St Augustine of Hippo's Church, Balmain, New South Wales

Brian Andrews

Introduction

St Augustine's Church is a building whose stylistic and planning roots can be traced to the ideals and impact of the Englishman John Bede Polding OSB, first Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, and of the great English early-Victorian architect, designer and theorist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852).

St Augustine's Church (Source: Eris M. O'Brien, *Life and Letters of Archpriest John Joseph Therry*, Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1922, vol. II, facing p. 260)

John Bede Polding OSB (1794–1877), a Benedictine monk, formerly of Downside Priory, Somerset, was the pioneering Catholic bishop in Australia and, from 1842, Archbishop of Sydney and founder of the Australian Catholic hierarchy. His attitude towards church architecture and furnishing, allied to his belief in the importance of beauty, dignity and reverence in the setting and performance of the liturgy, was quintessentially Benedictine.[1] This attitude can be seen in his choice of the fashionable Bath architect Henry Edmund Goodridge to furnish the plans for small churches that he brought out to

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[1] Benedictine monastic houses throughout history have been distinguished in this regard. St Benedict, in his sixth-century Rule, enjoined his monks when intoning the psalms and antiphons to do so 'with humility, gravity and reverence'. (Justin McCann (ed. & tr.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London, 1952, p. 109.)

Australia in 1835.[2] Goodridge had previously designed Gothick monastic buildings for Downside, a project in which Polding had been involved.[3]

Polding's consistent motivation for seeking only the best for his churches was well captured by his Vicar-General, Henry Gregory Gregory OSB, in a c.1850 report to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda,[4] when he wrote:

> As regards the style of [church] building also, we may without boasting congratulate ourselves. The Archbishop has expended considerable pains and anxiety on this point; not only because churches built with propriety and good taste, formed upon, though with no servile adherence to models of acknowledged authority, are eventually the cheapest, but because in a new community unhappily but too much engrossed in material pursuits, it is of no inconsiderable importance, in its due place, to present even to men's senses, the forms and suggestions of other beauties and more lasting interests.[5]

In June 1841 Polding landed in England on his first trip home from Australia. Pugin was riding the crest of a wave of approbation, building churches with stunning interiors filled with colour and imagery the likes of which had not been seen since the Reformation. Polding was to experience this bold assertion of the power and magnetism of emancipated English Catholicism within days of his arrival when he attended the dedication of Pugin's St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, on 20 June in the company of a great gathering of prelates. The conviction of its architecture, the glowing colour of its painted and stencilled surfaces, its genuine medieval pulpit, statues and fittings, its splendid stone altar and reredos under an elaborate canopy and especially the glorious rood screen would have stood in stark contrast to Goodridge's romantic sham at Downside which had been his former inspiration and to the feeble boxes of local architects in Sydney. Polding would have another opportunity to admire this radical new building when, on 27 October 1842, he consecrated Robert William Willson there as first Bishop of Hobart Town. Doubtless Willson would have told Polding of the great church of St Barnabas, the largest Catholic church in England since the Reformation, which he was in the course of building to Pugin's designs in Nottingham.

But perhaps the greatest stimulus for Polding to approach Pugin seeking designs for Australian buildings would have come from contact with his brethren at his old home Downside Priory. The community was in possession of a marvellous design prepared by Pugin for a vast new monastery in the Early English style on a scale surpassing a great many English medieval abbeys. The monastic buildings were arranged around four large courtyards and included a huge cruciform church with a trinity of spires. Surely, the psychological impact of Pugin's visionary scheme on the Downside monks and on Polding must have been immense.

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[2] Eleanor Joan Kerr, Designing a Colonial Church: Church building in New South Wales 1788–1888, PhD, University of York, Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, 1977, vol. 1, pp. 151–63.
[3] These and other ecclesiastical buildings designed by Goodridge were in an idiom termed 'Gothick', denoting a superficial application of Gothic elements and details without the framework of archaeological and ecclesiological understanding of medieval churches that would be later successfully championed by Pugin.
[4] The then Roman Congregation which directed and promoted the Catholic faith in missionary territories throughout the world. Australia was at that time deemed to be a missionary territory.
[5] Henry Norbert Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, 2 vols, Herbert & Daniel, London, 1911, vol. II, p. 172.

On 10 December 1842, a month after Polding set sail from Liverpool, Pugin's diary recorded delivery of drawings for Sydney to Fr Thomas Paulinus Heptonstall OSB, Polding's London agent.[6]

Pugin's 1842 package of designs for Archbishop Polding included: a temporary free-standing bell tower for St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, along with major extensions destined ultimately to replace that ungainly Gothick building; a school; and at least five designs for churches ranging in size and elaboration from small two-compartment buildings with nave areas less than 93 square metres to a spired triple-gabled structure with a nave and aisles area of over 370 square metres.

None of these churches were simply copies of Pugin's previous English or Irish designs. All were structured and equipped in accordance with his architectural, ecclesiological and singular liturgical stance, the latter predicated upon his hope that the late medieval English Sarum Use would one day prevail in the Catholic churches of England and its colonies.[7] All, therefore, had a bellcote or a spire, an antipodean north porch, a separately expressed chancel, differentiated from the remainder of the structure by a greater degree of elaboration for reasons of propriety, sedilia, a piscina, an Easter sepulchre, a rood screen and—even in the smallest—a west door to cater for processions and for solemn occasions such as the visit of a bishop.

All three small village church designs provided by Pugin were related to building types that he had produced in England during the preceding five years. The facade of St John the Baptist's Hospital Chapel, Alton (1840), was akin to that of the design which Polding used just once for the Church of St Stephen in Brisbane (1847–50). The little aisled church of St Andrew, Cambridge (1841–43) and its sister church of St Charles Borromeo's, Ryde, built as late as 1857, were both developed from the medieval church of St Andrew at Long Stanton, Cambridgeshire. Pugin's St Marie's, Southport (1837–40), had its close antipodean counterpart in a design which was used twice between 1848 and 1849, for St Augustine of Hippo's, Balmain and St Francis Xavier's, Berrima, and whose principal dimensions and composition would provide the basis for a crude essay, St Gregory's church, Queanbeyan.

These three designs were for buildings of very much the same size and complexity as ones already well within the constructional capabilities of contemporary colonial architects. So why did Polding obtain them from Pugin? The answer again lies in Polding's awakening to the taste and impact of the full-blown Gothic Revival, not just in architectural terms, but in the provision of an appropriate and comprehensive setting for a re-vivified liturgy, an aspiration very much evident in Polding's own plans for his Benedictine monastic community attached to St Mary's Cathedral. Not only were these little churches archaeologically correct in every detail, as well as in their plan form, composition and massing, but they also had a comprehensive set of liturgical furnishings, treated by Pugin in his 1841 *Dublin Review* article, 'On the Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England', as essential in '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'.[8]

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[6] Pugin's diary for 1842, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Pressmark 86 MM 61, L5163 1969.

[7] The Use of Sarum was a late medieval variant, in minor non-essential details, of the Roman Rite, the manner of regulating the public worship of the church that prevailed throughout Western Christendom. It originated in Salisbury Cathedral and had spread throughout southern England as well as Ireland and Scotland before the English Reformation.

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

St Augustine's and St Francis Xavier's Church, Berrima, are of particular interest in the history of Pugin's church design implementations for, alone amongst his richly diverse oeuvre, they were constructed from the same set of plans. As such they can shed light on the impact that his way of detailing—or not detailing—his working drawings had on the finished product. We can be sure of their common source for when Polding's vicar-general Henry Gregory Gregory OSB was applying to the Colonial Secretary for government aid in the construction of the Berrima church, he simply referred the authorities to the Balmain plans, stating that the Berrima plans were 'nearly the same … the difference is not material'.[9]

The design
The design used for St Augustine's was—like the abovementioned other two—a scholarly and completely convincing, yet totally original, evocation of a small English medieval village church. The Early English vocabulary of its elements establishes that it accurately reflected construction that would have originally been in vogue around the middle of the thirteenth century.

It comprised a four-bay nave with antipodean north porch,[10] a relatively deep separately expressed chancel,[11] with a rood screen across the chancel arch,[12] and a sacristy in the south-east angle between the nave and chancel. The design included a priest's door in the west end of the chancel north wall.[13] There was a west door for ceremonial usage, such as processions or the visit of a bishop, and the chancel—two steps above the nave—was fitted with sedilia and a piscina in the south wall and an Easter sepulchre recess in the north wall opposite the sedilia.[14] It was thus liturgically furnished for the Use of Sarum.

Except where explicitly 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 medieval life, including liturgical practice. This was a view shared by a mere handful of people,[15] including Bishop Willson of Hobart Town and Pugin's and his mutual friend Dr Daniel Rock, priest, antiquary and liturgical scholar.[16]

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[9] Henry Gregory Gregory to the Colonial Secretary, 22 January 1849, quoted in Kerr, op. cit, vol. 2, p. 244.
[10] 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.
[11] 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).
[12] That Pugin's small church designs for Polding had screens is confirmed by the builder's account for the erection of St Stephen's, Brisbane. See Brian Andrews, *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2002, p. 176.
[13] Priest's doors were a common feature of English medieval churches and Pugin frequently included them. There was also one in Pugin's St Benedict's, Broadway (see Andrews, op. cit., pp. 174–5).
[14] The sepulchre appears to have not been constructed at Balmain, but the Berrima building from the same plans has one.
[15] 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 after the Council of Trent. The Roman Rite has no use for sedilia or Easter sepulchres.
[16] 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.

The Balmain nave measured 40 ft (12.2 m) in length by 22 ft (6.7 m) wide. These were comparable dimensions to those of small two-compartment medieval churches like Tangmere Church, Sussex.[17] The two-bay chancel was 20 ft (6.1 m) long by 18 ft (5.5 m) wide.

Tall slender lancet windows, typical of the Early English period, lit the nave and chancel. The trinity of lancets in the chancel east wall had a subtle, almost imperceptible, Pugin touch. The central light was 2 inches (5 cm) wider than the outside lights, contributing to the overall balance and harmony of the composition.

Chancel east wall detail (Image: Brian Andrews)

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

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[17] See Raphael and J. Arthur Brandon, *Parish Churches* (2 vols), W. Kent & Co., London, 1858, vol. II, pp. 31–2.

gables, or turreted projections, carved up at the end walls, and surmounted by stone crosses.'[18] These took the place of the bell towers that were a part of larger churches. Pugin generally placed them on the nave west gable,[19] although in a handful of his designs they were on the nave east gable.[20]

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 Paul's, Oatlands; 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—chancel roofs.

The sedilia, or clergy seats, were simple in form, with moulded trefoil heads. This was Pugin's norm for such furnishings in his Early English church designs, as evidenced by the sedilia in St Mary's Uttoxeter, Our Lady & St Wilfrid's, Warwick Bridge, and the Lady Chapel in St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham. Medieval English sedilia were either stepped or level (as in the case of Balmain), the priest always occupying the easternmost seat with the deacon and sub-deacon to his west, according to the Use of Sarum. In the Roman Rite the priest occupied the central seat, requiring sedilia to be level so that the priest would not be seated lower than the deacon. Pugin designed sedilia of both types, however, in his Australian church designs the sedilia were always level, their ambiguity making them suitable for either the Roman Rite or the Use of Sarum.

There were holy water stoups in the porch west and east walls. Being situated in the porch and thus outside the church proper they 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.[21]

Construction

In May 1848 land on Balmain hill was conveyed to Archbishop Polding by the New South Wales sheriff, Adolphus William Young, for 'one or more churches, chapels or schoolhouses'.[22] The foundation stone for Pugin's church was laid on 4 September 1848 and tenders were called by the vicar-general for its erection on 18 September, the notice stating that 'the plans and specifications can be seen at Mr John Davis's, near St Patrick's Church'.[23] A stonemason Thomas Cordingley was contractor for the church, being paid the sum of £25 for 'Plans, Specifications and Superintendence' in 1852.[24]

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[18] [Pugin], 'Present State', op. cit., p. 319.

[19] 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.

[20] St Anne's, Keighley; Jesus Chapel, Ackworth Grange, Pontefract; St Austin's, Kenilworth; St Patrick's, Colebrook.

[21] [Pugin], 'Present State', op. cit., p. 320.

[22] Peter Reynolds, *On Balmain Hill: 150 Years of the Catholic Church in Balmain*, Balmain Historical Monograph No. 3, Leichhardt Historical Journal, Balmain, 1998, p. 1.

[23] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 1848, p. 1d, quoted in Reynolds, loc. cit.

[24] New South Wales State Archives, CSLR 4/3112, 'Clergy – Roman Catholic' 1852, no. 5689, in Kerr, loc. cit.

It would seem that a significant addition was made to Pugin's plans, perhaps even before construction work started. A tower with octagonal broach spire was tucked into the north-east angle between the nave and chancel, a door in its north face leading to the priest's door at the west end of the chancel north wall. Between this tower and the chancel north wall a quarter-round projection housed a stone spiral staircase giving access to the tower upper floor. The tower itself was fitted with two sturdy diagonal buttresses. With this addition there was no need for the western bellcote on Pugin's plans, so it was omitted from the construction.

The author of these additions is unclear. Although their composition and vocabulary are literate, they clearly did not form an alternative part of the Pugin plans.[25] Perhaps the architect whose own detail vocabulary most closely matches the additions is the English Pugin follower Charles Francis Hansom (1817–88) who had in fact furnished designs for New South Wales churches to Archbishop Polding during the latter's 1846—48 visit to England.[26] Be that as it may, it seems too long a bow to draw to imagine that Polding would go to such trouble to get additions from Hansom. What is clear is that by adding this steeple Polding gave the little church real presence atop Balmain Hill as seen from the heart of Sydney.[27]

The appearance of the completed church is well conveyed in a delightful 1850 lithographic engraving presented on the first page of this essay. Some aspects of this engraving lead one to believe that the perspective view was developed from the working drawings, as was often the case.[28] Nonetheless, the background scene is an accurate depiction of Sydney—including the spire of St James' Anglican Church—as seen from Balmain hill, so the artist must have at the very least drawn this in situ.

St Augustine's was opened and blessed by Archbishop Polding on 5 May 1851.[29] It was outfitted with the usual Pugin liturgical furnishings, including sedilia, a piscina and a rood screen.[30]

Additions and subtractions
By 1861 the population of Balmain stood at 3,482, more than double that at the time of St Augustine's opening.[31] The then parish priest Fr John Joseph Therry decided to enlarge the church, engaging local architect James McDonald to undertake the work.[32] McDonald extended the length of the 40 ft four-bay nave by an identical further two bays, or 20 ft. For extra strength angle buttresses were erected against the nave north and south walls a couple of feet west of the former nave west end. The west wall was painstakingly dismantled stone by stone and re-erected on the lengthened nave, leaving just enough room inside the Eaton Street boundary for a new west porch. A gallery was erected at the west end of the nave. This work was completed by April 1864.[33] Some time subsequently the plaster was scraped from the chancel north, south and west walls and they had wainscoting applied.

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[25] The stair enclosure is too tightly cramped against the chancel north wall windows.
[26] Such steeples/turrets are a recurring Hansom motif and are to be found *inter alia* on his Woodchester Priory Church, Downside Abbey school building, Clifton College Chapel, St Clare's Abbey Chapel, Darlington, and Ss Peter & Paul and St Elizabeth's Church, Coughton.
[27] This is confirmed by late nineteenth-century photographs.
[28] For instance, a belfry opening is shown on the tower west face that does on appear on the church, capitals and bases that were not executed are on attached columns to the west door, and the iron cross atop the spire is not oriented—perhaps an error in interpreting the drawings.
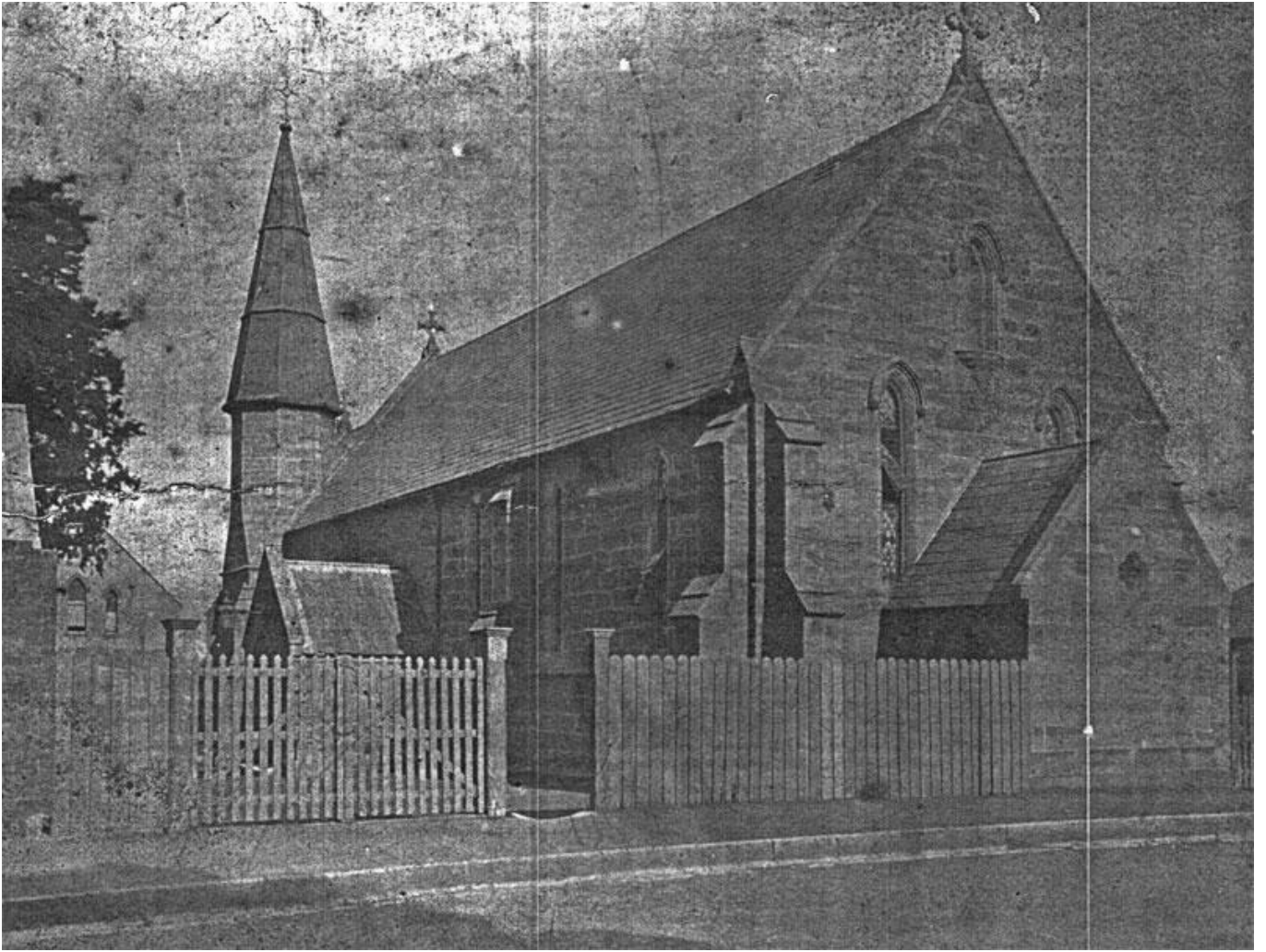[29] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 2.
[30] Notches in the chancel arch attest to the one time existence of a rood screen. Whether an Easter sepulchre recess was constructed cannot be determined at present because the area lies behind later wainscoting.
[31] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 4.
[32] ibid.
[33] ibid.

The church as extended by Fr Therry (Image: courtesy St Augustine's Parish, Balmain)

The extended church was not to prove adequate for long. By 1901 the Balmain population had grown to 30,077 and so on 7 October 1906 the foundation stone was laid for a huge new St Augustine's to the designs of Sydney architect A.E. Bates.[34] The only place for this new building on the congested site was directly north of the old St Augustine's, parallel with it and so close that it was necessary to demolish and remove the latter's north porch. Then in 1922, when a new presbytery was built very close to the south side of the old church, again because of site congestion, the sacristy had to be demolished (see image overleaf). At some stage the spire was also removed.

With the opening of the new church old St Augustine's suffered much the same fate as St Stephen's, its Brisbane sister church, had after the opening of the new St Stephen's Cathedral there.[35] All the church furnishings were removed, the gallery was dismantled and a low stage area built in the chancel, thereby converting it for use as a hall. It has also seen use as a classroom for the adjacent Catholic primary school.

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[34] Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 75–6.
[35] See Friends Newsletter No. 11, June 2006, p. 6.
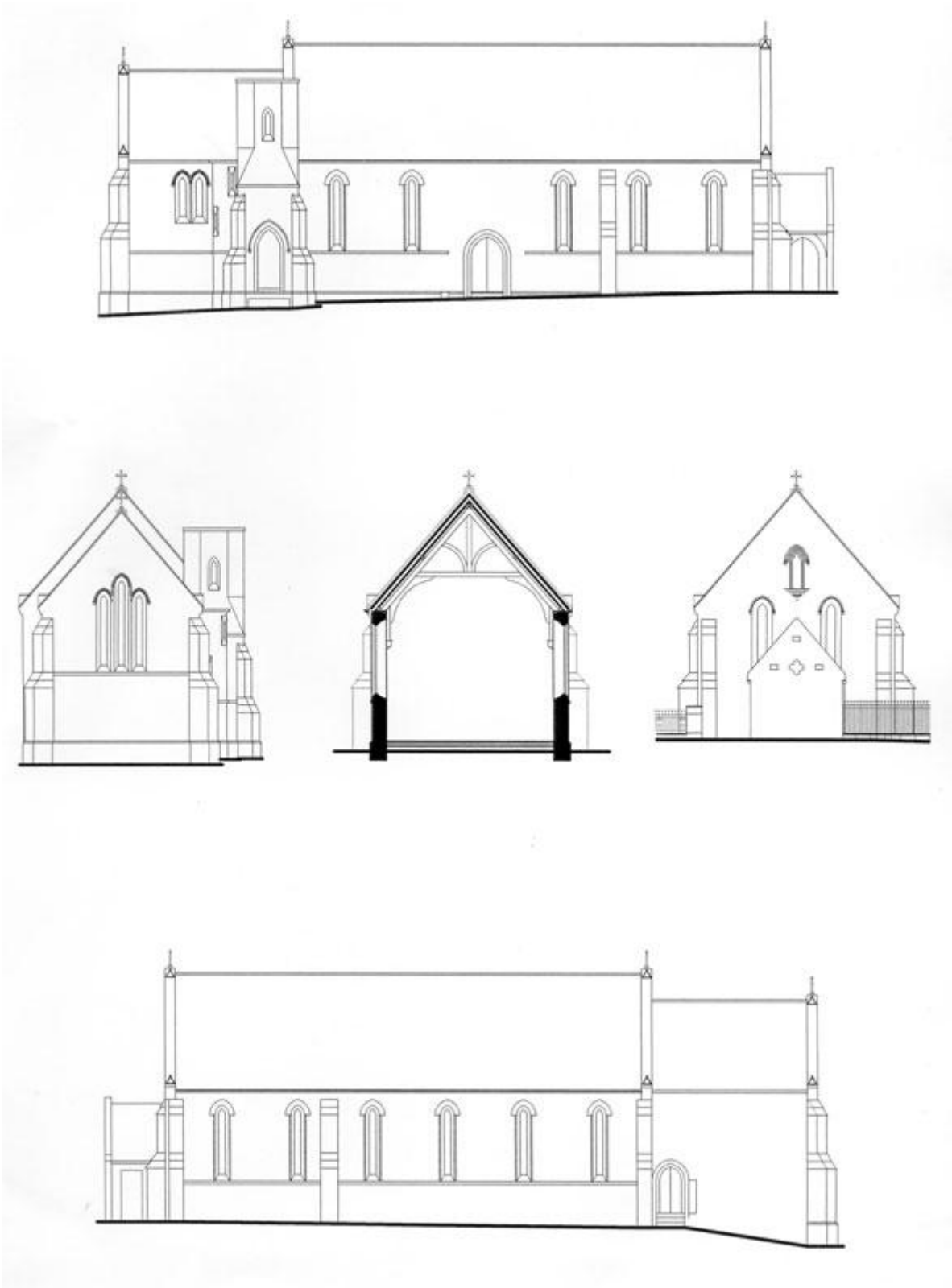
Measured drawings of St Augustine's showing Fr Therry's extensions and the building shorn of its north porch, sacristy and spire (Courtesy John Graham & Associates, architects, Sydney)
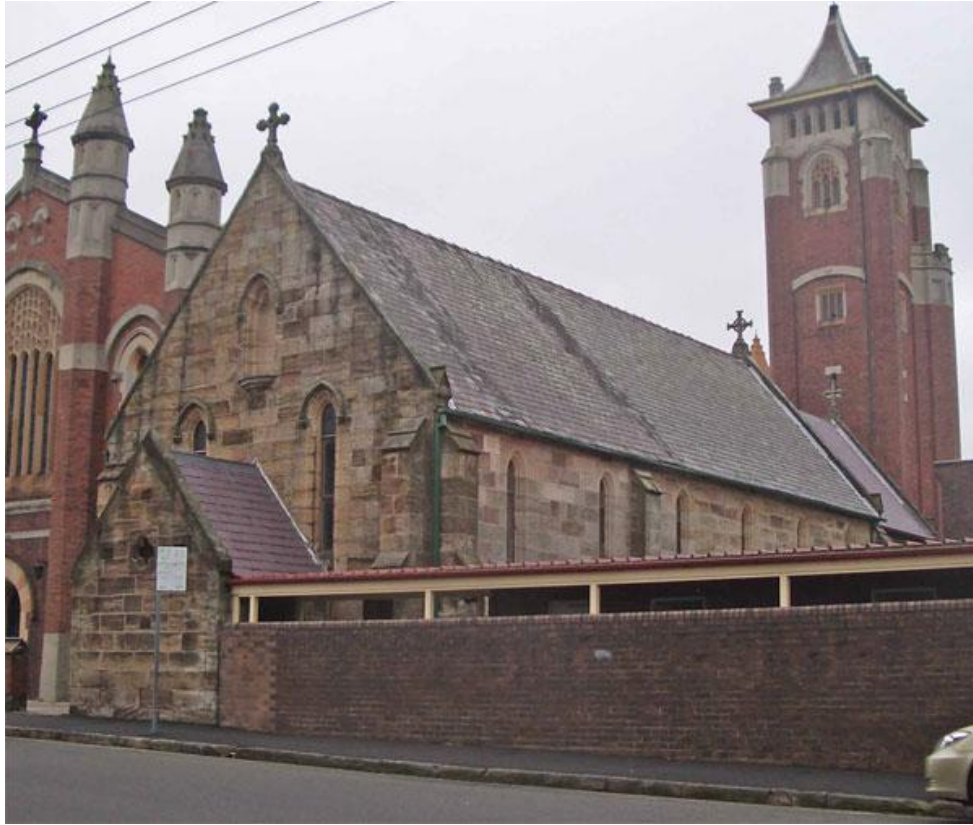
The old building hemmed in by the later church (Image: Brian Andrews)

Site of the demolished sacristy (Image: Jude Andrews)

The impact of Pugin's drawings

As noted in the Introduction, St Augustine's and St Francis Xavier's Church, Berrima, are of particular interest in the history of Pugin's church design implementations for, alone amongst his richly diverse oeuvre, they were constructed from the same set of plans. As such they can shed light on the impact that his way of detailing—or not detailing—his working drawings had on the finished product.

We know that Pugin dashed off his designs for buildings, stained glass, metalwork and so on, with extraordinary speed. And these design drawings—often little more than rough sketches—resulted in the exquisite results we so admire, with their beautifully proportioned composition and scholarly detail.[36] He was able to do this because he had built up a group of industrial collaborators to execute his designs, supplying their craftsmen with fragments of medieval works to inform their understanding of what he wanted, and supervising their growth in the execution of his designs in the way that he desired, so that they could in time—with little, if any, intervention—produce results that fully met both the letter and spirit of his intentions.

Of these collaborators, the key person for the bulk of his English ecclesiastical buildings was George Myers, his favoured builder.[37] That Myers' men could turn a Pugin sketch into a perfect neo-medieval product is without dispute. An illuminating example of such capability is a splendid 1847 headstone in Tasmania, Pugin's design for which has survived in the Myers Family Trust collection.[38] Note how a mere diagonal stroke in the drawing has become a sword in St Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor's hand. In a certain sense one can say that Pugin's works, particularly the details, are not entirely his, but rather the result of an extraordinary symbiosis between a creative genius and the remarkable craftsmen in whom he had such huge trust.


A Pugin drawing detail and the finished product (Images: Myers Family Trust and Brian Andrews)

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[36] The roughness of his drawings and the consequent speed of their execution, containing the essential germ of each creative act, are surely the principal reason why he was able to complete such a huge volume of designs in such a short life.

[37] For an excellent biography of Myers, readers are referred to Patricia Spencer-Silver, *Pugin's Builder: The Life and Work of George Myers*, The University of Hull Press, Hull, 1993. Patricia, a Friend of Pugin, is currently completing a second edition of this work, to be published by Gracewing.

[38] I am indebted to Patricia Spencer-Silver for arranging access to the Myers Family Trust collection.

Because of this relationship with Myers and his men, Pugin's architectural drawings were generally light on detail for elements such as moulding profiles, statue niches, crocketting and so on. He would typically include a large scale detail where it was sufficiently different to warrant providing more accurate information, often accompanied by adjacent notes. A good example is the complete set of 1845 drawings on four sheets for the (unexecuted) design of a Catholic church at St Peter Port, Guernsey.[39] The traceried windows have no moulding profile details but a quarter full-size cross-section, complete with notes, is given for fixing the lead to the roof ridge. It has been remarked by some writers that Pugin's architectural drawings appear to be a strange mix of the general and the detailed, but the reason is perfectly logical and—most importantly—entirely consistent with his modus operandi, as has been outlined above.
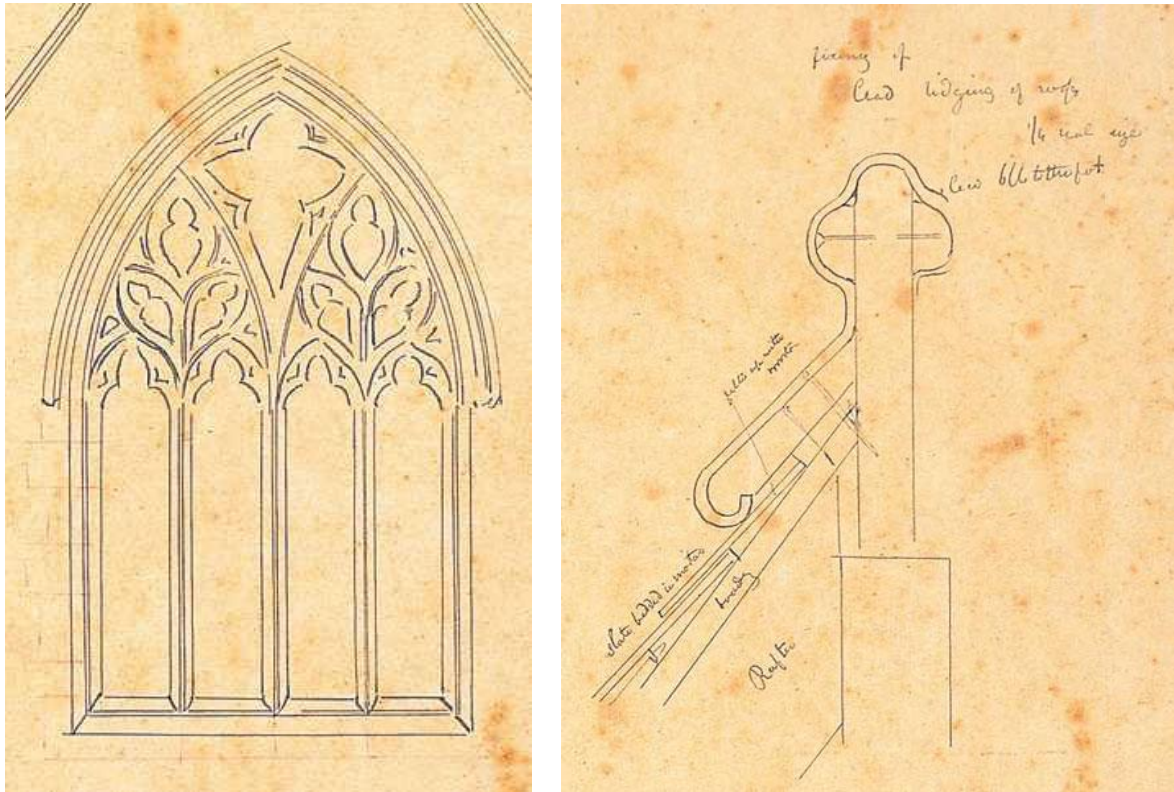

At left: the nave west window from Pugin's design drawings for a church at Guernsey; at right: a detail from the same drawings showing the method of fixing the roof ridge (Courtesy St John's College, University of Sydney)

As a further safeguard in achieving what he wanted for his English buildings Pugin supervised their construction, visiting each site on a number of occasions, as his diaries show. Such was not possible with his Australian designs. The interpretation of the drawings was in the hands of men with little if any understanding of the grammar and vocabulary of English medieval architecture upon which Pugin's work was so firmly, yet originally, based. In the case of the Balmain and Berrima churches no supervising architect was involved and the respective builders were left to their own devices in 'reading' the plans. That the plans consisted of the usual Pugin mélange of eighth-scale elevations and

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[39] See Brian Andrews, *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin at the Antipodes*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2002, exhibition catalogue, exhibit F.27, pp. 183–5.

sections plus a few details will become evident as we consider how differently the details on the two churches turned out.[40]

The proportions and principal dimensions of the buildings generally correspond—they would have been accurately derived from the main elevations and sections on the drawings. Yet even here, small variations occur. For example, the nave roof trusses are the same, but the treatment of the ceiling boarding differs—in Balmain below the rafters, in Berrima above them—and Balmain has an intermediate principal rafter at the centre of each bay.
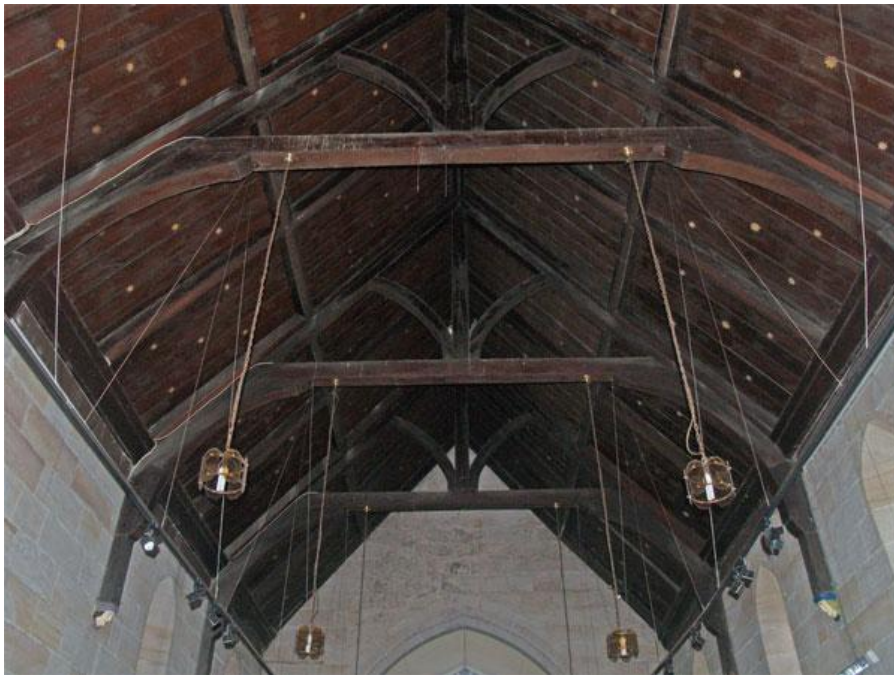
Above: the Balmain roof; below: the Berrima roof (Images: Brian Andrews & Ian Stapleton)

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[40] Traditionally, the principal elevations and cross-sections on architectural plans were drawn 'eighth scale', that is, one eighth of an inch to the foot (slightly larger than 1:100).

Beyond this there is little identical detail; certainly not in the mouldings to doors and windows. This is glaringly evident in the west doors. Berrima has *sui generis* wave mouldings, certainly not correct for the Early English style of Pugin's design.[41] Yet this is, aesthetically speaking, greatly in advance of the clumsy Balmain mouldings, which look like a handful of spaghetti.
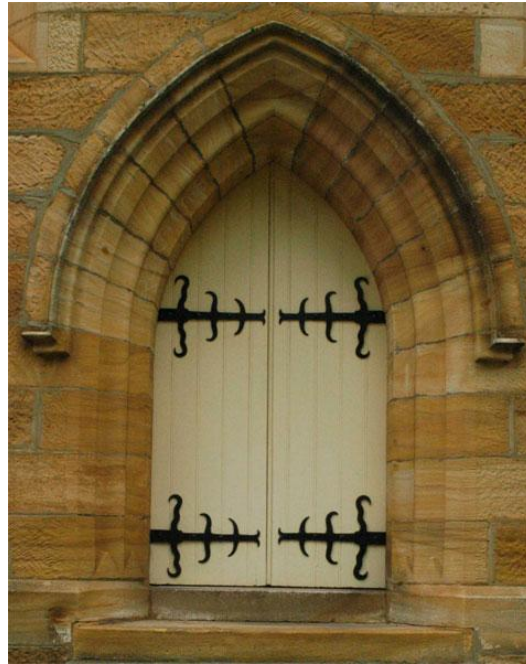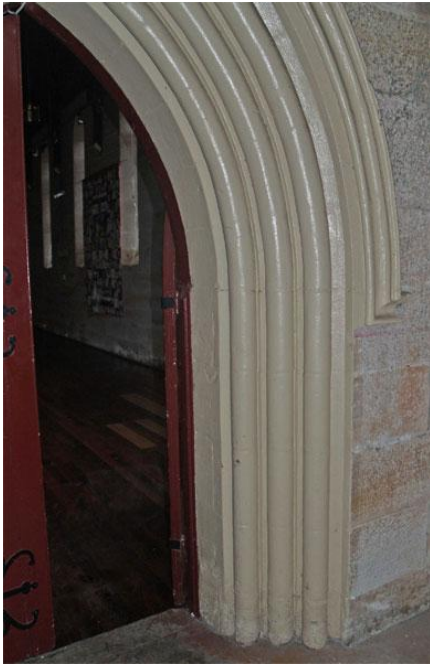
At left: the Balmain west door mouldings (Image: Brian Andrews)*; at right: the Berrima west door* (Image: Ian Stapleton)

A comparison of the statue niches on the facades also reveals very differing interpretations of the moulding profiles, particularly to the corbelled base. Again, the Berrima result is more pleasing, although not faithful to the Early English idiom.
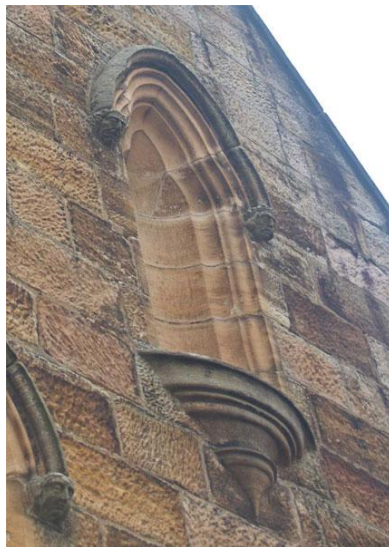
Statue niches at Balmain (left) and Berrima (Images: Brian Andrews and Ian Stapleton)

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[41] Wave mouldings are typical of the Decorated style, thus later than the Early English.

Undoubtedly the widest divergence in the builders' understanding and interpretation of Pugin's plans can be seen in the sedilia. It is difficult to believe that they arose from the same drawing, a pointer to how very sketchy the detail must have been.

The Balmain (left) and Berrima sedilia compared (Images: Brian Andrews and Ian Stapleton)

What general conclusions can we draw from this comparison of Pugin's little churches at Balmain and Berrima?

Firstly, because of the characteristic content of Pugin's architectural drawings, it confirms that the successful realisation of his creative vision was critically dependent upon the collaboration of builders and craftsmen who fully understood the Gothic idiom. Such was not the case with his designs for Archbishop Polding. This is perhaps underscored by what resulted from his Tasmanian designs for Bishop Willson. Here, the builders and local architect were no more literate in the Gothic, but they were working from accurate scale models of the churches made by Myers' men, supplemented by full-size exemplar stonework—also by Myers' men—for important details, rather than from Pugin drawings. It is fair to say that the buildings so constructed are, accordingly, closer to Pugin's intentions than those in New South Wales and Queensland.

Secondly, where we quite properly designate Polding's group of buildings as designed by Pugin, we need to qualify this by recognising that their Pugin traits encompass the overall plan form, composition and measurements, but by no means all of the details as implemented.

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