

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Johnson, Michael (2020) Completing Pugin's Vision: Dunn And Hansom's Contribution to St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle. Northern Catholic History (61). pp. 28-38. ISSN 0307-4455

Published by: North East Catholic History Society

URL: [http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/general\\_directory/diocesan...](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/general_directory/diocesan...)  
<[http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/general\\_directory/diocesan%20societies/nechs/nechs\\_mag.php](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/general_directory/diocesan%20societies/nechs/nechs_mag.php)>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/45159/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

# COMPLETING PUGIN'S CATHEDRAL: DUNN AND HANSOM'S CONTRIBUTION TO ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, NEWCASTLE

Michael Johnson

The mother church of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle was conceived not as a cathedral, but as a parish church, built to serve the rapidly increasing Catholic population of Newcastle. Opened in 1844, the building was designed by A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52), the leading architect and polemicist of the Gothic Revival. Following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, St Mary's Church became the cathedral of the newly created Diocese of Hexham (later 'Hexham and Newcastle'). In the succeeding decades, additions to the fabric by various architectural practices transformed St Mary's into a substantial ecclesiastical precinct [Fig. 1].

This article examines the alterations and additions carried out by Dunn and Hansom, Newcastle's leading Catholic architects of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Illuminating the building's architectural evolution, it argues that Dunn and Hansom's work was instrumental in elevating St Mary's to cathedral status. Not only did their splendid tower and spire (1871-2) help to complete Pugin's vision for the building, but their *cathedra*, or Bishop's throne, literally defined St Mary's as the 'seat', or principal church, of the Diocese. At the same time, Dunn and Hansom's work on this distinguished place of worship helped to consolidate their status as the preeminent Catholic architects in the region.

## Pugin's church

The building of St Mary's Cathedral illuminates the forces that were transforming the English Catholic Church during the first half of the nineteenth century. After centuries of persecution, the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 abolished legal restrictions on Catholics. Industrialisation caused Britain's urban population to increase dramatically as people flooded into towns and cities seeking work. Finally, the Irish Famine of the 1840s brought an influx of Irish migrants to Britain's industrial regions. Together, these factors created an urgent demand for Catholic churches, chapels and schools.

A meeting of local Catholics was held on 26 July 1838 in the boys' school room of St Andrew's Church in Worswick Street. Chaired by Father William Riddell (1807-47), the meeting was attended by several members of the Dunn family, who would become important benefactors of the church. George Thomas Dunn (1785-1852) proposed that, 'The Catholic Chapel in this town being quite inadequate to accommodate the present numerous Congregation, it is highly

expedient that another Edifice should be erected in addition to the existing building.<sup>2</sup> The assembly resolved that:

it behoves the Catholic Body to endeavour to erect a large and handsome Church, that may be at the same time an honour to their religion, an ornament to the Town, and capable to afford sittings for about twelve hundred persons.<sup>3</sup>

A subscription fund was initiated and major sums were pledged by prominent Catholics. The priests James Worswick (1771-1843) and William Riddell gave £50 (£5,350) each.<sup>4</sup> George Thomas Dunn and ten other members of the Dunn family gave a total donation in excess of £1,300 (£139,100). Aside from these larger donations, the remaining funds came from public subscription among working-class Catholics and it was said that the church was paid for with 'the pennies of the poor'. When the target of £6,500 (£695,500) was reached, a site was acquired and Pugin was commissioned to submit a design.

Converting to Catholicism at the age of twenty-three, Pugin devoted his life to reviving the Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages, which to him was not merely an architectural style, but a substantiation of Christian faith. Pugin was among the first modern architects to understand the structural properties of medieval Gothic architecture. From this study, he developed principles of rational construction, truth-to-materials and hierarchical ornamentation that became fundamental to modern design. His concern for archaeological fidelity to medieval models and his conviction that art was a moral index of the society that produced it had a profound influence on Catholic and Anglican church-building. Pugin was incredibly prolific, but worked himself to insanity and death by the age of 40.

Pugin visited Newcastle in February 1842 to examine the site. The building committee was anxious that the project should not exceed its modest budget and Pugin doubted that the church could be built for such a small sum. After drawing up his initial plans, Pugin ventured that the church could be realised for £6,700 (£716,900) if the tower was built only up to a height of 15 feet, forming a porch. He also identified features that could be omitted until further funds became available, such as the rood screen.<sup>5</sup>

The church was designed in the 'Decorated' Gothic style of the period of Edward the Third (1327-77).<sup>6</sup> Pugin adopted a rectangular plan based on that of St Wulfram's Church at Grantham (1180-1550) [Fig. 2]. However, St Wulfram's has a tower which projects slightly at the west end, forming an entrance porch. In his design, Pugin relocated the tower to the end of the south aisle in order to use the full length of the site for the body of the church.

Emulating St Wulfram's, Pugin devised a roof consisting of three gables.<sup>7</sup> The committee was concerned that such a roof would be vulnerable to damage caused by melting snow and suggested that a pitched roof over a central clerestory and lean-to roofs over the aisles would be preferable. However, Pugin stated that clerestories were not used in the fourteenth century except for very large churches, demonstrating that fidelity to medieval practice was a central principle of his work. He also argued that lean-to roofs would make the aisles feel oppressive. Pugin attempted to reassure the committee by insisting that lead cladding would protect the roof. Ultimately, the roof was built to his design, but its tripartite structure did indeed cause problems in later years.

Construction began in 1840, with Pugin's trusted builders George Myers (1803-75) and Richard Wilson serving as contractors. The church was built of local freestone, Pugin having specified the use of either Elswick or Westgate stone. Within the nave, Pugin had intended the corbels supporting the principal rafters of the roof to be sculpted in the form of angels, prophets and kings, but medieval carvings in the choir of Lincoln Cathedral inspired him to create angels with musical instruments instead.

Despite the committee's cost-cutting suggestions, the building was much as Pugin intended, except that his tower and spire remained incomplete. In his 1871 book *The Catholic Churches and Chapels of Newcastle upon Tyne*, T. Cooke Nicholson praised the building's interior and anticipated the completion of the tower and spire:

The enrichments of its style are lavished on the interior, which exhibits in every part a refinement and elegance, as well as a delicacy of finish in its minutest details; while the exterior is comparatively plain, and generally is ineffective, but be it observed *en passant*, that its appearance will be greatly enhanced by the Tower and Spire, which have not yet been completed.<sup>8</sup>

St Mary's Church was elevated to cathedral status in 1850 and subsequent alterations to the fabric gradually transformed it into a building worthy of the title. Significant additions included a chapter room and library designed by George Goldie (1828-87) in 1851, a rood screen of Caen stone by Goldie in 1853 and a presbytery designed by Pugin's eldest son, E.W. Pugin (1834-75), in 1858-60.<sup>9</sup> However, much of the work undertaken during the next fifty years was carried out by the architectural practice founded by Archibald Matthias Dunn (1832-1917), a member of the Catholic dynasty instrumental in building the church.

## St Mary's Schools and the Riddell Tomb

Born in Wylam in 1832, Dunn was a relative of George Thomas Dunn, who first proposed building the church [Fig. 3]. He received architectural training in the office of Charles Francis Hansom (1817-88) of Bristol and returned to Newcastle to set up independent practice in 1854. Dunn established himself by designing Catholic churches at Blackhill (1856-7), Gateshead (1857-9), Walker (1859-60) and Blyth (1859-61).

Dunn's earliest traceable design in connection with the cathedral was for St Mary's R.C. Schools in Bath Lane Terrace (1856-7, demolished), about a quarter of a mile from the cathedral.<sup>10</sup> Built on land donated by William Dunn (1811-62), the son of George Thomas Dunn, the schools formed a quadrangle, 150 feet across. A master's house with bell turret was flanked by wings containing a boys' and girls' school, each accommodating 500 pupils. The masonry consisted of block walling in irregular courses. The roofs were covered with Welsh slate and finished with an ornamental ridge, which Dunn designed especially for the building, rather than using a standardised product. The contractors were Gibson and Howard.<sup>11</sup>

Dunn's first work within the cathedral precinct came in 1862, when he designed an altar tomb to mark the grave of Bishop William Riddell, who had been instrumental in building the church and served as its first parish priest [Fig. 4].<sup>12</sup> This commission undoubtedly had personal significance for Dunn because Riddell was his godfather and was well known to the Dunn family.<sup>13</sup> At Riddell's request, a large catacomb or vault was built under the south wall of the cathedral in 1847 as a burial place for himself and the clergy of the town. Constructed by Richard Cail (1812-93), a prominent local builder, the vault contains shelves for twenty coffins, all arched with masonry.<sup>14</sup>

Riddell earned the respect of Newcastle's populace due to his unstinting efforts in caring for the victims of a typhus epidemic that swept through the town - and others - in 1847. Sadly, Riddell died as a result of visiting the sick in their homes at Sandgate and his body was interred in the vault.<sup>15</sup> To commemorate Riddell's devotion to the poor, a Gothic altar tomb was built just north of the vault in 1862-3. Various sources have suggested that it may have been the work of Pugin. In fact, it was designed by Dunn and was the first of several elaborate memorials he created for prominent clergymen.

Dunn's design takes the form of a chest tomb, a type of monument shaped like a stone box [Fig. 5]. Examples survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the majority of chest tombs are believed to date from the seventeenth century onwards. Dunn's design is typical in that the body of the subject is

buried beneath the memorial, not in the chest itself. Those chest tombs built inside medieval churches are frequently surmounted by recumbent effigies of the subject, while those located in churchyards are usually covered with plain stone slabs. As an external tomb, the Riddell memorial does not feature an effigy, but is covered with a coped stone, its upper face shaped into a cross that is decorated with black and white mosaic tiles. Around the edge of the cover is the inscription 'Sub hoc lapide iacet corpus Gulielmi Riddell Episcopi, qui hanc ecclesiam fieri fecit.' ('Under this stone lies the body of Bishop William Riddell, who caused this church to be built').

The front of the tomb features sculpted panels between polished red granite columns. The central panel shows the Bishop ministering to the sick [Fig. 6]. This is flanked by the Riddell coat of arms and the monogram W.R., along with a bishop's mitre. A portrait of the Bishop projects from a quatrefoil panel at one end of the tomb, while St Bede is represented at the other [Fig. 7]. Curiously, this does not resemble conventional representations of Bede; it does, however, look remarkably like Dunn, suggesting that this is a portrait of the architect [Fig. 8].<sup>16</sup> All of this carving, in Hartlepool limestone, was executed by Patterson of Newcastle.<sup>17</sup>

The tomb makes an interesting comparison to similar monuments Dunn designed in later years. In 1884, for example, he produced a tomb for James Chadwick (1813-82), the second Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle [Fig. 9]. Located in the cemetery at Ushaw College, this was modelled on the tomb of Godfrey de Bouillon - a knight of the First Crusade - in the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem [Fig. 10]. The well-travelled Dunn had visited the church with Bishop Chadwick, who admired the tomb and said that it was the kind he would like for himself. Dunn reportedly made the initial drawings on the spot.<sup>18</sup> Like the Bouillon tomb, Dunn's design consists of a grave cover, with a coped stone resting on four short columns. Echoing the Riddell tomb, however, the columns are executed in red granite with foliated capitals and the coped stone is shaped into a cross.

Much later, Dunn produced a tomb in memory of Herbert Cox Duke (1845-86) at St Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green, London (1890).<sup>19</sup> Duke converted to Catholicism in 1846 and served as parish priest at St Anne's Church in Keighley, Yorkshire.<sup>20</sup> This was another chest tomb, this time standing on a granite base [Fig. 11]. Like the Riddell monument, there are sculpted panels at either end, one featuring Duke's monogram and the other a chalice emblematic of the Eucharist. Further similarities are the cross that covers the top surface of the tomb, although this example is floriated, and the shafts of polished granite that adorn the body, here supporting blind arcades of interlaced Romanesque arches. Dunn was particularly fond of interlaced arches

and used them to enhance the frontages of St Dominic's Church, Newcastle (1869-73) and St Catherine of Sienna's Church, Birmingham (1874-5, demolished). The tomb was built by Joseph Ambrose Bladwell (1859-1929) of Bath, a member of a family of builders and contractors who worked on Dunn and Hansom's churches of St Mary, Bath (1879-81) and St Joseph, Hartlepool (1893-5), as well as Downside Abbey (1872-c.95) and Stonyhurst College (1877-89), using Bath stone for most of these projects.<sup>21</sup>

### **Heating apparatus, presbytery and roof**

The Riddell tomb began Dunn's long association with St Mary's Cathedral, but his next contribution was entirely practical in nature. In 1865, he prepared the plans for the installation of a new heating apparatus, giving his services free of charge. This was no doubt a judicious move that was likely to commend him to the church authorities should a more substantial commission arise in the future. The builder, William Foggin (1822-92), cut ducts in the floor at a cost of £81 6s 5d (£9,801).<sup>22</sup> The heating apparatus was provided at a cost of £185 (£22,385) by Walker and Emley of Newcastle, whose name was visible on the cast iron gratings over the ducts.<sup>23</sup>

This was followed by a more prestigious commission to design additions to E.W. Pugin's presbytery in 1869. A Tudor Gothic design in brick and stone, the presbytery was in part funded with a £200 (£23,600) bequest from a Miss A. Dunn.<sup>24</sup> Dunn added a substantial extension in stone, incorporating a passage way and staircase between the presbytery and the sacristy of the church [Fig. 12]. The extension featured a round tower and spire, which, according to Nicholson, had 'a particularly agreeable effect.'<sup>25</sup> The space under the tower was made into a safe with a steel door. To make the passage into the new building from the cathedral, Dunn removed one of the windows in the cloister and replaced it with the present arch.<sup>26</sup>

The original building committee had been concerned about Pugin's decision to erect a three-gabled roof, fearing that it would be vulnerable to damage caused by melting snow. It seems that these fears were well founded because, in 1871, Dunn was asked to examine the roof, which was beginning to show signs of decay. His findings were outlined in a report that he read at a meeting of the Northern Architectural Association in February of that year, entitled 'Reparation of the Roof of St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, which was affected by dry rot.'<sup>27</sup> After praising the church as one of Pugin's best works, Dunn observed that a 140-foot-long gutter ran along the roof, but that no 'snow-boards' had been put into it and the lead at both ends of the church had been removed. As a result, damp had come through and dry rot had set in.<sup>28</sup> The whole of the roof was found to be 'one mass of rottenness', with 'the whole foot

of the spar [rafter] and the principal next to the gable end resting only on a space of 2 ½ inches.’<sup>29</sup> Dunn had no hesitation in saying that ‘if this state of the roof had not been discovered at the time it was, it would have fallen into the cathedral during the present winter.’<sup>30</sup> Dunn repaired the defects with ironwork, with minimal impact on the outward appearance. The result was that ‘few people could tell that it had undergone renovation.’<sup>31</sup>

## **Tower and spire**

St Mary’s Cathedral stood without its intended tower for 30 years. The possibility of completing the structure arose when Dunn’s relative, Elizabeth Dunn (b. 1786), died on 3 September 1870, bequeathing £2,000 (£228,000) for this purpose. Her will stipulated that a new window should be introduced to commemorate her donation and that it should feature the Crucifixion with St John and Mary Magdalene. A fine window was duly built in the north side of the west wall (c.1872) [Fig. 13]. The donor is shown praying in front of an accurate representation of Dunn’s tower and the inscription reads, ‘Pray for the soul of Elizabeth Dunn. Munificent benefactress to this church.’

Pugin’s tower was built up to a height of five courses above the door and rested on a 30-foot deep bed of concrete. As Pugin intended, the base of the tower formed a southern porch and contained the first few steps leading to the proposed ringing loft and belfry [Fig. 14]. There was little possibility of building the tower to Pugin’s design because he had asked for his detailed drawings to be returned when it became apparent that the tower could not be built during the first phase of construction, although a perspective drawing survives in the cathedral archives [Fig. 15]. The prestigious commission to produce a new design was awarded to Dunn, which is unsurprising given his relationship to the benefactor and his previous work on the building.

In February 1871, Dunn showed his design at the same meeting of the Northern Architectural Association at which he presented his findings about the cathedral’s roof.<sup>32</sup> This was two months before he wrote to Edward Joseph Hansom (1842-1900) with an offer of partnership, indicating that the design was entirely his own. A poster depicting the cathedral with its majestic spire was issued to raise additional funds to ensure that the tower could be completed with all its elaborate detail.

Dunn devised a tower that would not only complete the church, but also proclaim its status as a cathedral [Fig. 16]. Designed in the same Decorated Gothic style as the cathedral, it complements Pugin’s work. The tower has three stages. The tall first stage rises to a ringing chamber in the second stage, access to which is via a turret staircase. The third stage contains the belfry chamber



and above this rises the spire. The proportions differ somewhat from those of Pugin's design. The first stage is much taller, braced with corner buttresses, while the belfry has similar details to Pugin's design, but appears shorter. Dunn's spire is simpler than Pugin's, with fewer pinnacles clustered around the base.

The cost was estimated at £2,230 (£254,220), but several alterations and additions to the design were carried out at an extra expense of around £300 (£33,600), bringing the total cost of the new work to about £2,550 (£285,600).<sup>33</sup> Construction was carried out under Dunn and Hansom's supervision by Walter Scott (1826-1910), a prominent Newcastle builder [Fig. 17]. The tower is 105 feet tall, tapering from 24 feet wide at the base to 22 feet at the pinnacles. The spire is 19 feet in diameter at the base, soaring to a height of 107 feet. From base to summit, the height of the entire structure is 212 feet. The pinnacle is capped with a 10-foot tall weathervane.

To secure the finest craftsmanship for their buildings, Dunn and Hansom formed good working relations with skilled practitioners. The tower's elaborate detail was carved by John Roddis (1839-87) of Birmingham, who was also engaged on carving the stonework for Dunn's church of St Dominic, Newcastle and would later do the same at St Catherine of Sienna's Church, Birmingham. The tower culminates with sturdy crocketed pinnacles at the four corners. The pinnacles are linked by parapets perforated with quatrefoils. Above them rises the immense octagonal spire, its four principal faces pierced by slender lucarnes or garret windows. Above these are three bands of recessed ornamentation. Despite Elizabeth Dunn's bequest, the tower and spire were not built entirely as Dunn intended. The tower was designed for a peal of eight or more bells, but these were never installed. Likewise, it was intended to erect a clock on the second stage, but this was never implemented.

Reports in the building press indicate how the spire was received by contemporary critics. *Building News* praised it as a 'handsome steeple' when it reviewed the design in 1872, adding that 'Each angle of the spire is finished off with a beading, which adds greatly to the richness and originality of the design.'<sup>34</sup> Writing in 1898, however, *The Builder* commented that the tower and spire 'are ill-proportioned and badly detailed, which is a pity. Pugin's work, though far beyond anything else of his time, is not so good but that little care might have produced a steeple at least worthy of it.'<sup>35</sup> More recent commentators have been kinder, with Sir Nikolaus Pevsner describing the cathedral as a graceful structure 'crowned by a noble needle spire.'<sup>36</sup> The tower is often criticised for being out of proportion with the church, which is small for a cathedral. Seen from afar, however, the spire pierces Newcastle's skyline,

signalling the building's presence in the townscape and defining it as a cathedral of the resurgent Catholic faith.

In April 1871, Dunn formed an architectural partnership with Edward Joseph Hansom (1842-1900), the son of his mentor Charles Francis Hansom and the nephew of Joseph Aloysius Hansom (1803-82), an architect, inventor of the Hansom Cab and founder of *The Builder*, a leading architectural journal. Opening an additional office at 2 Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, London in 1880, Dunn and Hansom were able to undertake commissions for Catholic churches, chapels and colleges throughout England, making them one of the few North East architectural practices to have a reputation outside the region. Undoubtedly, the successful completion of the tower and spire raised their profile, helping them make the transition from provincial to national practitioners.

## **Redecoration**

There is evidence to suggest that Dunn designed a tabernacle over the High Altar at some point before 1871. Described as 'a sumptuous piece of ecclesiastical work', this was twelve feet high, executed in Caen stone and terminated with a figure of the Pelican feeding her young.<sup>37</sup> The tabernacle was removed from the High Altar during the 1980s re-ordering.<sup>38</sup> What is certain is that Dunn and Hansom made significant contributions to the design of the interior and furnishings of the cathedral. In 1881, they orchestrated a programme of restoration and redecoration, which was carried out over a period of three months. This included new flooring, newly varnished seats, and renovation of the stonework, executed by the builder John Foggin.<sup>39</sup> The decoration included painting in the style of the fifteenth century by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake of Endell Street, London.<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to assess this work due to the scarcity of visual evidence, but detailed descriptions were published in the building press [Fig. 18].

The aisle roofs were painted buff and the timber a neutral green. The nave roof was painted red and buff, with decoration on the main timbers. A border in light red on buff ran over the arches and terminated at the top of each column, with a crowned M, for Mary, under a small canopy. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin was written upon scrolls in the nave, and upon a ribbon under the wall-plate in the aisles.

The chancel walls were given green borders over the arches and were diapered with rose and lily motifs, each with the words 'Ave Maria' below. The chancel roof timbers were of light red, with buff ornament, and the front members of the rafters were decorated with fleurs-de-lis in gold. The panels were diapered with

quatrefoils in grey, the centre of which contained a gold star and fleur-de-lis alternately. Nathaniel Hubert John Westlake (1833-1921), a prolific religious artist, painted figures of the Blessed Virgin and St Gabriel under canopies representing the Annunciation, as well as four angels holding scrolls with inscriptions from the first part of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.<sup>41</sup>

The cathedral's original Stations of the Cross were pictures in wooden frames, each with a cross fixed to the top. These were replaced by new Stations of the Cross by Westlake, all painted on canvasses fixed to the walls. Each had an elaborate frame in the shape of a castellated building painted around it. Sadly, these too were removed during the time of Canon Murray. The surrounds to the pictures of Our Lady and the Angel Gabriel were painted out at the same time as the Stations of the Cross were removed.

To celebrate the cathedral's golden jubilee in 1894, a major redecoration was carried out, obscuring much of this work. At this point, there was a vast amount of stencilling done around the arches and walls. The tiled frieze running around the nave, decorated with the names of local saints, was introduced in 1902.<sup>42</sup>

### **Bishop's throne**

A cathedral should have a bishop's throne, or *cathedra*, from which the term 'cathedral' is derived. A throne was installed when the church became a cathedral in 1850, but this was regarded as 'too small and poor for such a Church, and looks paltry and insignificant, when compared with the magnificent Sedilia on the opposite side.'<sup>43</sup> In 1892, Dunn, Hansom and Dunn designed a large oak throne, for which they received a commission of £8 (£530).<sup>44</sup> This was made by Ralph Hedley (1848-1913), a gifted painter and wood carver, at a cost of £154 (£10,000). A majestic canopy of carved oak enshrines the chair. The rear panel is emblazoned with the Bishop's coat of arms and culminates with brilliantly carved tracery. The side pieces feature linenfold panelling at the base and traceried heads. Hedley's talents are exemplified by superb figures of Our Lady and St Cuthbert [Fig. 19].<sup>45</sup> A gable-like canopy crowns the structure, arrayed with finials and exquisite angelic figures. The throne was originally installed near the Blessed Sacrament chapel, standing on a platform with two steps. The left-hand side of the lower step was removable, as it blocked the end of the communion step and was only brought out when the Bishop was officiating.<sup>46</sup>

### **Baptistry**

After Dunn retired in 1893 and Hansom died in 1900, the firm was continued by Dunn's son, Archibald Manuel Dunn, and W. Ellison Fenwicke as Dunn,

Hansom and Fenwicke. The firm's last major contribution to St Mary's cathedral was the octagonal baptistry at the south-west corner (1901-2). Built at a cost of £1,400 (£162,400), the baptistry complemented the design of the cathedral, with Decorated-style tracery in the windows [Fig. 20]. Gargoyles project from the corners in the manner of those on the octagonal lantern tower of St Michael's Church, Elswick (1889-91).

The baptistry was entered through iron gates and access to the cathedral was provided by breaking through the wall into the south aisle. This necessitated the removal of windows commemorating the Dunn family, but these were re-installed in the baptistry. Additional illumination was provided by electric lighting. The interior had a floor of mosaic sets with a tablet inset. The font was moved into the baptistry and a war memorial designed by the architects was installed in front of the font.<sup>47</sup>

Dedicated to Catholic soldiers who died in the Boer War, the memorial was rectangular in shape, executed in white marble and clustered with figures representing the sorrows of war. At either end were figures in full uniform representing privates in the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Durham Light Infantry, together with reliefs of the arms of each regiment.<sup>48</sup> This poignant memorial was sculpted by Robert Beal of Newcastle, who had made the pulpit at St Dominic's Church (1879), the font at Our Lady and St Cuthbert at Prudhoe (1889-91) and the alabaster reredos at St Michael's, Elswick. The full cost of the memorial (£1,000) (£116,000) was paid by Robert Ormston Lamb (1837-1912) of Hayton House, Carlisle, a J.P. for Cumberland and County Durham.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, the monument was removed in the course of reordering in the 1980s, but it is likely that it resembled another monument the firm designed for St Mary's R.C. Cathedral, Edinburgh (1889). This was a Gothic memorial in alabaster and granite, dedicated to the memory of Catholic soldiers who had died in the service of their country. It featured a wealth of foliated carving, again executed by Beal at a cost of £700 (£86,800).<sup>50</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the church realised by Pugin fell somewhat short of that originally envisioned, but successive additions by various practitioners transformed the building into a dignified cathedral, which for over 175 years has been the spiritual heart of the Diocese. Dunn and Hansom were instrumental in this transformation, contributing a spectacular tower and spire, the Bishop's throne and a dignified baptistry where future generations of Catholics could be christened. This series of important commissions helped to establish their reputation as one of the leading Catholic architectural practices in England.

---

<sup>1</sup> The structure of the practice varied over time. The firm was founded in 1854 by Archibald Matthias Dunn, who worked independently until 1871, when he formed a partnership with Edward Joseph Hansom. Dunn's son Archibald Manuel Dunn (1863-1925) joined the partnership in 1887. When the elder Dunn retired in 1893, the practice was continued by his son, Hansom and William Ellison Fenwicke (1863-1952).

<sup>2</sup> Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*, p17.

<sup>3</sup> Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*, p17.

<sup>4</sup> Where financial sums are given, their equivalents in 2018 currency are presented in brackets.

<sup>5</sup> Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*, p21.

<sup>6</sup> The antiquarian Thomas Rickman divided medieval Gothic architecture into three phases in his book *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture* (1819). These were: the 'Early English' (c.1189-1307), which featured simple lancet windows, without tracery; the 'Decorated' (c.1250-1350), with geometrical or curvilinear tracery; and the 'Perpendicular' (c.1350-1550), characterised by vertical linearity. Like Pugin, Dunn favoured the Decorated style when the budget allowed.

<sup>7</sup> Pugin occasionally favoured this plan-type for churches with large congregations, as at St Mary's.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholson, T.C. (1871) *The Catholic Churches and Chapels of Newcastle upon Tyne*. Newcastle: Henry Savage, pp37-38.

<sup>9</sup> The rood screen was mostly paid for by Miss Riddell of Felton Park, possibly a sister of Bishop William Riddell. It was removed during the time of Canon Murray.

<sup>10</sup> *Newcastle Courant*, 14 March 1856, p1.

<sup>11</sup> *Builder*, 13 June 1857, p340.

<sup>12</sup> Riddell was consecrated Bishop of Longo and Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District in 1844.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn was baptised by Father James Worswick on 16 November 1832 at St Andrew's Church, Newcastle. See St Andrew's parish records, Tyne and Wear Archives, C.NC77/1/1.

<sup>14</sup> Cail was born in Gateshead on 11 May 1812. After being educated at Dr Bruce's School in Newcastle, he served a seven-year apprenticeship to the Newcastle builder Joseph Grey. Establishing his own building firm in 1832, he undertook substantial contracts, including important railway projects, and made large profits by importing timber, slates and Aberdeen flags. He was a major supporter of the Redheugh Bridge project and formed a company to promote it in 1865.

---

<sup>15</sup> The vault also contains the bodies of Father William Fletcher who died in 1848, another victim of the typhus epidemic, and of the more recent Bishops Hugh Lindsay and Kevin Dunn.

<sup>16</sup> This is feasible since it is known that Dunn and Hansom included portraits of themselves in the corbels at their church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Cambridge (1885-90).

<sup>17</sup> *Builder*, 12 September 1863, p659.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn travelled widely throughout his life and much of his inspiration came from buildings he had encountered on his excursions. He published a book documenting his travels entitled *Notes and Sketches of an Architect* (1886).

<sup>19</sup> *Architect*, 1 August 1890, p69 and plate.

<sup>20</sup> Gorman, W.G. (1910) *Converts to Rome, a biographical list of the more notable converts to the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom during the last sixty years*. London: Sands & Co.

<sup>21</sup> The elder Joseph Bladwell (1828-91) worked with Dunn and Hansom on several occasions. He announced his retirement on 30 May 1883 and the firm was continued by his son Henry William Bladwell (1861-1913). His eldest son Joseph Ambrose Bladwell was also a builder and contractor. Both sons worked on Dunn and Hansom churches.

<sup>22</sup> His obituary stated that he carried out much of the Roman Catholic building work in Newcastle and the district, including St Andrew's Church and the presbytery at St Mary's, as well as Dunn and Hansom's church of Our Lady and St Oswin at Tynemouth (1889). See *Building News*, 20 January 1892, p190.

<sup>23</sup> They had premises in Westgate Street and Orchard Street.

<sup>24</sup> This may have been Ann Dunn, daughter of George Thomas Dunn.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholson, T.C. (1871) *The Catholic Churches and Chapels of Newcastle upon Tyne*, p61. Unfortunately, the spire was subsequently removed for safety reasons.

<sup>26</sup> It is possible that Dunn also designed the lodge at the entrance to the cathedral precinct at this time (visible in Figure 14).

<sup>27</sup> *Building News*, 24 February 1871, p155.

<sup>28</sup> Dry rot is caused by fungi that digests the wood and, despite its name, the process requires moisture.

<sup>29</sup> *Builder*, 25 February 1871, p153.

<sup>30</sup> *Builder*, 25 February 1871, p153.

<sup>31</sup> *Builder*, 25 February 1871, p153. Evidently these problems persisted, as further work was necessary in 1984. It was not known at that time whether the wall posts actually supported the principal rafters or whether they were mostly cosmetic. When the masonry was removed from the walls, it was discovered that the principals of the roof rested on wooden blocks set into the wall. To solve the problem, it was necessary to cut away all the faulty timber. The wood blocks for the principal rafters were replaced by box steel bases, while those for the secondary rafters were replaced by steel plates on a concrete foundation. See

---

Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*, pp44-45.

<sup>32</sup> *Builder*, 25 February 1871, p153. *Building News*, 20 September 1872, p222 and 225. The plans are preserved in the Tyne and Wear Archives (T186/4256 and T186/10738).

<sup>33</sup> *Building News*, 20 September 1872, p222. The base of the tower had already cost £650 (£64,155), meaning that the total cost of the tower and spire was around £3,150 (£352,800).

<sup>34</sup> *Building News*, 20 September 1872, p222.

<sup>35</sup> *Building News*, 20 September 1872, p222. *Builder*, 8 October 1889, p307.

<sup>36</sup> Pevsner, N. (1992) *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p424.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholson, T.C. (1871) *The Catholic Churches and Chapels of Newcastle upon Tyne*, p54.

<sup>38</sup> Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*.

<sup>39</sup> *Builder*, 3 December 1881.

<sup>40</sup> The firm also contributed to Dunn and Hansom's fine churches at Cambridge and Elswick.

<sup>41</sup> *Building News*, 25 November 1881, p706 and *Builder*, 3 December 1881.

<sup>42</sup> As this was contemporary with the baptistry, it may have been designed by Dunn, Hansom and Fenwicke.

<sup>43</sup> Nicholson, T.C. (1871) *The Catholic Churches and Chapels of Newcastle upon Tyne*, p51.

<sup>44</sup> Contemporary reports suggested that Dunn, Hansom and Dunn designed an entirely new throne, but it may be that the original throne was retained and placed under a new canopy designed by the architects. The design of the canopy matches published descriptions of Dunn, Hansom and Dunn's work.

<sup>45</sup> The cost of the throne was estimated at £137 10s 0d, but the Canons of the Chapter who commissioned it were surprised when Hedley charged an additional £27 10s 0d for the oak figures, having assumed that these were included in the original estimate. Another appeal for donations was made to make up the difference.

<sup>46</sup> Bartley, V. (1988) *Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle upon Tyne: A History and Guide*, p37.

<sup>47</sup> The font has since been moved to the sanctuary and the baptistry has been remodelled as an entrance porch.

<sup>48</sup> *Builder*, 16 August 1902, p154.

<sup>49</sup> Lamb's son, Everard Joseph Lamb (1886-1914), entered the 3rd Bn Northumberland Fusiliers as a 2nd Lieutenant in October 1905, although this was after Lamb had funded the building of the memorial.

<sup>50</sup> *Building News*, 3 August 1889, p164.