

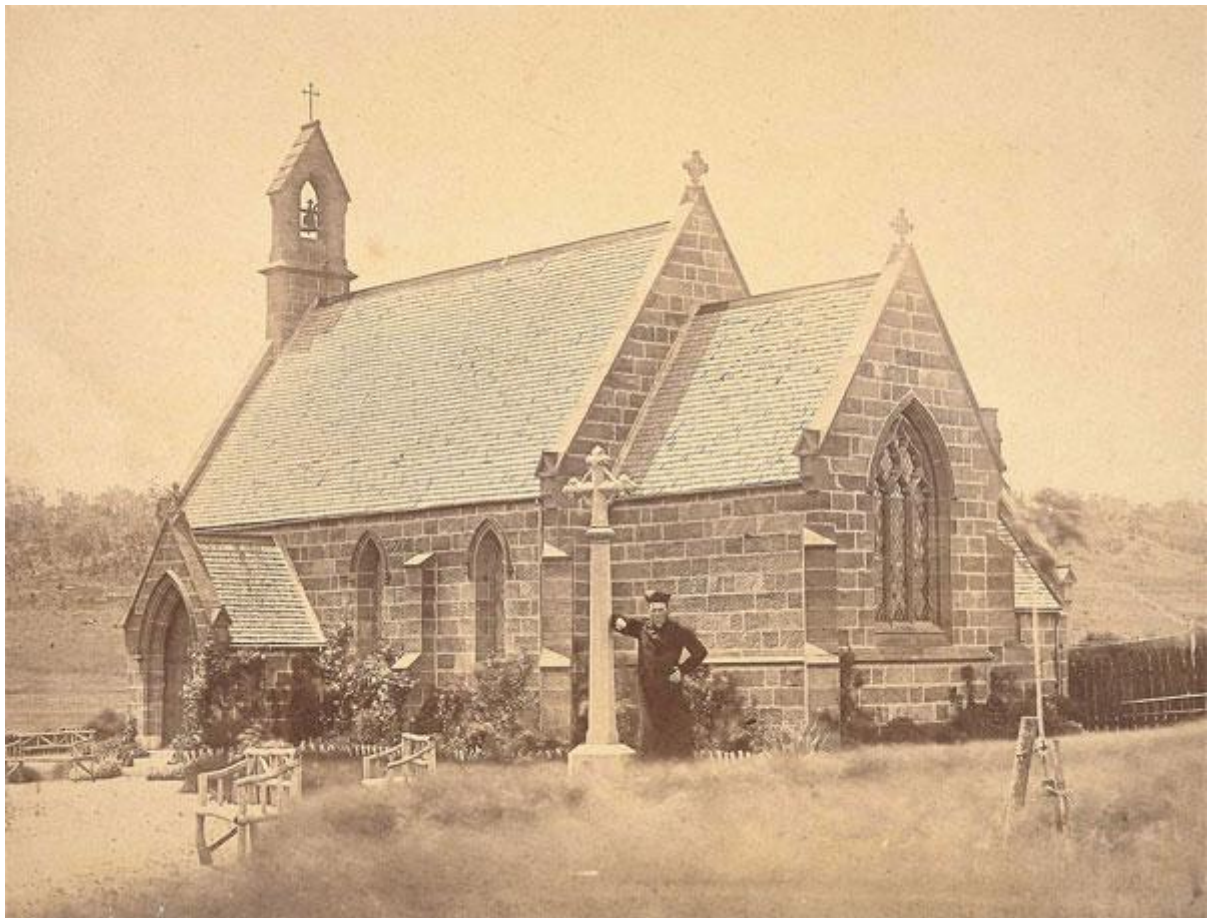
Pugin Foundation

St Paul's Church, Oatlands, Tasmania

Brian Andrews

Introduction

St Paul's Church, Oatlands, is a building the stylistic and planning roots of which can be traced to the ideals and impact of the Englishman Robert William Willson (1794–1866), first Catholic Bishop of Hobart Town, and of the great early-Victorian English architect, designer and theorist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52).

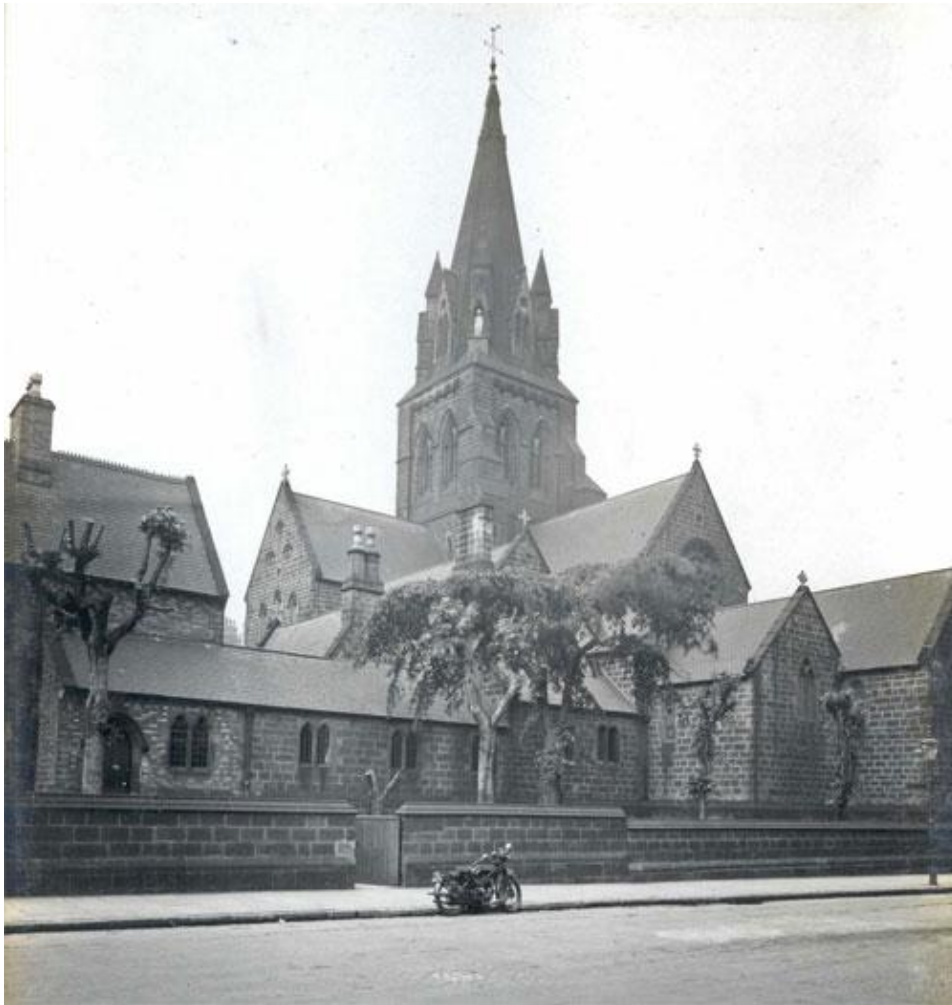


St Paul's Church from the south-east, c.1860s (Image: Archdiocese of Hobart Archives)

Bishop Willson brought to Van Diemen's Land (later re-named Tasmania) in 1844 a passionately held belief in the moral and spiritual efficacy of that nineteenth-century movement, known as the Gothic Revival, which brought about a return to the building style and technology of the High Middle Ages. His father was a Lincoln builder and his architect elder brother Edward had been deeply involved in the writing of text for a series of pattern books.¹ Amongst the most important and influential of such pattern books were those for

¹ Pattern books were publications containing large-scale, accurate, measured drawings of medieval buildings and their various details. They made available for the first time a substantial and comprehensive resource upon which practising architects could draw in designing accurate and convincing structures based on a particular medieval period.

which Edward Willson had provided the text. They were by the emigré French artist and architectural illustrator Augustus Charles Pugin (1769–1832), some of the plates for which were prepared by his precocious only child Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin.² Through this family connection, Father (later Bishop) Willson came to become a very close friend of the younger Pugin and, indeed, when as priest in charge of the Nottingham mission he decided to build a new church, it was his friend Pugin who provided the design for St Barnabas' Church (later Cathedral) which, when opened in 1844, was the largest Catholic church built in England since the Reformation.



St Barnabas' Cathedral, early 1930s (Image: courtesy Diocese of Nottingham Archives)

Pugin passionately believed that there was a strong correlation between the perfection of style and religious faith; restore the architecture, with its concomitant liturgical plan forms and furnishings, and you will help rekindle that faith with which it was once associated. The underpinning vision for his works was a religious—and hence social—not an aesthetic one:

Architecture is the barometer of faith; it is not the arch, the pinnacle, the pillar, that profiteth, but the spirit which produces them; and the revival or decline of true Ecclesiastical architecture is commensurate with that of the true faith. It is for these

² A. Pugin and A.W. Pugin, *Examples of Gothic Architecture*, 3 vols, Henry G. Bohn, London, 1838–40.

reasons that we labour for its restoration and not as a mere abstract question of art.³

That vision encompassed nothing less than the full revivification of the religious, social and architectural fabric of medieval English society. It followed that if Pugin's beliefs were to be translated into reality he must revive all the medieval crafts. For in order to revive the full liturgical, sacramental and theological life of the medieval church, the design and manufacture of vestments, liturgical metalwork, tombstones, memorial brasses, stained glass, book illustrations and so on, were just as essential to his vision as was the design of churches themselves.

Bishop Willson fully shared these views with Pugin. Indeed, of all the clergy with whom Pugin collaborated, Willson was arguably the one who most comprehensively subscribed to the Pugin vision and endeavoured to make it a reality. Pugin had spelled out that vision in great detail with regard to Catholic church architecture, liturgical planning and furnishing in two articles that appeared during 1841 and 1842 in the *Dublin Review*. In the first of them he set out what he 'regarded as forming a complete Catholic parish church for the due celebration of the divine office and administration of the sacraments, both as regards architectural arrangement and furniture.'⁴ Bishop Willson brought this key text to Hobart in 1844.



Bishop Willson (Image: Archdiocese of Hobart Archives)

³ A. Welby Pugin, 'Catholic Church Architecture', letter to the *Tablet*, vol. IX, no. 435, 2 September 1848, p. 563.

⁴ [A. Welby Pugin], 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. X, May 1841, p. 312.

When Willson was nominated as first Bishop of Hobart Town in 1842, his friend Pugin designed for him—at no cost—everything he would need to set up a new diocese, including episcopal regalia, vestments, altar vessels, three churches plus exemplar stonework for them, church furnishings and even tombstones. These were manufactured by key Pugin collaborators in England—principally the Birmingham firm of John Hardman & Co. and the builder George Myers—and brought out to Van Diemen’s Land by Willson on the *Bella Marina* in 1844, the only coherent collection of Pugin designs outside Britain and Ireland.⁵ In the case of the three church designs, they were produced by Myers’ men as detailed models for replication, evidently because of a notion that the skills would not be available in Van Diemen’s Land for constructing buildings from conventional architectural drawings.⁶

The advent of Willson at the antipodes therefore saw the most explicit, detailed and accurate implantation of Pugin’s architectural and religious ideals to occur in Australian history by one who passionately and comprehensively agreed with and propagated them.

Background to the design

Pugin’s approach to the design of three churches for Bishop Willson in 1843 was circumscribed by three factors. Firstly, the poverty of the Catholics in Van Diemen’s Land, over half of whom were convicts, precluded elaborate and expensive works simply because they would have been unaffordable. This was a not uncommon issue that Pugin had to face on a number of occasions in England, although many of his English churches—being funded fully or partly by wealthy patrons—were not so constrained.

Secondly, because he would not be able to supervise the construction, as he did so comprehensively with his English churches, Pugin had to create designs that would, hopefully, not be compromised through being erected on an unknown site by an unknown architect. And finally, because of the perceived lack of craft and interpretive skills in Van Diemen’s Land, the designs would have to be realised not in drawings but as detailed models, with minimal complex mouldings, carvings, etc. Where some more detailed carved work was called for—gable crosses, holy water stoups, piscinas—its proper execution was to be ensured through the provision of full-size stone exemplars for local copying.

All this added up to the need to design ‘simple buildings that can be easily erected’,⁷ as Pugin described them in a letter to his friend and munificent patron John Talbot, sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury, just before Willson’s departure from England for the antipodes, adding: ‘It is quite delightful to start in the good style at the antipodes. It is quite an honour.’⁸

That only models were sent out with Bishop Willson is attested to in three separate pieces of documentary evidence. In the abovementioned letter, Pugin spoke to Shrewsbury of ‘3 *models of small churches* [Pugin’s emphasis] all to take to pieces with the roofs &c framed’.⁹ Willson himself, in summarising the extent and significance of Pugin’s assistance to the

⁵ See Brian Andrews, *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2002, exhibition catalogue.

⁶ It is likely that the dark view of Van Diemen’s Land originated with Willson’s friend and clerical colleague Father (later Bishop) William Bernard Ullathorne OSB. Ullathorne had been on the Australian mission between 1833 and 1836, and again in 1839–40. The first period included several visits to Van Diemen’s Land. Ullathorne was not impressed.

⁷ Pugin to Lord Shrewsbury, 30 January 1844, Victoria & Albert Museum, L.525-1965/20, in Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, vol. 2: 1843–1845, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 161.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

embryonic diocese during an October 1844 address to his clergy ‘on the state of church temporalities’, mentioned ‘models of churches constructed on proper scales’.¹⁰ And again, a London newspaper report of 3 February 1844 about Willson’s imminent departure mentioned ‘models of churches of the most simple form’ as being amongst the cargo of the *Bella Marina*.¹¹

The work of carving the exemplar stonework and constructing the church models was carried out by craftsmen in the employ of Pugin’s favoured builder George Myers. The models must have been particularly well constructed and detailed because Myers’ records reveal a total of 48 days’ work for ‘Making 3 churches’.¹² At a skilled wage rate of 5/- per day, and with Myers’ 10% margin, the total cost of the models was £13-4-0.¹³

The design

The model used for St Paul’s, Oatlands, was—like the other two—a scholarly and completely convincing, yet totally original, evocation of a small English medieval village church. The vocabulary of its elements establishes that it reflected progressive construction that would have taken place between around 1200 and 1320. In its plan form, composition and furnishings it conformed to Pugin’s exposition of what constituted ‘a complete Catholic parish church for the due celebration of the divine office and administration of the sacraments, both as regards architectural arrangement and furniture’, as set out in his 1841 *Dublin Review* article ‘On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England’.¹⁴

It comprised an aisled four-bay nave with south porch,¹⁵ a relatively deep separately expressed chancel,¹⁶ with a rood screen across the chancel arch, and a sacristy in the angle between the nave east wall and the chancel north wall. There was a west door for ceremonial usage, such as processions or the visit of a bishop, and the chancel, one step above the nave, was fitted with sedilia and a piscina in the south wall and an Easter sepulchre in the north wall opposite the sedilia. It was thus liturgically furnished for the Use of Sarum, an English variant in non-essentials—one of a host of such variants—of the Roman Rite that prevailed throughout late medieval Western Christendom.

Except where specifically prevented from so doing, Pugin normally designed and furnished his churches for the Use of Sarum, a logical consequence of his passionately held belief that the social, moral and spiritual improvement of the English nation—and, by extension, its colonial possessions—was to be achieved by the resuscitation in its entirety of English

¹⁰ Draft of a speech by Bishop Willson, Hobart, 23 October 1844, Archdiocese of Hobart Museum and Archives, Willson Papers, CA.6/WIL.12.

¹¹ *Tablet*, vol. V, no. 195, 3 February 1844, p. 69, c. 2.

¹² The information is contained on a loose sheet, amongst the Myers Family Trust papers, headed ‘Dr Willson / things / for Hobart / Town / Vandemansland [sic]’, being an incomplete listing of items actually manufactured by Myers for Willson, along with their costs. Information kindly provided by Patricia Spencer-Silver.

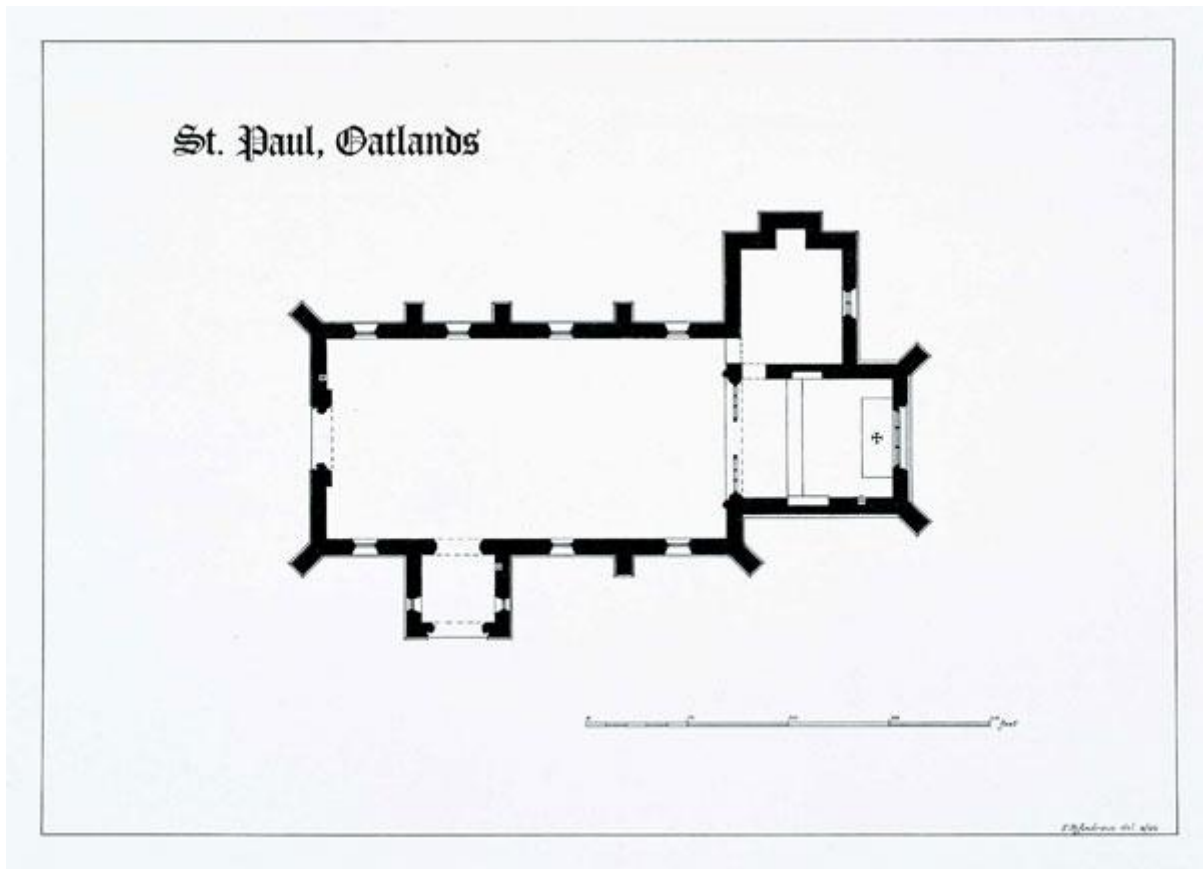
¹³ These rates and other details such as Myers’ margin are also set out in the sheet cited at footnote 6.

¹⁴ Pugin, ‘Present State’ op. cit., pp. 301–48.

¹⁵ In medieval English churches the porch—the congregational entrance—was normally located on the south side of the nave, that is, the sheltered, warmer side facing the sun. English designers of Australian churches, logically applying the same reasons, placed their porches on the north side. In this case it would appear that the porch was constructed on the south (English) side for practical reasons probably relating to the layout of the building on the site relative to the site entrance gate.

¹⁶ Although not as deep as most chancels of English medieval churches of this size, it was substantially more so than had been the practice generally in Catholic churches since the reforming Council of Trent (1545–1563).

medieval life, including liturgical practice. This was a view shared by a handful of people,¹⁷ including Bishop Willson and Pugin's and his mutual friend Dr Daniel Rock, priest, antiquary and liturgical scholar.¹⁸



Measured ground plan (Brian Andrews)

The nave measured 40 ft (12.2 m) in length by 20 ft (6.1 m) wide¹⁹. These were comparable dimensions to those of small medieval churches like Badgworth Church and Barnwood Church, both in Gloucestershire.²⁰ The chancel was 15 ft (4.6 m) long by 12 ft (3.7 m) wide.

Lancet windows, typical of the Early English period, lit the nave north and south walls, which had angle buttresses to their faces and diagonal buttresses to the corners, as did the chancel. Above the west door was a trefoil-headed statue niche intended to house an image of the saint in honour of whom the church would be named.

¹⁷ A view that did not prevail. Pugin's Sarum-furnished churches were never used for that liturgy, only ever for the Tridentine Rite, the version of the Roman Rite approved and promulgated throughout Catholic Christendom by the Council of Trent. The Roman Rite has no use for sedilia or Easter sepulchres.

¹⁸ As evidenced by the Sarum Use arrangements in St George's Church, Buckland, Berkshire, built on the edge of their estate by the Throckmortons to an 1846 design by the Pugin follower Charles Francis Hansom. Rock was the Throckmorton's chaplain at the time. He wrote *The Church of Our Fathers*, 3 vols, 1849–53, a scholarly work on the English Church, including the first description and analysis of the Use of Sarum. Bishop Willson possessed a copy.

¹⁹ Dimensions are given according to the closest nominal value in Imperial measurement that would have pertained to the model, based on measured values on the building, as the metric figures in that respect are of little obvious meaning.

²⁰ See Raphael and J. Arthur Brandon, *Parish Churches* (2 vols), W. Kent & Co., London, 1858, vol. 2, pp. 9–10 and 13–14.



Lancet windows in the nave north wall (Image: Brian Andrews)

The chancel east window was a three-light Flowing Decorated design with reticulated—or net-like—tracery, a type much admired and very widely used in churches built around 1320. It was the most elaborately developed element in the building’s structure, and that for reasons of propriety. In *True Principles* Pugin had defined propriety as an essential attribute of a building, whereby ‘*the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with, the purpose for which it is destined*’.²¹ For churches this meant that the chancel should be the most highly elaborated part of the building because it was, in Pugin’s view, ‘the most sacred part of the edifice’.²²

The nave west gable was surmounted by an elegant bellcote, a structure that by its size and position was the key element in completing the impressive balance and harmony of the building’s simple external composition. In his 1841 *Dublin Review* article Pugin had described how: ‘In very small churches, of exceedingly simple design, we occasionally find belfreys [sic], in the form of perforated gables, or turreted projections, carved up at the end walls, and surmounted by stone crosses.’²³ These took the place of the bell towers that were a part of larger churches. Pugin generally placed them on the nave west gable,²⁴ although in a handful of his designs they were on the nave east gable.²⁵

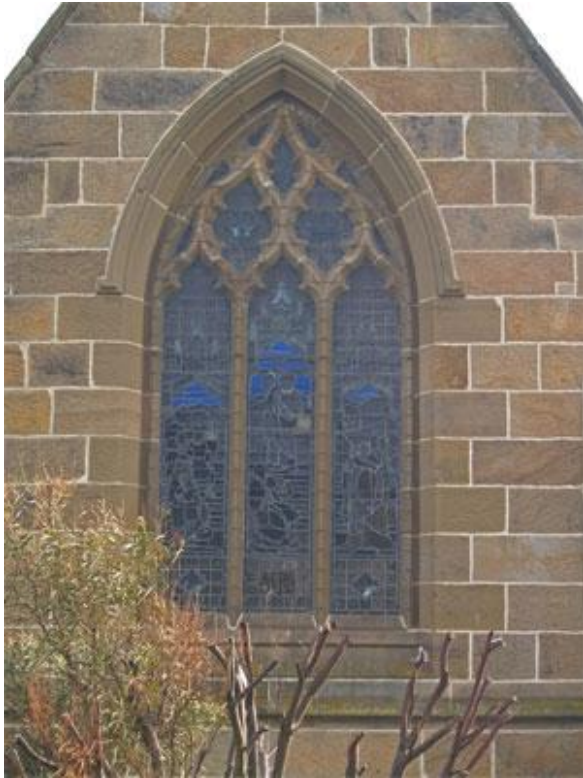
²¹ A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, John Weale, London, 1841, p. 50.

²² Pugin, ‘Present State’, op. cit., p. 330.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 319.

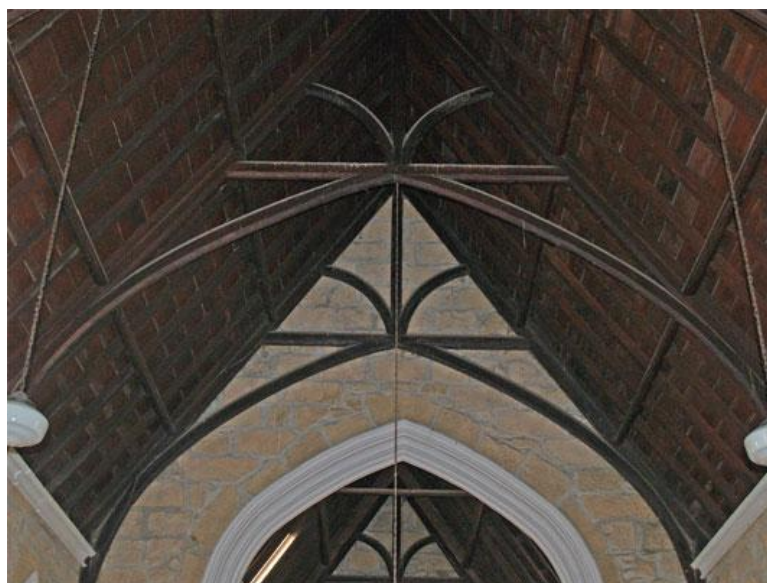
²⁴ At least sixteen of Pugin’s designs had a nave west gable bellcote, including: St James’, Reading; St Marie’s on the Sands, Southport; St John’s Hospital Chapel, Alton; Our Lady & St Wilfrid’s, Warwick Bridge; St Francis Xavier’s, Berrima; St Stephen’s, Brisbane; St Paul’s, Oatlands; St Lawrence’s, Tubney; St Augustine’s, Solihull; the Assumption, Bree; Our Blessed Lady & St Thomas of Canterbury’s, Dudley; St Andrew’s, Cambridge; St Winefride’s, Shepshed; St Charles Borromeo’s, Ryde; St Alphonsus’, Barntown; St Peter’s College Chapel, Wexford.

²⁵ St Anne’s, Keighley; Jesus Chapel, Ackworth Grange, Pontefract; St Austin’s, Kenilworth; St Patrick’s, Colebrook.



The chancel east window and the bellcote (Images: Brian Andrews)

The nave roof was supported by arch-braced collar tie and king post trusses, their wall posts resting on moulded corbels. This truss type was not infrequently used by Pugin in his designs for churches both large and small, including: St Francis Xavier's, Berrima; St Patrick's, Colebrook; St Mary's on the Sands, Southport; St George's Cathedral, Southwark; and St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham. They were used for nave and—occasionally, as at Oatlands—chancel roofs.



Detail of the nave and chancel roof (Image: Brian Andrews)

The sedilia were simple in form, and designed to be made from wood as for the two other model churches. Because the Oatlands church was so small, Pugin designed the sedilia with only two seats—for priest and deacon—instead of the usual three. Such an arrangement was not entirely uncommon in English medieval churches.²⁶

The piscina, to the east of the sedilia, would be copied from one of the two stone exemplar piscinas carved by George Myers' men and brought out with the church models by Bishop Willson.



The piscina (Image: Brian Andrews)

The Oatlands Easter sepulchre, in the chancel north wall opposite the sedilia, was in the form of a simple recess with a pointed arch head. In the Middle Ages it was the norm to have a portable sepulchre of wood which was placed in such a recess during the Sarum Use Easter rites. Such sepulchres were by far the most common type in medieval English churches.²⁷ Rarer were special structures of masonry, like the splendid and well known Flowing Decorated examples in Hawton Church, Nottinghamshire, and Heckington Church, Lincolnshire, or chest tombs, sometimes canopied, such as that in Porlock Church, Somerset. Generally, Pugin's Easter sepulchres were of the latter two types, exemplified by the stunning polychromed and gilded stonework in St Giles', Cheadle, and the tomb type in St John's Hospital Chapel, Alton.

²⁶ As, for example, in St Augustine's, Brookland, Kent

²⁷ Francis Bond, *the Chancel of English Churches*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1916, pp. 232–3.



At left, the filled-in Easter Sepulchre; at right, a holy water stoup (Images: Brian Andrews)

There was a holy water stoup in the porch west wall. Being situated in the porch and thus outside the church proper it also conformed to Pugin's 1841 *Dublin Review* exposition. In this respect he had stated:

Holy water stoups were generally hollowed out of the porch walls, and frequently built in niches on either side of the external arch, as at Bury St. Edmund's; all stoups for hallowed water should be placed *outside* [Pugin's emphasis] the building.²⁸

There was another stoup in the nave west wall inner face for the use of those entering via the west door on ceremonial occasions.

The accompanying table demonstrates the strong conformity of the Oatlands design with Pugin's published views on what constitutes 'a complete Catholic parish church for the due celebration of the divine office and administration of the sacraments, both as regards architectural arrangement and furniture'.²⁹

²⁸ Pugin, 'Present State', op. cit., p. 320.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 312–42.

Element	Conforms	Notes
Bellcote as alternative to steeple	Yes	On nave west gable
West door as ceremonial entrance	Yes	-
South porch as congregational entrance	Yes	-
Holy water stoup(s) in porch wall	Yes	In west wall
Doom painting on nave east wall	No	-
Rood screen, without a loft, across chancel arch	Yes	-
Separately expressed chancel	Yes	-
Sedilia in chancel south wall	Yes	-
Sacrarium, or piscina, in chancel south wall east end	Yes	-
Easter sepulchre in chancel north wall	Yes	-
Sacristy against chancel south wall	Yes	-
Chancel at least one step above nave	Yes	One step
Altar three steps above chancel floor	No	One step remains in the chancel, and the altar would have had a footpace

Construction

During the 1840s the village of Oatlands, situated some 80km north of Hobart on one of two roads linking the capital with Launceston, experienced a growing Catholic presence ‘as convict pass-holders and ticket-of-leave men, together with a handful of free settlers, moved into the district’.³⁰ Between 1845 and 1848 Fr William Dunne, pastor of Richmond had been travelling to Oatlands on horseback to celebrate Mass in a local cottage.³¹ Then Fr William Bond, chaplain to the Catholic convicts in Oatlands gaol, ministered to the local flock.

Early in 1849 a committee was formed for the purpose of having a Catholic church built in Oatlands. At its first meeting on 8 April with Fr Dunne as chairman it resolved to request a plan and specifications for a church from Bishop Willson.³² It agreed to accept the Colonial administration’s offer of a parcel of land, 3 acres 1 rood in extent, bounded by William, Gay and Dulverton Streets.³³ The committee also asked the administration for a cash grant towards the construction. Although this was refused Willson did succeed in obtaining 9,000 cubic feet of stone that had been intended for public works but not used.³⁴

The Pugin model chosen by Willson for erection in Oatlands was the smallest of the three, but nonetheless of imposing appearance to suit the growing importance of the settlement.³⁵ The task of converting the model into working drawings, preparing the specification and supervising the erection of the church was given by Willson to Frederick Thomas (1817–1885) of Hobart. Thomas had been sentenced to transportation to New South Wales in 1834 for swindling. He was further sentenced in 1842 to fifteen years in a penal settlement for stealing and arrived in Hobart Town in February 1843. While still on probation he was

³⁰ W.T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania: The Country Parishes*, Launceston, 1979, p. 53.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Archives Office of Tasmania (hereafter AOT), Hall Papers, NS308/2/17.

³³ Vera Fisher, *St Paul’s Oatlands: A Time to Remember 1850–2000*, Parattah, 2000, p. 5.

³⁴ Southerwood, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³⁵ The middle-sized model would be used for St Patrick’s, Colebrook (1855–56), and elements from the largest model would be used as a basis for 1858 additions to St John the Evangelist’s, Richmond.

assigned as an unqualified draftsman and clerk to the Public Works Department on 1 July 1847, then was later promoted to Senior Draftsman and eventually Clerk of Works.³⁶ It would appear as though Thomas was ‘moonlighting’ in executing work for Willson, for his activities relating to the Pugin churches at Oatlands and Colebrook were the subject of a letter of complaint to the Governor of Tasmania and a subsequent Board of Enquiry.³⁷

At the building committee’s meeting on 9 December 1849 with Bishop Willson in the chair the plans and specifications were submitted and approved. Tenders were called, to be submitted by 1 January 1850. These could be examined at the Bishop’s residence in Macquarie Street, Hobart, and at the residences of Fr Bond in Oatlands and Fr Thomas Butler in Launceston.³⁸ Subsequently, at its meeting on 24 February 1850, the committee resolved to accept the tender of a Mr Stewart for £489 and to deduct therefrom an amount of £25 for the value of the stone given by the Government.³⁹ A subscription list for the church building reveals that the principal donors were:

Bishop Willson	£50
Dr Edward Swarbreck Hall ⁴⁰	£20
Thomas Anstey and Henry Anstey ⁴¹	£150

On 9 April 1850 Bishop Willson laid the foundation stone for St Paul’s Church. Writing to his episcopal colleague, friend and confidant James Alipius Goold, Bishop of Melbourne, on 25 April he related: ‘I had the consolation to lay the first stone of a little Church at Oatlands on the 9th inst—but mine will be a very humble building, still it will afford the means of accommodation to a flock for divine worship.’⁴²

Construction of the church was, unfortunately, not without tragedy. On 15 July 1850 the *Hobart Town Courier* reported that a stonemason Patrick O’Flanagan had been killed when part of the stonework fell on him. Stewart, the contractor, narrowly escaped the same fate.⁴³ The subsequent inquest returned a finding of accidental death:

The said Patrick Flanagan [sic] on the 13th. Day of July last past following the occupation of Stone-mason at a certain building at Oatlands in the said Island, it so happened that accidentally, casually and by misfortune, a quantity of Stonework of the said building together with certain timber then and there fell upon the said Patrick Flanagan inflicting upon the said Patrick Flanagan divers mortal injuries of which mortal injuries the said Patrick Flanagan then and there instantly died.⁴⁴

St Paul’s Church was opened for worship on 25 February 1851, complete with churchyard cross (See the image on page 1 of this essay.) Like that cross the building’s gable crosses,

³⁶ Thomas’ biographical details are largely drawn from E. Graeme Robertson, *Early Buildings of Southern Tasmania*, 2 vols, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1970, vol. 1, p. 19.

³⁷ See *Colonial Times*, 4 February 1856, p. 2; 13 February 1856, p. 2; and 12 March 1856, pp. 2–3.

³⁸ AOT, loc. cit.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Government Medical Officer and a close friend of Bishop Willson.

⁴¹ Thomas Chisholm Anstey and Henry Frampton Anstey were English Catholic converts and friends of Willson, resident on the Anstey Barton estate a few kilometres west of Oatlands.

⁴² Willson to Goold, 25 April 1850, Archdiocese of Hobart Archives, Willson Papers, CA.6/WIL.465.

⁴³ *Hobart Town Courier*, 15 July 1850, cited in Southerwood, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Inquest papers, AOT, quoted in Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

piscina and holy water stoups had been copied from exemplar stonework, and its ironwork—door hinges and handles, bellcote cross—all to Pugin’s designs, had also been brought out from England by Willson in 1844.



Locally copied ironwork (Images: Brian Andrews)

However, it still lacked its pews, rood screen and sedilia. They were constructed from Australian Cedar (*Toona Australis*) by Patrick John Lynch (1804–1889) who had arrived in Tasmania as an assisted migrant from Ireland in 1854. He set himself up in the building trade, undertaking government work in Jerusalem and Oatlands.⁴⁵ Lynch was a skilled cabinetmaker who had been engaged on the wooden furnishings of Pugin’s and John Gregory Crace’s decorative program at Lismore Castle, County Waterford, for the Duke of Devonshire.⁴⁶ He would go on to make the pews, sedilia and rood screen in St Patrick’s, Colebrook (1855–57), the second Tasmanian church to be constructed from a Pugin model, upon which he was engaged as the builder.

The pews, or benches, were copied from an exemplar supplied by Pugin to Bishop Willson in 1847. This exemplar would be later replicated at Colebrook and at St John the Evangelist’s, Richmond.⁴⁷

Bishop Willson supplied a Pugin-designed figure of Christ for the cross atop the rood screen. Carved in White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*), coated in gesso, rubbed back and then polychromed, it was one of a number that had been made from the same design for Willson in 1847 by craftsmen in the employ of George Myers, Pugin’s favoured builder.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Fisher, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁶ Executed after Pugin’s death.

⁴⁷ Pugin to John Hardman, 14 November 1847, Margaret Belcher (ed.), *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, volume 3: 1846 to 1848, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 310.

⁴⁸ Willson had acquired at least fourteen such figures when in England in 1847. Ranging in size from around 45 cm from head to toe to over 130 cm, they were intended for use on rood screens. At least six of them were so used, in churches by Pugin and by Willson’s architect protégé Henry Hunter, viz., St Paul’s, Oatlands; St Patrick’s, Colebrook; St Mary’s, Franklin; St John’s, Glenorchy; St Michael’s, Campbell Town; and St Joseph’s, Hobart.



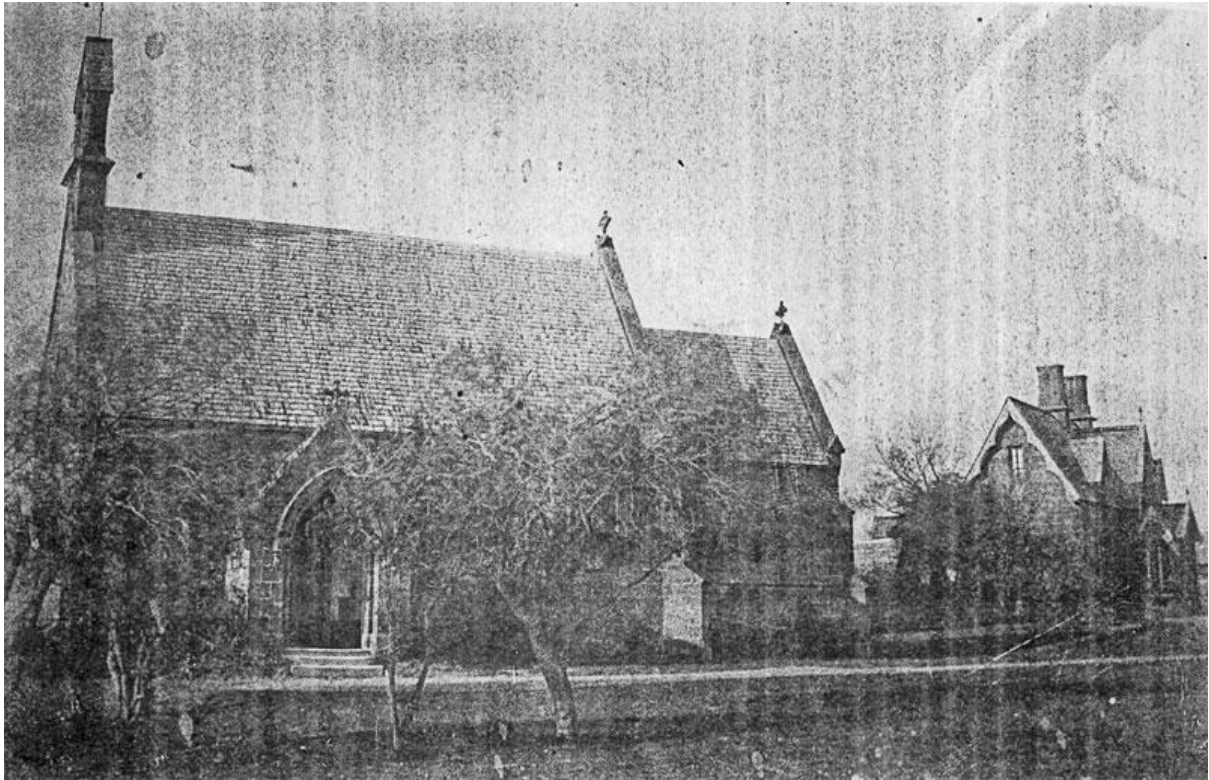
The benches copied from a simple Pugin-designed exemplar (Image: Brian Andrews)

Subsequent History

It should be noted in passing that a Pugin-designed presbytery was erected a little to the liturgical east of the church c.1854. The design would have been made for Bishop Willson during his 1847 return visit to England and was Pugin's only Australian domestic architecture design. Sadly, it underwent major structural additions and alterations over its life and was demolished c.1955, a major loss.

The compositional aspects of Pugin's Oatlands presbytery were closely related to the façade of a convent with attached school adjacent to his St Peter's Church, Marlow. This is believed to have been designed by him very late in his short life and was executed by his son Edward Welby Pugin in 1854.⁴⁹ If Pugin was indeed the author then his Oatlands essay would seem to have been at the root of this charming domestic building, forming such a lovely group with St Peter's.

⁴⁹ Gerard Hyland, 'The E.W. Pugin gazetteer: part 2', *True Principles: The journal of The Pugin Society*, vol. iii, no. 5, Autumn 2008, p. 48. See also [Pat Taylor], *St Peter's Church, Marlow, 1846–1996*, Marlow, 1996, pp. 18–19.



St Paul's, Oatlands, with its Pugin-designed presbytery (Courtesy: Fr W.T. Southerwood)



The former convent adjacent to St Peter's, Marlow (Image: Brian Andrews)

St Paul's Church stood unaltered for three-quarters of a century. The accompanying fascinating photograph shows the interior as it existed in the first decade of the twentieth century. Aside from the curious Carpenter's Gothic side altars, probably dating from the 1880s,⁵⁰ one's attention is drawn to the original chancel furnishings.



An early 1900s view of the interior showing the Henry Hunter altar (Courtesy: Tom Hazell)

Visible beyond the rood screen are a pair of standard candlesticks, survivors from the outfitting of the building in the early 1850s and components of an interior furnished for the liturgy according to the Use of Sarum, long after their purpose would have disappeared from memory.

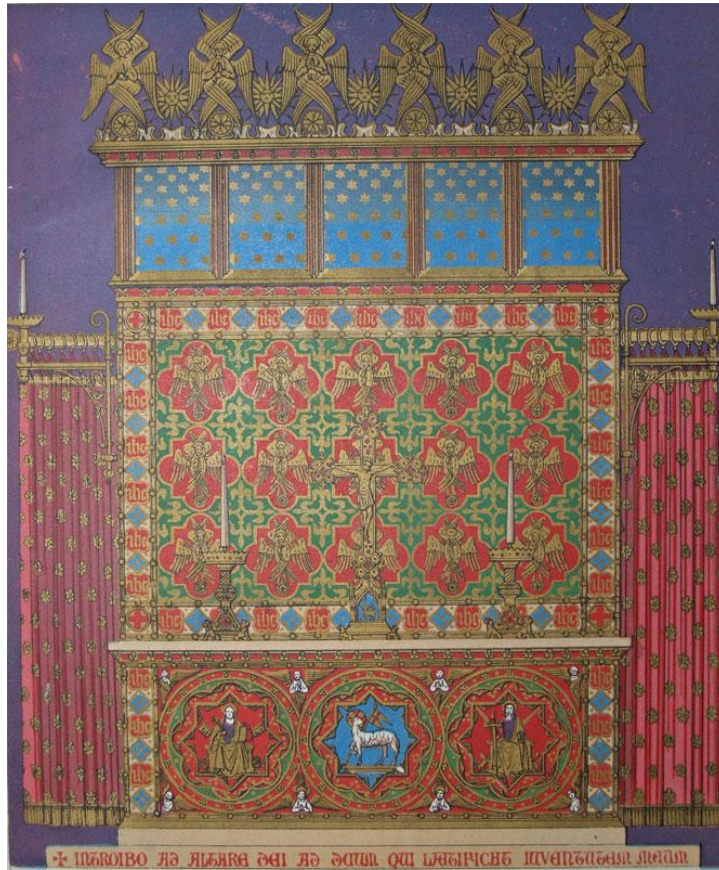
The painted and gilded altar of 1858 is by Willson's home-grown architect Henry Hunter who executed the decoration and gilding himself.⁵¹ It is likely that he entrusted its construction and carving to Patrick Lynch who had earlier built the rood screen.

As so often with Hunter's early work the direct influence of Pugin's *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* is evident. The altar itself, along with the riddel curtains, is based on that shown in Plate 70, while the form and detail of the reredos derives from the altar illustrated in Plate 71 (see overleaf).⁵²

⁵⁰ Probably by recently arrived Irish immigrant Patrick Sheehy who constructed similar altars at that time for Pugin's St Patrick's, Colebrook, in the same parish.

⁵¹ *Mercury*, 29 June 1858.

⁵² A. Welby Pugin, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*, 2nd edn, Henry G. Bohn, London, 1846.



Pugin's altar designs in his Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume, Plates 70 & 71

The simple wooden sedilia are just visible in the chancel south wall, but the Easter sepulchre in the north wall has already been filled in and plastered over.⁵³ Also noteworthy are the series of simple patera-like bosses on the rood screen top beam, presumably the best that cabinet-maker Patrick Lynch could manage when faced with Pugin's design which probably featured foliated bosses. These bosses vanished from the screen, possibly at the time it was sent down to Hobart in the 1950s for French polishing.

In the 1930s an addition was made to the west end of the church which had a major impact on the proportions, composition and integrity of Pugin's original design. The west doors were removed and—regretfully—disposed of, and a five-sided stone structure with pent roofs was constructed against the west wall for the choir, thus releasing space in the nave for extra accommodation. The stone for this was salvaged from demolition work on the Oatlands jail.⁵⁴ Around this time Hunter's altar, which had long been all-over painted white, was demolished and replaced by the present prosaic Gothic altar in varnished Tasmanian Blackwood.⁵⁵



The west front of St Paul's with its 1930s addition (Image: Brian Andrews)

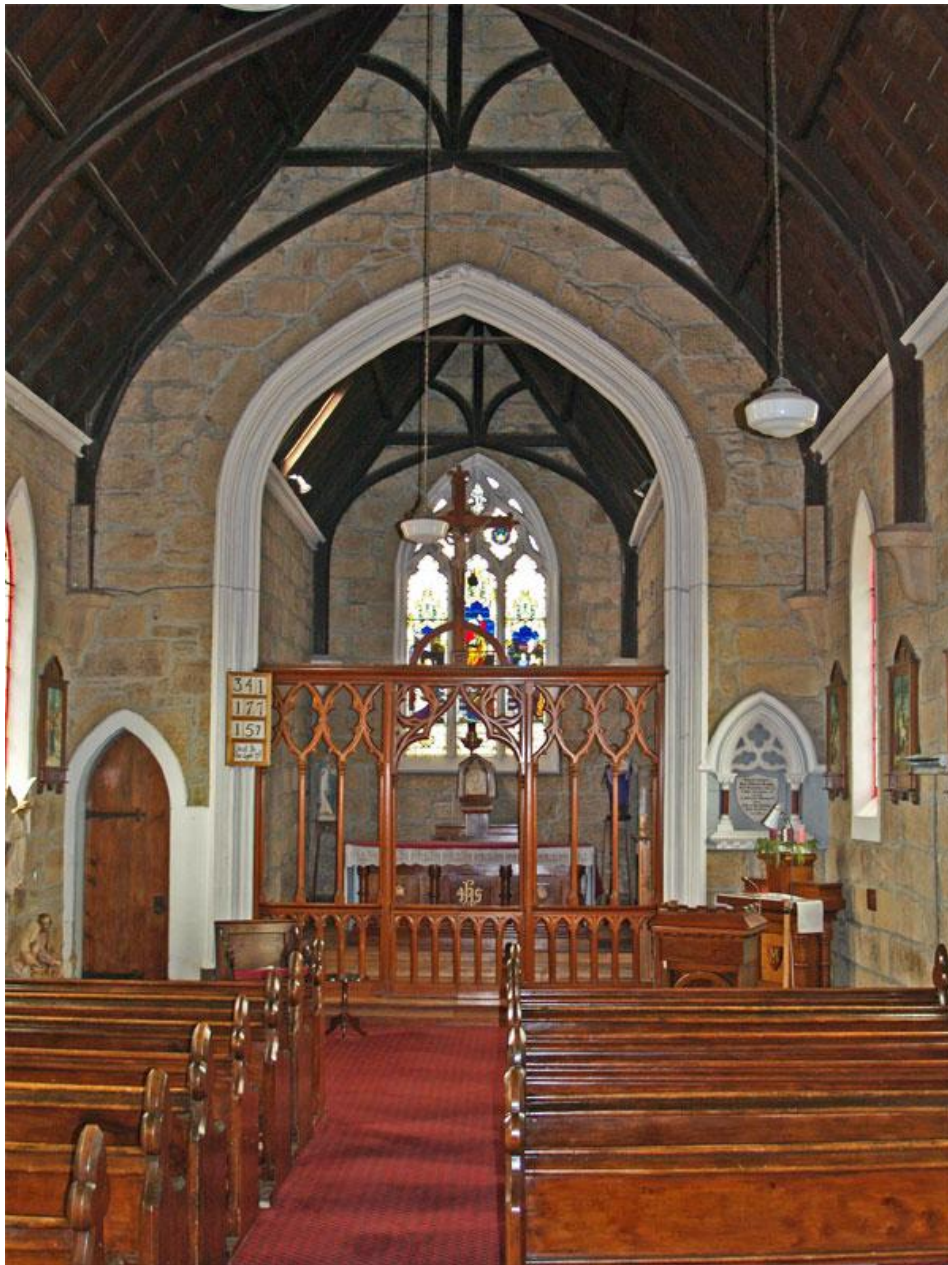
During the 1950s a major change was made to the interior every bit as deleterious to the unity and integrity of Pugin's design as had been the western addition to the exterior. Pugin designed his hundred or more church and cathedral interiors to be plastered over rough

⁵³ This was probably a consequence of a decision of the First Synod of Westminster, held by the newly restored English Catholic Hierarchy in 1852. It affirmed the use of the Roman Rite as codified in the wake of the Council of Trent, thus negating the possibility of the revival of the late-medieval English Use of Sarum. It is likely that as a result Willson would have had the Sarum-specific Easter sepulchre filled in, whereas the other Sarum furnishings could also be used in Roman Rite liturgies.

⁵⁴ Vera Fisher, *St Paul's Oatlands: A Time to Remember 1850–2000*, Parattah, 2000, p. 10.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 9.

stonework so as to receive flat decorative finishes.⁵⁶ Stewart, the builder of St Paul's, had adhered to this design requirement via the drawings produced by Frederick Thomas from the church model. Almost all the plaster was scraped from the interior, leaving little more than a strip just below the skirting boards and a strip over the thickening of the nave west wall directly below the bellcote. This left all the dressed stonework—windows, doors, stoup, piscina and so on—standing proud of the stripped walls by the thickness of the former plaster. Equally seriously, the wooden sedilia now didn't fit into their plastered niche so they were scrapped. The rough stonework, never intended to be exposed, was then re-pointed with hard cement.

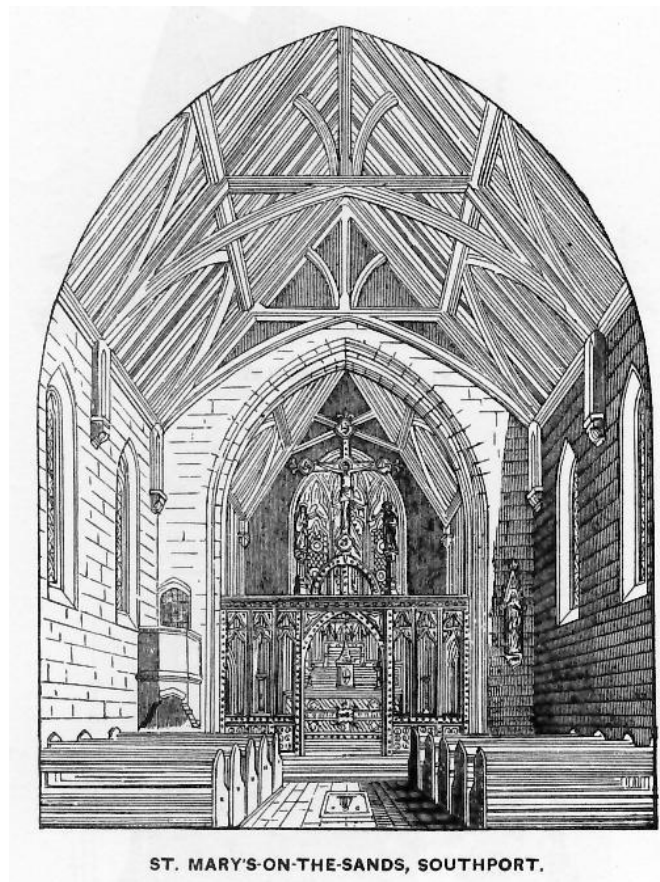


The interior looking east (Image: Brian Andrews)

⁵⁶ The sole exception was his own St Augustine's Church, Ramsgate, which had superbly dressed and fitted ashlar stonework to its interior.

The only other instance of a Pugin interior so stripped of its plaster is his great St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney, done in 1972–73. This latter act, accompanied by the removal of the historical furnishings, has been described by leading Pugin scholar Dr Roderick O'Donnell as the 'most misguided decision' which 'represents not Pugin but a profoundly anti- or "post"-historical coalescence of the Modern movement and liturgical minimalism'.⁵⁷ In the case of St Paul's, Oatlands, it was simply ignorance.

A minor change of unknown date to the interior structure was the re-hanging of the door in the north-east corner of the nave so as to open outwards. Although this door reads as an access door to the sacristy it was not intended as such. The actual sacristy door is in the chancel north wall. The door into the nave was intended for access from the sacristy via a short flight of steps to the pulpit, slightly elevated in the nave north-east corner, a characteristic Pugin arrangement as see in his illustration below of the interior of his St Mary's, Southport. This design detail, including the pulpit, would have been included in the church model but, like the other woodwork, was not constructed by the builder Stewart. Wooden furnishings had to await the efforts of Lynch a few years later and he, for whatever reason, didn't construct the intended pulpit.⁵⁸



Pugin's illustration of the interior of his Southport church showing the elevated pulpit reached from the sacristy (Source: 'Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England')

⁵⁷ Roderick O'Donnell, 'The Pugins in Ireland', A.W.N. Pugin Master of Gothic Revival, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, p. 146.

⁵⁸ In fact the church never received a pulpit.

St Paul's Church was sited on a land grant on the edge of the Oatlands village. This setting was enhanced throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century by the planting of deciduous trees, the making of a garden around the church, construction of attractive iron vehicular and pedestrian gates hung on stone piers and the planting of a Hawthorn hedge enclosing that part of the grant around the church and its adjacent Pugin-designed Presbytery. The integrity of this setting was progressively lost over the course of the twentieth century. Almost all trees have gone from the site as well as the garden and the Pugin presbytery, the latter replaced circa 1959 by a contemporary house and shed whose relationship with the church is completely unsympathetic.

Despite all this and the structural changes of the 1930s and '50s, all of which are reversible, St Paul's remains a significant antipodean realisation of Pugin's ideal for the revival of a small English medieval village church.
