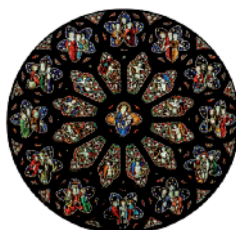


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The early part of this history depends heavily on Thomas Hand's little book, *The Second Spring of Catholicity in Stourbridge*, published by Mark & Moody in 1912. This present work has been made possible by the efforts of the Parish History Committee as well as by the individual contributions from many parishioners. Particular thanks are due to Anna Willetts for her unflagging energy and tireless research in both local and Archdiocesan archives, to Peter Harrington, Paul and Martin Cartwright for many of the photographs reproduced here. The photograph of Harvington Hall is reproduced by kind permission of the management. Hagley Catholic High School kindly provided photographs of the school. Maben Hartley and Mgr Patrick McKinney have been eagle-eyed proof-readers. Any errors or omissions are entirely the fault of the Editor!

Kevin Hartley



Cover picture:

The East Rose Window depicting Our Lady and the Saints

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FOREWORD



It is with great pleasure that I offer my greetings in this Foreword celebrating the history of the Parish of Our Lady and All Saints, Stourbridge, and marking particularly the 150th anniversary of this beautiful Church building designed by E.W. Pugin in 1864.

This building, dedicated to Our Lady and All Saints, is the place where the Catholic community in Stourbridge has gathered over the past 150 years to meet and worship God; to listen to His word and to receive Him sacramentally through the body and blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. We believe that when we gather together to celebrate Mass, we are united in the Lord and with one another in a very special way. This building stands as an image of the Church, not solely made up of bricks and mortar but of 'living stones' of faith, priests and people who have gathered faithfully to serve the Lord and witness to the gospel for each succeeding generation.

During this significant anniversary year for the parish, I particularly want to give thanks to God for those whose faithful presence and example have inspired and enriched the Catholic community in Stourbridge and the surrounding area. The publication of this history of both Church and Parish pays particular tribute to their invaluable contribution.

Recalling and celebrating what has gone before us helps us to appreciate the present and to prepare for the challenges ahead. I assure you of my prayers and kindest wishes and I also encourage you in your continued witness of faith, most especially with the wider community which we are all called to serve after the example of Christ himself.

With every blessing on this auspicious occasion.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ Bernard Lawley

Archbishop of Birmingham

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF REFLECTION



I am delighted in this special year within the life of the parish, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the opening of the present church, that this new history of Our Lady and All Saints Parish has been published. It is always good and instructive to be aware of our history, not simply to be nostalgic, but to draw upon and learn from the past so as to equip ourselves for the future. This is especially so at a time when so much in our society and in our Church seems to be changing, and what lies ahead can appear far from clear.

Just 14 years after the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in England and Wales, Bishop Ullathorne officially opened the new Church of Our Lady and All Saints with Mass on 14th September 1864, the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross. It was a time when many of the bishops were conscious of their responsibility to encourage and help facilitate the full and active involvement of the laity in the

social, cultural, political and scientific life of the wider society. These are all the places where the Good News of Christ is to be lived out and witnessed to by committed lay Catholics. Cardinal Manning emphasised the importance of social and political involvement, while Blessed Cardinal Newman encouraged involvement in culture and science. But both of them had a vision of the Church's missionary engagement in society that was broad and not narrow.

The Second Vatican Council, which ended some fifty years ago, also gave us a renewed vision of the Church at the heart of the world and at the service of the world, and invited us all, lay men and women and clergy, to be actively involved in that missionary work in and through the circumstances of our daily lives. All the Popes since then, including Pope Francis, have encouraged this:

“An evangelising community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first, and therefore we can move forward, boldly taking the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.”

(Evangelii Gaudium, 24)

The history of this parish suggests that it has always thought of itself as a community, drawing its strength and focus from the gathering of the people to celebrate Mass, and that parishioners down the ages have been most generous in offering their time, talents and energy to serve both the parish and the wider community. Certainly today, it can be seen in the rich variety of the working backgrounds of committed parishioners. The apostolate of the Catholic laity in the midst of our society deserves more encouragement and deeper appreciation of its potential huge impact on the work of evangelisation.

Vatican II also called us out of the darkness of our narrowness in relation to other Christians, challenged us to be more knowledgeable of and true to our own Catholic tradition, and encouraged us to pray and work with our local Christian sisters and brothers. It is so encouraging to see now the long-established, warm, prayerful relationships that exist in Churches Together in Stourbridge, and some of its more recent fruits, the setting up of the Street Pastors and the Life Debt Advice Centre in the town with involvement from our parishioners. At a time when some would despair of ever reaching a deeper degree of agreed unity between the Christian churches, it is so important that as a parish we continue to seek every opportunity to pray with all local Christians and to work with them in putting our faith into action in service of our local community.

The years since Vatican II have helped us to become more aware than ever that we are people on a journey. We are a 'pilgrim people', the people of God who, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, seek to follow the way of Jesus. But there can be the temptation to feel that these are uncertain times, the number of clergy is declining, fewer people are going to church, parishes are now sharing priests and, as we can bear witness to ourselves, a number of Mass Centres and churches are having to be closed. Faced with these changing circumstances, the path ahead might feel less than clear. But a reading of the history of this parish, and a desire to be faithful to those generous parishioners who have walked this way in faith before us, suggests that there is only one viable response that we can make as a parish: 'Lord, help us to know your will for us, and then give us the grace of your Holy Spirit so that we may follow you ever more generously.'

Mgr Canon Pat McKinney

Parish Priest

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE BEGINNING



The parish church of Our Lady and All Saints celebrates its 150th year in 2014 but the history of Catholicism in the Stourbridge area goes back many centuries. St Mary's Oldswinford has been the mother church of the district since medieval times but as Nigel Perry recounts in his *History of Stourbridge*, a chantry chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity and for the celebration of Masses for the repose of the souls of the

deceased members of the Haley family was established in 1430 in what is now Lower High Street. Attached to the chapel was a free grammar school for the education of the poor, taught by the priest. At the Reformation the chapel was closed down and the school provided the origins for what is today the Edward VI College.

A new religious way of life

The Reformation worked profound changes on the religious way of life for everyone. There would have been some in Stourbridge who took to the new way of worship with enthusiasm, and many who adapted as best they could to whatever changes might be imposed upon them by royal decree – like the school chaplain Nicholas Rocke, who was kept on to teach but who was not able to keep his clerical position “*because of certain impediments*” (his reluctance being to conform to the new style of religion), and a few who resisted even at the cost of their lives. Lady Margaret Pole, born in Stourton Castle, was one such. There is a stained glass window to her memory in Our Lady's chapel in our church.



A faithful few



Some people managed to retain the practice of their Catholic faith at the cost of heavy fines and confiscations. It was not actually illegal to be a Catholic, only to practise as one. So the family who owned Harvington Hall contrived to secretly maintain visiting clergy, hiding them when necessary in ingeniously constructed “Priests’ Holes”, some of which were only rediscovered long afterwards when the Hall was being restored.

Going all the way to Harvington

Harvington remained a noted Mass centre even after the time of active persecution came to an end at the close of the eighteenth century, serving Catholics from as far away as Kidderminster. So any “papist recusants” as they were called (a recusant was someone who refused to attend Anglican parish services and a papist was one who owed allegiance to the Pope), would have to make their way to Harvington if they wanted to attend Mass.

Mass at the ironmongers

Records of the Diocese of Worcester show that in 1674 in the parish of St Mary's Oldswinford (Stourbridge did not have its own parish church of St Thomas until the end of the eighteenth century) there were 13 papist recusants, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was only one family that called itself Catholic. There may have been others because by 1812 when Francis Martyn, the first priest to have been educated and ordained in England since the Reformation, came to say the occasional Mass at an ironmonger's shop in the High Street, the congregation consisted of Thomas Green, his wife and two sons, a domestic and James Wade, Thomas's business partner. Such convenience must have been a literal God-send to Thomas who for the previous forty years had regularly walked to Mass at Harvington. The little group was joined by Mrs Howell, the wife of a Quaker, and her children; Mrs Salter, whose husband kept a pub, and an apprentice named William Russell.



A remarkable man

Francis Martyn must have been a remarkable man. He was born in Norfolk but was educated at Park Hall which Bishop Challoner turned into Sedgley Park School (now Park Hall Hotel in Park Drive, Goldthorn Hill, Wolverhampton). He then went on for theological studies to Old Oscott College (now Maryvale Institute) where he was ordained by Bishop Milner in 1805. He was appointed to serve in Bloxwich and we imagine that it was there that he somehow came across Thomas Green who invited him to come to say Mass in the room above the shop in the High Street.

Mass on a chest of drawers

From small beginnings great projects grew. By 1816 the room over the ironmonger's shop was too small for the congregation and Francis took out a four-year lease on an old house in Bury's Yard, behind a pub called the Horse and Groom at the upper end of the High Street. The house had two small upper rooms thrown into one, to serve as a chapel, and a ground floor room for the use of the person who had charge of the chapel, which was dedicated to St Francis de Sales. Mass was celebrated on a chest of drawers and benches were provided for the congregation. Mr Martin (secular clergy were only given the title "Father" towards the end of the nineteenth century) was handy with the begging bowl, seeking financial assistance from as far afield as Yorkshire. He had help, from 1818, in the shape of a newly ordained Irishman, Thomas Lakin, who worked with him in Stourbridge.

A mean house in a dirty court

For one year only Stourbridge was served by the delightfully named Lawrence Strongitharm who was replaced in 1820 by the Reverend F C Husenbeth who walked fifteen miles from Old Oscott on Saturday afternoon, returning on Monday morning. Mr Husenbeth was quite frank about conditions in Stourbridge, declaring that he had from the time of his ordination, "*served in the mission in Stourbridge, which was then in its infancy with no better chapel than two upper rooms of a mean house in a dirty court and low neighbourhood, which were thrown together under a low gable roof.*"

A proper chapel needed

The early years of the nineteenth century saw a great influx of Irish into the area. The “*mean house*” was becoming far too small for the needs of the swelling congregation and it was decided to look for somewhere to build a proper chapel. This plan was given impetus by the arrival of John Brownlow, the first resident priest in the town since the Reformation. He came from Lincolnshire, born in 1795 of Anglican parents but becoming a Catholic in 1816. He studied at Old Oscott and was ordained priest by Bishop Milner. He was 26 years old and had no intention of using that “*mean house*” in Bury's Yard a moment longer than necessary, setting out on a nationwide begging mission mounted on his “*frollicsome brown Welsh pony*” which we might think of as the nineteenth century equivalent of a Vauxhall Corsa!



A successful begging mission

By 1822 he was back in Stourbridge, setting about organising the building of a chapel to be dedicated to All Saints, with a new house for the clergy. His begging mission must have been enormously successful for he was proud to announce, when he eventually went to take over the parish of Harvington, that he left behind “*not a farthing of debt*”. He was to remain at Harvington for the next fifty years. His father became a Catholic shortly before Thomas left Stourbridge and his mother later moved to Harvington as his housekeeper.

“Fearless of taunts”

For a while the Stourbridge mission was looked after by a French émigré priest, the Abbé Vergy, of whom one story in particular is worth recording. A local man, Moses Barlow, was asked by a dying woman if he would ensure that her daughter was raised a Catholic. He knew nothing about Catholicism but took her along to Abbé Vergy for catechism. The upshot of the relationship was that Moses became a Catholic himself and was described as “*fearless of taunts and jibes, never hesitating to make the sign of the cross in public at a time when to be a Catholic was treated with contempt.*” This says something for Moses' strength of character and a lot about the general opinion of Catholics in Stourbridge at that time.

The converter converted

In 1826 the newly ordained James Mason arrived in Stourbridge. James, as a Methodist minister, had at one time tried to convert Francis Martin in Bloxwich but in his turn had been converted to Catholicism. Mr Brownlow might have left no debt but it is a measure of the constrained finances of the time that James had to turn his hand to educating boys, one of whom also became a priest, to make ends meet.

Midnight in Stourbridge

With the arrival of Walter Keen in 1842, the story of the parish began to take the form that led to its present state. Walter came from Aston-by-Stone and his Anglican parents had been horrified at his conversion to Catholicism at the tender age of fourteen. His introduction to Stourbridge was not propitious, arriving on foot from Dudley shortly after Saturday midnight, unable to eat or drink if he was to celebrate Mass on the Sunday morning (the regulation of fasting from midnight was not relaxed until the latter part of the last century).

The ever-present problem

Money was the ever-present problem. In addition to the weekly offerings which amounted to no more than ten shillings (fifty pence in modern money) there was a grant of £80 a year from the Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury which ceased in 1852 with the Earl's death, the bishop being able to provide only a subsidy of forty pounds. However, by 1854 enough money was scraped together to buy land for a chapel in Brierley Hill which became a separate parish four years later.

A new church needed

Numbers, swollen both by Irish immigrants and converts, were beginning to make the chapel of All Saints inadequate and the bold decision was taken to build a new church. The first move was a collection on Sunday 24th May 1857, the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, which amounted to £20. There were many fund-raising activities, including the ever popular bazaars.

"A few postage stamps!"

Walter Keen was not afraid to appeal all over the world: *"For the love of God and our Blessed Lady, send me something, if only a few postage stamps towards my new church for 1,300 people. I have a chapel that will hold 250 with a school alike miserably insufficient for present wants... We have been five years striving to remedy this state of things and with God's blessing, we will still strive but, without friends, the work is too much for us... I again solicit a helping-hand donation, a contribution in any way, a laid aside gold ring, a watch chain, a bracelet, a locket, and article for my next bazaar, anything. On my part I promise most faithfully to all benefactors a Priest's best return ONE MASS EVERY WEEK and a Daily Remembrance as long as God spares me to stand at his altar."* Walter's appeal was successful.

In 1863 building started on the new church to the design of E. W. Pugin and the church opened in September of the following year.

CHAPTER TWO

A NEW CHURCH

With the opening of the Church of Our Lady and All Saints, an imposing building was to give prominence to the Catholic presence in Stourbridge. The choice of architect was itself significant. Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875) was of a famous architectural family, the eldest son of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and Louisa Barton. His father, A.W.N. Pugin, a convert to Catholicism, was a famous architect and designer of Neo-Gothic architecture who had a large hand in designing much of the interior work for the Palace of Westminster and the clock tower popularly known as "Big Ben" as well as, more locally, St Chad's Cathedral and Oscott College and the well-known landmark of St Giles in Cheadle.



After his father's death in 1852 Edward took up his own successful practice and by the time of his early death in 1875, Edward had designed and completed more than one hundred Catholic churches across the British Isles and received commissions from as far away as North America.

A local builder

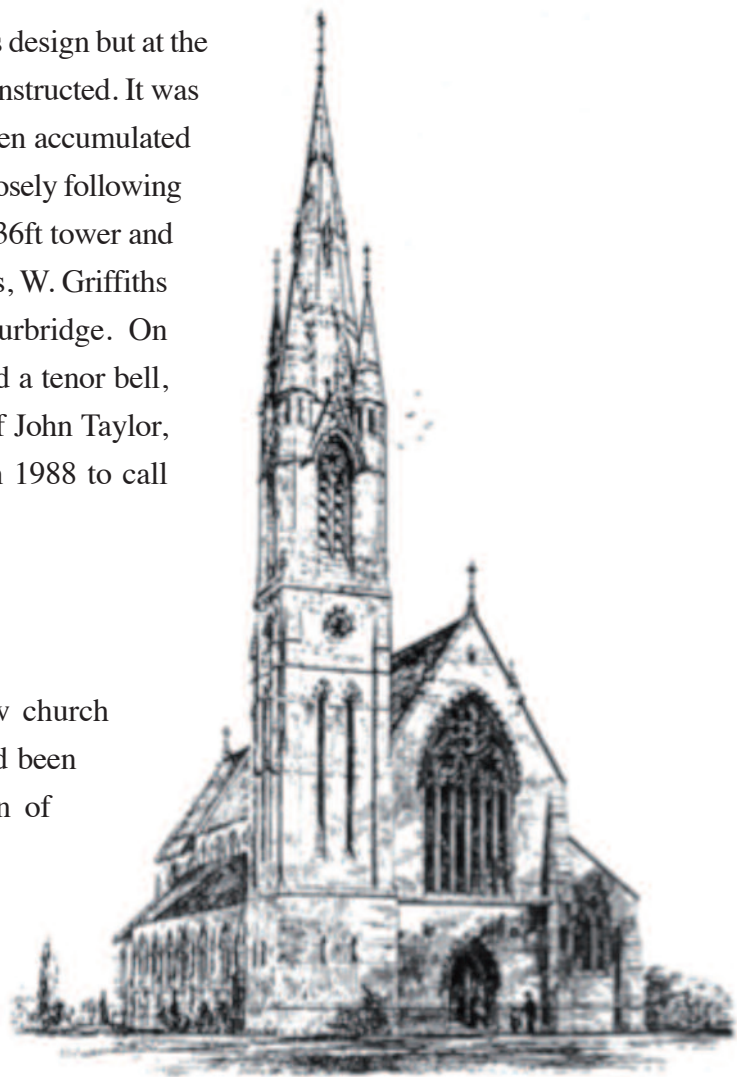
The church he designed for Stourbridge in the distinctive Decorated Gothic style was to seat 700. J. W. Ife of Wollaston was the builder. The nave is distinguished by the columns, alternately in Aberdeen Grey and Peterhead Red granite, that make a stately procession to the chancel. The beautiful glass we see today in the windows of the nave, the north and south chapels and the glorious rose window as well as the magnificent west window above the choir are all later additions. Pugin may well have intended these windows to be filled with colour but it was not until 1875 that the first of the stained glass was installed, the work of the Hardman Studios in Birmingham that were to provide the rest of the stained glass until the 1930s. Hardman Studios still retain the original cartoons for the glass and when part of one window was damaged some years ago could provide an identical replacement.

The tower came later

Pugin had included a tower and spire in his design but at the time of opening only the base had been constructed. It was not until 1889 that sufficient funds had been accumulated to allow George H. Cox of Birmingham, closely following Pugin's design, to bring the work on the 136ft tower and spire to completion using local contractors, W. Griffiths of Brierley Hill and W. North of Stourbridge. On completion Mr and Mrs H. James donated a tenor bell, cast by the famous Loughborough firm of John Taylor, the same bell that was restored to use in 1988 to call people to Mass.

Where is the organ?

The organ that was installed in the new church already had something of a history. It had been built in 1819 by Henry Cephas Lincoln of Holborn for St Austin's Catholic Chapel in Stafford. Mr Price, the priest at St Austin's, then sold it in 1822 to Mr Brownlow for the new chapel of All Saints in Stourbridge, telling him what a bargain he had got, for the princely sum (in those days) of £150. Its installation in Our Lady and All Saints church was not the end of its wanderings for in 1888 it was to be dismantled and installed in the church at Harvington. We shall see later how the instrument that succeeded it was eventually considered to be inadequate and was in its turn replaced by the magnificent organ that now graces the choir loft.



An imposing edifice

On the 4th July 1863 The Brierley Hill Advertiser devoted a large article to an account of the laying of the foundation stone by Bishop William Ullathorne. It was only thirteen years earlier that Catholics had been allowed to set up dioceses in this country. Ullathorne was a Benedictine monk, an ex-cabin boy who had spent time as a priest in Australia before taking over a mission in Coventry. He had been ordained bishop in 1847 as Vicar Apostolic of the Western District and had been nominated the first bishop of the newly created diocese of Birmingham.

“Mr Keen's zeal”

Some eighteen months later the Advertiser was even more expansive in its account of the opening of the church on the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, 14th September 1864. Great credit was given to the efforts of The Reverend W. Keen over many years to find the funds necessary for so great an undertaking, noting that *"Mr Keen's zeal was seconded by a kindred zeal on the part of his congregation."* Of the total cost of approximately £4,000, only £3,000 had been so far collected, which meant that the church had a solemn opening rather than being consecrated.

“A sign to draw your hearts!”

The sermon at the Pontifical High Mass marking the opening was given by the Rt. Rev. Dr Amherst, Bishop of Northampton, who concluded, *"It seems as if the cross raised here this day in your sanctuary as the sign of your redemption, is a sign which will draw all your hearts into it; it seems like a signal to the whole world that here, at least, are those who live and glory in the cross of Christ."*

“The object of your aspirations”

The *"déjeuner"* given in the Corn Exchange at the cost of Mr Dutton of the Bell Hotel was given almost equal attention in the newspaper. Toasts were drunk, to His Holiness the Pope, the Queen, and to the health of the Right Reverend Dr Ullathorne. In his reply the bishop thanked all present for the loyal outpouring of their hearts. He felt he could talk to them as a father talked to his children. He congratulated the Catholics of Stourbridge on the completion of that church which for so long a time had been the object of their aspirations, their prayers and their most earnest efforts. He went on to congratulate Mr Keen whose full heart and soul had been given to the promotion of the great work.

Great work indeed

Walter Keen's reply was perhaps characteristically modest. Great work had indeed been done but it was not the priest who had done it. When he had conceived the idea he had not had a sovereign to his name. Donations had come in from all over the world but the greater part had come from his own poor people. Without them the church could never have been built.

THE PRESBYTERY 1877-79

The present Presbytery at 13 New Road dates back to 1879 and was built by Canon James McCave, DD, who succeeded the Revd Walter Keen (1813-1877) as Rector of Our Lady and All Saints in 1877. The new Rectory (as it was then called: today no distinction is made between the Rector of a parish and a plain parish priest) was erected on the site of two small houses Walter Keen had bought on behalf of the Birmingham Diocese, one of which was used as the presbytery.

It wasn't a plain demolition and rebuild. The records relating to the construction are patchy but a reference to Mr Tigh bricking up "*doorways in the dining room and the cellar, altering the position of two bedroom doors and taking down the wall in the second bedroom, together with bricking up doorways in the dining room and cellar,*" provides the intriguing possibility that somewhere in the present building there remains fragments of the house where Walter Keen died on 7th February 1877, aged 63, of "*Valvular disease of the heart years.*" At any rate, something of Walter Keen's original Presbytery must survive because Mr. Tigh appears to have re-used 5,500 old bricks found on site at the commencement of the work.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WORK CONTINUES

A church building isn't a museum: it's like a living being in some ways. When young it's all new brickwork, stone and glass, the product of the hard work of the people of the parish. Outsiders may look at the new structure and admire the elegance or deplore the architect's lack of inspiration. The building begins to be used, its quirks and inconveniences as well as its advantages gradually emerge. Repairs need to be made as the building ages. Ingenious adaptations have to be worked out to meet changing patterns of worship.

“A mere shell”

The church that was opened with such ceremony in 1864 lacked many of the features that we take for granted today. In his brief history of the parish *The Second Spring of Catholicity in Stourbridge*, Thomas Hand describes the building as “*a mere shell*”. But such was the enthusiasm to complete the fitting out of the church that eleven years after the original opening, in July 1875, there was a grand ceremonial reopening marked with the celebration of Solemn High Mass.

Old and New Testaments



The stone altar and reredos, installed in 1875 and designed by E. W. Pugin, were executed by a Cheltenham artist, probably Richard Lockwood Boulton, and features figures from the Old and New Testaments. The centre of the reredos now contains a crucifix but originally held carved figures of three angels, two swinging censers representing prayers arising to heaven, the centre angel with hands spread in benediction.

Symbols of the Eucharist

The mosaics set on either side of the altar front represent two traditional symbols of the Eucharist, the right the pelican, which, it was believed, fed its young with its own flesh. On the left is the Lamb of God. The carving in the middle is an Annunciation scene with the Angel Gabriel on the left and Mary on the right, the lilies in the centre being symbolic of Mary's purity.



The chapels



The altars in the Lady Chapel on the left and the St Joseph's Chapel on the right are of a florid, decorated Gothic style and were also in place in 1875, most probably the work of the same Richard Boulton who carved the reredos over the High Altar. The statues in the side chapels are later additions.



Bright decorations

According to the *Stourbridge Observer* of 18th September 1875, describing the re-opening, the walls of the sanctuary were covered with representation of the cherubim with tongues of fire over their heads while the spandrels between the arches in the nave contained murals. The dramatic stencil work you see today on the walls of the sanctuary was introduced towards the end of the last century.

All change!



Over the years the interior decoration of the church has undergone significant changes. The murals in the nave and sanctuary were painted over in the 1960s. The Stations of the Cross, originally painted wooden panels, have been replaced by rather magnificent mosaics and, of course, the originally plain windows in the side aisles, the chapels, the wonderful East rose window and the West window over the choir have all been filled with stained glass.

Magnificent glass

Hardman's Order Book shows that the stained glass windows above the altars in the Lady Chapel and St Joseph's Chapel, featuring the Adoration of the Magi in the former and the Flight into Egypt in the latter, were both installed sometime in 1876 at a cost to the Revd Keen of £40 8s 7½d (see Appendix B for details).

Further changes

The much-loved Mr Keen died in 1877, to the great distress of his parishioners, and was succeeded that same year by Canon James McCave D.D., previously the parish priest of St Ambrose, Kidderminster. As well as building the new Rectory, Canon McCave added annexes to the school which cost £164, funded decorations costing £50 and purchased a larger organ, for which the size of the gallery was increased, at a cost of £322.

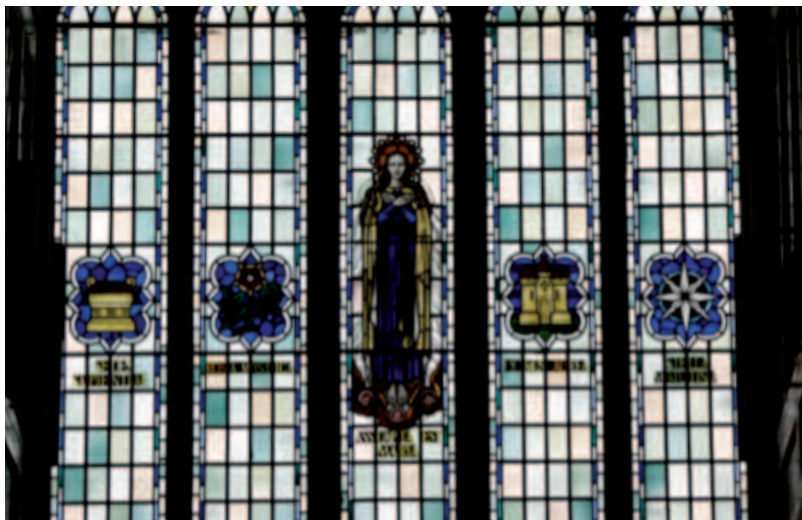
The arrival of the Revd Frederick William Boulton in 1886 ushered in further important improvements including the decoration of the church by Mr Hopkins, the installation of heating apparatus, the re-flooring of the church – one wonders what was wrong with the original floor installed twenty years earlier. It was in Frederick Boulton's time that the tower and spire were constructed, new sacristies added as well as a new classroom to the school, and a new entrance porch in the church, presumably as a result of the enlargement of the gallery to accommodate the new organ acquired by Canon McCave. Iron railings were added around the property.

Consecration

By Catholic tradition a church cannot be consecrated until the debt on it has been cleared. Father Boulton always believed in paying off one project before embarking on another; consequently it was not until 9th July 1891 that the church, being at last free of debt, was consecrated by the Rt. Revd. Dr. Ilsley, Bishop of Birmingham. If you look carefully around the walls of the church you will see the twelve crosses that commemorate the event.

More contributions

Parishioners continued to help adorn the newly consecrated church. Frederick John Haskew paid for a pulpit, marble altar rails, painted canvas Stations of the Cross, the statue of the Sacred Heart and a statue of Our Lady, all of which cost £155, as well as giving £500 towards the cost of the Convent. George Edward Whitwell gave a wooden tabernacle. The altar and rails in the Lady Chapel costing £111 were given by Miss Lucy James, the statue of the wonder worker St Anthony of Padua was the gift of Mrs G.F. James and the statue of the Immaculate Conception in the Lady Chapel costing £15 was paid for by Miss Agnes Barlow. Eleven stained glass windows by John Hardman and Company costing £550 had been installed by 1912 and others were added at later dates up to the 1930s.



A calling bell

The tenor bell and hanging, supplied by John Taylor & Co and costing £100, was the gift of Mr & Mrs Henry James in 1889. The bell fell out of use but in 1988 it was refurbished and now rings out again to call people to Mass.

A moving pulpit

The present stone pulpit, replacing the earlier wooden one, has been moved twice since it was first installed and the damage to the sculptured figures that decorate its sides bear some witness to its treatment over the years.



Replacing the baptistry

The baptistry in Pugin's design was on the south side of the church at the entrance, protected by gilded wrought iron grilles. In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, at a time when the church was undergoing some transformation, the removal of the altar rails at the entrance to the sanctuary being the most noticeable change, it was thought appropriate to open up the baptistry space and use the font as the pedestal for the new west facing free-standing altar. Opinion remains divided as to the wisdom of that decision and at present we have no permanent font in the church. The grilles now serve a different purpose in the car park!

A fine instrument

The present organ was built by Mr E. A. Cawston in 1999, based on a Walker Organ (Opus 710 London) originally built in 1863, the same year building work started on the church. It was not until all the parts for this organ had been purchased that the significance of the dates was appreciated. The rebuilding work

of this fine instrument was made possible by generous donations from parishioners, a grant from The Foundation for Sport and the Arts and a grant from the On Organ Fund. The instrument has been acclaimed by numerous visiting professional organists and will grace our beautiful church for many years to come.

Enlarging the Presbytery

The garage and extension to the Presbytery were completed in the 1950s by Guest's of Amblecote during the time of Father Archibald Snell, (1952-58), the parish priest Michael Forde, (1954-1960), and Father Michael O'Meara, (1952-1961). Demolition of the old toilets and former air raid shelter enabled parishioner Brendan Byrne, who later became a priest, to build an extension at the front of the School for a Youth Club.

New pews for old!

It was about this time that the old wooden benches with parishioners' name plates on them were replaced by the present pews, and a new heating system was installed. The original wooden tabernacle was found to be riddled with woodworm and was replaced by a more robust stone-built tabernacle.

New uses for an old school

With St Joseph's school being transferred to Lea Vale Road, new use had to be found for the buildings on the church site. Elmcroft, in Worcester Street, now the Stourbridge Galleries, had served at one time as a centre for parish activities but it was obvious that the redundant school was the ideal place to develop a new parish centre. The work was fraught with difficulties, including dry rot and structural problems which necessitated the installation of a new damp course and structural repairs. The improvements included rewiring, new lighting and heating, a new kitchen and the provision of a chapel dedicated to St Francis of Assisi.

Further improvements

The church was rewired in 1994 and new light fittings installed. Improvements to the choir loft frontal were carried out in 1998 with the centrepiece taken from an old wooden altar found in the garage and believed to be the altar removed from the Lady Chapel in the 1960s. The remaining gilded ornamentation was designed by Father McGough.

Major works



The run-up to the 150th anniversary of our church coincided with a period of major phased works to rectify weathering and dilapidations. The whole site, a rare series of Grade II listed buildings, presented complex problems. The work, which included repairs to the parish centre and the presbytery, was generously overseen by Bob Hudyba, a

parishioner and consultant surveyor, and the parish architect Roy Pugh of Jennings, Homer and Lynch.

A string of fund raising activities began in support of the building fund as more than £400,000 had to be found: sponsored walks, Bible readings and musical evenings, and much, much more to raise funds.

There were numerous structural defects to be addressed and rising damp due to poor drainage on the Union Street side was causing serious problems. The cement render and bitumen on the inner walls had to be removed and replaced with breathable lime plaster, an additional precaution being the injection of a chemical damp course. A gravel soakaway was introduced. Brick plinths were removed and replaced with limestone, weathered stone on the exterior was repaired or replaced and then cleaned and new guttering was installed. A tie bar, invisible from ground level, was installed to prevent the East window from pushing the adjacent exterior walls outwards any further.

The perimeter walls have been rebuilt, limestone cappings replaced or repaired, new cast-iron railings affixed and corroded window protection grilles replaced with stainless steel. A ramp has been provided in front of the main entrance to conform to disability requirements, the car park has been extended and new garden areas planted.

The fabric of the parish centre was in such poor condition that the building was close to being condemned. As the then parish priest Father David McGough put it, the task was like getting “jam out of a jam sponge without disturbing the sponge!” Extensive work has succeeded in making the place once more attractive.

CHAPTER FOUR

MASS CENTRES

Over the years, as the parish expanded, account had to be taken of parishioners who lived on the edges of the largest parish in the Archdiocese in geographic terms. Forty years ago, with three resident priests and a visiting priest from the Sacred Heart College in Droitwich (which closed in 1991), there were Mass Centres in Kinver and Clent and Mass was also celebrated every Sunday in the Hall of Hagley R.C. High School.

Today the centres have all been closed, though Mass is still regularly celebrated, but not on Sundays, at Hagley. Of the building used at Kinver there seems to be little record but that at Clent, the chapel of Saint Oswald and Saint Wulstan, opened on 28th February 1927, is fortunately well documented.

A much loved chapel



The building, Grade II listed, of sixteenth century origin, around 1660, apparently began life as an alehouse and then a barn before being offered to Stourbridge parish by Mrs Elizabeth Cutter, whose family had owned Green Farm since 1875. Mrs Cutter was a staunch Catholic who, all her life, had cherished a dream of creating a Catholic church in Clent. Her

dream came true thanks to her son-in-law, Clem Woodward senior. The parish priest of Our Lady and All Saints, Canon William Rowley O'Keefe (1920-1927), purchased the building for five shillings and conversion began in 1926. The original building was probably of box frame construction, infilled over time with brick.

Many contributors

Many people contributed to the fitting out of the new chapel. Sam Horton made the altar, reredos and missal stand. The sanctuary lamp was made and given by Enoch Heathcock. G. Lombardi gave a large statue of Our Lady, and Canon O'Keefe donated a harmonium and furniture in readiness for the opening of the new church.

A celebratory breakfast

The building held seventy people and was packed for the Mass at the opening ceremony, after which the congregation dispersed to Green Farm for a real old-fashioned breakfast of baked meats, ale and wine. Mr Clement Woodward then gave due praise to Mrs Cutler, who was unable to attend because of illness.

Fruits of many labours



The first altar stood on a platform of halved millstones (a reminder that the local industry had been the making of scythes and other blades) but a later parish priest, Fr Forde, decided that a proper stone platform should be built and the floor of the nave flagged with stone. When Mrs Jess Packwood died in 1992, donations were made in her memory to provide a fund to pay for necessary and routine repairs. For many years a bell rang from the wooden bellcote to summon the faithful to Mass. The bell had been rescued from the Cathedral of Arras in northern France during the First World War. Mgr Wilfred Moore provided a stained glass window of St Wulstan, the Stations of the Cross and a crucifix figure of Christ the King as well as a smiling statue of Our Lady which is a copy of a medieval statue in Toledo Cathedral in Spain. An *Ecce Homo* (Christ wearing his crown of thorns) painting

was donated by the landlord of a local pub and Adrian Durkin designed and made the altar frontals and lectern hangings as well as the wine and water cruets. Mrs Patsy Mullins gave a red carpet for the sanctuary in memory of her husband. The tabernacle niche was built by a skilled brick worker from Stourbridge and Terry Wilson constructed the confessional in the sacristy.

Mass in a refrigerator?

The chapel suffered from lack of heating in the winter but it was not until the time of Fr John Burns (1985-1990) that electric heating was installed. As more than one worshipper had commented, “A refrigerator isn't the best place to celebrate Mass.” It was about this time that proper pews were introduced, taken from a former convent.

“Good to see familiar faces”

Chris Fonteyn, well known to many through his involvement in several Stourbridge organisations, has written movingly of Clent Chapel. He reveals it was an important part of his life, as he attended Sunday Mass there with his late parents for many years. He continued the tradition alone as travelling over to Clent had become part of his normal routine. *“It was good to see the familiar faces and it was a privilege to be involved with a community who were so warm and friendly. Bright and sunny summer mornings with birds singing made you glad to be alive.”* Winter could be a challenge with the humble heating system doing its best against a penetrating chill and the hope that the sermon would be short! Christmas was special and the chapel became ever more atmospheric and a fitting venue for that season.

A time for tears

It was a bitter blow to the congregation when they were told the chapel was to close - a sad sign of the times with a shortage of priests and the cost of maintaining the elderly cherished church. There was little time to reflect upon this decision and the final Mass was a time for tears.

The happiest of memories

All who worshipped there have the happiest of memories of a place which brought them closer to God and meant so much to them. The closure of the chapel was like a family bereavement, but as one said: *“I recall with pleasure the many friends and characters who helped strengthen my faith on the rocky path through life. We must be grateful for the chapel of St. Oswald and St. Wulstan which made a profound impression upon us all.”*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONVENTS

Stourbridge parish owes much to the presence of various communities of nuns. The history of the nineteenth century convents and convent schools of Stourbridge, Kidderminster and Leek are connected because they all owe their beginnings to a branch of the teaching and missionary order, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), Rathfarnham, also known as the Sisters of Loreto, founded in Navan, Ireland, in 1833 and its Mother Superior, Mother Mary Paul Finn, (1799-1865).

First arrivals

Mother Mary Paul was invited by Bishop Ullathorne, the first Bishop of the Birmingham Diocese, to provide schools for poor Irish children in Kidderminster. Mother Mary Paul and five Sisters arrived in Kidderminster in 1858. They opened a day school for fee-paying students to fund two non-fee-paying Poor Schools, one for girls and one for boys. Father Joseph Anderson of St Mary's Mission, Leek, in 1860 then invited Mother Mary Paul to set up similar schools for the children of Leek, which she did, the Sisters buying a property in 1862 which became the Loreto Convent in King Street, Leek, until 1976.

Interestingly, given the climate of opinion as regards Irish immigrants in those days, the Sisters were able to offer education to children regardless of their religious background. Writing in 1912, Thomas Hand says that about half of the children in the parish school were not Catholics and most of them received the same religious education as the Catholics.

Built to a Pugin design

The convent school at 66 Union Street, Stourbridge, now in private hands, was designed by Edward Welby Pugin, (1834-1875), most probably in 1863, at the same time he was designing the present church. Hand confirms that Irish nuns of the Order of Loreto occupied the convent when it opened circa 1867 for about three years. It is therefore likely that Mother Mary Paul had already made arrangements with the Reverend Walter Keen to provide teachers for the Stourbridge convent school before her death in the Loreto Convent in Leek in 1865.

Financial problems

The convent schools in Kidderminster sadly had to close because of insufficient funds. The five Sisters then moved, in 1868, to join the two already in Stourbridge. The financial situation did not improve and in 1869 the seven Sisters were obliged from want to give up the foundations they had been sent to make and return to Rathfarnham.

We give thanks for their presence

We don't know the names of the original two Sisters at Stourbridge but the five nuns at Kidderminster

Mission in the 1861 census were Mary Teresa Casey, Mary Gertrude Boarke, Mary Cecilia Daniel, Mary Rourke, and Mary Christina McGuiness. The Archives of the Loreto Order in Ireland record Mother Mary Paul saying of Sister Mary Teresa that giving her to the Kidderminster Mission was “*one of the greatest sacrifices she could offer to God*”. Mary Teresa died on her return to Rathfarnham in 1869 so maybe she was too ill to make the difference to Stourbridge that she did at Kidderminster. We give thanks for the missionary presence of the Sisters of Loreto in Stourbridge, Kidderminster and Leek on behalf of the children of our towns.

Convent life in Stourbridge

Sister Kathleen Fitzgerald and Aine McHugh who look after the Loreto Sisters' Archives, have supplied the following fascinating details about the arrangement of the Stourbridge convent; information that reflects well upon the life of the convent at that time: “*On the feast of the Epiphany we heard that a new Branch House was to be opened at Stourbridge. On Jan 23rd, Mother Aloysia (Jackson), S.M. Joseph (Pilley), S.M. Philomena (Beech) and Sr Veronica (Johnson, a lay sister) left us to begin the new work at Stourbridge – by all accounts all seemed very promising. The Convent constituted of a small chapel, good size community room, refectory etc. etc., and several very good cells. The Convent was adjacent to the Church to which the Sisters went to daily Mass. The poor schools were in the same block as the Convent – there was also a very good size playground.*

“*Father Keen, the resident Priest and a saintly man, gave the Sisters a very warm reception. In addition to the poor schools a middle-class day school was opened which in a very short time was filled, there being many respectable families in Stourbridge.*

“*By degrees the Branch House at Stourbridge got nicely furnished – some time in June Sr M. Joseph (Pilley) and Sr M. Mechtildis (Farrell) gave a visit of surprise to the Sisters of the Branch taking with them a large statue of St Joseph for the chapel – several other useful presents were brought later on.”*

Closure

The Leek convent and schools thrived until 1976 when circumstances necessitated the closure and sale of the convent, which is now a delightful, small and successful hotel, the “Peak Weavers.” The sisters will, however, continue to be remembered because the stone gateposts to the property still bear the name “Loreto Convent”.

New faces at the convent

The Sisters of Mercy of St Anne’s Convent, Camp Hill, Birmingham, replaced the Sisters of Loreto in January 1869 and continued to occupy the Stourbridge convent until 1872 when it was then sold to the Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle based at Selly Park, Birmingham. Sr Marie St Honore Ducroc and Sr Benedicta Brodhurst arrived in Stourbridge in 1872, the former remaining in Stourbridge from 1872-1875, the latter 1872-1901 and again 1906-1923. The St Paul Sisters subsequently had charge of the Stourbridge schools for 125 years until 1992.

The 1881 census shows none of the five “scholars”, aged between 10 and 19, were born in Stourbridge so presumably these were boarders whose fees helped to fund the convent poor school as had been the arrangement in Kidderminster. The remaining women included Sister Genevieve, born Louisa Dobson in Worthington, Cumberland, who taught in Stourbridge from 1876-1927, and Sister Cecilia, born Maria Bolger, from Newcastle, Northumberland, who taught from 1877-1895.

An American in Stourbridge

The 1891 census also includes Sister Benedicta who was born Catherine Brodhurst in New York in 1836. She never returned to America. Instead she became a British naturalised citizen, remaining in Stourbridge for many years, eventually becoming the third Superior General of the Congregation. She is buried in St Paul’s Convent cemetery.

A new convent school

There were no boarders in the 1911 census. The old Convent school had been demolished to make way for what was described as the Mixed St Joseph's School, which opened in September 1911 and by this time the distinction between “middle-class” fee-paying scholars and the pupils of the “poor school” had been abolished.

The 1911 census shows that there were five women living in the convent, including Louisa Dobson (Sister Genevieve), who was the head teacher at St Mary’s R C School, Brierley Hill, Susan Ryland (Sister Barbara), head teacher of St Joseph’s Infant School, and Bridget Flynn, who was the Head Teacher of the new school.

Old Girls!

Four Stourbridge girls became sisters at St Paul’s Convent, Selly Park: Sr Marie Celine (Mary Elizabeth Elwell) entered in 1924, Sr Benedicta (May Shields also in 1924), Sr Magdalen (Pattena Payne) also 1924 and Sr Seraphina (Teresa Mary Rush in 1928).

Leaving Union Street

The Sisters sold the convent in Union Street in 1977 and moved to Landsgate, a large house in Racecourse Lane. Sister Bernadette Devine, Head Teacher of the new St Joseph’s School in Lea Vale Road, from 1982-1991, wrote of her convent companions as “*prayerful, honest, hospitable [women] ..full of good humour*” with whom she gratefully lived in a “*happy community*”. The nuns were all involved in additional parish work and community activities, including the retired Sisters who regularly visited hospitals and the sick in their homes. Sister Bernadette could equally well be describing the Union Street convent nuns from 1867 to 1977, who coped with the poverty of the nineteenth century, two world wars and the upheavals of Vatican II in the 1960s.

Leaving Stourbridge

Sister Breda Murphy and Sister Marie Leahy (1918-2007), who often commented on how well the nuns supported each other, “*rejoicing in each other’s successes*”, closed Landsgate and returned to their mother house in Birmingham in 1997, bringing to the end an era of education given by Roman Catholic women who were devoted not only to God but to the generations of Stourbridge children in their care. We salute them.

St Andrew’s Convent

The Union Street Convent was not the only religious establishment for women in Stourbridge. In 1923 Studley Court, now the council offices in Mary Stevens’ Park, was acquired for £15,000 by Mother Marie Xavier, the Superior of the Religious of St Andrew, a Belgian order of Ignatian nuns, based in the UK at Streatham in London, and dedicated to hospitality and teaching. Studley Court became St Andrew's Convent, incorporating a high-class boarding and day school for girls. Contemporary photographs show the students had well equipped classrooms, a gymnasium, tennis courts and substantial grounds at their disposal, making a much-appreciated addition to Catholic life in Stourbridge.

Fond memories!

The late Mrs Joan Seymour’s memories of the 1920s were, as she put it, of an active Catholic life. Joan particularly enjoyed Corpus Christi processions from a little gate in Norton Road, around the pool to an altar erected by the ornamental gate in Norton Road. Joan also remembered summer fêtes held in the grounds, with swings and a maypole provided by the nuns, and how her mother, in charge of the swings, charged a few pence for a few minutes, no doubt for a good cause!

A Dominican Chaplain from Caldey Island

The community was served by Father Samson Carrington OSB. He was formerly a member of the Benedictine community on Caldey Island who had introduced the Arts and Crafts movement to Caldey and Prinknash Abbeys, which eventually developed into the famous incense and pottery businesses. He was in Stourbridge from 1923-29 and died in Bristol in 1934. Four priests from Prinknash Abbey, including the abbot Fr Dyfrig Rushton, celebrated his funeral and burial in the Norton Road cemetery, where the Benedictine insignia can still be seen on his weathered gravestone.

Another closure

The convent school closed in 1929 and was bought by the local philanthropist Ernest Stevens and given to the people of the borough in memory of his wife, Mary Stevens. The nuns were dispersed, some eventually going to Brazil and the Belgian Congo. Today the Sisters of St Andrew are to be found assisting the priests and brothers of the well-known international community of Taizé in France.

CHAPTER SIX

NORTON CEMETERY



In his 1912 history of Stourbridge parish, Thomas Hand refers to burials in land associated with the Mission church of All Saints in New Road. There is no means of knowing exactly where they were located but it is clear that by 1869 it was realised that a new burial ground would have to be provided. Unlike medieval parish churches in this country, relatively few Catholic churches have consecrated churchyards surrounding them and so it was necessary to look further afield for some open space.

Purchasing the land

Correspondence between Freer and Perry Solicitors and George Whitwell and held in the Archdiocesan Archives reveals that in 1869 negotiations began for the purchase of land in Norton for a new Catholic cemetery. This had been made possible by a Miss Mary Ann Turnbull who had loaned £400 to Revd Walter Keen for this purpose, subject to interest during her life.

The Archdiocesan Treasury records contain an Agreement made between Jeremiah Mathews of 15 Waterloo Street Birmingham, Land Surveyor, Agent of the Trustees of the Charity of Thomas Foley Esq, and George Whitwell of Stourbridge, druggist, to acquire 7260 square yards of land at Iverley Plantation, beside the Turnpike Road to Kidderminster (now Norton Road) for £450. The solicitors dealing with the transaction were Bernard King and Sons of Foster Street, Stourbridge. George Whitwell then transferred the land into the trusteeship of Bishop Ullathorne, George Jeffries, Michael O'Sullivan and Walter Keen, priest of the All Saints Catholic Mission Stourbridge in an Indenture dated 1st June 1870.

Objections!

Correspondence in the Archives and dated 6th May to the 31st August 1870 reveals that a Mr Cooke, presumably a near neighbour, objected strongly to a cemetery being sited near his house. His objection went to the Secretary of State in April 1870, who referred the case to Mr Holland, Inspector of Cemeteries, who ruled that burials should not take place within 100 yards of Mr Cooke's house. Mr Cooke then appealed to the Home Secretary, Henry Austin Bruce, who decided that his approval of the site was not required. It has not been possible to locate Mr Cooke on any of the census records so the location of his property is unknown but he must have been able to swallow his objections because he later sold a further two acres to Mr Whitwell at the further end of the Plantation via Bernard King and Sons. Mr Whitwell finally received the conveyance on 31st August 1870.

Death of the benefactor

Miss Mary Ann Turnbull died on January 25th 1870 aged 66, a couple of months before the purchase of the land was completed. However, she was possibly the first to be buried in the new cemetery. Her beautiful tombstone is on the right, next to the central footpath, about halfway up the site, well away from the boundary wall, probably a deliberate attempt to avoid the subsequent complaints voiced above. Probate Records show Miss Turnbull's estate was less than £450, her sole executor was Walter Keen, so probably she left everything to All Saints Mission, which would have helped greatly in paying for the cemetery.

Legal wrangling!

The next legal mention of the cemetery is on 15th April 1891 when Stephen Gateley of Birmingham, the solicitor acting for the Diocese, sent a Deed of Conveyance and Deed of Declaration of Trust to the Revd Vincent Holcroft, Bursar for the Birmingham Diocese, asking him to obtain the signature of the new Stourbridge trustees, the original trustees having died out. It would seem that the Revd Frederick William Boulton had earlier retained the Catholic Stourbridge solicitors Wall and James to look after his interests because Wall and James complained that the documents should have gone through them as they belonged to the Stourbridge parish. The correspondence then descends into anger and acrimony against Stephen Gateley over the handling of the documentation and arguments about his fees. Eventually F. W. Boulton sided with Wall and James. Things gradually deteriorated to such an extent that Gateley wrote to Holcroft on the 16th July 1894 that he was surprised at the strong feeling of Stourbridge people, and that the Stourbridge Board of Management of the Cemetery were getting way above themselves. It is difficult at this distance to appreciate the rights and wrongs in the matter but it does appear to be that Wall and James and Revd Boulton thought they should have more say in the appointment of Trustees for the Cemetery. A conveyance dated 9th November 1894 was eventually completed between John Pierce Lacy, Mary O'Gorman, The Right Reverend Edward Ilsley, the Reverend William Boulton and seven others and enrolled in the Central Office of the Supreme Court on 24th November 1894, with Gateley waiving his fees! All the debts having been paid, the cemetery was consecrated by Archbishop Edward Ilsley in 1895.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SCHOOLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We saw in the first chapter that as early as the fifteenth century education and church were interconnected in Stourbridge with the foundation of a school attached to the chantry chapel in Lower High Street.

Education was also important from the beginnings of the Stourbridge Mission in the nineteenth century. Education Acts in 1870 and 1880 gradually established the principle of compulsory primary education for all but in some ways the Stourbridge Mission was ahead. Perry's *History of Stourbridge* records that in 1827 a school was opened on the New Road site and supported by voluntary contributions as well as by the pupils' pence. By 1832 there were 36 pupils and by the middle of the century 60 girls and 40 boys were on roll.

When The Reverend Keen negotiated the arrival of the Sisters of Loreto, he ensured that the newly built convent in Union Street had a new school attached. The school must have proved an enormous success because ten years later the premises had to be extended at a cost of £164 by Canon James McCave who was at that time the Diocesan Inspector of Schools. The Canon was greatly respected by the parishioners who presented him with a beautiful chalice. He died in 1899 at Abbots Salford and is buried in Norton Cemetery.

Education for all

What was striking about the education provided by the Sisters was that the school was open to both Catholic and non-Catholic Stourbridge children, something which must have contributed to removing from the town a large amount of the prejudice and bigotry which had been earlier demonstrated locally.

A new building needed

The school continued until the early part of the last century but in 1910 the Board of Education warned the then Rector, the Revd Edward Charles Delaney, (1909-1920), that the convent school would not be grant-earning after March 31st 1911, unless it was brought up to the Board's standards. Father Delaney took expert advice and reluctantly agreed to demolish the old school and replace it with a new school.

The new school was designed by architects Bailey and McConnal and was built by J. Guest and Son, Brettell Lane, within six months of the demolition of the old school at an estimated cost of £2000. Enthusiastic fund-raising and sponsorship, which included a three-day Bazaar in Stourbridge Town Hall, raised £1000 towards building costs with another £900 promised from subscriptions and donations. The success of the bazaar was itself testimony to the changing attitude of local people to having a Catholic parish in their midst.

The County Express reported that the school could accommodate 220 children. It was a square building with a 12ft wide corridor, which could serve as an assembly hall, bisecting three large classrooms on one side, divided by glass screens, and one large classroom on the other divided into two. There were separate cloakrooms for boys and girls located at the end of the corridor which could also serve as a playground in wet weather. The building was designed to be bright, light and airy with an excellent system of ventilation; it had modern gas lighting and an indoor water heating system installed by Mr Attwood of Foster Street. The interior had pitch pine block flooring throughout, with brightly painted walls. The toilets were outside and there were two asphalted playgrounds, one for boys, the other for girls.



A daily ritual

A parishioner, Joan Seymour, now deceased, remembered the headmistress of St Joseph's school in the 1920s was Sister Bernard, assisted by Sisters Lorenzo and Agnes and three lay teachers, Miss Green, Miss Groves and Miss Enid Hinds who continued to work at the school until the 1940s when Sister Agnes became headmistress. Peter Harrington recollects the 1940s morning ritual: girls lined up to the left of a railing between the convent and rear of the church, boys lined up on the right hand side. The girls then walked to the school's rear entrance, the boys to the front entrance. Joan recalled the priests at the time: Father Delaney, Father Kilgannon, and Canon O'Keefe, who served Stourbridge from 1920-1937 and whom she described as "tall and stern but also nice."

Fond remembrances

A female pupil of the 1940s remembers that boys and girls did not mix. Basic P.E. for girls was held in the Girls' rear playground, with boys' P.E. in the Boys' front playground. Since there was no playing field at St Joseph's, pupils walked to Oldswinford Primary School for team games, rounders and football. She remembers needlework was taught but not cookery and her unhappiest day was when she passed the 11+ and had to leave St Joseph's to go to St Paul's Roman Catholic High School for Girls in Birmingham. She was prepared for her First Holy Communion by Miss Shiner and remembers having boiled eggs and bread and butter for breakfast in the main school after Mass, because communicants in those days fasted from the night before.

A stern teacher

One pupil came to Stourbridge from Northern Ireland in the 1940s when she was eight. She lived in Wollaston with her parents and invalid brother. She was first taught in the Hut which to her was "a school, good and proper." The pupils referred to the outside toilets as the *laboratories*. She remembers Miss Shiner, who was "very strict and dished out punishment" with "a ruler briskly rapped across the knuckles." She also remembers other teachers: Miss O'Connor, Miss Heathcock and Mr Farmer. She left school at 15 and worked in a shop. One of her daughters went to the old school, the youngest to the current school in Lea Vale Road, Norton.

The "Hut" she remembered was in fact a large, black, single classroom building, entered directly from Union Passage through a gate in the wall and heated by a stove in the middle, which needed stoking in winter. This temporary structure was introduced after the Second World War to satisfy the School Inspector's complaints about overcrowding.

Beware the rainy days!

Rainwater run-off seems to have beset the school. One pupil remembers how the playground sloped and heavy rain was dreaded as water would run down the playground and in through the Boys' entrance. Large brooms were given to the pupils to brush the water over the parquet floor and out the through the Girls' entrance. The boiler room under the school building would also flood: a leaky water pipe was thought to be the problem but no leak was found. After much investigation it transpired that the school was built over a natural spring!

From pupils to Head Teacher

Brian Francis Barry was a Yorkshireman who moved to Wednesbury with his family, and in 1957 he came to teach at St Joseph's school. He taught mostly the 10 year olds in the mixed class and retired in 1974/5. Two of his daughters became stalwarts of Catholic education in Stourbridge: Joan Lewis was one of the first teachers at Hagley High School when it opened in 1959, and Mary Orchard had the distinction of teaching not only in the old St Joseph's school but also at Elmcroft, the Hut and the new St Joseph's in Lea Vale Road, where she eventually became Head Teacher.

Chilled milk

One pupil remembers Sister Francis and the "cosy warmth" of the Hut, but "the horrible outdoor toilets were always frozen in winter." There were newts to clean out and she remembers Miss Murphy drawing a Teddy on a blackboard, which wobbled precariously, to teach the class the letter T. In winter the children had to cope with their daily milk freezing. There was daily rehearsal for a music festival. She loved every minute of it, but recalls being really vexed because she was only taught by Mrs Orchard once because she kept changing age groups. She was upset at leaving and always looked back on her time there with affection.

Mary Orchard arrived at the Hut in September 1960, having completed her teacher training at the Maria Assumpta Teaching College in Kensington, London. She taught the 6-year-olds and remembers the coke stove giving out acrid fumes.

ELMCROFT



Elmcroft in Worcester Street (now the Stourbridge Galleries), had originally been run as a private convent school in the 1930s, the headmistress being Sister Ignatius Wright. The archivist for the Sisters of St Paul, Sister Anne Cunningham, confirms that Sister Ignatius taught privately in Stourbridge 1930-1949, and, when she retired, the building became parish property in 1950.

Sister Cyril graduated from the Hut to Elmcroft in the 1950s. She tells us the building had everything necessary for a school: there were two spacious rooms on the ground floor which served

as classrooms for 6-7 year-olds. Only the ground floor was used for teaching as an elderly couple occupied the upper storey of the house. The building was in good shape, pleasantly situated with a large garden at the back, but there was a good 15 minute walk to the Conservative club where the children walked for their lunch, each holding the hand of a friend and chatting to their hearts' content.

Giving her all to the school

The headmistress of Elmcroft was Sister [Agnes] Rose Doherty, who was described as giving her all to the job and knowing every child by name. She was hard-working, a good organiser, regarded discipline as important and kept a close eye on the progress of teachers and pupils alike. There were many children to a class, they used slates and chalks for writing and paper for drawing was in short supply. Afternoons were given over to singing, story-telling, acting, drawing and physical activities.

Taking turns before the fire!

Mary Orchard arrived in 1961 and began by teaching the reception class of 5 year-olds in what is now the main shop on the left hand side ground floor of the Galleries. There were no indoor toilets so the children had to walk down the side of the building to the outside toilets at the back. If the weather was wet their socks were dried in front of the one gas fire. If the weather turned cold Mary moved the children around the room so each had a turn by the fire.

However, the situation changed once it came to the attention of the new headmistress of the schools, Sister Petronilla. She arranged for the old couple who lived upstairs to be cared for in a nursing home which freed up their kitchen on the ground floor. Dinners then moved up to Elmcroft. The indoor toilet upstairs came into use and she opened another upper room.

In time Elmcroft became more of a social centre with facilities for the scouts, guides, youth clubs and senior citizens. The rooms also housed the organisation for the highly successful parish Football Pools which raised money to build Hagley High School in 1959.

Through a succession of Head Teachers, from Sister Petronilla, Sister Bernadette, Mary Orchard, Brenda Beale and Norah Painter, the top priorities in St Joseph's School continue to be placing Christ at the centre of the life of the school, acknowledging that every child is unique and special, and enabling them to fulfil their potential in all areas. That clear and common sense of purpose between the head teacher, deputy and staff has allowed a shared approach to decision making and the day to day running of the school. A strong Governing Body continues to offer support and challenge, ensuring that policy and statutory requirements are met whilst maintaining the Catholic nature of St Joseph's. The school has expanded significantly but has remained a close knit community where members support each other during happy times and sad. Visitors and official reports comment on the warm, caring and uplifting environment where children clearly thrived.

Events and Memories

There have been many excellent liturgical celebrations in the school, including the blessing by Archbishop Vincent Nichols of the memorial garden created in memory of parents who have died whilst their children were at St Joseph's. Mrs Horner, a formidable but loving school secretary, sadly died in service in 2009. There have been school plays and productions which displayed to



parents' joy and pride the talent with which their children participated through the creative arts. Sport has been developed and maintained strong links with the wider community: the St. Joseph's football teams are forces to be reckoned with and enjoy many successes.

Moving with the times



ICT began modestly with the acquisition of a single computer. It soon became apparent that it was an advantage to be under the age of ten in order to easily get to grips with this wonder of modern science! Eventually two new classrooms were built and an ICT suite was equipped and the technology was further developed with the introduction of interactive whiteboards in each classroom. The school is proud of the awards it has won in this area.

Maintaining strong links

St Joseph's continues to enjoy strong links with other Catholic schools in Dudley and the Primary and Secondary schools in Stourbridge. The liaison between Hagley Catholic High School and St Joseph's is strong. Many ex-pupils return to carry out work experience or help in a voluntary role throughout the school. The school has always been highly sought after by students training to be teachers and strong links have been formed with local training colleges, particularly Newman College.

A true parish school

Last but by no means least, the school enjoys a close relationship with Our Lady and All Saints' parish which it has faithfully served for many years. All staff, past and present, are proud of the achievements of our pupils and the success they achieve in their teenage and adult years. It is gratifying when those past pupils bring their own children to be educated at St Joseph's.

Transformation

The school building on the church site so proudly opened in 1911 has now been transformed into the Parish Centre but many of the details that were in evidence at its opening then can still be seen: the general lay-out of the building, the foundation stones in the external walls, the separate entrances for boys and girls, the present day rear fire exit clearly carved *Girls*, the front entrance, *Boys*.



HAGLEY HIGH SCHOOL



Fund raising

The fund for a new Catholic secondary school had been launched in 1942 in the middle of the Second World War, a major figure in the enterprise being Father Michael Forde of Our Lady and All Saints, also well known for cycling round Stourbridge giving half crowns to the poor. He devised a very Irish plan to finance the new school known as "The Dead Cert": it involved the purchase of racing and football tips supplied to the parish priest by a parishioner with a gift for predicting the outcome of sporting events. This and other fund raising schemes eventually allowed Fr Forde to inform Archbishop Grimshaw that a down payment of £1500 could be made towards the building costs.

Where to build?

The original plan had been to build the school in Stourport-on-Severn but the unexpected bequest of land in Hagley called for a change of plan. Despite local opposition the proposal to build in Hagley was supported by the Labour MP for Dudley, George Wigg. The building was under the supervision of Joe Lynch of the Brierley Hill architectural firm of Jennings, Homer and Lynch and was intended to accommodate 400 pupils drawn from Stourbridge, Kidderminster, Halesowen and Stourport at a cost of £92,500, a good proportion of which came from government funding.

A momentous day

Thursday 8th January 1959 was a momentous day when the new school admitted its first intake, some 75 third and fourth year pupils and their teachers. The building was already too small before the end of the year and by 1962 an extension was provided at a further cost of £20,000.

The important business of education

The school thrived under the leadership of the first headmaster, Michael Durkin. Gilbert and Sullivan operettas became an important means by which the social life of the pupils was enhanced; costumes were designed and made, sets constructed. A school choir gained a considerable local reputation, and there were fashion shows and visits to various countries. Durkin didn't believe that academic success was the be-all and end-all, saying: "We do our best not to let the business of exams hamper the important business of education." These were the days before targets and league tables.

Moving on

As the numbers of pupils increased, space was increasingly at a premium and in 1971 a double decker bus was brought in to serve as a Fifth Form Common Room. The following year, Ken Bonnaud took over the headship. By now there were twenty two teachers and increasing numbers of pupils were sitting public examinations. The school was moving to comprehensive status, achieved in 1974. In addition to the other academic progress, a Religious Education department made its appearance, offering entry to examinations at O and CSE levels. A lunch-time weekday Mass was introduced and pupils were encouraged to go on popular residential retreats with the Redemptorists at Woodcote Hall in Shropshire.

An expanding school

Paul Hill took over after Ken Bonnaud retired through ill health. The school continued to expand, examination results grew steadily better and pupils were beginning to carry on to university. Social activities continued to be an important element in school life, with overseas visits and winter skiing in Austria as well as excursions to various parts of Britain at the end of summer terms.

In the early 1990s a Latin Club was founded, a German exchange arranged and mock elections were held. The school's strong musical tradition flourished. At the end of each summer term exhibitions of pupils' hobbies attracted large numbers of entries, among them stamp and coin collections and giant African snails!

An outstanding school

By the time Paul Hill left, Hagley High School had established itself as one of the most successful in Worcestershire and his successor, Ted Hammond, has been able to build on that reputation and sporting, academic and musical success has continued.



Although the school still retains its old name of Hagley RC High School, the establishment now proudly claims St Nicholas Owen as its patron and all new pupils go to visit Harvington Hall where Nicholas, the Jesuit Lay Brother, did so much cunning work to provide hiding places protecting the hunted priests who served the local Catholic population in the days of persecution.

In 2005 the school was awarded Specialist status, government funds being granted for the promotion of music, drama and dance for the benefit of both the pupils and the wider community.

A Catholic School

Hagley School continues to lay great emphasis on extracurricular activities, providing the choir in St Chad's cathedral at the annual CAFOD Mass on the anniversary of Oscar Romero and being heavily involved in the dramatic music presentations at Birmingham Town Hall, a recent theme being the Catholic Community and the World. Every year group has the opportunity to take part in retreats, younger ones at Alton Castle or the Briars Retreat Centre, older pupils going to Soli House in Stratford-upon-Avon or Harvington Hall for days of recollection. The school also participates in the annual Archdiocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.

A beautiful small chapel, created for class Masses, is also a quiet place for prayer and reflection at any time of the day and the regular Tuesday Mass is open to outsiders.

And into the future!

There are now over a thousand pupils and seventy teachers at the school. Just as importantly, the social dimension has not been overlooked. The true measure of a school's success should always be reflected in the character of the young men and women who leave to face an ever more challenging world.

YOUTH IN THE PARISH

Youth activities for young parishioners in the early years were mostly organised within the fabric of the sodalities, like the Children of Mary and by the Teachers and Nuns of St Joseph's School. There are vague memories and a few old photographs of various outings and a young theatre group in the 1920s.

All structured youth activity has always depended upon the enthusiasm and support of the clergy, backed up by a dedicated group of parents and adults with a vision of the future generation in the faith.

From the mid-1950s organised youth groups developed, with a strong Scouting, Guides, Cubs and Brownies team. The scouts were led by “Doc” Franks, a dentist from Harborne, with Imelda and Verina Smith involved with the Brownies and Rangers. After the retirement of the leaders in the late 1950s, there was a great revival with the uniformed youth in 1964 with Denis Clee and Joan Cody building a team and membership of over 100 youngsters. This continued very successfully until the 1990s. Unfortunately without adult support, these are now disbanded, and all the equipment has been donated to the Group Scout Organisation.

Youth groups met in St Joseph's School on Sunday Evenings after Benediction during the 1950s, and a regular Parish Dance was held in the Carlisle Hall to support the School Building Fund. The move of the youth groups to “Elmcroft” in the 1950s coincided with the flourishing of the parish youth club. There was a junior club on Friday evenings, senior club on Sunday evenings and Table Tennis on Wednesdays, from the 1960s. The members stimulated many outgoing activities during these years, by supporting a Convent School in Southam which was run by the sister of Fr Tom Higgins.

In 1965 the Catholic Club leaders invited the clergy from all other denominations in Stourbridge to a meeting at the leader's house, and formed the Stourbridge Christian Youth Organisation. A live Christmas Crib was erected by the Town Clock, with a live “baby Jesus”, supported by all the churches, raising funds for the War on Want. Many joint activities followed, including a live Passion Play enacted on Stourbridge Football Ground on Palm Sunday in 1966.



In 1975 the Catholic Youth Club U14 football team had a poor experience in the Birmingham Boys League, and so the Stourbridge Youth League was begun by the Catholic Youth Club Leaders. They invited 7 local youth clubs to take part for the first season. This is now a very successful Youth Football League.

With the completion of the new St Joseph's School in Lea Vale Road, Elmcroft was sold in 1978, and the youth groups moved back to the old school, now the parish centre. An extension to the centre was organised and built by the youth leaders in 1982 to improve the youth facilities. Youth groups continued to develop, with some support from the Birmingham Catholic Youth Service, with arranged visits to the Soli House Centre at Stratford-on-Avon and Alton Castle. There is today a great need for enthusiastic adult youth leaders, who can give time to organise and inspire our Catholic Youth in their faith and outgoing Christian influence in the world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOME SPECIAL EVENTS

The life of a church achieves a sort of dynamic of its own. We have seen that the construction work of 1864 was only the beginning of a process of constant change. The parishioners of the nineteenth century were whole-hearted in their desire to adorn the building. Fund raising was already elevated to a fine art in those days. In 1884, as Thomas Hand relates, a very successful Bazaar was held in the old Corn Exchange, advertised as “The Fairy Garden”. Elaborate pavilions were erected and decorated with flowers and ferns and flags. There was a band and, to cap it all, a fountain played into a large basin in which bull-rushes and rocks formed a charming picture. It is hardly surprising that Hands comments that the show far excelled any one held in Stourbridge before or since!

Birmingham Archdiocesan Eucharistic Congress - 21st May 1934

Canon William Rowley O’Keefe (1915-1937), the parish priest of Stourbridge 1920-1937, had already been greatly influential in organising two Eucharistic Congresses in the Archdiocese, the first in Coleshill in 1933 and another in Hednesford.

In an unpublished 1988 draft entitled *The Growth of Catholicity during the Twentieth Century*, Sister Celine Elwell describes how the Canon pioneered a third Congress at a High Mass celebrated in Stourbridge on Whit Monday 21st May 1934 when the church was filled to capacity. The celebrant of the Mass was the Very Rev. William Lyth, assisted by the Revs David Quinn and Joseph McHugh. Canon O’Keefe gave the homily from the text of Isaiah 12:14 “*Praise ye the Lord...make known his works among the people*”. He hoped that his projected Eucharistic Congress would lead to a great enthusiasm and devotion to the Holy Sacrament.

He didn't live to see his hopes bear fruit. He died on the 12th May 1937 shortly before about six thousand people attended the Eucharistic Congress held at Father Hudson’s Homes in Coleshill. The *Catholic Herald* of 21st May 1937 recorded Archbishop Thomas Williams' praise for “*the great part taken by the late Canon W. Rowley O’Keefe of Stourbridge in organising diocesan Eucharistic Congresses in the past, the previous Coleshill gathering, in 1933*”, and that “*at Hednesford two years ago*”. Canon O’Keefe’s obituary noted that the Birmingham Archdiocese had lost one of its most popular priests and indefatigable workers. His remains are buried in the parish cemetery in Norton.

Cross Carrying Pilgrimage of Prayer and Penance for Peace

An appeal was published in 1947 in the *Catholic Herald* by Gerald Vann OP, a Dominican theologian and philosopher, on behalf of ex-serviceman Charles Osborne, organiser of the Vezelay pilgrimage in 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War, for 400 men to bear crosses to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk as a direct answer to the call of Our Lady of Fatima for prayer and penance.

The Slipper Chapel

There are two shrines at Walsingham, the Anglican Church built in 1934 by Father A. Hope Patten in the village, and the Roman Catholic shrine, a 14th century church, known as the Slipper Chapel, at Houghton St Giles, a mile and a half outside Walsingham, so-called because traditionally this was the place where pilgrims removed their footwear for the last stage



of their journey to the shrine. The shrine contains a statue closely modelled on the mediaeval statue which at the time of the Reformation was taken to London and desecrated.

Fourteen towns responded to the appeal, among them Stourbridge. The volunteers walked all the way to Norfolk, often barefoot, carrying fourteen crosses, representing each of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Each cross was of oak, 6ft tall and weighing ninety five pounds. The Stourbridge cross was the 7th station, *Jesus falls a second time*, and it can still be seen flanking the left hand side of the path leading to the present day Chapel of Our Lady of Reconciliation, opened in 1988.

Mary Moran, née Harrington, remembers seeing nineteen men walking up towards the Hagley Road from Our Lady and All Saints church. They were, most probably, drawn from surrounding parishes because only Joseph Thatcher, brother of Gemma Wright, and Tom Horton, husband of Thelma Horton, can be positively identified as Stourbridge parishioners. *The Tablet* of 24th July 1948 records how the penitent pilgrims walked through the country, sleeping and eating when and where they could, two at a time carrying their crosses, the others following in penitence and prayer for the future peace of the world, reaching the Shrine on the 16th July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

An eyewitness describes how they arrived at the meadow whilst the night mists were still in the fields in the early hours of 16th July 1948. Mass was being said at three altars set up in the field opposite the Slipper Chapel where already thousands were receiving Communion. Then the people lined up along the roadside from the Slipper Chapel to the Priory Gate and the procession began, led by the pilgrimage sponsors the Union of Catholic Mothers, bearing the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham. As the hymn singing stopped, the first pilgrim cross came into sight over the hedges and very slowly the fourteen crosses passed along the Holy Mile to the ruined Priory in Walsingham, the tired men, some wearing tattered uniforms, passed bare foot, bearing their cross, broken and wounded...an exquisite agony as *The Tablet* report had it.

The ceremonies continued with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, the blessing of the sick, a sermon by Cardinal Bernard Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster (who, years earlier, had been Auxiliary Bishop in Birmingham), and the Consecration of England and Wales to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Benediction brought the ceremonies to a close and when the grounds were clear of day pilgrims the Cross bearers took up their crosses for the last time, returning in procession to the meadow beside the Chapel where the Crosses were to be erected to form the Stations of the Cross.

The final reminiscences of a pilgrim who carried the Glossop cross most probably reflect the thoughts of all who took part in the Pilgrimage and are just as valid today: *“At 10.07am our train steamed out of the station, the compartments were quiet until we passed the meadow where the 14 crosses stood... showing the way to peace; peace through God and the Cross on which he died, for the salvation of mankind, that they may all live as brothers.”* We can only hope and pray that someday all peoples, men and women, will listen to Jesus’s teachings and learn to live in love and peace together.

A Broadcast Mass

In 1977 the Midlands ITV contractor, ATV Network Ltd., broadcast a live Sunday morning worship from Our Lady and All Saints church, which was filled with scaffolding for the cameras. Father Geoffrey Tucker, parish priest of Harvington and Roman Catholic religious advisor to ATV Network, and later to Central Independent Television, provided the commentary from a desk set in St Joseph’s side chapel. The programme, a sung Mass, was well received by the sick and the housebound. It was directed by Tony Parker, a non-Catholic from Oldswinford, and a former wartime Spitfire pilot. Afterwards the TV crew enjoyed a scrumptious breakfast laid on by the parish.

Papal Visit to Birmingham



September 2010 saw the culmination of months of preparation for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Britain.

What people in Birmingham had been waiting for was his arrival to celebrate Mass in Cofton Park and proclaim the Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman.

One participant's memories sums up the experiences of all: *“We left Our Lady and All Saints church in darkness, very early in the morning, the drivers successfully avoiding Birmingham traffic jams, and arrived at an enormous open space in Groveley Lane, which had recently been part of the Austin factory at Longbridge then in the course of demolition. The site was already full of coaches arrived from afar for this special day.*

“We began our walk at daybreak to Cofton Park wearing our yellow Pilgrim backpacks containing a copy of the Magnificat, detailing the liturgy and events to come, plus many other useful publications. I was befriended by a very nice young woman

called Elaine, who carried my chair and looked after me for the rest of the day. Security was tight and we each had to provide proof of identity. We walked through the barriers individually and were issued with an identity wrist bracelet with an individual number for each person. Elaine proved a godsend, erecting my chair, settling me in a good position then going to fetch hot drinks. I sat quietly waiting for her and thought how strange it was to be sitting in a place well known to John Henry as he often walked the hills and park whilst staying on retreat in Oscott House, Rednal, only a ten minute walk from where I sat.

“In the course of the sung Mass of the Beatification of John Henry Newman that began at 10.00am, the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, formally requested that the Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman be beatified. Pope Benedict acceded to Archbishop Bernard’s request and declared that John Henry Newman should henceforth be invoked as Blessed, his feast to be on the ninth of October.

“It was a wonderful day but my abiding memory is hearing the strangest, eerie ethereal music during the Pope’s homily. I thought at first it was interference from the recording equipment but then realised thousands of us were listening to him in silence and what I could hear was the wind singing, being picked up by the giant microphone nearby.”

SOME SPECIAL PEOPLE

Over the course of nearly two centuries since the earliest beginnings of the Stourbridge Mission were many people who in one way or another made their mark. We are reminded of Thomas Green who used to walk regularly to Harvington for Mass in the beginning of the nineteenth century and who influenced the Revd Mr Martyn to come and offer Mass here in Stourbridge.

Moses Barlow also comes to mind, a convert and a man, as Thomas Hand recounts, of strong will and determined character, honourable and straightforward; as a Catholic, fearless of taunts and jibes at a time when to be a Catholic was to be treated with contempt.

There were the priests who made long and arduous journeys before there was a permanent resident in town to ensure that the fledgling Mission had Mass on Sundays, sometimes walking from Old Oscott and back. And those later clergy whose determination to build up the parish was aided by the efforts of parishioners, poor and rich, to provide a suitable place of worship.

There is space here only to record a few of the people who, in more recent times, have added to the life of the parish of Our Lady and All Saints.

Frank Foley 1884-1958

It would have been easy to overlook the stocky, bespectacled, balding grey-haired man attending Sunday Mass or walking back afterwards to the family home in Eveson Road. “*Quite a nondescript little man,*” as someone said, “*you could pass him in a crowd.*” He and his wife Kay led a very quiet life and when he died of a heart attack in May 1958 there were not many at his funeral.

Although highly decorated for his service to his country, it was not until 1999 that Captain Frank Foley was awarded the title of *Righteous Among the Nations* at the Israeli Holocaust Memorial Centre at Yad Vashem for his work in assisting Jews fleeing Nazi persecution in the years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Born in Somerset in 1884, Frank attended Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, and then spent three years in a seminary in France before deciding that priesthood was not for him. He was a philosophy student in Hamburg at the outbreak of the Great War and made a daring escape to neutral Holland and back to Britain and life in the Army. In 1917 he was sent to France, where a bullet wound in his lung left him unfit for front-line duties. It was at this time Frank embarked on what was to become his life-long profession in Secret Intelligence, working first in France debriefing Belgian refugees and then in the Rhineland, stationed in Cologne - where he met his future wife Kay - and finally in Berlin where his cover was that of Passport Control Officer.

In 1933 as Jews became totally marginalised, their property confiscated, ousted from the professions, businesses looted, Foley took the initiative in issuing visas enabling Jewish people to get to Palestine or to England. As more and more people were rounded up, Frank and Kay took to hiding desperate Jews in their house until they could be found safe passage out of the country. In the last months before the declaration of war, Frank's life was one hectic round of getting as many people as possible to safety. Finally, in August 1939 Kay returned to England and set up home in Stourbridge while Frank went to Copenhagen where he was to carry on his clandestine work until the war's end when he came back to the home Kay had created in Eveson Road. It isn't possible to gauge exactly how many Jews he managed to save from the Holocaust but it is reckoned that at least ten thousand people profited from Frank Foley's work.

Lizzie Wainwright

Lizzie retired to the parish after a roller-coaster life. She is part of the Strickland family from the Scottish Borders who can trace their Catholic faith back to Saxon times.

She worked for Reuters, the Foreign Office and the BBC and is the widow of Erik de Mauny, who was both the BBC correspondent in Moscow and then in Paris. She had some experience in Russia with Soviet dissidents, some of whose families were in the Gulags. Her experiences are right out of John le Carré. She also met Andrei Sakharov, the Soviet nuclear physicist and peace campaigner, who, in 1988, was to be given the International Humanist Award.

Lizzie is also a person of practical kindness because she ended up helping the estranged wife of the spy Kim Philby, who became a family friend. Lizzie's husband Erik used to drink with Philby in Beirut – “*The only time,*” Lizzie reminisces, “*we ever had marital disputes.*”

In the 1980s the Memorial War Museum in Caen asked Lizzie to do translation work on their displays. The French had got hold of an Enigma code-breaking machine (declassified from Bletchley Park in the mid-1970s). They asked Lizzie to do a translation regarding its function and inner workings!

Later in life Lizzie married Squadron Leader Michael Wainwright, a brave Spitfire pilot who, aged 20, had defended the beaches of Dunkirk.

Her tall and elegant presence has captivated many. With her failing eyesight, Lizzie is often seen sitting at the front of the our church, absorbing all its sung liturgy has to offer - and who, after happily mixing with people in the Parish Centre, is glad to get home for a wee dram.

Marie

This South African lady arrived in the parish in the mid-1940s after falling in love with a British serviceman based in South Africa who had promised to marry her. Marie followed him to England only to discover that he was a married man. She took a little terraced house just down from the church on New Road and made Stourbridge and the parish her new home. Her large clattering rosary was her distinguishing feature, even in the street. She was a daily communicant, known for her practice of getting up from her seat at the consecration and bowing down in the centre aisle as an act of adoration - a practice she continued into the 1970s until incapacity prevented her.

Norman Cresswell

Norman lived in Clent. He had been a bodyguard to the King of Jordan during the British Mandate of Palestine. On returning from the Middle East he ran a travelling theatre before working in journalism for the BBC in Birmingham where he presented a series called *Tibbles the Church Mouse*. Norman left the BBC to found the Midlands Catholic Pictorial newspaper, delivered in the Stourbridge parish by members of the junior Legion of Mary. It was a populist publication, often featuring photos of priests' housekeepers and footballing nuns!

Leaving Clent, Norman went to edit the *Liverpool Catholic Pictorial* before being asked by the hierarchy to found the *Catholic Times* newspaper as an antidote to the *Catholic Herald* and *The Tablet*. He always had very fond memories of Christmas and Easter Masses at the Clent Chapel.

Vilma Henwood

Vilma's early memories include being in Our Lady and All Saints church on Sunday 3rd September 1939 when the church was packed for the Mass celebrated by Fr Horace Relph. As she left the church she was

told, "Life will not ever be the same again." She also has vivid memories of bombers and troop carriers flying over the town for the D-Day invasion in 1944 and, later, of dancing with the Yanks in Market Street on VE Day the following year.

From her childhood Vilma showed a particular aptitude for dancing, a skill nurtured by Sister Ignatius, a nun at the girls' school that used to be at Elmcroft in Worcester Street. She encouraged Vilma to leave Elmcroft to start a dancing school, which she did in 1946. She recalls fund-raising for the parish by running dancing classes in Carlisle Hall. Eventually she opened the Henwood School of Dance and Drama on the corner of Worcester Street and Greenfield Avenue. Over the years she sent a number of students to the Royal Ballet and to New York ballet companies. She appeared in several films shot at the Elstree Studios in Hertfordshire, including one called *Latin Quarter*. The school is still thriving and Vilma, semi-retired, continues to take classical ballet classes in our own Parish Centre.

Vilma's brother Ken was the first and last Catholic Mayor of Stourbridge (1972-1973) before the town was incorporated into Dudley Metropolitan Borough. Mgr Wilf Moore celebrated a Civic Mass for the Town Council and people of Stourbridge.

Tom Tranter, a Deacon for the Parish



Tom Tranter, always a genial character, was ordained to the permanent Diaconate on 17th July 2011. He is a former police motorway driving instructor with West Midlands and latterly with West Mercia Police. A convert who was received into the church by Father Tony Bex SJ at St George's Worcester in 1976, Tom's faith journey has been a lifelong one; even from the age of 8 he would peer at the Roman Catholic Church in Cannock and wonder what went on in there. His vocation to Christian service was always within him but was cemented by his long association with the spirit of the Franciscans and pilgrimages to Medjugorje, when he sensed he needed to do something positive. His vocation was sealed when he saw in a dream a figure in a holy setting inviting him to 'join us.'

A deacon, like a priest, is a servant who is called to make a gift of his total being to the Lord and the Church, and is usually ordained to a special ministry of service. It should also be noted that living in the parish is another deacon, Revd Doctor Peter Mason, now retired, but who for many years served the parish of Saint Ambrose in Kidderminster.

Jack and Teresa Tompkins

Jack and Teresa (née Thatcher) were both born and brought up in Stourbridge. They were both awarded the *Benemerenti* Medal (a Vatican recognition of work for the Church) on the same day but, unlike many

couples, the honour was not the result of a joint effort. They both devoted their time to good causes but in different ways, which is no surprise since they had very different personalities.

Jack could be likened to a gentle tortoise, steady and tenacious, but Teresa - often referred to as Tree - was more akin to a hare, rushing from one thing to the next, with little time for contemplation. Teresa raised funds for many charities and could be very persuasive when selling raffle tickets, crocheted slippers, blankets or soft toys. Few escaped when she approached!

Jack was a stalwart of the St Vincent de Paul and Catholic Men's societies. In 1936, as a young man, he was part of the parish team which carried a full size cross to Walsingham, where it remains to this day. As they lived almost opposite the church on Union Street, Jack also assumed the role of unofficial handyman and did countless small repair jobs to parish buildings. He was still climbing ladders to repair broken windows well into his seventies. People often popped into their house either after Mass or shopping; everyone was welcome and the house was often full. Both of them loved to talk and share the news; they had natural warmth and generosity of spirit which made them the essence of what makes a community tick.

The Pied Piper Priest

Brendan Byrne felt called to the ministerial priesthood following extensive stints as leader in our Parish Scout Troup (19th Stourbridge) and in Our Lady and All Saints Youth Club. Tall, rugged and from a well-loved Irish family in the parish, Brendan once rested a heavy steel roof steel joist on his head whilst refurbishing the attic at Elmcroft on Worcester Street.

Brendan did not find studying for the priesthood an easy option but as he'd been around the block so to speak, girlfriends included, he brought other qualities to the priesthood in abundance. On the instructions of Archbishop Couve de Murville, Brendan was eventually placed in many tough parishes including Blackbird Leys, on the outskirts of Oxford, once pinning the aggressive owner of the local porn shop, who was aggrieved at the Catholic Youth Club, up against the wall with the words, 'I'm no pufftah priest!' Brendan also served in Coventry, Small Heath, Wombourne and finally Tettenhall. His school visits were often characterised by children clinging onto his legs in the midst of a great deal of merriment. In Wombourne he generated great hilarity when he did a sponsored beard shave.



Towards the end of his active life Brendan suffered from persistent illness and he died on 19th October 2011, aged 60. At his request, his Requiem Mass was celebrated in Stourbridge and he was laid to rest in Norton Catholic Cemetery not far from his old family home.

Father Cecil Rogerson

It is not every day that a Catholic priest and his wife renew their marriage vows in the face of the congregation but that is what happened when Cecil and Joca Rogerson celebrated their Silver Wedding.

Cecil and his wife Joca originate from South Africa where he was ordained priest in the Anglican Church. The couple later came to England and Cecil took a post as Team Vicar in the Wordsley Team Ministry in Worcester Diocese.

As time went on the family - Cecil and Joca have two boys – decided that their true religious home was in the Roman Catholic Church and they were welcomed into full membership of the Church in Our Lady and All Saints before a full congregation at a Sunday Mass.



Cecil found work with a local Undertaker while he waited while his application to join the Catholic priesthood was being considered. Finally, in 2008, he was ordained in our parish church and began to minister within the parish and also as part-time hospital chaplain, first at Selly Oak and later at the Queen Elizabeth in Birmingham.

In 2012 Cecil became the parish priest of Kingswinford and Brierley Hill, having in his brief time at Stourbridge gained the affection and gratitude of the whole parish.

CHAPTER NINE

PARISH LIFE TODAY

History has a present and a future! In other words, what we have inherited from the past informs the way we live life today as a parish and that in turn will have its influence in the way those who come after us will act out their lives as members of the Body of Christ in Stourbridge.

A glance through the *Directory of Parish Groups and Activities* gives a fair idea of what our parish is like today. The main areas of activity can be divided into: the development of spiritual life; social life; finance, and the parish outreach to the wider community. The Directory supplies all the details about the various activities but anyone seeking information or wishing to share in any way may like to phone the Parish Office on 01384 395308.

The Journey in Faith Group caters for those looking to learn more about the Catholic Faith. The programme is a series of friendly, relaxed and interactive sessions for people to learn about the Catholic faith, with a view to becoming a Catholic, or for Catholics who have not received the sacrament of Confirmation or who now wish to learn about faith.

The Parish Rosary Group meets informally on Sunday evenings. The prayer includes the rosary, the divine mercy chaplet, scripture, praise and intercession.

The Parish Prayer Group meets twice a month in the Assisi Room of the Parish Centre, providing an opportunity for quiet prayer, intercession on behalf of family and friends and to give thanks to God.

The Secular Franciscan Order provides an opportunity for members, adult men and women, to follow Jesus in the footprints of St Francis of Assisi, bearing witness to the Gospel through prayer, simplicity of life and service to others.

Parish Catechists are individuals who volunteer to support children through the combined parish and school programme of preparation for reception of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Reconciliation.

Ministers of Holy Communion help with the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass and ensure that the sick and housebound of the parish also receive Holy Communion.

Readers proclaim the Scriptures at each weekend Mass.

Altar servers, boys and girls, provide important assistance at the celebration of Masses.

Sides-men/Ushers are available to provide assistance at Mass where needed and also take up the Offertory collections.

Bell Ringers provide a rota to call people to Mass and remind those outside that the Catholic Church is here among them.

An array of supporters ensures that our parish church is looked after properly. The altar linen needs to be washed and ironed; the church is beautifully decorated with flowers throughout the seasons of the year. The inside of the church needs to be cleaned on a weekly basis and the grounds have to be maintained. Refreshments are offered in the Parish Centre after the Saturday morning Mass and the 10.30 Mass on Sundays. The proceeds of the collections at weekends and special occasions need to be counted. The Piety Stall is situated in the Parish Centre and is open following the Saturday morning Mass and the 10.30 Mass on Sundays, selling a variety of religious items – a good place to find that special Baptismal, First Holy Communion or Confirmation gift. Volunteers to help with any of these activities are always welcome!

Stourbridge & Halesowen LIFE Group helps women, men and children by providing help and support to some of society's most vulnerable people. LIFE Care offer pre- and post-abortion counselling as well as practical support to women and men facing unintended pregnancy or who are suffering after abortion. LIFE Education Programme engages with young people in school, colleges and universities.

The Association for the Propagation of the Faith is the principal support organisation of the Catholic Church. Its objective is to ensure that young churches throughout the world have the necessary funds to build churches and schools, to lead people to learn about Christ and to build a better world. Individuals and families contribute financially through the famous Red Boxes that are to be found in so many Catholic homes throughout the country and also through the church collections on the annual World Mission Sunday.

Street Pastors are out in Stourbridge on Saturday nights, engaging with people on the street, to care, help, listen and chat, to build trust and create a safer community. This is an initiative of the Churches Together in Stourbridge and draws in volunteers from many of the local churches as well as our own.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is an international Christian voluntary organisation, active in this country since 1844, dedicated to tackling poverty and disadvantage by providing direct practical assistance to anyone in need. Members of the SVP, as the movement is popularly known, help the needy in our parish and visit the elderly and housebound. Three times a year they organise a Mass and Tea, providing transport to church so that old friends can enjoy a get-together after Mass.

The Stourbridge Food Bank helps provide basic rations to desperate people. Our parish, along with other churches and individuals in the town, contribute food and household and personal necessities. In our parish the main means of contributing is by bringing items to the weekend Masses.

Stourbridge Catenian Association is part of an international brotherhood of Catholic laymen who meet socially, reflecting the mutual support and sharing of common values to be found within the Association. The Stourbridge Circle of Catenians was founded in 1966.

Our Lady and All Saints Lourdes Pilgrimage Fund helps fund pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady in Lourdes for people to experience spiritual consolation and healing through participation in the torchlight processions, the waters and the celebrations at the Grotto.

The Parish Finance Committee advises and supports the parish priest with the financial administration of the parish and meets at least four times a year.

Parish Project Grants Group looks at forthcoming parish projects and researches the possibility of finding grants to help with the funding of these projects.

The 400 Club has, since it started in the 1990s, raised more than £135,000 for the upkeep and improvements of our parish. A weekly contribution of £1 is all that is required and there are monthly cash prizes to be won!

APPENDIX A

OUR LADY AND ALL SAINTS R.C. CHURCH STOURBRIDGE

MAIN BUILDING COMPLETED 1864

ARCHITECT Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875)

BUILDER J. W. Ife of Wollaston

STYLE Decorated Gothic

SEATING 700

INTERIOR

Chancel Arch

Bath stone, ornamented on either side by marble shafts with Corinthian capitals, the base resting on carved angel corbels.

Nave

Columns, alternately Aberdeen Grey and Peterhead red granite, with Pollard stone bases and Painswick stone capitals.

Arches

Bath stone with acutely pointed Gothic arches, decorated with angels playing musical instruments.

Clerestory

Pentagonal and cusped.

Nave Roof

A modified arched brace roof with the principals resting on Caen stone carved angel corbels.

Chancel Roof

Similar to the nave roof, principals resting on elaborately carved foliage corbels.

Windows

The Rose Window was installed in 1875, outer circle three figures in each cinquefoil section comprising from the top clockwise, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, Kings, Monks/Hermits,

Soldiers/children, Holy Women; inner lozenge shaped sections are angels with the Madonna and Child Jesus in the centre.

The windows behind the altars in each side chapel were also installed in 1875; the remaining biforate stained glass windows were given by donors at various times up until the 1930s. All stained glass is by John Hardman and Co.

Reredos

The reredos, also designed by E.W. Pugin was installed on the high altar in 1875. It matches the decorated Gothic style of the church but is in a more florid style, pinnacled, cusped and crocketed.

EXTERIOR

Tower and Spire

Both were designed by E. W. Pugin in 1863 but only the base, up to 16 ft., was completed by 1864. Sufficient funds had been found by 1889 to complete the tower and spire we see today. The architect George H. Cox of Birmingham closely followed Pugin's design but had to rebuild the lower stage and foundations as the original work was failing. The tower is built of red fire brick with dressings of Greensill stone. It is 136 ft. high and has a stone spire. The joint contractors were W. Griffiths of Brierley Hill and W. North of Stourbridge, Thomas Price was the Clerk of Works and the carvings are by a Mr Wall of Cheltenham.

A tenor bell, cast by John Taylor and Co, donated by Mr and Mrs H. James, was also installed in 1889, cost £100.

Walls and Roof

External walls are in Stourbridge red fire brick, laid in English bond. The plinth has recently been replaced with a new limestone plinth. The roof is Bangor green and blue slate with ornamental earthenware cresting. Many other works have recently been completed to repair and improve the ravages of time.

APPENDIX B

THE EAST ROSE WINDOW STAINED GLASS BY JOHN HARDMAN AND COMPANY installed 1875.

The window is circular in shape. At the centre is a quatrefoil featuring the Madonna and Child, then an inner ring of twelve lozenge shaped foils with an angel in each swinging a censer, and an outer ring of twelve cinquefoils containing three figures in each, as follows clockwise from centre top:

1	Apostles	St Peter St James St John
2	Prophets	David Ezekiel St John the Baptist
3	Martyrs	St Alban St George St Lawrence
4	Confessors	St Edward St Edmund St Thomas of Hereford (Thomas Cantelupe)
5	Kings	Richard I St Edmund St Louis (IX King of France)
6	Monks/ Hermits	Venerable Bede St Bennet St Neot
7	Soldiers Child	St Sebastian St Maurice St Hugh of Lincoln

8	Holy Women	St Hilda St Margaret of England St Helena
9	Doctors	St Ambrose St Gregory St Jerome
10	Ecclesiastics	St Augustine (of Hippo) St Chad St Dunstan
11	Virgins	St Ethelreda St Catherine St Edith
12	Patriarchs	Abraham with two unknown

APPENDIX C

CLERGY SERVING STOURBRIDGE

1812	Francis Martyn (1782-1838), based in Bloxwich, served the Stourbridge Mission in many ways until his death in 1838. Revd James Austin Mason who served in Stourbridge from 1826 to 1842 kept a note of priests visiting the town as follows:-
1818	Thomas Lakin baptised the first child belonging to the Stourbridge Mission, on January 26th 1818. The child's name was Richard Hyde and his godfather was William. There being no priest's house in Stourbridge, Thomas Lakin resided with Francis Martyn at the Bloxwich Mission.
1819	Lawrence Strongitharm
1820	Frederick Charles Husenbeth
1821	John Brownlow
1824	The Abbé Vergy, a French priest who ended his days at Mawley Hall. The Hall still exists but the chapel was demolished a long time ago.
1826	James Austin Mason
1842	Walter Keen
1877	James McCave
1883	J. O. Price
1886-1909	Frederick William Boulton PP
1909-1920	Edward Charles Delaney VF PP
1923-1929	Samson Carrington OSB (at Studley Court)
1920-1937	William Rowley O'Keefe PP
1931-1936	Edward Kilgallon
1937-1949	Peter Joseph Bierings PP
1937-1941	Horace Relph
1942-1950	Gerald Peuleve

1946-1949	Patrick Meager
1949-1953	Timothy O'Connor PP
1949-1951	Mortimer Loftus
1950-1954	Desmond O'Dowd
1951-1952	John O'Dwyer
1952-1958	Archibald Snell
1954-1960	Michael Forde PP
1952-1961	Michael O'Meara
1958-1961	Francis Coyle PP
1960-1963	Dermot Corcoran PP
1961-1964	Patrick Sugrue
1962-1964	Patrick Hegarty
1963-1966	William Alfred Oddie PP
1964-1966	Francis Carr
1964-1968	Leo Woodward
1966-1985	Wilfrid Moore PP
1966-1969	Thomas Higgins
1967-1971	Aengus Donlon
1971-1976	Gerald Hanlon
1973-1976	David Hutt
1976-1978	Kevin McDonald (later Archbishop of Southwark)
1978-1980	James Ward
1980-1981	Sam Penney
1981-1986	Peter Blundell
1985-1990	Anthony John Burns PP
1986-1988	Anthony Norton
1989-1993	John Bale

1990-2005	David McGough PP (later Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham)
1992-1995	Kevin Kavanagh
1995-1996	John Darley
1996-1999	Francis Toole
1998-2001	Keith Enston
2005-2006	Richard Scott
2004-2006	Peter Norton
2006-	Patrick McKinney PP
2008-2012	Cecil Rogerson (Assistant priest/part-time chaplain Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham).
2011-	Tom Tranter, Permanent Deacon.

(NB. It should also be noted that The Revd Doctor Peter Mason, a parishioner, was ordained deacon in 1992 to serve the parish of St Ambrose Kidderminster).

FURTHER READING

A History of Stourbridge, Nigel Perry, Phillimore & Co. Whether you are new to the town or an old inhabitant, this book is useful reading.

Catholic Staffordshire, Michael Greenslade. Gracewing. A comprehensive and very readable account of the way Catholic life was maintained in Staffordshire in time of persecution.

Foley The Spy who saved 10,000 Jews, Michael Smith. Coronet Books. A fascinating biography of a quiet hero.

Stourbridge Living Memories, Dorothy Nicolle, Frith Book Company Ltd

The Priests and People of Harvington, David Higham, Gracewing. How a local family kept the flame burning for Catholics.

The Stripping of the Altars, Eamon Duffy, Yale University Press. An important and detailed fresh look at the effects of the Reformation upon the people of England.

