

Pugin's Wexford

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin was a Londoner, born on 1st March 1812 at 39 Keppel Street, Russell Square to Augustus Charles Pugin, a French émigré, and his English wife, Catherine Welby.

His connection with Wexford came through the patronage of John, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, Waterford and Wexford. Shrewsbury's wife was a native of Blackwater, Co. Wexford. Her uncle, John Hyacinth Talbot, was the first Catholic MP for County Wexford after Catholic Emancipation in 1829.

An only child, Pugin was a precocious genius who received most of his education in his father's school of architectural draftsmanship and by the age of fifteen had already designed Gothic furniture for Windsor Castle. His father worked in the office of John Nash, the great Regency architect and published with the help of his son, the earliest popular design books for the Gothic Revival.

The young Pugin was as important an influence on the history of nineteenth century English architecture as Frank Lloyd Wright was to be on American architecture.

Pugin became an enthusiastic convert to Roman Catholicism at the age of twenty-three by which time he had lost his first wife, Ann Garnet, and both of his parents.

He published extensively on his ideas for church architecture and gradually established himself as the greatest of the Victorian 'new men'.

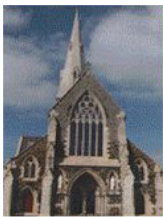
He was an extraordinarily gifted artist and designed ceramics, stained glass, wallpapers, textiles, memorial brasses, church plate, etc. Probably the pinnacle of his design work was when he drew all the interior designs for the new Houses of Parliament.

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Pugin was to die through overwork at the age of forty in 1852, but has left a unique diocesan heritage to Ferns in his churches. His son and son-in-law, E.W. Pugin and George Ashlin, were to continue the building of Gothic Revival churches and monuments in Ireland.



St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy.



St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, for which the foundation stone was laid in 1843, was the largest church Pugin built in Ireland.

The recent renovations of 1996 have restored to a great extent, the original beautiful building as visualised by Pugin.

The external stonework is superb work by the Irish stonemasons who were praised by Pugin.

The restored stencilling of the interior gives some idea of what Pugin wanted for his churches.



St. Peter's College, Wexford



The interior of the Chapel of St Peter's College was unchanged until 1950, when the removal of the rood screen changed Pugin's original design.

What survives is the fine triptych altar design and the magnificent Hardman stained glass in the rose window, which contains the Talbot family coat of arms. It is still an original and beautiful interior where the first Mass was celebrated in 1840.



The Collegiate nature of the original church was in its day unique.



Church of the Assumption, Bree, Co. Wexford.

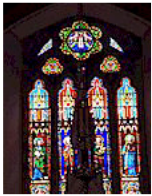
The foundation stone of the Church of the Assumption, Bree was laid in 1837, which makes it the first of Pugin's Irish churches. As an early church it is a simple building with a long nave and smaller chancel.



The main feature, which is now covered, was a very early example of open roof timbering. It has been much changed in renovations, but it is an interesting church in the light of Pugin's other Irish churches within the next few years. It also owes its existence to the Redmond family patronage.

St. Mary's Church, Tagoat, Co. Wexford.

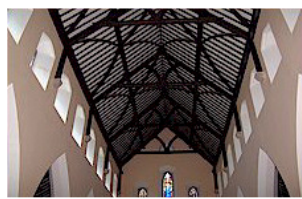
St. Mary's church, Tagoat, was the parish church of John Hyacinth Talbot, MP.



He was a great benefactor of this church which is the most important of Pugin's Irish parish churches.

It contains more original Pugin features than any of the other Irish churches, such as a memorial brass in memory of Fr. Walter Rowe, who built the church, Minton tiles, wooden screens to the side chapels and Hardman stained glass.

Pugin presented a set of brass candlesticks of his own design to the church, which was dedicated in 1846.



The Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

The church of St. Michael the Archangel, Gorey, is unique in the churches of Pugin in that it is built in the Norman style.

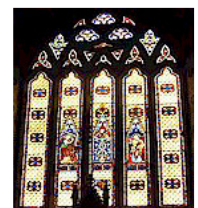
It was begun in 1839 and completed in 1842 and is one of his earliest Irish commissions. The patrons were the Esmonde family, who donated the site and whose coat of arms are shown above the front entrance. The spire was never added, but Pugin shows it in his drawing of his churches. The interior was also decorated with highly coloured stencilling and again the timbering of the roof trusses is interesting.

St. Alphonsus' Church, Barntown, Co. Wexford.

St. Alphonsus' church, Barntown in the parish of Glynn, was planned by Pugin as a complete Catholic parish church. So it consists of nave and aisles with belfry, south porch, wide alleys for processions, a distinct and deep chancel, a sacristy and Lady chapel, etc.

Unfortunately, the church has been much altered, but the external stonework and solid nature of the church is striking.

The finest feature of the interior is the surviving Hardman high window. The church was built 1844-1848.



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