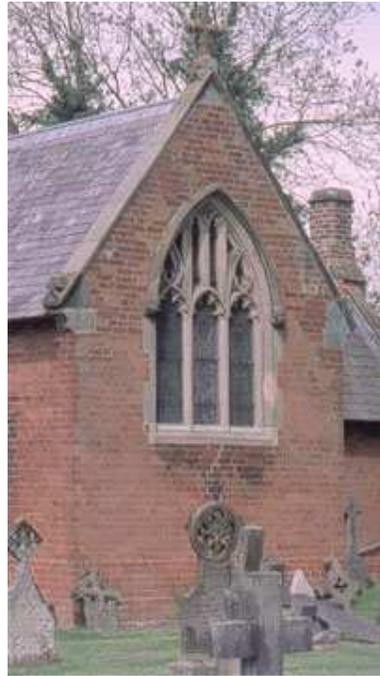
2.5 St Stephen's Church, Brisbane, 1842

This church was Early English in design except for the west door and window, both in the mature Perpendicular style. The window was a simplified derivation of the chancel east window of Melrose Abbey, Scotland, which Pugin had visited on 20 October 1842, a few weeks before he executed the subject design.[8]

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[6] In 1851–52 the nave was extended to the west and a north aisle added, with a second sacristy, all to plans by Gilbert Blount. See Elizabeth Meaton, *The Church of St. Augustine of England, Kenilworth*, Kenilworth, [1989], pp. 18–19.

[7] For example: St Marie's on the Sands, Southport, Lancashire; St Paul's, Oatlands, Tasmania; and St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde, New South Wales.

[8] See Brian Andrews, *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2002, exhibition catalogue, pp. 176–7.

2.6 Former Chapter Hall, St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, 1842

This building started life as a school, one of the 1842 package of designs provided by Pugin to Archbishop John Bede Polding OSB.[9]

Although the plans underwent several modifications before the building was constructed, a number of the constituent elements—roof trusses, windows, plinth mouldings—are beyond dispute from Pugin's original drawings for the school. The windows are very late Gothic, typical of secular structures of the Tudor period, closely resembling details illustrated in Volume I of his father A.C. Pugin's *Examples of Gothic Architecture*.[10]
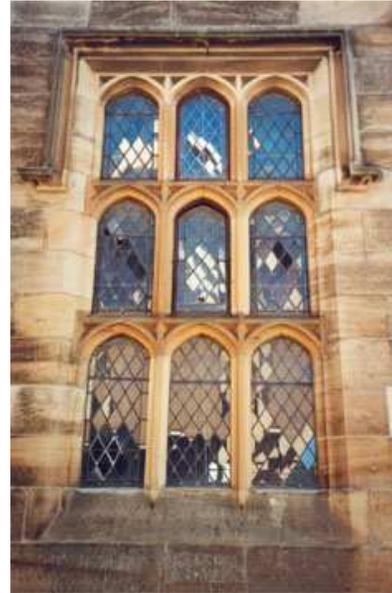
2.7 Former Cadogan Street, Chelsea, Cemetery Chapel, 1845

This little rectangular building with its mature perpendicular east window started life as a cemetery chapel, being later subsumed as the south east chapel of John Francis Bentley's sober Early English essay, St Mary's, Cadogan Street, constructed between 1877 and 1879.

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[9] ibid., pp. 161, 172.

[10] A. Pugin, *Examples of Gothic Architecture*, Henry G. Bohn, London, 1831. See, for example, plate V, Wolterton Manor House, Norfolk.

2.8 Design for a Catholic Church at St Peter Port, Guernsey, 1845

In his unexecuted design for a church in the Decorated style with five-bay nave and north aisle, north-west spire, and separately expressed chancel and north-east chapel, Pugin inserted three-light transitional windows into the nave south wall and aisle north wall. Built to an amended enlarged design with south aisle, Ss Joseph and Mary's Church lost the particular feature of its aisle windows that marked them as transitional, namely, the continuation of the mullions up to the underside of the segmental arches.
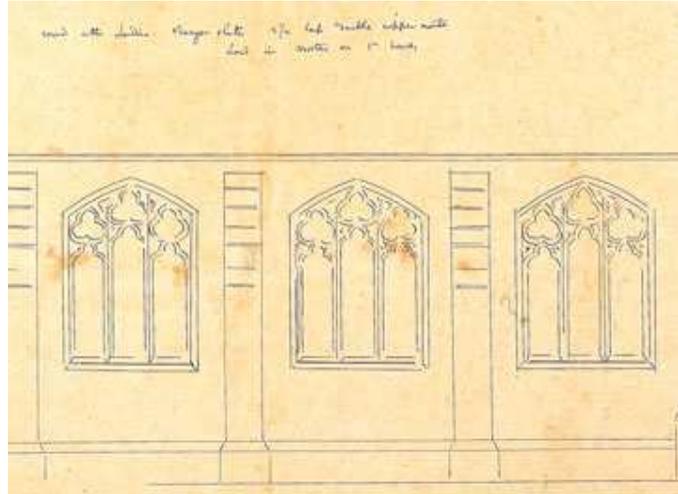

## 2.9 St Peter's Church, Marlow, 1845

This lovely small church essay with a similar nave and north aisle layout to Pugin's unexecuted Guernsey design was in the Decorated style, with the exception of the three-light window in the chancel south wall. In this, the vertical elements extending from the apex of the flanking ogee-arch lights to the underside of the segmental arch gave it the typical characteristics of a transitional Perpendicular window.

2.10 St Augustine's Church, Ramsgate, 1845

There are several examples of Pugin's use of early Perpendicular in his own church complex at Ramsgate. The most prominent occur in the first structures on the site, such as the large five-light window in the north façade of the large sacristy, a space that was in turn a temporary church, a school, then a sacristy,[11] as well as in the two-light windows of the east cloister.
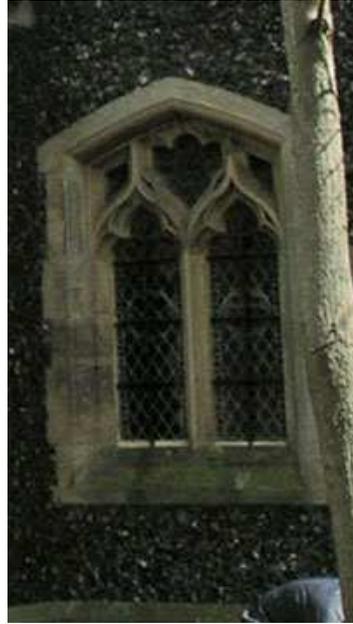
### 2.11 St Thomas of Canterbury, Fulham, Presbytery, 1847
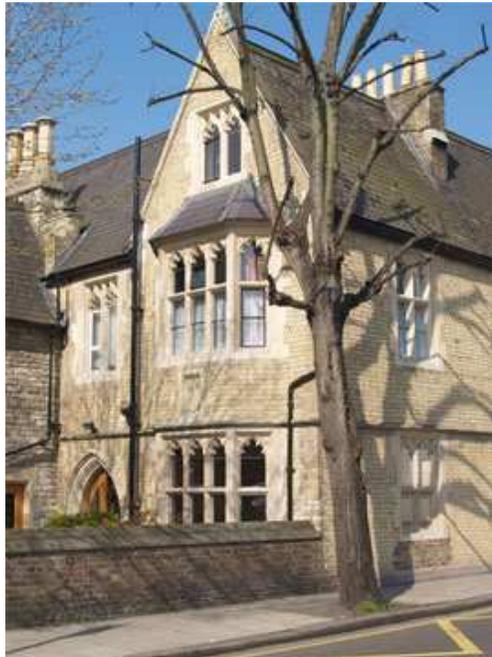
This building, which makes such a splendid group with the adjacent Decorated church, has a range of window types all typical of the mature Perpendicular style.

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[11] Libby Horner & Jill Hunter, *A Flint Seaside Church: St Augustine's Abbey Church, Ramsgate*, The Pugin Society, Ramsgate, 2000, p. 23.

2.12 Former Convent of Mercy, Cheadle, 1848

Here, near the very end of his effective career as an architect, Pugin made use of the early Perpendicular style. As part of the design he created a cloister constructed largely of timber,[12] but in the blind north end east face of the west walk—constructed in brick—he inserted a two-light square-headed window filled, incidentally, with the most charming non-figurative Hardman glass.
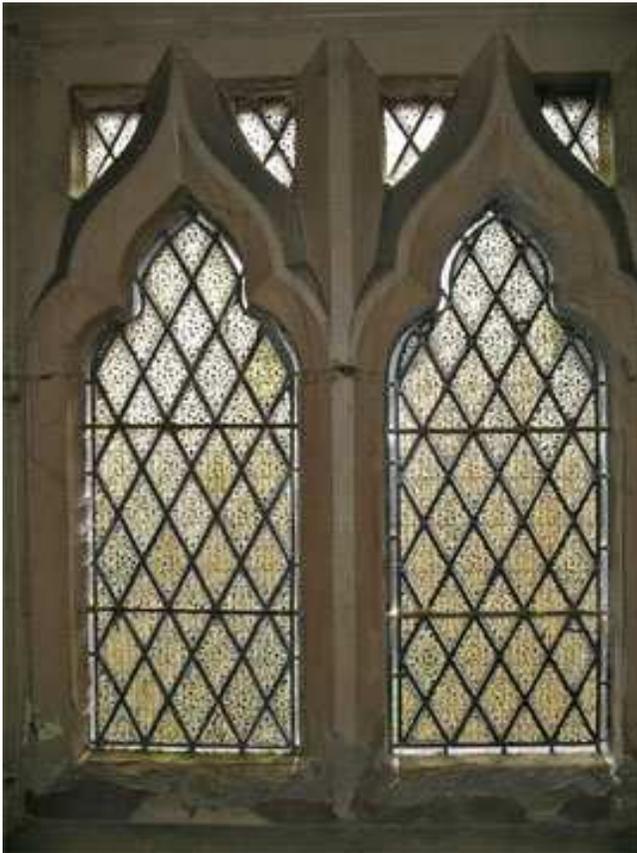
[12] Michael Fisher, *Pugin-Land: A.W.N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury, and the Gothic Revival in Staffordshire*, Michael J. Fisher (Publishing), Stafford, 2002, p. 121.