



County Wexford Pugin Trail



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WEXFORD
PUGIN TRAIL



A Man of Genius

Pugin's Historic Churches in Enniscorthy and County Wexford

"To appreciate great art and architecture you must immerse yourself completely and with no resistance in the beauty of the spectacle that is presented to your senses" – A.W.N. Pugin

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) was a designer of buildings, furniture, metalwork, jewellery, textiles, ceramics, wallpaper and books. Pugin is renowned for the adoption of the Gothic Revival style and his transformation of architecture in Britain and Ireland. He is best remembered for his iconic contribution to the design of London's Westminster Palace - the clock tower that became known worldwide as Big Ben.

Pugin's Wexford buildings include St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy, and St. Michael's Church, Gorey, as well as commissions in Edermine, Bree, Bellvue, Ramsgrange, Tagoeat, Barmtown and Wexford Town. Elsewhere in Ireland, Killarney Cathedral and the great seminary at Maynooth, are considered to be among his best work.

The granting of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 saw a surge in Church building, which led to a proliferation of showcase architecture throughout Britain and Ireland. This found added impetus for expression in County Wexford, where suppression of the 1798 Rebellion had destroyed more than half the churches in the Diocese of Ferns. Providentially, the need to replace ruined mud-walled buildings with edifices proclaiming religious equality coincided with the advent of Gothic Revival Style Architecture, and the rise to prominence of its greatest exponent, A.W.N. Pugin.



St. Michael's Church in Gorey was a watershed in Pugin's stylistic development. Its Norman appearance marked a departure from his earlier more dramatic and unrestrained work. A crucial influence on the style of his later church designs resulted from a visit to Dunbrody Abbey in South Wexford. Its cruciform layout, with lean-to side aisles relieved him of his strenuous obligation to High Gothic architecture. Pugin's later designs reflect the architectural features of the Dunbrody ruin. This is most notable in St Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, Pugin's largest Irish Church, and the benchmark design which was to be widely replicated throughout the diocese and beyond. St. Aidan's is not a large cathedral in its proportion, but soaring spaces and use of colour make it the most exemplary embodiment across all his Irish works, of both the Gothic style and of the Pugin ideal – to unify style, purpose, structure and decoration.

Pugin's legacy extends far beyond his own architectural designs. He was responsible for popularising a style and a philosophy of architecture that reached into every corner of Victorian life, and still influences the structure, shape, and style of the houses we build today. Pugin was a prolific product designer, assiduously seeking out manufacturers who worked to his high standards conceived, in pursuance of his credo that "In pure architecture, the smallest details should have a meaning or serve a purpose".

We are grateful that so many of Pugin's ideals are clearly manifest in his Co. Wexford Churches, in particular St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy.

Pugin the Man



Born in England 1st March 1812, the son of a French draughtsman, Pugin is described as a young man whose "energy was boundless, his powers of application inexhaustible and the versatility of his ability unrivalled". Though largely uneducated, and with no formal training, Pugin was talented, precocious and self confident. He challenged the reigning tastes in England so effectively, that his name became synonymous with the Gothic Revival.

Pugin learnt his drawing skills from his father, Auguste Pugin, who trained him to draw Gothic buildings for use as illustrations in his books. Between

1821 and 1838 Pugin and his father published a series of volumes of architectural drawings, some of which remained in print and were the standard references for Gothic architecture for at least the next century. Pugin completed his first external design of a church at age nine.

He was described as being "below ordinary stature, his style of dress inclined to that of the dissenting minister, combined with a touch of a sailor", favouring a wide skirted black dress coat, with capacious pockets to hold sketch books and apparatus, loose trousers, shapeless shoes-- "tied anyhow" and a black silk kerchief thrown negligently around his neck. Pugin maintained a rigid daily schedule, neither smoked nor drank, and ate only the plainest food. Professionally, his individual output was prodigious, unequalled by his contemporaries, and eventually contributed to his early demise at age forty.

Pugin married in 1831, aged nineteen, the first of three wives. He had eight children, including the architects Edward Pugin and Peter Paul Pugin. He lived with his family at a striking residence of his own design at Ramsgate, England. Eccentric as he may have been, Pugin never compromised his absolute belief that Gothic Architecture was "not a style, but a principle", and in twenty years he overturned the architectural precepts of the preceding three centuries.

Following the destruction of Westminster Palace by fire in 1834, Pugin was employed by two eminent architects to supply drawings for the new building, commissions which resulted in a succession of designs and refurbishments for Anglican and Catholic Churches throughout England. In 1834, Pugin converted to Roman Catholicism, resulting in the loss of some commissions, but bringing him into contact with new patrons and employers, most notably his Catholic Patron, John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, the most influential Catholic layman in England in the early 19th century.

Talbot's generosity made it possible for many of the Pugin's ambitious projects to come to fruition, and his family connections led to several commissions for Pugin to design churches in Wexford. Pugin arrived in post emancipation Ireland in 1838 when Catholic churches were permitted to be built. Most of his work here was of religious focus and he demanded the highest quality of workmanship from his craftsmen, particularly the stonemasons.

On his death in 1852, Pugin bequeathed an unrivalled legacy of architectural and design brilliance. In the space of a short working life, in a feverish frenzy of creativity he had designed over 100 buildings, including several cathedrals, which are still regarded as the high point of Gothic. Contemporary comment abounds on Pugin's lifestyle, appearance, personality and outright eccentricity. Cardinal Newman's simple summation of A.W.N. Pugin – 'a man of Genius' – is perhaps at once the most succinct and the most apt.





A Visit To St Aidan's – Pugin's Irish Gem

Pugin believed that the clergy and laity in all churches should face East - *"The sun rises in the East, the star that announced the birth of the Saviour rose in the East, the three wise men came from the East."* St Aidan's had of necessity to face north/south because of a steep slope to the east side, and the old thatched church had to remain intact for use inside the new building until completion.

Otherwise the exterior conforms to Pugin's ideal - *"Large stone destroys proportion. Small stone adds to the effect of a building by increasing its apparent scale."* The beautiful grey/green Ordovician rock, collected from the tower of the old Franciscan Friary which collapsed in 1839, provides a perfect foil for the granite dressings.

All the roof ridges are terminated in granite crosses, and the clock tower- which was rebuilt to half its intended height because of subsiding foundations- is surmounted by a magnificent broach spire- in essence, octagonal in shape on a square base. As was the norm before modern scaffolding was available, in order to avoid excessive work at a high level, the spire was built in small sections on the ground, the stones numbered for accurate re-assembly, transported by hand to roof level, and rebuilt without difficulty. A gilded weather-cock, 220 feet above ground level, completes the structure.

Pugin perfected the stepped and tapered buttress as an architectural feature. St. Aidan's displays them to perfection on the perimeter of the building - a necessary support for high walls, visually powerful but not overpowering, symbolising strength, permanence and stability. Roof pitches are varied to add variety and balance to the outline of the building.

Rising from a base that is wide relative to its height, St. Aidan's presents a splayed, almost squat external profile, tapered elegantly from floor to tip of spire - *"Gothic structures should be bold, light, solid, filling the mind of the beholder with admiration for the skill and genius of the age in which they were built"* - The Pugin Ideal!

"In a building appropriate for Christian worship, the eye is carried up and lost in the soaring vaulting and the intricacy of the aisles, the rich hues of the windows, and all the array of detailed beauty that fills the mind with veneration for the place" - Pugin



On entering St. Aidan's, the significance of Pugin's achievement becomes clear. Internally, with soaring proportions that are inch perfect, the building seems far higher and longer than is possible given the external outline. Though not overly large, the interior conforms to Pugin's dictum *"Every element should appear to be under tension, as if on the point of springing further upward."*



"All ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building, and in pure architecture, the smallest details should have meaning or serve purpose." - Pugin

The stencilling on the arches is an exact reproduction of Pugin's original design, in his trademark strong colours, while the names of all bishops to occupy the See of the diocese since St. Aidan in 632 ad. are tabulated in gilt on the main pillars at the central crossing. The main altar, made by the father of Padraig Pearse, the 1916 leader, is surrounded by a handwoven carpet with Pugin motifs, and set on a praedella of Wicklow granite. Overhead the ceilings are handpainted also in Pugin colours.



In front of both side altars are two squares of flooring covered with matchless examples of the intricately patterned and richly coloured handmade encaustic or inlaid Minton tiles, made exclusively for Pugin. The reredos, under the North window, comprises nine niches, depicting sacrificial scenes from the Old Testament, all handcarved in high relief from Caen sandstone. Standing in an unlit St. Aidan's, and you are assailed from all sides

by a myriad of beautiful images and a profusion of colour from stained glass set in exquisite granite tracery - *"Stained Glass beams with sacred exhortations, and sparkles with glowing tints, filling the mind with veneration, and impressing upon it the sublimity of Christian worship."* Truly, Pugin's Irish Gem!

We are pleased to share with you the beauty of our Cathedral, and we hope you enjoy a visit to one of A.W.N. Pugin's greatest creations.



1. Church of St. Michael the Archangel

Location: Gorey, Wexford
Constructed: 1839-1842
Features of Note: Structurally intact. Pugin's first cruciform church

This first cruciform plan, is influenced by Pugin's visit to Dunbrody Abbey, releasing him from his strenuous obligation to Gothic flamboyance. St. Michael's is unique in being Pugin's only Irish designed church featuring Romanesque/Norman architecture. It was built by Richard Pierce who was involved in most of Pugin's Irish commissions, and features a mortuary chapel window by Harry Clarke Studios, Dublin. Built in limestone with Wicklow granite dressings, the project benefited from the financial patronage of the Esmonde family, whose coat of arms can be seen in the entrance porch.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.67544, -6.28969



2. St. Aidan's Cathedral

Location: Enniscorthy Town
Constructed: 1843- 1860 Restored 1994
Features of Note: Unaltered, broach spire, encaustic tiles.

Pugin's 'Irish Gem', St. Aidan's Cathedral is a vintage Pugin church with an exquisite broach spire and seven-bay nave and aisles. It was built using striking blue/green local Ordovician rock with granite dressings. It has an unusual north/south orientation to accommodate its steep site. Features include handsome buttresses with crosses to all roof terminations, scissors roof trusses, granite columns, lavishly stencilled interior, extensive use of carved Caen stone in reredos and mortuary chapel altar front. Original encaustic tiles remain intact.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening
For Group Tours phone 053 92 35777
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.50240, -6.57088



3. Private Chapel

Location: Edermine, Enniscorthy
Constructed: 1860
Features of Note: Outstanding Pugin features including Rose Window

A private chapel for Sir James and Lady Power, Edermine is similar to the College Chapel at St. Peter's, Wexford. Designed by Pugin, but completed after his death it is attributed to his son, but significant because it has remained practically untouched and unaltered and contains many outstanding Pugin features including a rose window, rood screen, beautiful diaper work, hammer beam roof trusses and exquisite examples of carpentry.

Opening Times: Edermine is in private ownership. To view phone 087-9195433 for appointment.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available.
SatNav:



4. Church of the Assumption of Mary

Location: Bree, Enniscorthy
Constructed: 1837-1839
Features of Note: Structurally unaltered. Original encaustic tiles, piscine, oil lamps

This commission was secured through the patronage of John Hyacinth Talbot. A two-compartment, five-bay church with attractive hexagonal shaped chancel and western bellcote, it is built of coursed rubble sandstone with brick dressings. The original encaustic tiles, piscine and oil lamps extant. Baptistry adjoining entrance is a distinct Pugin characteristic.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.43465, -6.60964



5. Church of St. John the Baptist

Location: Bellevue, Enniscorthy
Constructed: 1859
Features of Note: Original diaper work

Designed by Pugin, and built after his death for the Cliffe family who had family connections with the Powers and Talbots, Bellevue is a typical Pugin oratory, connected to the adjoining, but since demolished, Bellevue House. Featuring high level pews, in effect, a first floor balcony opening directly on to the chapel from the adjoining residence to facilitate the attendance at Mass of the ill or incapacitated. The original diaper work is a significant feature of the interior, and representative of the Early Decorated period.

Opening Times: Viewing by appointment, phone 053 92 47702
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav:



6. Maher Family Mausoleum

Location: Ballymurn, County Wexford

"From the stupendous to the simple, Gothic style should be awe-inspiring" - Pugin's dictum is exemplified by his design of this simple but elegant Mausoleum, built for the Maher family, at Ballinkeele whose crest adorns its gable. Also recommended viewing is the magnificent Pieta by John Hogan the celebrated sculptor, installed as an altar front in the adjoining church.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.44022, -6.47619



7. Church of St. Alphonsus

Location: Barntown, County Wexford
Constructed: 1844-1851
Features of Note: Structurally unaltered

Based on the design of a mediaeval church at Stanton, Cambridgeshire, St. Alphonsus' is considered to be Pugin's ideal style, size and layout of a model Parish Church. It includes all

the dedicated spaces necessary for ceremonial and congregational use with minimal structural and decorative embellishment. The distinctive buttressed front supports a western double bellcote. Locally quarried stone combined with Carlow granite dressings give the exterior a delicate variety of texture and colour. Internally, Hardman's five-light East window features the Talbot coat of arms at bottom centre, while the magnificent altar front, typically Pugin, carved from Caen stone consists of seven panels with inset bas relief figures.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav:



8. St. Peter's College Chapel

Location: Summerhill, Wexford
Constructed: 1838-1840
Features of Note: Triptych reredos in diaper work

Pugin's first County Wexford commission, the six-bay chapel was integrated as part of the college and built in beautiful coursed rubble, massively buttressed with stylish bow roof trusses. Internally,

St. Peter's features a beautiful triptych reredos in Pugin diaper work. A rose window by John Hardman shows the Talbot coat of arms. High level window opening from college, "so that services could be followed at the altar."

Opening Times: St. Peter's College Chapel - viewing by appointment with the school (School closed July 1-Aug 12 each year)
Telephone: 053-914 2071
SatNav: 52.33484, -6.47125



9. Church of St. Mary's

Location: Tagoat, County Wexford
Constructed: 1843-1848
Features of Note: Original altar and pieta

St. Mary's is a cruciform church with five-bay nave and aisles. The Dunbrody influence is evidenced in the clerestory lighting to the nave. The interior is replete with Pugin features including the original

altar and pieta, the sedelia and piscine, beautiful encaustic Minton floor tiles in the chancel, attractive stained glass work, and a set of Pugin designed candlesticks presented to the church by the architect himself.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.24412, -6.38954



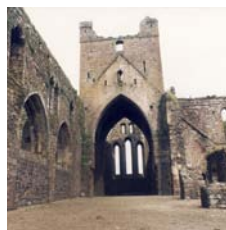
10. Church of St. James

Location: Ramsgrange, County Wexford
Constructed: 1838-1843
Features of Note: South facing porch with tower

A barn church of seven-bays in the early English style of simple pointed lancets and massive buttresses. St. James's has a beautiful south facing porch with a tower on the west elevation. The design is similar to

Pugin's Church in Macclesfield, U.K. The interior has been modernised.

Opening Times: Open to the public daily mid morning to early evening.
Facilities: Adjacent car parking is available
SatNav: 52.24570, -6.91926



11. Dunbrody Abbey

Location: Dunbrody, County Wexford
Constructed: 1170-1220
Features of Note:

Founded on the instructions of Strongbow with a generous grant of land, the imposing abbey flourished until the Dissolution of Monasteries signalled its end as a functioning church in the mid

16th century. It was later plundered, and suffered a further collapse in 1882. Cruciform in shape, with lean-to aisles and clerestory windows, it impressed Pugin to the extent that he felt church architecture should mirror this indigenous style – "these solemn piles of buildings." Consequently, it became the accepted model for his larger designs, most notably St. Aidan's. Dunbrody Abbey is now under the care of the Office of Public Works.

SatNav: 52.28350, -6.95937

Access information

Unless otherwise indicated all locations are open to the public mid-morning to early evening. Car parking is available adjacent to all churches.

The Architecture Of Light

"Something solid is removed from its natural surroundings, divested of weight, and made to soar upwards"- thus a contemporary commentator described the sublime loftiness and ethereal beauty of twelfth century Gothic Architecture. Emerging as a distinct style of building for churches and other public buildings in a small kingdom centred on Paris around 1150, inside a century it became the accepted and much envied style of ecclesiastical architecture throughout France and in most other European states.

Characterised by rib-vaulted roofs and detailed, elaborate decoration, the intense spiritual feeling and transcendent character of the vast and soaring spaces of Gothic Cathedrals dominated the urban landscapes of mediaeval Europe, and created a fascination with church buildings that has lasted to the present day.

Having fallen into decline after the Reformation, the Gothic style was revived in the 19th century in reaction to the "bland, soulless buildings" of post Industrial Revolution Europe. Proponents of Gothic claimed that "in pointed architecture, as the scale of a building increased, the amount of detail multiplied, whereas in classical architecture, it merely magnified"

Pugin proclaimed his ambition to "resurrect Mediaeval Architecture, and set it going again, like "a clock that had been stopped for three hundred years – waiting to be rewound"

Distinctive features of Gothic Architecture

Buttress

A vertical stone pillar supporting a wall by counteracting an outward thrust of a vault.

Clerestory

The top storey of a nave, using high level windows to light the interior of a building.

Coronels

Suspended highly ornate brass circular light fittings.

Croquets

Carved ornaments usually representing leaves, used extensively on the edges of pinnacles and gables.

Diaper Work

Decoration on panelling, featuring colourful repetitions of squares and lozenges.

Encaustic or Inlaid

The technique of filling indents on a tile surface with coloured clay before firing. A style perfected by Minton of Stoke to produce lavishly decorated hard-wearing floor tiles.

Flying Buttress

a graceful arch that is used to carry the thrust of a wall across an open space to an outer buttress.



Predella



Reredos



Rood Screen

Predella

The platform on which an altar stands.

Reredos

A highly decorated panel behind the altar, often carved from stone, and depicting biblical scenes.

Rib Vault

A stone ceiling carried on graceful stone arches meeting at centre-point of a roof

Rood Screen

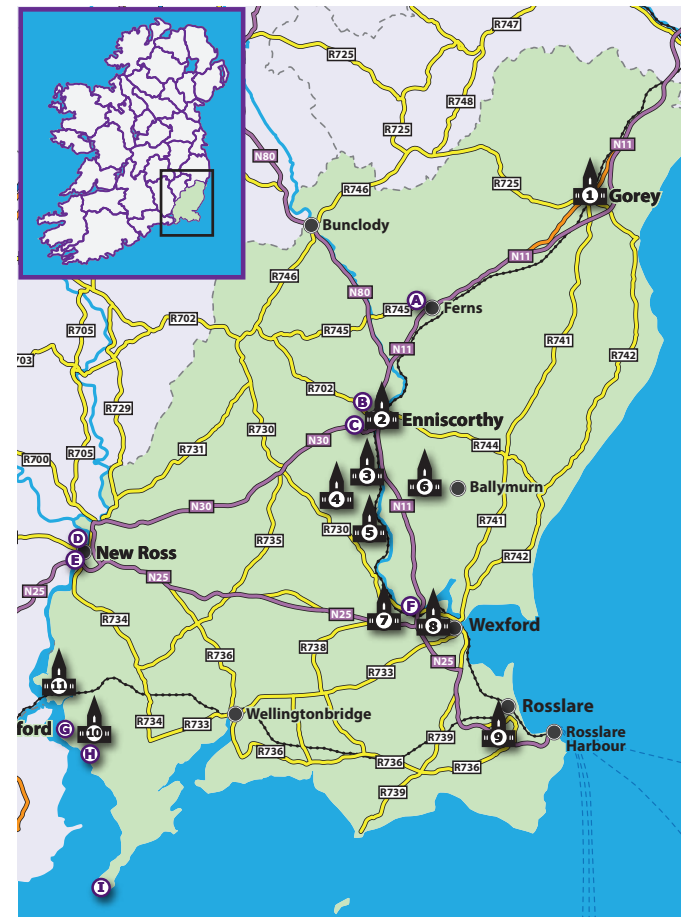
A richly decorated screen, surmounted by a cross (The Holy Rood), separating the chancel, (for the clergy) from the nave (for the laity).

Tracery

decorative interlacing or branching lines of stone or wood, used to embellish window tops, screens and doors.

Trefoil

Much favoured by Pugin - a threeleaf shape (signifying for him the Holy Trinity) extensively used in window tracery.



Pugin Sites

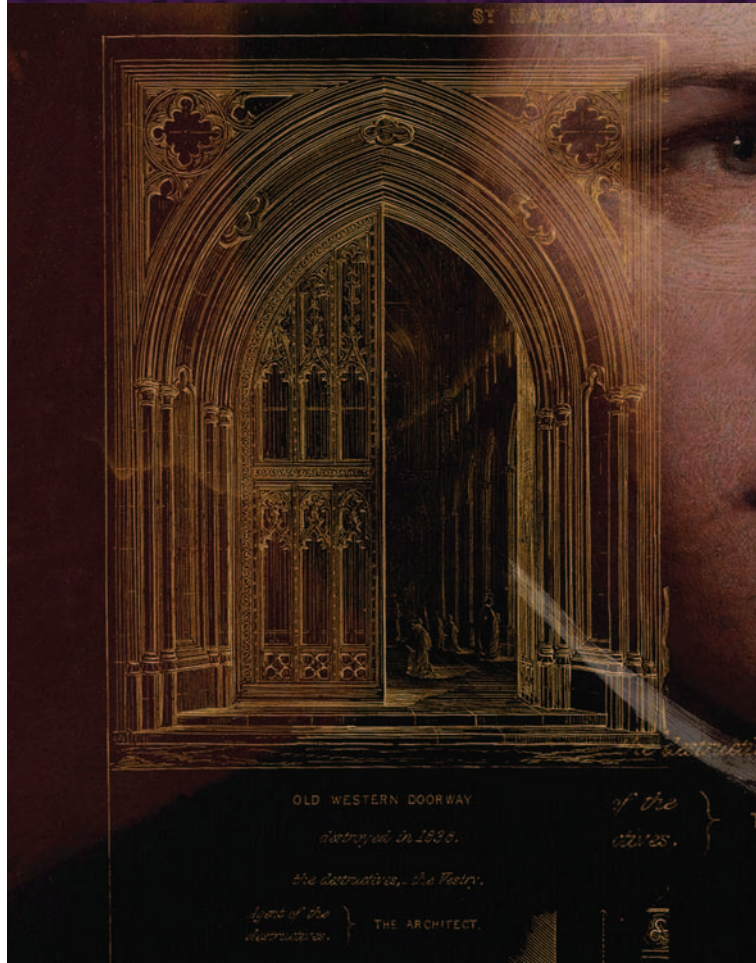
1. Church of St. Michael The Archangel, Gorey
2. St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy Town
3. Private Chapel, Edermine, Enniscorthy
4. Church of The Assumption Of Mary, Bree, Enniscorthy
5. Church of St. John The Baptist, Bellevue, Ballyhogue
6. Maher Family Mausoleum, Ballymurn
7. Church of St. Alphonsus, Barntown
8. St. Peter's College Chapel, Summerhill
9. Church of St. Mary's, Taggart
10. Church of St. James, Ramsgrange
11. Dunbrody Abbey

Other Attractions

- A. Ferns Castle
- B. Enniscorthy Castle
- C. National 1798 Centre
- D. Dunbrody Famine Ship
- E. Ros Tapestry
- F. Irish National Heritage Park
- G. Ballyhack Castle
- H. Duncannon Fort
- I. Hook Head Lighthouse

Pugin's historic churches in Enniscorthy and County Wexford

To celebrate the bicentenary of Pugin's birth, and in recognition of his pioneering contribution to Church architecture in Wexford, **Enniscorthy Town Council** in conjunction with the **Enniscorthy Pugin Society** and the support of **Wexford County Council** are launching *The Pugin Trail, An Exploration of Pugin's Churches Across County Wexford*.



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WEXFORD

SO OLD, SO NEW



wexford
local development
Forbairt Áitiúil Loch Garman

