

A History
and Recollections of the Mission,
Parish, and Roman Catholic Churches
of
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL,
KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE
1840 - 1985

A. E. Harris



This book is Dedicated to all Priests
and Members of the Parish both past
and present.

©Copyright the Parish Priest of St. Vincent de Paul Roman
Catholic Church, Knutsford, 1985

This book is sold only from St. Vincent's Roman Catholic
Church, Knutsford, Cheshire, and all proceeds therefrom are to be
allocated to the New Church Building Fund.

Made and printed in England
by The Catholic Printing Company of Farnworth,
16/18 Longcauseway, Farnworth. Bolton

Contents

1	Foreword	5
2	Introduction	7
3	The Beginning and the First Church	13
4	The Second Church	39
5	The Third Church and Conclusion	69
6	Author’s Note	91
7	Acknowledgements	93
8	Bibliography	95
8.1	CHESHIRE RECORD OFFICE	96
8.2	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, (COPYRIGHT OFFICER), CHANCERY LANE, LONDON	96
8.3	CHESTER CITY RECORD OFFICE	96
	List of Figures	97

Foreword

I warmly congratulate the author Mr. Harris, and his wife Elizabeth and daughter Sarah who have been such an enormous help to him. The whole family have read and talked so much about the characters of the past one hundred and forty-five years connected with the parish that I notice they now speak of them not merely with admiration, but with great feeling.

The amount of research was enormous; the disappointments were many, but the author's affection and deep regard for the parish never faltered, and were his main driving force. He would not claim to be an historian nor would he go further than to say that he has tried to compile a fairly comprehensive account of the growth and development of the Catholic community in Knutsford and its surrounding district comprising the parish of St. Vincent de Paul.

Lastly, I pay tribute to the Priests and Parishioners of the past 145 years who have worked and built the parish, and to the present Parishioners whose enthusiasm and co-operation make the task of the Priest working with them a sheer joy.

J. CAHILL,
Parish Priest
1985

Introduction

IT is important to have a clear picture of Catholicism as practised and followed in and around Knutsford in pre-Reformation times, and of the situation confronting Catholics and their faith during and after the Reformation as this leads up to the story of the Parish and Churches of St. Vincent de Paul, Knutsford. It will serve as a not untimely reminder of the sacrifices made by both clergy and our ancestors in those times long ago. when many of them paid the ultimate penalty in their courageous efforts to preserve and sustain the faith, as we all now enjoy the freedom to worship and follow Our faith in our own splendidly simple but beautiful new church.

St. Werburgh's, Chester, was founded in 858, and became a Benedictine Monastery in 1093 when Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester placed in it Monks of that order which was Oblate or enclosed. Many properties and families were endowed to the Monastery in Tabley, Plumley, Chelford, Goostrey and other places.¹ Everyone at this period in our history was of the same religion.

From a study of Local History² we learn that about the year 1070, the Barons of Halton were conferred with their title in fee, including the Constablership of Cheshire, with Domesday recording that "Cunetesford" was held by the then Baron of Halton under the Earl of Chester.

Knutsford eventually comprised the lower or "Nether" part of the town and upper or "Over" part known as Knutsford Booths cum Norbury Booths.

Organisation of diocesan and parochial affairs was established early in the twelfth century,³ and formation of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry took place, in which Cheshire was included, and later an archdeaconry was formed at Chester with rural deaneries at Frodsham and Macclesfield.

The church of St. Mary, Rostherne was built in 1188 or even earlier. and made the Mother or parochial church of the area which included Knutsford and its surrounding villages. Members of the Venables family were amongst its early clergy.

During the thirteenth century William de Tabley became lord or the manor of Knutsford which included Norbury Booths, and during his ownership Knutsford became a market town, with a growing population.

Dominicans, Franciscans and other mendicant missionary orders⁴ arrived in this country during that time, and it is safe to assume that the friars moving around the county, propagating and preaching the faith must inevitably have stopped off at Knutsford in pursuance of their task. In the very early part of the thirteenth cen-

tury a Patrick de Mobberley founded a small priory of St. Mary and St. Wilfrid at Mobberley, which was later annexed to Rocester Abbey, when a few canons of the Order of St. Augustine of Hippo were maintained there.⁵ The presence of this Order and its influence must have been widely felt in the surrounding neighbourhood. The church of St. Wilfrid was built there in 1245, and members of the Mobberley family were amongst its first clergy.

In the year 1300 Peter Legh acquired the lands of Norbury Booths which had been leased to Sir John Orreby, and William de Tabley released all rights to them.

The difficulty for the inhabitants of Knutsford and surrounding areas attending Mass regularly at Rostherne was overcome in the early part of the fourteenth century by the building of a parochial church with a cemetery, where baptism and burial could take place and which would have been consecrated. The church was built at Norbury Booths, and the rebuilt foundations outlining the site are still in evidence not so very far from our present Catholic school in Manor Park South. This church or chapel was, I believe, dedicated to "Saint Mary of Knutsford". Two other churches were built in the same era, St. Lawrence at Over Peover and St. Oswald at Lower Peover.

A number of the gentry with large houses or mansions in the area had their own oratories or private chapels, permission for which was obtained by license from the Bishop of the Diocese, and many of these had private or resident chaplains or members of their own families who entered the priesthood and became chaplains, but full rites could only be performed at the parochial church. There was a chapel of ease in the centre of Nether or Lower Knutsford with a school attached to it, but this chapel would be one of convenience to relieve the difficulty of travelling, and on the more important Feast days people would be required to attend the parochial church. A small plaque on the wall of the car showroom (41a King Street) marks the site. This chapel of ease could eventually have been dedicated to St. Roch, a church of that name being mentioned, at Nether Knutsford, in relation to a felony committed there, and recorded in the Chester Plea Rolls of the early sixteenth century,⁶ when perhaps its status had been raised to that of a parochial chapel.

A number of families other than those already mentioned lived in the area, and from one of them Nicholas Munschall or Mynchull (Chaplain) was granted a license by the Bishop in 1378 for 3 years for an oratory in his mansion of Knutsford, and he is also named amongst the early clergy serving the parochial church.

In the early thirteenth century, or even before, a family settled in the area known as Toft and assumed its name, holding the land in moieties of the Halton and Dunham Baronies, and it is believed were in the area for 250 years. In 1398 a Robert de Toft and Cicely his wife were granted the liberty of keeping a chaplain

CHAPTER 2. INTRODUCTION

for celebrating Divine Duties in their private chapel or oratory at Toft, whilst in 1412 Pope Alexander V granted to Hugh de Toft and Alice his wife the authority to choose themselves a confessor, which also included an indulgence, because of their charity and aid towards the castle of St. Peter.⁷ A Hugh de Toft is also named as one of the serving clergy of the Parochial Chapel. From the will of a John de Toft dated 1421 in which he is described as a Chaplain, we discover that after various bequests including his best animal to his master the reverend Roger de Venables, Parson of the church of Rostherne. 6 and two swarms of bees to other beneficiaries, he requested that wax [candles] be burned about his body and other necessities for his burial be arranged by his said master. He bequeathed vestments consisting of chasuble, alb, two amices, stole, maniples and two consecrated corporals to the chapel] of St. Mary of Knutsford; with 3s.4d. to the rector of the church where he was to be buried, and 40d. to the chapel of St. Mary in that church for prayers for his soul.⁸

The Oulegreve family lived in Knutsford during the fourteenth century and beyond, and a member of this family Thomas Oulegreve, who was born in Knutsford, later moved to London where he became a Citizen and Skinner. Judging from the contents of his will dated 1472, in which he made many bequests to the poor, prisoners, and people in institutions, he was undoubtedly both a philanthropist and public benefactor. Such bequests appeared to be a custom of those times. He also provided for an "honest" priest to be found (a general expression in use in those times, and perhaps ought not to be taken too literally) to sing and say divine service in the parish church of Knutsford for two years for the souls of his parents, himself and his wife, for which 16 marks was to be paid, and he was to say Mass in the church every Wednesday and Friday, and every Sunday, and the other weekdays at the chapel in the nether part of the said town.⁹ As a point of interest, the mark worth 13s.4d. (or 67p.) new. was a method of accounting in those days.

In his Will dated 1493 (there Was no date of probate) Henry Kelsall of Reading, Clothier, revealed that he had relatives in Knutsford, and beside the seemingly customary bequests to the poor, made many bequests to a number of churches at various places, amongst which were Rostherne, Mobberley, Over Peover, Nether Peover, Lyrnm and Knutsford. After other personal and provisional bequests of his land and property, he directed that should they be allowed to fall into decay, the Churchwardens of Our Lady's Chapel of Knutsford in Cheshire should have them, with an extra proviso that whosoever held them should keep a yearly obit in St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, for his (Kelsall's) soul, to the value of 20s. a year, and the curate there was to receive 20s. for dirge and masses there to be done. He also bequeathed to the chapel of Knutsford E40 that the Wardens should keep a daily priest to sing for him there for 7 years after his death.¹⁰

The Mainwarings of Higher Peover also had a private chapel, and in the early sixteenth century, the Wardens of the Chapel of Blessed Mary of Knutsford are mentioned in a further Chester Plea Roll.

The Catholic Faith throughout England and Wales was dealt a shattering and near mortal blow in 1534 with the Act of Supremacy declaring Henry VIN to be Supreme Head of the English Church, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries and suppression of Chantries and Grammar schools that followed. Over the next three hundred years under successive Monarchs and Governments, with the exception during the reign of Mary (1553—8) when Catholics persecuted Protestants, Catholicism was outlawed and its practice declared illegal under the most severe penalties.¹¹

During the Reformation a number of Acts were passed and made law with the sole purpose of extinguishing the faith, amongst them being the notorious Oath of Allegiance¹² which was condemned by the Holy See. Recusancy laws were also passed (the word "Recusant" derived from the Latin verb meaning "to refuse") which imposed heavy fines and confiscation of property for non- attendance at Protestant services. No new churches were allowed to be built, and existing churches and houses were stripped of all objects of piety.¹³ Celebration of Mass was forbidden in any building possessing a bell or steeple, and was allowed only in a private house if not more than five outsiders were present. Informers could still gain a reward for obtaining the conviction of priest,¹⁴ and all Catholics were banned from taking up their place in Public Office. The Papist laws also required all Catholics to register their names and real estate with the clerk of the Peace of the County.

Small wonder then that all Catholic services were conducted in clandestine fashion with the priest often resorting to disguise in order to avoid detection and its consequent penalties. The places that the tiny pockets of Catholics met to worship in and to attend Mass often at night¹⁵ were diverse and varied. The faith was kept alive during those times mainly by the surviving Marian clergy and later the first seminary priests came to work in Cheshire.¹⁶

With the advent of the Reformation the Catholic Church in England and Wales had been thrown into confusion and disarray, and it was administered by Archpriests until 1623 when the first Vicar Apostolic was appointed With the establishment of a Chapter. The secular clergy were organised locally, and the Jesuits were also establishing themselves.¹⁷

In 1688 the English Mission was divided by Apostolic Brief into four areas, London, Western, Northern and Midland, and a Vicar Apostolic was appointed for each area. Cheshire was placed in the Northern Vicariate, and this situation continued until 1840. From 1750 Mass was said in houses all over South Lancashire and Cheshire by the Reverend Edward Helme (or Hulme), and one of

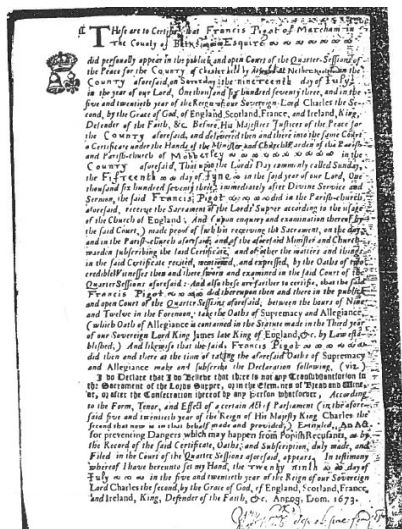


Figure 2.1: Cheshire Records Office - Oath of Allegiance

the buildings used by him to say Mass in was situated behind Church Street in Market Street, Manchester, and was approached by way of Roman Street, and Roman Entry, which names still remain. In 1773 a plot of land was secured for the purpose of erecting a Catholic Chapel in Rook Street which now forms part of Lewis's store on the corner of Market Street, Manchester. The actual building was not completed until 1776 when it was dedicated to St. Chad, and thus became the hub of the Manchester Mission, eventually radiating out and supplying priests to a large area of South and East Lancashire, Stockport, Glossop and Macclesfield.¹⁸

Notes

1. Monks of Chester. Burne. SPCK. London. pp 186. 197. 199. History of Cheshire.
2. History of Cheshire. Ormerod Vol. I. History of Cheshire. Lyson Historical Antiquities of Gt. Britain & Ireland. particularly concerning Cheshire, Leycester.
3. Illustrated History of Gt. Britain (1984). ed. Kenneth O. Morgan, Oxford University press, p 154

4. Ibid, p 155.
5. Medieval Religious Houses. England & Wales. Knowles & Hadcock. Longmans, p 166.
6. Cheshire Sheaf, 3rd Series. Vol. 10. p 92
7. Knutsford its Tradition and History. Green. Morten. p 59
8. Cheshire Sheaf. 3rd Series. vo. xvm, p 12
9. Ibid, p 15
10. Ibid. p 1
11. History of Macclesfield, Stella Davies. Macciesheld Borough Council. p 346
12. Cheshire Record Office, Chester (see Bibliography).
13. History of Maccelesfield, Stella Davies, Macclesfield Borough Council, pp 346, 350
14. Catholic Centenary Exhibition Souvenir. Manchester 1973
15. History of Macclesfield, Stella Davies, Macclesfield Borough Council. p 350
16. Victoria History of the County of Cheshire, Vol. III. OUP. p 90
17. Ibid
18. Catholic Centenary Exhibition Souvenir, Manchester 1973

The Beginning and the First Church

IN the year 1741 Knutsford was a Parish by Act of Parliament. Earlier, around 1714 the population of Knutsford and its neighbourhood was reported as being only 1600. The number of Roman Catholics for the whole of the County of Cheshire was tiny, an official return for 1717 giving a total of only 421, and for 1767 only 548. The Catholic population of the County dwindled as elsewhere¹ and in a number of places it had been practically eliminated, for in the year 1787 only 340 Catholics are recorded in Cheshire.² Returns of Papists for that period revealed a “Nil” Return for Knutsford.

Whilst the flame of faith flickered and wavered, during those long and terrible times, and barely survived the Reformation in places, it was never finally extinguished. It was kept alive in the West of the County where a number of Recusant gentry with their large houses had private Chapels and sometimes resident Priests, to support and encourage the local pockets of Catholics³ This was also evident in the East of the County, though to a lesser extent, where the ”Suttons of Sutton Hall had their own Chapel which was the centre for Catholic worship in Macclesfield during the 17th Century and later in the 18th Century at a private house in Sutton Lane Ends owned by the Misses Orme”.⁴

Central or mid-Cheshire was virtually devoid of such support, but during the seventeenth century Jesuits served Catholics at a place called Dutton Lodge,⁵ which was probably part of the Dutton Estate in the Parish of Great Budworth.

A study of Returns of Papists for 1767 reveals that there were some 55 persons recorded as Papists in the Parish of Great Budworth⁶ and significantly Dutton with 21 was the area where the largest number of Papists resided. Knutsford, as mentioned before, recorded none. and the surrounding areas of Lower Peover and Little Tabley showed two families in the Returns, but they were both of mixed persuasion in their beliefs.⁶

The position of Catholics was eased a little in the years 1778 and 1791 with the passing of two Relief Acts, removing many of the penalties imposed on them, discontinuing the registration of Papists, and allowing Catholics to meet openly and build churches⁷ provided they were registered as places of worship at Quarter Sessions.

Cheshire Catholics of those early times appear to have been held in rather low esteem and were regarded somewhat as second class citizens, being described as of the ”Low”, ”lower”, or ”lowest” rank of ”very low extraction”, and harmless inoffensive very poor people.⁸

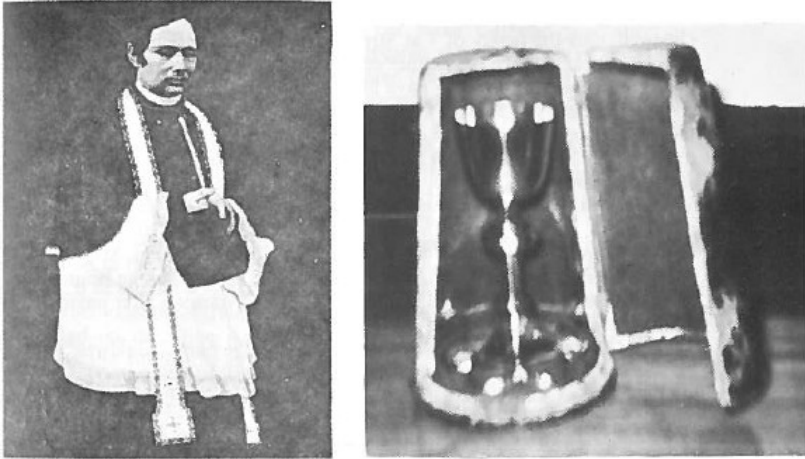


Figure 3.1: Father John Hall and Travel Chalice.

Over at Macclesfield the situation remained unchanged. The mission was 10 supplied by a succession of Priests from the Manchester Mission and Stockport over a number of years. In 1811 a Chapel was opened in Chester Road dedicated to St. Michael,⁹ and the position both there and at Knutsford remained fairly static for the next decade with the exception of an increase in the Macclesfield Catholic population.

The year 1821 was a momentous one for the Catholic population of Macclesfield, when Father John Hall, born in 1796 at Preston, and educated at Ushaw College where he was ordained in 1821⁶ was appointed immediately to Macclesfield by Bishop Smith of the Northern District and arrived to take up his duties and residence there on Maundy Thursday, 17th April 1821,¹⁰ at the age of 25.

Much has been written about this zealous and vigorous Priest and it is sufficient for the purpose of our own history to recall that he immediately set about his daunting task of starting missions and building Churches and Schools around the area to provide for the needs of the ever-increasing Catholic population. St. Mary's, Congleton was completed and opened in 1826, and St. Gregory's, Bollington in 1834. The magnificent and beautiful present Church of St. Alban designed by Augustus Pugin was completed and opened in 1841. When Father Hall first arrived at Macclesfield, there were including himself only 4 Priests in the whole of Cheshire. He quickly took charge and eventually became their spokesman.

For several years he supplied the towns of Middlewich, Sandbach, North-

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

wich, Knutsford and round journey on pony covering a 11 circuit of nearly 70 miles.¹¹ This piece of information is one of the important links on the trail of our own history.

1825 was an important year for our own Parish-to-be, when Robert Clowes the incumbent of the Parish Church in Knutsford recorded the first evidence of any Catholics residing in the Knutsford area in his Visitation Return to the Bishop for the Diocese of Chester. His answer to the question of the probable number of Roman Catholics in the Parish or Chapelry was, "I only know of two or three. There may be half a dozen."¹²

1829 was also a year of much importance to us with the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act allowing Catholics to resume taking up public office and entering the universities.

Two well-known establishments were built in Knutsford during those times, and events show that they too had their quota of Catholic residents, however reluctant they may have been. The Knutsford Prison known as the 'House of Correction' was built in 1817, and later the Poor House or Workhouse was started in 1837.

Being the marvellous agricultural county Cheshire was then and still is, many farms were probably run by the local landowners. The Catholic Farmers like the Savages, Masseys, Ashtons, Copelands and Caldwells maintained a Chapel at Great Budworth, but had no resident priest¹³ and Mass was probably celebrated there on occasions by a travelling priest, or possibly supplied from not-so-far-away Warrington.

This family of Caldwells with its 7 members listed as Papists was shown as being in residence in Stretton, Great Budworth.¹⁴

Study of the Returns of Papists for the then adjacent Deanery of Warrington, reveals a veritable "colony" of Caldwells. A number of families comprising some 40 people in all were listed as Papists under the name of Caldwell, plus the family of 7 at Stretton, making an incredible total of 47¹⁵. Several appear to have been either cotton spinners or weavers, and one or two of the older people to have lived in the area from the early part of the eighteenth century¹⁶. There is a common thread of similarity about a number of their Christian names which suggest that many were of the same stock. One of these particular families in Warrington lived in the area known as Hollinfair and comprised John Caldwell—Husbandman [farmer], his wife Ann and their four children.¹⁷ It is from this family or possibly one of the other families recorded as Papists¹⁸ that the first tiny seeds of our Catholic Parish at Knutsford were sown. These families were by no means affluent. Most farmers of those times were merely tenants or occupiers of a farming area belonging to the local manorial estates, and extracted a meagre livelihood after paying their tithes and rents.

We ourselves are most closely concerned with the name "Caldwell", which figures so prominently and significantly in the history of our own parish, although these Caldwells are not related to the well-known horticultural firm in Knutsford.

This bastion of Catholicism had Southworth Hall and Culcheth Hall with 12 their private chapels, and the Mission of St. Peter's, Woolston to attend and hear Mass, and the early baptismal registers of these places of worship record the name of Caldwell] on many occasions. On 24th January 1779 a certain David Caldwell born of John and Ann was baptised at St. Peter's, Woolston.¹⁹ He married about the year 1802, and according to the Register of Parliamentary Electors for 1832²⁰ and General Census of 1841²¹ took the tenancy of a farm in Tabley Superior with his wife Margaret, who was born in St. Helens, and two sons Thomas and David. He remained there until perhaps 1854.

Being the staunch and devout Catholics that they undoubtedly were the Caldwells would then have sought the nearest place of worship in order to attend Mass. They appear to have chosen Macclesfield or Congleton until they became aware of Father Hall's excursions. Being tenant farmers on a much larger scale than their forebears, they probably possessed a pony and trap for their transport. In those difficult and still arduous times most of the small band of Catholics in Knutsford would probably have had to walk to their chosen place of worship in order to hear Mass and have their children baptised, unless they were fortunate enough to obtain transport from some friendly carter.

The first authentic evidence that the Caldwells made contact with Father Hall at Macclesfield is shown in his register of donations towards the new church of St. Alban, one such entry being recorded on 9th November 1835 from Mrs. Caldwell, Knutsford, and another on 11th April 1841 (the month before St. Alban's was officially opened) from Mr. Caldwell, Knutsford. There was also a donation in April 1835 from a Mr. Edge of Knutsford, whom I am led to believe was a Boot and Shoe Maker in Lower or King Street in the 1820s, and an obvious founder member of our first mission.

The desire of the steadily increasing but small Catholic population at Knutsford wishing to hear Mass and receive the Sacraments, and their difficulty in travelling. would surely have been brought to the notice of Father Hall who would immediately have offered to include Knutsford in his travelling ministrations.

It should not be too difficult for us to visualise Father Hall mounted on his sturdy pony Complete with saddle bags and travelling Case containing the small silver chalice which is still kept at St. Alban's. He would probably be clad in discreet clothing. and we picture him on his pony trotting down the lane or road from his last stay at Northwich. on to the present A556 (Wading Street), and then on to the Caldwell's farm where he would probably be invited to stay the night. if he did not stay at the nearby Windmill Inn.

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

The exact location of Caldwell's farm where the first Mass was said has been pin-pointed on the Tithe Apportionment and Map for Tabley Superior for 1847.²² as the site of the present Moss Lane farm owned by Mr. and Mrs. Crimes. which is some 200 yards down on the right hand side of Moss Lane. directly opposite the Tabley Church of St. Paul's (which was built during the 1850s) on the A556 on the North side of the roundabout. now junction 19 on the M6.²³

I am pleased to record that in my research I failed to uncover any evidence at all of a repetition of the fate that befell him when, making a similar journey to Bollington some years before, he was waylaid, dragged off his pony, and unceremoniously thrown into a nearby pond.²⁴

By pre-arrangement the Catholics from Knutsford, about 7 (amities at that time, probably some 20 to 30 strong in number, would have made their way down 2 miles of country lanes to the farm at Tabley, and that marvellous first step in the forming of our Mission and Parish—the First Mass ever in the life of our Parish history.

After leaving Tabley, Father Hall would then presumably ride on to Wilmslow to perform similar duties and ministrations before returning to Macclesfield. This routine would probably be carried out once a month, or perhaps every other month, in all weather and conditions.

Mass was said at the farm for perhaps the years 1840/2. and then due to the ever increasing Catholic population a decision would have been made to find a suitable place for worship in Knutsford itself.

Meanwhile. in 1840 a further division of the country had been made with vicariates being established in eight districts, London, Midland, West, East, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northern and Welsh. Cheshire was placed in the new Lancashire District under its first Vicar Apostolic, Dr. George Brown.²⁵ The Manchester Mission had been strengthened with the addition in 1794 of St. Mary's, Mulberry Street (the Hidden Gem), and later in 1820 of St. Augustine's, Granby Row. During the decade 1840/50 a great increase in missionary efforts took place in Cheshire.²⁶

The population of Knutsford and District rose quite sharply during the next two decades, partly due to the advent of the Industrial and Railway building booms throughout the North and Midlands, and to the arrival in this country of great numbers of Irish immigrants, and also to those arriving from Catholic countries on the continent, all in search of work. The immigration from Ireland became a flood from 1845 onwards as a result of the Potato Famines,²⁷ and the General Census for Knutsford²⁸. for this time reveals blocks of names of people from Ireland who had taken up residence here, migrating together in such areas as the Old Market Place, Silk Mill Street, Warrington Road, Cross Town and elsewhere, and it is quite possible that a number of our present parishioners

had forbears amongst those immigrants. The Irish people were said to be good workers and their women worked in the lanes around Knutsford from dawn until dusk.

The first public meeting place for Mass in Knutsford was a small shop vacated by Mr. William Wood, on the then named Warrington Road, now known as Manchester Road, near the Gasworks built by John Ogden in 1844 in the area later called Gas Street, and now of course known as Windsor Way.

The shop must have been small indeed, as people had to kneel in the roadway outside as their numbers increased. Apparently they were called Moss-ites from a prominent member of the community named Edward Moss 14 who lived in King Street and plied his business as a Carter along the Warrington Road to Warrington.

Father Hall must have been confronted with great difficulties in saying Mass in such a small place, but obviously as always coped in his own zealous and efficient manner.

The next place to figure in our history as a place of Catholic worship was in house situated between the Guardian Office and Marble Arch. It was probably used as a Mass centre for perhaps 3 years or so, with the small rooms positively bulging at the seams at Mass time.

The burden on Father Hall carrying out this arduous routine of regularly ministering to a number of towns, in addition to his own duties in Macclesfield and its neighbourhood, must have imposed a heavy physical strain upon him, although it is probable that these duties were eventually shared by the resident priests at the established missions of Congleton and Bollington, but about 1847 their burden was lightened considerably when relief arrived on the scene.

Father Michael O'Reilly about whom, unfortunately, there is little personal information available, was born at Cavan, Drumlomon in Ireland about the year 1812. He was probably one of a number of Priests Sent over from the seminaries in Ireland at the time as the demands for Priests in this country increased. His age would suggest he had entered the Priesthood later in life, or that he had been a serving Priest at some parish in Ireland and was requisitioned as an experienced Priest as one of the supply to this country in its hour of need.

Father O'Reilly arrived at Altrincham in 1847 where he opened the first mission. celebrating the first Mass at the house of a Mr. McDermott in George Street, and shortly afterwards at a cottage in Higher New Street and eventually in a house lower down the street.²⁹ Immediately after his arrival he would have made contact with Father Hall and the situation at Knutsford would have been fully discussed, with Father O'Reilly taking over the duties there in view of the closer proximity to Altrincham.

From the scant and sketchy evidence available it seems that Father O'Reilly first arrived on the Knutsford scene some time in 1841, though how he regularly



Figure 3.2: Father Michael O'Reilly.

made the 7 miles journey between Altrincham and Knutsford is not revealed until later. Nevertheless he must have quickly assessed the growing situation and decided that it was high time a fairly permanent place was found in which to say Mass more frequently. It would appear that Mass was said in two particular buildings for at least 12 years from 1848 onwards.

One was said to be the Gas Street building (now Windsor Way) once the Royal May Day Festival's Stock Room. This building still stands although in a very advanced state of dilapidation. The other one may have been the building reported and described as "once" the old Volunteer Inn, and which had last appeared in the Commercial Directories in the early 1850s listing Mary Acton, Publican. This had probably become vacant, the address of which was given as Heathside, was possibly in the vicinity of the present "White Bear" in Canute Place.

In 1850 came one of the most historic years in the whole history of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, with the restoration of the Hierarchy. The country was divided up into thirteen new Dioceses, one of them being Shrewsbury which took in Shropshire, Cheshire and North Wales, the latter forming its own Diocese in 1895. Father James Brown, at the age of 39, who had been born in Wolverhampton and ordained in 1837, was consecrated the first Bishop of Shrewsbury in July 1851. It is reported that serious and disorderly riots took place in one or two places around that time, but fortunately it would appear the

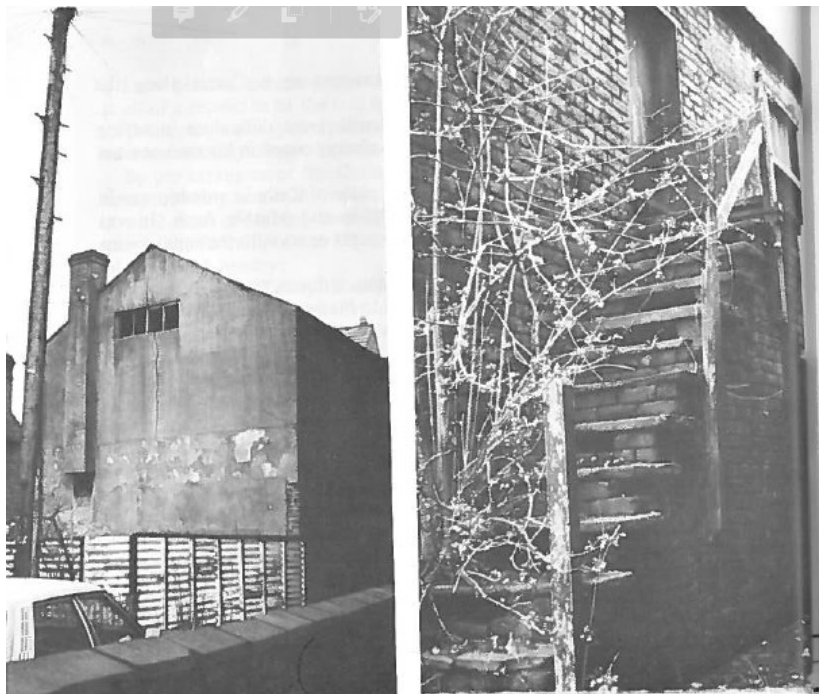


Figure 3.3: George Street Church.

either acquired equestrian skills and a pony, or were young and fit enough to walk the considerable distances required of them in many cases. We do not know how Father O'Reilly travelled to Knutsford from Altrincham in the early years, but it is said that a Dr. Levenson of Knutsford presented Father O'Reilly with a pony and trap so that he could drive over to Knutsford on a Saturday evening, say Mass there the following morning and drive back to Altrincham in time to say Mass. The Reverend gentleman was summoned and unjustly fined £5 with costs for the grave offence of not having his name on the pony carriage, even though the trap was not used for commercial purposes. His poor but devoted people soon collected the amount.

1853 saw the end of Father O'Reilly's pastorate at Altrincham, and it was thought he eventually went to America at the age of 41. Father James Berry took over at Altrincham from 1853/55, but alas we have no photograph of him. An entry in the Catholic Directory for sewed from Altrincham" told its familiar tale.

Next at Altrincham came Father W. Walton who served the Parish there from 1855—58 and the Catholic Directory for 1857 has the same entry— "Knutsford served from Altrincham", with a commercial Directory for that year having an entry under places of worship in Knutsford—"Roman Catholic Chapel, Heathside".



Father Henry Alcock was a truly remarkable Priest on a par with Father John Hall of Macclesfield and cast in the same vigorous mould as we shall presently read, Michael Connolly's marvellous potted biography of Father Alcock³² has provided much of the following information. He was born on 24th October 1819 at Alvechurch in Worcestershire, of Protestant parents. In 1836 when only 17 years of age he became a Catholic, but there is no information as to the circumstances of his conversion. It is known that he entered the Passionist Order after a few years. In 1843 he was clothed with the Passionist Habit and his full profession followed 12 months later. There is no record of his ordination to the Priesthood, but as a Passionist Father he was known as Father Anselm of St. Vincent, obviously being greatly influenced by that particular Saint. This may provide the answer to the question that has probably puzzled countless people over [he years as to why the two Parishes of Altrincham and Knutsford were both dedicated to St. Vincent de Paul. Another explanation is that the Vincentian Fathers ministered to the needs of the Catholic workers on the building of the local railways, and the dedication was taken after them.

Father Anselm's main task was to give missions and take retreats and from 1849 to 1851 he and a Father Gaudentius travelled the length or the country giving retreats and holding Missions in such places as London, Derby and Manch-



Figure 3.5: Father Henry Alcock.

ester, St. Mary's, Mulberry Street. He left the Passionist Fathers in 1851 and joined the Diocese of Shrewsbury, being appointed first of all to Crewe, and from there until 1858 he ministered to the needs of Catholics in many parts of Cheshire, organising missions in a number of towns.

In 1858 he had a brief stay at Macclesfield assisting the Reverend Dr. Hall who was now nearing total blindness, and helping to shoulder many of his responsibilities. In 1858 he was appointed to Altrincham where he organised the building of the new Church of St. Vincent and the school which was opened in 1860 and served the Catholics of Altrincham for the next 47 years.

From 1858 to 1861 Father Alcock rode over to Knutsford to say Mass and the entry in the Catholic Directory for 1859 reads: "Knutsford served from Altrincham every Sunday—Mass at 12 o'clock."

Two Commercial Directories for the year 1860 list the Roman Catholic Chapel in Manchester Road, which until that time had been known as Warrington Road.

Then we have the entry in the Catholic Directory for 1861, and note with a slight addition: "Knutsford - St. Vincent de Paul - served from Altrincham on Sunday, Mass at 11 o'clock, afternoon prayers at 4."

Our permanent Mission had been duly established and dedicated to our Patron Saint. Being the far sighted and pioneer Priest that he was, Father Alcock had launched an appeal in February 1860 for funds to build a church at Knutsford, and his appeal was successful in as much as he was able to buy a piece of land off the Manchester Road in the area now known as Queen Street. The task of

building a church was then entrusted to the Reverend H. Lynch.



Father Hugh Lynch was ordained on Sunday, 10th June 1855 in St. Alban's Church, Macclesfield by the Right Reverend Dr. Brown, Lord Bishop of Shrewsbury. He was first Priest to be ordained there, and was immediately appointed to Congleton. After 6 years service he was moved to Knutsford in 1861 when about 32 years of age, to become the first permanent resident Catholic Priest here, and he took up residence somewhere in King Street, probably in the same house as mentioned before between the Guardian Office and Marble Arch. This house, I believe, was the one recorded in the General Census for Knutsford of 1861,³³ as being on King Street East and occupied by the Reverend John Gibbon, Roman Catholic Priest age 34, born in Ireland, and his Housekeeper Bridget Kelly age 20 also born in Ireland. Father Gibbon was a temporary supply from Altrincham until the arrival of Father Lynch. The probability is that Bridget Kelly remained with Father Lynch as his housekeeper.

Knutsford now had a permanent Mission dedicated to St-Vincent de Paul. The first Baptismal Register was opened, and its entry is dated 3rd November 1861, "Isabella May ... Reverend Hugh Lynch."

The Bishop meanwhile had lent his voice to the appeal for more funds to enable Father Lynch to erect a chapel and house. Over the next four years information is scanty. It would appear that the building used as a chapel in Gas Street or the old Volunteer Inn were no longer available to us and Mass was then said in a room over the old Bowling Green Inn (the Innkeeper at that time was a Charles Edward Gleave) and was situated where the old Drill Hall formerly stood, and which is now the site of Royce Court, a sheltered homes complex in Green Street and Manchester Road. Later the house of a Francis Murphy in King Street was used. He originally lived in Warrington Road, where he carried on his business of Hardware, Marine Store and Earthenware Dealer. He subsequently moved to King Street where he continued in the same business. The General Census for 1861 records Francis Murphy, his wife 20 Catherine, both born in Ireland, and their seven children all born in Knutsford, in residence in King Street West. The location of these premises now demolished, and the site occupied by new buildings, is believed to have been opposite the Post Office which was built later in 1894. It is interesting to note that Francis Murphy and his parents were probably one of the original families of our Parish, and records show that there was a family of that name in the parish for nearly a century. Subsequently Mass was said at the premises previously mentioned between the Guardian Office and Marble Arch, and opposite the Angel Hotel. A Commercial Directory for 1864

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

lists the Roman Catholic Chapel as being in King Street with Reverend Hugh Lynch—Priest.

In 1865 Father Lynch was transferred first to Mawley in Shropshire, then to Cleobury Mortimer, near Kidderminster, and eventually to Bangor, North Wales where he officiated as Priest for many years. Old newspaper cuttings reported him as being a kind-hearted and generous friend to all in distress, and that when the area was apparently visited by an epidemic he was always faithfully at his post of duty in the hospital or in the cottages of the poor helping to alleviate the suffering of the sick. His health eventually failed him, and with a view to recuperation he visited his nephew who held a curacy in Cavan in the North of Ireland where he died in December 1883 at the age of 54.

Father Alcock again took up the reins at Knutsford in 1865 pushing ahead with his plans. He was a great worker and pioneer and had built to his own design a little Chapel, the first of our three Catholic Churches to be built in Knutsford.

The Chapel was opened on Sunday, 16th September 1866 with Father Alcock himself singing the Mass and preaching the sermon. The "Tablet" for that period reported :

"On Sunday last the above Chapel was opened, the Reverend Henry Alcock of Altrincham singing Mass and preaching the sermon. In the afternoon the sermon was preached by the Reverend Mr. Crawley of Stockport. The chapel which will be used as a school is very neatly built and stands on freehold sufficient for a church and presbytery to be built on a future occasion. It is one of the many erected by good Father Alcock, upon the principle of bringing the Church to every man's door at a little expense, and without burdening the mission with debt. There are a considerable number of Catholics in the old county town of Knutsford, and what is also very gratifying, a generous feeling is exhibited towards them by the county gentlemen and inhabitants generally. Notwithstanding the unusually wet weather the chapel was crowded to excess, there being many Strangers present."

The first baptism in the new church was performed one week after it was opened; the entry in the Register reads :

"23rd September 1866, Dominic Connors Reverend Daniel Casey."

From old letters it would appear the Bishop of the Diocese, the Right Reverend Dr. Brown promised £25 towards the cost of building and £15 was received from the people of the parish. A Mrs. Brigham, who lived in Oughtrington and died in 1868, also promised £25 towards the building and £5 for the decoration of the Chapel. Two new vestments were also promised.



Figure 3.6: This photograph was actually taken over 60 years later.

The structure was simple, with little decoration and a wooden floor. The illumination would have been by oil lamps and candles, for the incandescent gas mantle was not invented until 1885. The church was designed to seat 150, and the pews were of sturdy pitch pine with iron legs. At one time it was said of Father Alcock that there must have been something amiss in his ideas of construction as an architect, for although quite pleasing to look at, all his churches sooner or later began to bulge and had to be demolished. However the Old Building in Queen Street remains standing to this day, and is now the Little Theatre.

Father Alcock's powers of endurance were wonderful. Fasting, he would walk out to Knutsford on a Monday morning to say Mass, and part of his duties was to visit the gaol and instruct the prisoners in the Catechism.

While at Altrincham Father Alcock continued his vigorous work by building a school and chapel in Sale. He also served Lymm for six years and founded a new mission in Latchford. All this must have taken its toll, for eventually he became sick and infirm, and helplessly bedridden, retiring in 1876 to Clifton Wood in Bristol where, after a long illness, he died on 22nd February 1881. Because of the tremendous work and the length of time he must have spent in Knutsford on his various labours. he has been placed in an honorary position on our list of 19 resident priests.

The builder of both Church and presbytery which was not completed until 1867 was probably a Mr. James Paul. The mission was served from Altrincham until then by Father Alcock and a Father Casey who was obviously being



Figure 3.7: Father Daniel Casey.

groomed for eventual service at Knutsford.

Father Daniel S. Casey was 25 years of age, born in Co. Waterford, and having helped supply Knutsford from Altrincham, was well acquainted with the scene. The following entry appeared in the Catholic Directory for 1868 : "Knutsford—Rev. D. Casey. On Sunday Masses at 9 and 11. Afternoon service at 4. On weekdays Mass at 8."

Amongst his duties as Pastor was the care of prisoners in the House of Correction, and Father Alcock had previously petitioned the Magistrates of Knutsford Quarter Sessions for a salary for the Priest who visited the gaol. The petition was accepted and the magistrates passed a motion to have a Roman Catholic Chaplain with a yearly salary of £40. The Magistrates observed and commended highly:

".... the Roman ministers who had come Sunday after Sunday and had performed voluntary services without payment. We now ask that the services of the Roman ministers to this Gaol be given some recognition,"

Father Casey was appointed as Prison Chaplain at Chester Sessions on the 1st July 1867. Another of his duties was to visit Wilmslow once a month to say Mass in a room of the Railway Hotel, an extra duty which was carried on for a couple of years.³⁴

His pastorate at St. Vincent's, Knutsford continued for the next nine years until 1876.

Mary Sibylla Holland, the daughter-in-law of Sir Henry Holland (one of Queen Victoria's Physicians) staying in Knutsford at her aunt's home, Hollingford House, Ton Road (then London Road) adjacent to the Parish Churchyard,

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

wrote a letter in the early months of 1876 from which I quote:

"There are a great many Irish in the town, all very poor and very merry. Just at Easter the Roman Catholic Priest died. He was quite a young man, and very well educated, but no one in Knutsford knew him, or had even spoken to him except his own poor people. He was ill for one week and died in his lonely little room, with an old Irishwoman sitting by his bed. His body was taken Over to Ireland; all the Irish here accompanied it to the station with loud lamenting, and all the village in Ireland came out to meet it, carrying his poor old mother with them. When the respectable 23 Protestants of Knutsford heard all this, they wished they had done something for Father Casey; but it was all too late."³⁵

A fitting epitaph indeed for this young Priest who died at the very early age or 34.

Next in our succession was a Father Patrick A. O'Reilly, who came from St. John's, Bridgnorth, of whom little has been discovered, not even whether or not he was related to our earlier pioneer Priest Father Michael O'Reilly. His stay in Knutsford covered just 3 years from 1876—79 when he retired apparently owing to ill health.

A further section of the letter, written by Mary Sibylla Holland must have been referring to Father Patrick O'Reilly when she wrote:

"A few days ago an Irish boy died who belonged to the Society of Good Templars. The priest performed the service for the dead in the Catholic Chapel, then, as he was to be buried in the Churchyard, the body was brought, and Mr. Barnacle, the clergyman read our service. Before the grave was filled up, a man rang at our gate, and asked leave to Stand on our wall and read a prayer and make an address in the name of the Good Templars. Aunt Mary gave leave—or rather her old maid did—and so the Good Templar talked away, while the clergyman walked crossly Off. and the priest, who had come to look on, leant against the churchyard gate with rather a melancholy face. I watched it all from the window. and could hear every word, and I thought how far away the boy's spirit was. while his poor little body was carried out. The grave was soon filled up and the people clattered away,"³⁶

This serves to illustrate that perhaps in those times Catholics were not allowed to have their own Priest conducting burial services in a Church of England



Figure 3.8: Knutsford Church.

Cemetery, and unless the relatives took the deceased's remains away for burial elsewhere, most deceased Catholics of those times from Knutsford and district were probably buried in the Parish Churchyard. The present Public Cemetery at Tabley was not opened until about 1902.



Father Robert Roberts Maurice, 1879—1900, became our longest serving Priest for over 20 years. Unfortunately, there is no photograph of him. but we do know that he was born at Bistre Cottage, Bistre, Mold. North Wales in 1824. it was suggested that he was of French extraction. but there is no evidence to support this. He was a graduate of Oxford and an LL.D. He was a member of the Anglican Communion for 10 years and went to Belgium as a 24 Professor of English in the Jesuit College there. During this period he was influenced by the Oxford Movement and embraced the Catholic Faith. After his ordination as a Priest of the Catholic Church he served at a number of Missions for short periods from 1852 to 1854 including Macclesfield. Bath and Glasgow, and then went to Canada and Mexico. On returning to England he joined the Shrewsbury Diocese and after appointments in Wales came to Knutsford in 1879, where his cousin Miss Roberts became his housekeeper. It would be during this long Pastorate that the extension to the Presbytery was built.

Father Maurice did great work in a quiet way at Knutsford, and St. Vincent's School in Queen Street, built under his supervision, is a lasting tribute and monument to his interest in education and the Catholic Religion. It was opened on

the 8th August 1881 and designed allegedly eventually to "accommodate" 180 children. A figure of 80 is more likely, for an Inspector's Report of October 1899 records "Average attendance was 46 between the ages of 3 and 15 years. The discipline of the school and methods of instruction are satisfactory."

Miss Elizabeth O'Brien was appointed as its first teacher, with Miss Walsh joining her as assistant some years later.

Knutsford and its neighbourhood have been served by a continuing succession of splendid teachers who have helped to educate our Catholic Children over the years, both by example and their undoubted academic talent. Before the opening of the school the education of Catholic children in Knutsford would have been by religious teaching at Church or Sunday School, and academic teaching would have been by attendance at the local parochial school which was at that time at the foot of Adam's Hill. At certain times the Catholic children were irregular in their attendance owing to their religious duties.

The first St. Patrick's Ball in the Parish was held in March 1893 in the Cheshire County Ball Room at the Royal George Hotel, 100 people being present.

Confirmation was administered in February 1894 by John Carroll, Coadjutor Bishop of Shrewsbury. Eighteen candidates were presented, which, it was reported, was rather a small number compared with recent years.

During the time he was at Knutsford, Father Maurice was Roman Catholic Chaplain at the Prison, and his kindness of manner and goodness of heart was admired by officers as well as prisoners. He was well known in the district, and it was to everyone's regret that advancing years compelled him to give up his work at Knutsford in 1900 and retire to his cottage in Mold.

Father Maurice was well known throughout the country in another connection. He was a great bee fancier, and his hives in Queen Street, containing as they did a unique collection of British and foreign specimens attracted members of the fancy from all parts. Mrs. Keane, one of our oldest Parishioners who died in 1983, told me that she could remember as a little girl going to school and watching Father Maurice attend to his hives, suitably protected with a black veil over his hat and face. There is a photograph of the hives with the school in the background shown in *The History of the Diocese of Shrewsbury* by Mgr. Slaugher which is in the custody of the Diocese. She also remembered the whole of George Street as a field, and having to return home by way of Manchester Road. She recalled that the Headmistress was always one hour late on a Monday as she had to play the accompaniment for the Catholic prisoners' service at the Prison.

Father Maurice died at his home in Mold on the 3rd February 1908 at the venerable age of 84. As a point of interest, his will bequeathing part of his estate to the Diocese of Shrewsbury was disputed by a relative and became the subject of litigation at Chester Assizes, but the Judge pronounced for the Will.



Father John Henry Roche, ordained in 1894, arrived in Knutsford in 1900 from Our Lady's, Birkenhead where he had Curate for 2 years. Apparently he was a veritable giant of a man, some 6 ft. 6 inches in height, and he had to have a special bed made for him. He was born in Kildare in 1866 and went to Ushaw in 1882 where he taught Latin and Greek from 1888—90, and was then Choirmaster from 1890—92. After his ordination he was sent as Curate to St. Peter's, Stalybridge where he remained for 4 years. He was a member of the Bucklow Board of Guardians, and served Knutsford until he left in 1906, to take up duties at St. Mary's, Latchford, and then later to St. Joseph's, Stockport as Parish Priest where he became a Canon in 1917. He celebrated his Silver Jubilee in 1919 when a number of Knutsford subscribers to his fund were present. He remained in Stockport until his death on 5th August 1926, aged 59 years.



The next pastorate of Father Thomas Mullins has a deep and significant meaning for myself, as he instructed and received my own Father into the Catholic Faith. He was ordained in 1889, being appointed to St. Vincent's from Our Lady Help of Christians and St. Oswald, Oswestry.

In 1908 during his brief stay of only 3 years, Miss O'Brien, the teacher, retired due to ill-health. She was always very popular with scholars and parents, and when a testimonial fund was started it was plainly evident that the good and painstaking headmistress of St. Vincent's had friends almost everywhere, even in the new world across the Atlantic. At her farewell presentation in the schoolroom, presided over by Father Mullins and supported by Father Roche from Latchford and the committee, it was pointed out that she had been in charge of the Catholic education of the town for the past 27 years, many of which she had laboured single-handed and with material not of the best. A framed address and a cheque for a substantial amount representative of the good wishes of the subscribers was presented to her, and Miss Nora McGowan the senior scholar at the school then stepped forward and presented to Miss O'Brien a purse containing a sovereign representing the cordial wishes of the children to the their headmistress. The children of the school performed a little musical play entitled "The Sleeping Beauty". Miss O'Brien was quite unable to speak in reply and asked Father Roche to say a few words on her behalf. Father Roche told of his arrival in Knutsford in December 1900. Miss O'Brien was very ill and with her usual good sense thought that a new Priest would want to start afresh. Father Roche would not accept Miss O'Brien's resignation, and he asked her to think it over. He gave her three months to recover, and she returned to carry on at the school.

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

Following the speeches a concert programme was given by members of the Parish and the Bexton Glee Party made their first public appearance—a successful debut which filled the band with great encouragement.

Father Mullins continued the Prison Chaplaincy, but in 1909 he was asked to attend an execution at the Prison, and was so overcome that there and then he requested the Bishop to remove him.³⁷ This was apparently granted for in April 1909 he preached his farewell sermon and was appointed Parish Priest of SS. Peter and Paul, New Brighton where he remained until his death in 1945.



We move on with our succession of Priests to Father Albert Morrissy, a gentle Priest who courageously fought ill-health for half or his time in the Priesthood. He was born in Brazil, and his parents came to England when he was seven years old and settled at Bowdon. In later years his mother returned to Brazil.

Father Morrissy was educated at Baycliff House, Windsor, and at Ushaw where he was ordained in 1898. celebrating his first Mass at St. Vincent's Church. Altrincham. For two years after his ordination he was a professor at his old college and then for seven years assistant to Canon Walsh at Liscard. His first appointment was to St. John's, Bridgnorth where he remained for about two years, and here contracted a serious illness which greatly impaired his constitution. He was far from well through most of his time at Knutsford where he arrived in 1909. With the consent of the Bishop he was away from the district on several occasions in the hope of effecting a restoration of his health. On his return each time it was evident that the change had brought some improvement, but time showed this to be of a temporary nature only. Despite ill health, he was a member of the Bucklow Board of Guardians and served on other committees.

Whilst Father Morrissy was in residence at Knutsford, the Misses Rice were housekeepers to him. Miss Carpenter joined Miss Walsh as School Mistress, and for a short period there was also a Miss O'Sullivan. Later Miss Moore and Miss Donovan took over the mantle of teachers at the little academy in Queen Street.

At one time, after an absence of five months on sick leave, Father Morrissy received a tumultuous welcome home at a specially and secretly arranged reception in the schoolroom in December 1911. A 2-hour concert by the children of St. Vincent's was arranged by Miss Moore, that adjudged maestro and producer of Children's Concerts and Pantomimes. Mr. T. Cunnellon read an address of welcome home, ending with the wish of all "Ad Multos Annos". Father Morrissy replied that when he reached Knutsford just a few hours before, he had no idea of the welcome awaiting him.

The Reverend Father Gore who had been Priest-in-Charge during Father Morrissy's absence, joined the congregation in welcoming him back, and spoke

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

of the kindness he had met from everyone. The proceedings concluded with a dance.

Many events took place in the Parish and Knutsford over the next few years. Houses were erected on the right hand side running down George Street and the Church was reopened in February 1912 after having been in the hands of the workmen and decorators for a period. At that time a new floor consisting of wooden blocks was laid over concrete, and the combined efforts of all in the congregation to meet the cost had resulted in a transformation of the Church. The pulpit that had been introduced was the handiwork of a member of the congregation and was used for the first time at the 11 0'clock Mass when the celebrant was Father J. Ryan of Shifnal. music and singing of the Mass was rendered at all the services by the children's Choir under Miss Moore. Mr. Tomlinson of Bexton Road officiated at the organ, and Father Ryan preached the sermon.

A week's mission at Easter in 1912 was conducted at St. Vincent's by Father Davidson, one of the Redemptorist Fathers from the Monastery at Bishop Eton attracting goodly-sized congregations.

The Knutsford Pantomimes, as everybody called them, became an annual feature of the town's entertainment. They were held in the Old Town Hall (now a well-known furniture store) and in 1912 had to increase the performances to three nights, public demand for tickets being so great. The proceeds, 156.9s., realized a net profit of £40.2s.6d. To furnish here a little of the cast list from 28 these Pantomimes, may revive a few memories: The fairies were: May Wixted, Eva Murray, Teresa Cunnellon, Kitty Reed, Rose Long, Maggie Martin, and the Bluebells: Winnie Reed, Maud Cunnellon, Mary Smith, Winnie Cunnellon, Mary Connor and Winnie Holden; and in "Ali Baba and the Thieves" we had: Cogia (Captain of the Thieves) Joseph Cunnellon; Assad and Assim (principal thieves), John Wixted and Edward Dowling; thieves, Katie Marron, Katie Hester, Lizzie Marron, Maud Connor, Eleanor Foy, Maud Cunnellon, Nancy Duffy, Norah Connor, Kitty Duffy, and a host of other names who were by local consensus the "tops" in their efforts and entertainment value. These events were all a resounding success, as were Jumble Sales with the Jumble being offered at auction by Mr. Edwards the local auctioneer. The children had a Fancy Dress Ball and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, but it was the Pantomimes that were the talking point of the town.

1914 saw the start of the Great War, and in 1916 the Knutsford Guardian paid tribute to Miss Moore and Miss Donovan the teachers, and children of St. Vincent's School stating that they were unrivaled as crowd pullers in their concerts which filled the Town Hall even during a war. The teachers instructed by both example and precept.

In 1915 the Prison was closed and this meant a big financial loss to the Parish

as by that time the Chaplain's salary was £100 per year.

A frequent visitor to the Church at this time was a Mr. George Leigh whose wife eventually became the first Catholic Chairman of Knutsford Urban District Council.³⁸

Father Morrissy's last illness dated from a period shortly before Christmas 1916. After recuperating in Yorkshire he had returned for the Christmas Festival looking forward to a future of restored health. On the day of his return however he met with an unfortunate accident. Going to post a letter he slipped on the icy road and sustained a deep gash on the forehead and shock. He never really recovered and eventually died in the early hours of Sunday, 6th May 1917 at St. Vincent's Presbytery, aged 45.

The Sunday services were taken meanwhile by a Franciscan Father from Gorton Monastery. Father Morrissy's coffin was taken from the Presbytery to the church on Tuesday night and rested on a catafalque for the Mass for the dead to be said the following morning by his brother the Reverend James Morrissy and at which the children's choir sang the hymns. The body was then taken to St. Vincent's, Altrincham on Wednesday evening and a silent vigil was kept during the night. On Thursday morning Pontifical Requiem Mass was sung by the Bishop of Shrewsbury,³⁹ Father Burton of Spanish Place, London, was the assistant Priest, Father T. Marts (Hyde) and Father O'Reilly (Sale) were deacon and sub-deacon respectively and the choir consisted of Reverend Canon Grady, and Fathers Welsh, Thompson, Ryan. Kirby. McNally, Jones, Griffin, Ca.lliwaert, Bryne, Seddon, Porter, Rooney, Bethel and Foy. Father Hughes was Master of Ceremonies. There was a large congregation present, including scholars from St. Vincent's, Knutsford, and St. Vincent's Altrincham.

The Bishop gave a short address in which he paid high tribute to Father Morrissy. He did not think that any eulogy of Father Morrissy's life was needed, they all knew and admired him. Everything Father Morrissy had done was without any hope of earthly reward. He only wished to be of service.

The interment took place at Bowdon Parish Church and the last rites were completed by the Bishop. Floral tributes were sent by the Congregation of St. Vincent's, Knutsford.

To end this account of Father Morrissy's pastorate in Knutsford, it is interesting to note that the altar at St. Vincent's Church, Altrincham at which he served as a boy, and at which he celebrated his first Mass, was subsequently removed to St. Vincent's. Knutsford, where he celebrated his last Mass at it on Easter Sunday, 1917.



Father Edward Dodsworth Kirby arrived at Knutsford in 1917 from St. Hilda's,

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

Northenden. His second name was his mother's maiden name whose family came from Yorkshire and perhaps were descended from a mid-nineteenth-century convert. He was ordained in 1901, and had held curacies at Altrincham, Chester, Hyde, and Ellesmere Port, and had been at St. Hilda's for 4 years. He was considered to be an excellent writer of parish historical data, and apparently had a fine memory, recalling an ordination by Bishop Singleton in St. Laurence's, Birkenhead when he was only 5 years old. It was also said that he was a keen cricket supporter, visiting the Lancashire County ground when his duties permitted.

During the early part of his pastorate, Miss Moore and Miss Donovan retired from teaching, and their respective places were taken by Mrs. Wilson and Miss W. O'Loughlin.

At a meeting of the Father Morrissy Memorial Committee held in March 1918 with Father Kirby in the chair, the treasurer announced the contribution to date including one of £20 from a member of the congregation. The form of memorial was discussed, and it was generally agreed the most suitable would be the erection of a porch to the church leading directly from Queen Street to replace the existing side entrance, but work was withheld as we shall read later.

November 1918 thankfully saw the end of the Great War, and the *Te Deum* was sung at St. Vincent's Church in Thanksgiving for the promise of Peace.

After the War had ended and before the prison was demolished, it was used for a time to house soldiers in their preparation for the Anglican Ministry. A number of them used to visit the Catholic Church for the service, and joined heartily in the hymns,⁴⁰ until it was put out of bounds.

The Great War had taken its toll everywhere, and in November 1919 the unveiling of Knutsford's first War Memorial took place at St. Vincent's Church. The memorial consisted of a crucifix by a sculptor named Wall of Cheltenham," and a tablet below inscribed with the names of the eight members of the Parish who had fallen in the War. They were Daniel Caulfield, 30 Patrick Leech, Edward Lowe, Francis McGowan, Joseph Lowe, Peter Murphy, Edwin Connor and John Burns, and John Leonard whose name appears to have been added later. The Memorial was fixed to the centre of the front wall of the church. and to pay for it the sum of £50 was subscribed by both Catholics and by non Catholics who raised more than half this amount."

At the unveiling were Mr. Mayson Penn, Chairman of the Urban District Council, Councillors Robert Lee and Tom Cunnellon, Lt. Colonel R.J. Slaughter of Mobberley, who performed the unveiling, and Captain Frank Walsh who formerly lived in Queen Street.

In 1920, after persistent and friendly agitation during the period after World War I, the Parish Priest was able to get the Catholic School recognised as eligible for the selection of May Queen along with St. John's and St. Cross. As a result,



Figure 3.9: Great War - Crucifix Memorial

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

St. Vincent's was drawn first by ballot, and by the vote of the school, Eva Murray (Mrs. Brooks) was selected and crowned Knutsford's first Catholic May Queen in 1920.⁴¹

Father Kirby remained at Knutsford until 1920. He was at Hazel Grove from 1923—29, becoming Parish Priest at St. Vincent's, Altrincham in 1931, where later he was made Canon. It is of interest to note that his family were in business as Architects in Liverpool and designed the present St. Vincent's church at Altrincham.

When he finally retired in 1938, he returned to Knutsford and took up residence in a private house, 8 St. John's Road, where he remained until his death on 25th February 1954.



Notes

1. Cheshire 1600—1780. Hodson, pp 43.44
2. North West Catholic History Vol. (1982).
3. Victoria History County of Cheshire Vol. III. Oxford University Press, pp 88, 89.
4. History of Macclesheld, Stella Davies, Macclesfield Borough Council, pp 349. 350.
5. Victoria History County of Cheshire Vol. III. Oxford University Press, pp 88, 89.
6. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Decannual Publication (1)
7. St. Albans. Macclesfield. Ullmann
8. Cheshire, 1660-1780. Hodson, p 44
9. St. Albans. Macclesfield. Ullmann
10. St. Albans. Macclesfield. Ullmann
11. History of Macclesheld, Stella Davies. Macclesfield Borough Council, p 356.
12. Cheshire Record Office, Chester (see Bibliography)
13. North West Catholic History
14. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional Publication (1)
15. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional Publication (1)
16. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional Publication (1)
17. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional Publication (1)
18. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional Publication (1)
19. Catholic Record Society. Records of Catholic Registers, Vols. 3, 13, 17. 12
20. Cheshire Record Office. Chester (see Bibliography).

CHAPTER 3. THE BEGINNING AND THE FIRST CHURCH

21. History of Macclesfield. Stella Davies. Macclesfield Borough Council. p 358.
22. Cheshire Record Office. Chester (see Bibliography).
23. Cheshire Record Office. Chester (see Bibliography).
24. History of Macclesfield. Stella Davies. Macclesfield Borough Council. p 358.
25. Catholic Centenary Exhibition Souvenir 1973—Manchester.
26. Victoria History of County of Cheshire Vol. II, Oxford University Press, p 94.
27. Victoria History of County of Cheshire Vol. III, Oxford University Press, p 94.
28. Cheshire Office, Chester (see Bibliography)
29. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record 1851—1951, p 42.
30. Victoria History of County of Cheshire Vol. III. Oxford University press, p 96.
31. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951, p 68.
32. Shrewsbury Diocesan Year Book 1968. Father Henry Alcock, Michael Connolly.
33. Cheshire Record Office, Chester (see Bibliography).
34. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951, p 95.
35. Letters of Mary Sibylla Holland. Edited by Bernard Holland, Edward Arnold, pp 38. 39.
36. Letters of Mary Sibylla Holland. Edited by Bernard Holland, Edward Arnold, pp 38. 39.
37. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951, p 68.
38. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951, p 68.
39. Knutsford Guardian, May 11th 1917.
40. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951. p 68- 27. 32
41. Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record, 1851—1951. p 68

The Second Church

FATHER Ryan was born in Runcorn in 1880. He studied at Cotton College, Staffordshire, at the English College of Valladolid in Spain, and was ordained at St. Joseph's, Birkenhead in 1904. He was curate at Edgeley, Stockport for 6 years, and at St. Joseph's, Seacombe from 1910—16. He served for 3 years as Chaplain in the Great War, being attached to the 2nd Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers, and eventually as Senior Chaplain to the 4th Division with rank of Major. After demobilisation he returned for a few months to Seacombe and then in October 1919 to St. Alban's, Macclesfield. He was appointed to St. Vincent's, Knutsford as Parish Priest in July 1920.

Father Ryan quickly established himself in the Parish, along with his faithful housekeepers Miss Beswick and Mrs. Howcroft who kept her own chickens behind the Presbytery. Miss Beswick was responsible for the arrangement of flowers, Candles, etc., and generally carrying out the duties of sacristan for many years.

Sunday, 24th October 1920 saw the canonical visit to St. Vincent's Church or the Right Reverend Dr. Singleton, Bishop of Shrewsbury. The sanctuary presented a beautiful appearance, the adornments of the Altar having been renovated at the cost of various subscribers. His Lordship celebrated Mass at 8.30 a.m. and Father Ryan was the celebrant at the service at 10.30 when His Lordship delivered his Visitation address. He congratulated the congregation on their hearty co-operation with the Rector in the spiritual and temporal affairs of the parish. In the afternoon the sacrament of Confirmation was administered, the sponsors being Mr. and Mrs. W. Murphy. Following the Confirmation, the Bishop gave the Benediction.

In March 1921 a ten-day Mission was conducted at the church by the Reverend T. Bradley, and was a great success.

Over the next few years it was all systems go, with the usual events ranging from Hot Pot Suppers, Whist Drives, Concerts, Jumble Sales and Dances including the annual St. Patrick's Ball, always a sell-out and always such a huge success with people of all denominations. The tickets were eagerly sought after, as attendance at the Dance was considered one of the social events of the year. There was the never-ending succession of Summer and Christmas Raffles or Draws as they were known. Every classic event in the racing Calendar was an invitation or occasion to hold one, with tickets at one old penny each, or sometimes twopence, or if you were in a generous mood, a book of seven for sixpence.



Figure 4.1: Father John James Ryan 1920-1934

Sales of Work were also the order of the day, and an interesting one was held in St. Vincent's Schoolroom in November 1922. In the absence of Lord Colum Crichton Stuart, M.P. who was unable to attend because of political duties, Mrs. Leigh declared the sale open. The room was Crowded and soon resounded with the clamour of a noisy mart. Great business was done, and by seven o'clock most of the goods had found well-satisfied buyers. The treasurer reported that the receipts amounted to £196.18s.8d. and the rebuilding fund would eventually be augmented by about £200. Father Ryan announced during the day that he had received a donation of 350 francs from Mr. and Mrs. Seelhand-dillen Faille, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Seelhand van de Werve, Lieutenant-General Rugnoy and Father V. Wagenberg in token of their appreciation of the kindness they received from Knutsfordians, whilst residing at High Legh and Mere Hall during the War; also EIO from the Misses A. Culkin and M. Almond, former parishioners of St. Vincent's residing in New York.

Although memories tend to become somewhat blurred over the years, vivid recollections remain of the last few years of the Old Church in Queen Street:

the silent beckoning message painted scroll-like in large gold Gothic lettering Over the sanctuary arch, "Could you not watch one hour with Me". This message must have been the source of much inspiration to countless devout Catholics over the years, and became almost like a Parish motto or symbol of faith, and was by request painted over the sanctuary arch of the second Church. Alas it was never restored when the new Church was redecorated many years later;

of very small altar boys in those far off days, staggering with the Mass Missal

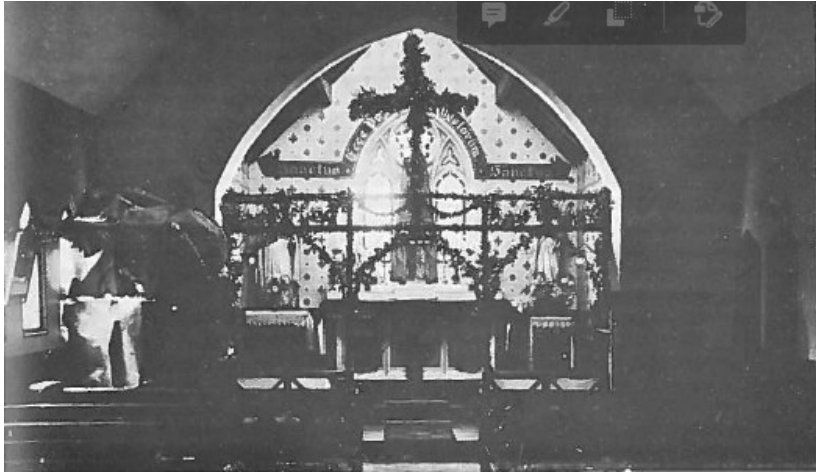


Figure 4.2: Perhaps it is fitting that the last photograph of our first Church should be one of the interior taken, obviously, just before one Christmas Eve, some time I would think in the 1920s. It shows the framework that used to be built across the sanctuary at Christmas time. clad with evergreens. which the children used to thread into long garlands. These were suspended from the roof and can just be seen. The crib of course is off prior to its opening, and we can also see one or the Stations of the Cross. The two doors on the right are the entrance from the Church to the sacristy and Presbytery, and the Confessional.

on its stand, from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the altar, and then draping the spotless white communion cloth which was suspended by its tapes all along the altar rails ready for the communicants to receive;

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament took place after the 11 o'clock Mass on a Sunday until Benediction in the evening, when during the day the Church was never without someone paying a visit of at least one hour. During the winter the church was lit by gaslight, the gas mantles giving off their somewhat slight greenish-tinged light, hissing and occasionally popping, and dozens of lighted candles on the altar radiating a soft yellow but warm light. All this with clouds of sweet-smelling burning incense from the thurible and the rather lengthy sermons made a combination that all too often acted as a soporific to many a small altar boy, who found it most difficult not to nod off;

the Stations of the Cross were a monochrome print type of picture fronted by glass in oak frames, and a number of parishioners accepted them when the Church in Queen Street closed for the last time;

Mr. Holt and his small but valiant choir rendered their responses and the missa cantata which was a permanent feature every first Sunday in the month over the years. The choir was accompanied by a pedal harmonium, both on a small raised platform with a wooden safety rail in a corner at the back of the Church;

the annual processions in honour of Our Lady, in May, and Corpus Christi in June which were such a feature and profession of faith and continued over and into the life of the second Church. The children as always were beautifully groomed and dressed, and to extend the distance of the procession, it was routed from the old school in Queen Street across the path in the then garden through the back door of the Presbytery, out through the front door, back to the front of the school, and then back along Queen Street to enter the Church;

each year the schoolchildren went off by charabanc on their annual day trip to one of usually three venues, New Brighton, Southport or Overton Hills (Frodsham).

Father Ryan was a kind and generous man, and apparently like all our priests a keen follower of cricket, soccer and both codes of Rugby football. His knowledge of these sports was too great for any who challenged him. He was also good at conjuring tricks.

He soon realised that the old church and presbytery were fast falling into decay, with much evidence of dry rot and damp. In fact the church was condemned as dangerous in 1921. He set about organising a number of fund-raising activities to enable the parish to pay off the remaining debt on the old church, and to augment the reconstruction fund, a scheme which I believe was to rebuild perhaps on the old site at a cost of something like £2000.

Five of these events are most unlikely to be surpassed in their effort, organisation and generosity, from the Catholic population of Knutsford, which in 1922 was below 250. Times also became hard during the next five years, culminating in the General Strike of 1926 and the eventual recession and unemployment of the following years without the cushion of social security to help alleviate the widespread poverty.

These events were called "Galas", held annually in the open in Booths Hall Park (now the Toft Cricket Club ground) in 1922, 1924 and 1925, and in 1923 and the last one in 1929 were held in Tatton Park. The Knutsford Guardian reported :

Saturday 14th July 1923.

2nd Annual Gala was held in Tatton Park attended by a large crowd and in ideal weather. It was a success not only from a financial point of view, but because of the esprit de corps which prevailed through the long

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

and varied programme. Through the generosity of Lord Egerton of Tatton the promoters were able to invite their patrons to a popular and extremely picturesque venue. Rev. Fr. Ryan was an enthusiast who at once inspired others and in his most recent endeavours to "raise the wind" had not only the willing assistance of members of his own flock but people of other denominations and thought came to his aid with the happiest of results.

Throughout the many vicissitudes of the early history of the Church the limited congregation had remained loyal and their zeal and enthusiasm had been an inspiration to those who were anxious to see the present structure replaced by a more worthy building, Saturday's effort was the most ambitious of all.

An attractive programme drew a large number of patrons to the Park. The Gala was honoured by the presence of the Lord Bishop of Shrewsbury and Lord Egerton. The Bishop performed the opening ceremony in the Kiosk, and he was supported by Canon Roche, Fr. Jones of Runcorn, Mrs. G. Leigh, with the Rev. Fr. Ryan introducing his Lordship.

The Bishop expressed his pleasure at seeing so many present, and his personal thanks to Lord Egerton for placing the Park at their disposal, On behalf of the congregation and Fr. Ryan he would like to say how much they recognised the good feeling existing in Knutsford and the assistance they had received in promoting the Gala. He was pleased to the good feelings amongst the different bodies of the town when they were trying in their humble way to fulfill their duty in the promotion of what they sometimes called religion. In spite of what some people said they would get on very badly without religion. The object of the Gala had his full sympathy. In declaring the Gala open he wished them every success.

Several troupes of dancers, a Jazz Band (led by Miss Katie Hester) and the famous McSweeney Juvenile Band from St. Patrick's, Manchester, who had all volunteered their services took part in the procession around the town headed by the Knutsford and Cross Town Band, and after the opening ceremony they provided the variety programme in the Kiosk.

Miss Edna Garner (now Mrs. E. Knight) gave a very graceful and effective Skirt Dance. The St. Vincent's Irish Dancers who had been splendidly trained by Mrs. Harris gave a display in which some of the old Irish jig steps were introduced. The McSweeney Pipers gave a three-banded reel and four of their number contributed an Irish Dance.

In another area of the Park a programme of Sports had been arranged, at the conclusion of which the Bishop presented the Cup and prizes.

In the evening some of the Dancers repeated their performances and the Edwardian Concert Party from Runcorn gave a very enjoyable and

varied programme in the Kiosk.

Various stalls and other events run by enthusiastic members of the parish attracted excellent business.

Catering arrangements were in the capable hands of Mrs. Leigh who was assisted by a number of willing helpers."

The following year the Gala called the "Last Rose of Summer" was held in Booths Hall Park and followed the previous year's pattern, starting with a modest procession from the school in Queen Street, with 3 bands, Dance troupes and Drill teams and Characters from the School. The procession also included a carriage' carrying Mrs. George Leigh, Chairman of the U.D.C. accompanying her were Mrs. Hester, Mrs. Connor and Miss Wilson, the three oldest female members of the Parish, who were conveyed to the Gala in the grand and regal manner.

In 1924 Miss M. Sexton and Miss Ball became the new teachers at the school. Subsequently Miss Ball left, it is believed, to become a nun, and was replaced by Miss McEvoy.

The Annual Parish Meeting held in the school room on 23rd January 1925 was well attended. Revealing that the year's work had been very satisfactory, Father Ryan reported that attendance at Mass and Benediction had greatly improved, and the record of over 400 Communicants per month was worthy of special mention. The social activities of the Parish had been uniformly satisfactory and nearly £500 had been added to the New Church building fund as a result. In addition £100 had been collected by a house to house collection, so that altogether they had £1,110 and promises of another £500.

Events both spiritual and parochial moved along in the customary smooth manner, and in March 1925 the field running the length of George Street from the old school to Tatton Street was purchased by the Bishop and the Diocesan Trustees. The land was occupied by a Mr. H. Rawson who lived in the house on the corner of George Street and Tatton Street, and kept the newsagent's and tobacconist's shop now run by McColl's in Canute Place. The field was used for breeding turkeys and guinea fowl, and there was at one time a town pit on roughly the site of the present new Church. One or two trees where the 37 Presbytery stands were uprooted and dragged away before building operations started.

Saturday, 9th October 1926 was another important milestone in our history with the laying of the foundation stone of the second Church facing Tatton Street.

The report in the Knutsford Guardian on that occasion is so admirable and beautifully accurate, that I have not the slightest hesitation in adopting it in full, plus one or two slight additions:

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

Worse weather conditions could not have prevailed than was the case on Saturday afternoon, during the foundation stone laying Ceremony on the site of the new St. Vincent's Church, which is in course of erection at the corner of Tatton Street and Garden Road, Knutsford.

The wind was cold and boisterous and not for a moment did the rain cease to lash furiously. Those who were brave enough to weather the storm were full of sympathy for Father Ryan and his flock, who were looking hopefully forward to the occasion which was to be such an important epic in the history of local Catholicism. There were few of the little congregation who would allow their enthusiasm to be damped, but many sympathisers in the work, both locally and outside the district were prevented from attending.

The site the new church is a commanding one, being bounded by Garden Road, Tatton Street and George Street. The principal entrance will be from Tatton Street, and a side entrance will also be provided. The buildings are set back 83 feet from Tatton Street, and the land in front, when laid out as gardens, will form a fitting foreground for the buildings. The church is designed in the Early English style of Gothic architecture and will be built in brickwork, the facing being in Accrington bricks with Christie patent stone dressings to match the natural stone from Darley Dale. The church is in a single span of 32 feet wide and will be 20 feet high to the eaves of the roof. The nave is 60 feet long, and the chancel 10 feet deep, ending with an apse 12 feet deep, wherein will stand the high altar. Over the porch, which, with the baptistry will occupy the full width of the church, will be fixed a choir gallery. The top of the cross on the main gable will be 40 feet from the ground. The main walls are to be strengthened by substantial buttresses and between these lancet windows glazed with cathedral glass will give a soft mellow light throughout the church. The Presbytery will contain reception, dining, and sitting-rooms, four bedrooms and the usual offices, and there will be direct access to the church by means of a corridor which also connects the vestry. The interior of the church walls will be plastered and the whole of the roof stained and varnished. Accommodation will be provided for 250 people and give ample room for an aisle down each side of the church. Adequate provision is being made for ventilating, heating and artificial lighting by electricity.

One feature not usually found in churches will a sloping floor, which Will give the congregation a better view of the chancel and altar. The whole of the foundations are of concrete reinforced with steel rods to reduce to a minimum the risk of cracking walls—an occurrence not un-

common with the buildings of Knutsford. The contractors for the whole of the work are the Exors of Elijah Murphy of Moston, Manchester, and the contract price for the completed work is £5,640 of which less than £2,000 is actually in hand.

As there was no prospect of the storm abating it was decided to proceed with the arrangements as far as was possible. A procession was formed at the school, and headed by the Knutsford and Cross Town Band, proceeded to the site of the new church, where there was a large gathering, representative of the various religious and social organisations of the town, including members of the Urban Council, the British Legion and the R.A.O.B., the latter wearing their regalia.

The Bishop of the Diocese, the Right Rev. Hugh Singleton, was accompanied by the Very Rev. Canon Welch, of Altrincham, the Rev. Father Griffin, Moreton, and the Rev. Father Kinsella, of Middlewich.

His Lordship, after blessing the holy water and adding the salt in the form of a cross, proceeded to the site of the altar where he sprinkled the water and blessed it. On returning to the foundation stone on the left of the entrance he blessed it, and taking the silver trowel, presented by Mrs. Murphy, on behalf of the Exors of Elijah Murphy, marked the stone on each side with the sign of the cross. Beneath the foundation stone was placed a parchment record with the day and date, coin of the current year, and sundry religious emblems. The stone was then placed in position and holy water having been sprinkled upon it, the Bishop received a silver-mounted ebony mallet from Mrs. Holt, the wife of Mr. G.D. Holt, the hon. architect with which he declared the stone well and truly laid. Holy water was afterwards sprinkled upon the foundations, and the hymn "Come Holy Ghost, Creator come," was sung.

His Lordship, in a short address, said he would have wished to have said many things concerning the ceremony. and the purpose of the church of which he had laid the foundation stone. They had not the means to erect in that little place a grand and glorious Cathedral to the honour of God, but they were doing their best, and they were giving what they had to God for His Holy Temple. They must console themselves that it was about to be the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that their church would be the centre of spiritual blessing. It would be to them a place where they would assemble Sunday by Sunday to offer God that testimony of their recognition of His spiritual dominion; the testimony of their love and affection for Him in the offering of the Holy Mass. The church to them would also be a place for the reception of those means of sanctifying grace which were to put them in union with Jesus Christ and



Figure 4.3: The Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Right Rev. Hugh Singleton

the Holy Spirit or God, which was the source to them of all the spiritual blessing which they need in their passage through life.

It was to them the means and source of all spiritual blessings to their souls; no wonder, therefore, they would wish to build a grand temple to God, and decorate it, and make it as glorious as they could. They had the satisfaction of knowing that God would be there for them in their tabernacle, and that He would be to them a source of blessing and sanctification. That foundation stone was a figure of Jesus Christ, and they were told there was no other foundation of their spiritual life.

He would like to say a few words with regard to the contributions for the erection of the church. It was customary for those who came to the laying of the foundation stone of a new church to give evidence of the interest in their work, and the love and veneration of the Lord and church by placing their offerings on the stone. He appealed to them to be generous. He knew full well that their little congregation had been generous in the past, and absolutely united in their desire to testify to their recognition of God, while that same testimony had come from outside their own congregation, for which they were specially grateful. They had made a good beginning, and he, on his part, would do what he could to help them. He blessed them in their work, and may they love and serve God in life eternal.

Father Ryan said he had made a special appeal amongst the Catholic laity—many of his friends and many others who were not known to him, but all were known for their good work in the Catholic faith. As the result of that special appeal he asked his Lordship to place £80.4s.6d. on the foundation stone. Many of them had seen that he had opened a *Is. fund*, and that had so far realised £21.5s. which he also asked his Lordship to place on the stone. Many of them, perhaps, did not know that he had recently made tour of the diocese, and as the result of that appeal he had received £300. In that collection he had received *IOS.* in gold, and as he promised the donors that it would be placed on the foundation stone he asked his Lordship to place it there.

Following the singing of the hymn "Faith of our Fathers" the Bishop proceeded to the right corner of the entrance and laid the foundation of the war memorial stone, on which was inscribed: "Remember at the altar of God. Daniel Caulfield. Patrick Leech, Edward Lowe, Francis P. McGowan, Joseph Lowe, Peter Murphy, Edwin Connor, John Burns and John Leonard, men of this parish who gave their lives in the Great War. May they rest in peace."

Father Ryan explained that the stone was not intended to take the

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

place of the original memorial, which would be eventually removed from its present position to a place above the new stone.

Lieutenant-Colonel Dallas Waters, DSO. of Arley Hall, then placed a magnificent floral cross upon the stone in the name of the congregation of St, Vincent's, after which the band played "Land of hope and glory" and the National Anthem.

The total offertory placed on the foundation stone amounted to £200.

The diocese of Shrewsbury made a grant of £500 to the new church, and an appcal fund had been set up offering the 240,000 bricks required to build the new church and presbytery at a cost of 4d. per brick.

Work proceeded rapidly with the building programme and eventually the last baptism was performed in the old church in Queen Street, the register reading "10th April 1927 ... Leigh ... Reverend John James Ryan."

Sunday, 22nd May 1927 became yet another red-letter day in our history, when the second church Was opened and once again I am indebted to our local paper for their full report.

The Roman Catholics of Knutsford attained their ambition on Sunday, when the formal opening of their new church at the junction of Garden Road and Tatton Street took place and received the blessing of the Bishop of the Diocese, the Right Rev. Hugh Singleton, D.D.

The new building is the culmination of a great effort on the part of the parish priest (the Rev. Father J.J. Ryan) and his congregation, for, though small in numbers, they have worked with a zeal and enthusiasm, which has been no less remarkable than the substantial amount they have already raised of the which is required to complete the scheme.

The old church, which was condemned some years ago, had become extremely dilapidated, and inadequate for the needs or the parish, and Father Ryan with his characteristic energy and determination set about creating a fund for the building of a church on a new site.

Many difficulties had to be overcome, finance being the principal, but in a comparatively short time an excellent site was secured and the nucleus of a fund justified the preparation of plans by Mr. G.D. Holt. who throughout has given his services as architect.

Though not half the sum required has been raised. it was with confidence that the erection of the new church and presbytery was entrusted Messrs. Elijah Murphy and Sons. of Moston, Manchester. and in the early purl or October last year the work was sufficiently advanced to enable the Lord Bishop of the Diocese to lay the foundation stone. The



Figure 4.4: Houses built in Garden Road.

building proceeded with such rapidity that it was round possible to bring the church into use last week-end. though it will be some little time before the presbytery will be ready for occupation.

The new edifice is capable of seating about 250 people. and is splendidly lighted, heated and ventilated. The altar is of Bath stone and the reredos of English oak, while the sanctuary is panelled also in oak. The altar rails are a memorial to the Rev. Fr. Morrissy. a former parish priest. and were subscribed for by the congregation. The Stations of the Cross are a beautiful feature and are in high relief. They are the work of M. de Beule. of Ghent, Belgium, and each was given by members of the congregation. The baptismal font in English oak was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Leigh, in memory of their daughter Alice Mary. The silver lamp of the sanctuary and the handsome vestments used at the Mass were given by an anonymous donor, while the statues of the Sacred Heart and the Madonna and Child were presented by Mr. and Mrs. J. Gibbons. The schoolchildren gave a beautiful silver ciborium, while many other pieces of furniture and ornaments were given by members and friends of the congregation. Every effort has been made to do full justice to the interior of the church. with a very pleasing result.

On Thursday morning last week, the Bishop attended to solemnly bless the new building and to dedicate it to God in honour of St. Vincent de Paul, the titular patron saint of the parish. Afterwards he consecrated the altar and the first Mass was said by the Rev. Father Ryan, the parish priest.

There were about 25 clergy from the diocese present and they in the ceremonies.

On Sunday morning the formal opening took place when, in the presence of the Bishop, the Solemn High Mass was sung by Father Ryan as

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH



Figure 4.5: Part of the open field running from the back of the church up to the school bounded by the fence. part of which still remains



Figure 4.6: The second church - interior



Figure 4.7: This shot, taken just before demolition started, shows the centre aisle which had been cut through the benches.

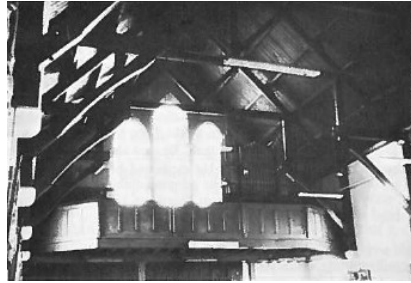


Figure 4.8: An early photograph of the interior soon after the church was showing the Original decor and the benches running the full width and oak reredos forming the back of the altar.

celebrant. He was assisted by the Rev. Father Jones of Runcorn, as Deacon, and Dr. J. Coleman, DD. of Northenden, as sub-deacon.

At the throne, the Bishop was assisted by Canon Welch of Altrincham and Canon Hazelhurst, D.D. of Birkenhead.

The church was filled to its capacity. and the congregation included Lord Egerton of Tatton, Mr. Charles R. Longe. his agent, members of the Urban Council, representatives or other denominations in the town and parishioners of neighbouring parishes.

The Lord Bishop was the preacher, and prior to commencing his sermon, as chief Pastor of the diocese, offered his congratulations to the Pastor and the people of the congregation on the completion and opening of their new Church. He thought he might designate it a beautiful church, suitable for its purpose as a temple of the living God. He thanked the Pastor for his labours in the cause and also the congregation who. at great sacrifice to themselves and much labour, had brought their work to completion. He begged that they might be blessed in their good work now and in the future.

He wished also on behalf of the Pastor and congregation to say they appreciated highly the kindly spirit and generous help which had been given by the townsfolk of the ancient town of Knutsford. It was a pleasing thing to find [hat their little congregation was sincerely esteemed and respected, and had the confidence of its fellow townsmen. There would still be needed sacrifice and work on the part or the congregation of that church, for there were many details still required doing. Not only so, but he had to impress upon them that there was still a debt on the Church. They did not like debt, and he hoped it would be the earnest endeavour

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

of the congregation to clear their Church from debt, so that they might have, in the highest and true sense, a house belonging to God.

In the evening, the sermon was preached by Canon Hazelhurst, Chancellor of the diocese, and solemn Benediction was given by the Lord Bishop.

Canon Hazelhurst preached from the text "Be you also as living stones, built up into a spiritual house" (St. Peter 2—3). He explained how man was raised to the super-natural state by grace and made the adopted child of God; united to God in the mystical body of Christ. He asked them, therefore, to realise and understand the privilege of their son-ship with God and to live up to the sanctity of that adoption in their lives.

The music and singing during the day was very ably rendered by the choir, under the conductorship of Mr. G. D. Holt.

The offertories amounted to more than £50.

The first Baptism in the new Church of St. Vincent in Tatton Street was performed on the actual day the church was officially opened by his Lordship the Bishop, and the register entry reads: "22nd May 1927—Anthony John Hooper Reverend John J. Ryan."

With a debt of some £4000 still outstanding, (an enormous sum in those days) fund raising events were still the order of the day, and one such event, a two-day Church Bazaar was held in the Town Hall in December 1927. It was opened on Friday afternoon, the first day by Brigadier-General E. Makins, D.S.O., M.P. and among the many people present were Mr. J. Buckley Taylor, Mrs. George Leigh, the Reverend GA. Payne, Mr. F. Wildgoose (Chairman of the Knutsford Council), Mr. J.P. Cox, Canon Morris (Hyde). Father Thompson (Sale), Father Ryan (Knutsford), Dr. Kearney (Latchford), Fathers Byrne (Middlewich), Griffin (Moreton), Cregan (Northwich), Russell (Sale), Corcoran (Hyde), Coughlan (Birkenhead) and D'Alton (Altrincham).

There were a number of black and white stalls symbolical of Old Knutsford, well stocked with a great variety of useful and fancy goods for which a ready sale was found on both days. The stalls included one from Macclesfield and one from Northwich. Before the sale of goods started, Mrs. Leigh handed to Father Ryan a cheque for £10, the result of a competition for a watch, and Mr. Taylor presented him with a cheque for £70 also the result of a competition. The Macclesfield friends handed up a donation of £100 in notes.

The second day, Saturday, the Bazaar was opened by Mrs. Taylor with Mr. Cox in the Chair. Mrs. Leigh proposed a vote of thanks to her and the 45 Chairman, and mentioned that Mr. Cox had done more than his bit for he had decorated the whole of the interior of the church and presbytery free of cost. He was a non-



Figure 4.9: Crucifix above the Porch

Catholic like many other generous benefactors present.

On each day the children sang a greeting song at the opening and at intervals performed Irish songs and dances. On both evenings the Knutsford and Cross Town Silver Band rendered selections. The proceeds of the two days' sale, including donations amounted to £510. Early recollections of the new Church return most clearly—the beautiful silver sanctuary lamp suspended from the roof, the truly magnificent but very stiff set of vestments, the chasuble heavily embroidered with gold thread, forming a veritable cloth of gold effect with its beautiful figure of the Sacred Heart in the centre, the small exquisite monstrance, and the cut-glass altar cruets. All were personal gifts to Father Ryan from anonymous donors.

The floor of the Church and Sanctuary was of a composition requiring much polishing and was many years later tiled over. A new and modern innovation for the Church in those days was the pipe organ up in the choir gallery. Its behaviour was rather eccentric, to say the least. At first the air was supplied to it by bellows pumped manually. The person carrying out this exacting task had to maintain a sufficient and correct supply of air by keeping a small weight attached to a piece of string, which was in turn attached to the bellows, between two points



Figure 4.10: Station of the Cross

marked by stamp edging. Depending upon the enthusiasm and exuberance of the organist, the efforts of the pumper ranged between frantic panic, and slow as he tried to keep up the flow of air. If he was over-zealous and pumped the bellows over capacity, the organ emitted a protesting, rasping-like bronchial noise, much to the disconcertment of everyone, especially the organist and choir. Later the organ was re-equipped with an electric pump.

Families in the parish were invited to pay for a Station of the Cross, at a cost of about to £10 to £15 each, and most of the Stations were paid for in this manner.

On the first Friday of each month, Communion was given every quarter of an hour up till the Mass at 8.30 which was said each morning during the week at that time.

Those early hours were to enable people to receive Communion on the first Friday and then catch an early train to work in Manchester or elsewhere.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society visited the Bucklow Institution or Workhouse once a month to meet and talk to the old and young inmates and the sick in the hospital, and the old men were most grateful for the odd pipe refill of "thick or thin twist" tobacco.

It was during these early years that the local authority requisitioned a slice of the land from the Church garden on the corner of Garden Road and Tatton Street, for road widening purposes, and paid the sum of £25.

The rest of the field behind the Church was used as a playing field for the school, until eventually it was sold to builders when the existing houses were built on it.

The Irish Boys who had come over to work on the many farms in the area surrounding Knutsford would walk into Knutsford on a Sunday, some from many miles out to attend the 11 o'clock Mass come rain or shine. After the Mass they would gather some 30 or so strong outside the Church in George Street, dressed smartly in their Sunday best and the air would be thick with the rich brogue from Mayo, Sligo and other counties as they views and news from home. On the Sunday nearest St. Patrick's Day, the Saint himself would have been proud to see the "Wearin' of the Green" so much in evidence.

On the 21st August 1929 Father Ryan's Silver Jubilee presentation and appreciation took place in the Town Hall after 25 years as a Priest, and an illuminated address and a cheque for £278 was presented by Mr. Wined on behalf of members of the congregation and other diocesan Catholics and non-Catholic friends in Knutsford.

A framed letter of congratulations from the schoolchildren was read by Master A. Harris and a cheque for £30, collected amongst the 40 children from the school, was presented by Miss A. Colgan. Mr. Payne from the Brook Street Unitarian Chapel was also present on the platform.

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

In December 1931 Colonel Dallas Waters of Arley Hall opened the new Parish Hall, which had been constructed out of the Old Queen Street Church and site, with a Sale of Work at which there was a good attendance. The capital debt was then and various efforts had already raised £280. With the proceeds of the Sale it was hoped to reduce the debt to In fact the net proceeds of the Sale of Work amounted to £26.18s.6d.

On the three days, 26th, 27th and 28th May 1932 the Feast of Corpus Christi was celebrated by a triduum of devotion. A record number for the Parish received Communion on Sunday morning, and in the evening there Was a procession in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. The service concluded with Benediction.

For six of his 14-year pastorate Father Ryan was an elected member of the Board of Guardians, served on the Bucklow Guardians Committee, also Knutsford and Wilmslow Administrative Sub-Committee for Education and the Committee of the Knutsford War Memorial Cottage Hospital. He was Chairman of the original Unemployed Relief Committee and subsequently of the United Services Relief Committee until it was merged with the British Legion in which he took an active interest. He was also a member of the General Committee for Relief of Unemployment and prompted several schemes for the welfare of Knutsford and its people of all denominations. He was a much respected and loved person by all in Knutsford. He left us in June 1934 for the much larger parish of Our Lady's, Latchford, and subsequently he was appointed to Stalybridge and then Stockport where he was made Canon, and thence to St. Mary of the Angels, Hooton where at the age of 73 he died on the 8th March 1953.



Father J. H. Campbell—June 1934—May 1935—was born in Liverpool in 1900, and studied first at St. Francis Xavier's College. Liverpool, and then at 47 Ushaw College, Durham. Ordained in 1925, He served as a curate and assistant Diocesan Treasurer at St. Joseph's, Birkenhead, then moved to St. Werburgh's, Birkenhead, from where he was appointed to Knutsford. In all too short a stay, he showed himself as a quiet, almost shy, and kindly man, often seen speeding around Knutsford on his bicycle carrying out his ministerial duties.

Father Campbell organised Father Ryan's testimonial on leaving the Parish, and in September of 1934 in the Clubroom Father Ryan was presented With a cheque for 257, a bookcase from the children, a desk chair and Cut glass rose bowl from the Choir and members of the Whist Club. Father Ryan expressed his most grateful thanks to all and especially the children who had not forgotten him. He also thanked Sister White of the Bucklow Union Institution for her many kind acts in the care of Roman Catholic patients.



Figure 4.11: The Statue of St. Therese of Lisieux was given the Parish in July 1934 by Dr. and Mrs. Doherty of Toft Hall, Knutsford, and was solemnly blessed and dedicated by Father Campbell before a large congregation, one Sunday evening. The service concluded with Benediction and veneration of a relic of St. Therese.

CHAPTER 4. THE SECOND CHURCH

Father Campbell asked the Bishop for a move because he found Knutsford a little quiet. He was appointed to Holy Cross, Birkenhead in 1935. A presentation from the parish was made to him in September of that year.



Father Peter J. Coughlan was the next Priest in the long line to be appointed to Knutsford. He was a native of Wallasey and an old boy of St. Francis Xavier, Liverpool. He received his theology training at Ushaw College, Durham and was ordained by Bishop Singleton at St. Joseph's, Seacombe in July 1927. He was a curate at Our Lady's, Birkenhead for eight years and appointed to Knutsford in May 1935. This young Priest, who was a close friend of Father Ryan, was another keen sportsman. He soon settled in and bought himself a small car. He had a rich baritone voice and helped to boost the singing on many occasions and he also sang at the odd concert. He and my late brother repainted the statues of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady.

The 75th anniversary of the beginning of the mission was celebrated together with the patronal feast on Sunday, 19th July 1936. Solemn High Mass was sung in the morning by Father Coughlan, assisted by Father Ryan, and E. F. Coughlan his brother. The Very Reverend Canon Griffin of Birkenhead was present in the sanctuary. Terry's Mass of St. Dominic was sung by the choir under the direction of Miss Sexton.

The parish still numbered only 270 and the debt owing on the church was about Parish life continued on an even keel, but the clouds of war were looming ahead.

1939 saw the start of World War II and later we witnessed the tragedy of the very young evacuees arriving in Knutsford from the neighbouring big cities and other parts of the country, including many from the Channel Islands. Amongst them were many Catholics. All families in Knutsford accepted them into their homes without hesitation, and nearby Moseley Hall was eventually used as a temporary school and accommodation.

Father Coughlan left Knutsford in 1941 when he was appointed as Rector to English Martyrs, Wallasey, where eventually he was made Canon, and died on 2 1st September, 1971.



Originally a member of the Franciscan Order, Father Maurice A. Stone was ordained in June 1917 and arrived at Knutsford from St. Joseph's, Upton in 1941.

This wartime period in our parish history saw many different facets of life in and around the town. The congregation became somewhat reduced with about



Figure 4.12: The annual procession in honour of Our Lady was also a feature of the spiritual life of the parish : Miss Joan Hodkinson leading. followed by Master Dennis Hennelly, Miss Vera Walsh, Miss Sexton the headmistress, and Miss Freda Murray. make their way to the front entrance of the second church.



Figure 4.13: Father Maurice Stone

50 members away serving in the forces, and in October 1943 a Bring and Buy Sale was held in the school to buy Christmas gifts for such members, and raised £25.

Knutsford and its surrounding areas during those times was used as a major staging post for the American troops before they moved south. Many of them being Catholics helped to swell the congregation. There were also the Italian and German prisoners of war, who were marched under guard to attend Mass. At Christmas time they rendered "Silent Night" most movingly in their native tongue.

This is perhaps the appropriate place, lest we forget, to remember the former members of the school and the Parish who lost their lives in World War II: James Walsh, Owen Traynor, Albert Connor, George Leech, and Arthur Brooks, and all other persons from Knutsford and its surrounding areas. May they all rest in peace.

Father Stone left Knutsford in 1944, eventually being made Canon, and he died at the venerable age of 89 on the 8th January 1984. Fond memories of the parish must have remained with him, for he bequeathed the sum of £300 from his estate to St. Vincent's Church, Knutsford.



Figure 4.14: Father John Gildea



Our next wartime Priest also came from St. Joseph's, Upton. Father William C. Corcoran was appointed to Knutsford in 1944. He was a member of the Cistercian Monastery at Mount Melleray in Ireland, and had been ordained in 1910. He overworked at Melleray during the 1919 'flu epidemic and then worked in parishes in the south of England before joining the Shrewsbury diocese in 1925 or thereabouts. He remained in Knutsford until 1948. During this period Miss Rebbitt took over the position and was joined by Mr. John O'Gorman.

After leaving Knutsford Father Corcoran moved to Acton Burnell, where he remained until his retirement to Lichfield where he died on Christmas Eve 1967.



Next came Father John Gildea for a period of three years from 1948. Born in 1888 he eventually became a Marist Brother, where he remained for 30 years, being Superior at Athlone, Wolverhampton and Dumfries. He was Parish Priest at Acton Burnell before exchanging parishes with Father Corcoran.

In 1949 the old church in Queen Street, together with the Presbytery, was sold to the Knutsford Amateur Dramatic Society, and renamed "The Little Theatre".



Figure 4.15: Members of the Parish carrying the statue of Our Lady in the May Procession.

The sale of this property relieved the parish of debt. The Catholic population, meanwhile, had remained fairly static. The little school, however, still required more space, and after the sale of the old church new premises were also required for parochial affairs. An ex-American Army hut was purchased from the camp site in Toft Park for about £25 and re-erected by a small group of parishioners on the plot of land on the right hand side of the Old school in Queen Street.

The annual May processions took place with one service being conducted by a visiting Priest, Father Kelly, along with Father Gildea.

October 1951 saw the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Roman Catholic establishment in England, with the Catholic community of Knutsford looking back on a century of progress. Father Gildea pointed out that 100 years ago the Diocese of Shrewsbury covered Shropshire, Cheshire and North Wales, with only 33 Priests. Now the Diocese covered only Cheshire and Shropshire, with 218 Priests.

Father Gildea's Pastorate in Knutsford ended in 1951 and he died on the 27th June 1955.



Father Michael Barry had a much longer pastorate than his two predecessors.

He was ordained on Passion Sunday, 1st April 1933, at Lisbon, by the Papa] Nuncio, and was appointed to Knutsford from Altrincham in 1951.

In March 1954 Solemn Requiem Mass was said by Bishop Dr. John Murphy of Shrewsbury on the death of a former Rector of the Parish Canon Kirby which was attended by 40 Priests from all over the Diocese.

The little school was all too small, and temporary accommodation was sought at the old Winstanley House at the junction of Northwich and Stanley Roads, now a sheltered homes complex.

In 1958 a Christmas Fair was held and was attended by the Lord Mayor of Manchester.

The annual May procession in May 1960 took a new and longer route and was some 100 yards long, proceeding from Winstanley House along Northwich Road and Tatton Street to the Church. The lawn on each side of the front path of the church was sanded with the words "Ave Maria, Gratia Plena", by the late Mr. J. Daniel and Mr. J. O'Gorman, work which drew much favourable comment from onlookers.

Father Barry departed in the early part of 1961 to become Parish Priest of St. Hilda's, Northenden, and subsequently died on the 4th April, 1975.

Now we start to approach more familiar ground with the arrival in Knutsford in February 1961 from St. Winifred's, Sandbach of Father James Joseph Matthews who was ordained on the 6th April 1935. He was a teacher of English Literature and Higher Mathematics, and was also regarded as an authority on finance, classics, sport and current affairs. He studied at Cotton College, Staffordshire, and then at the English College, Lisbon. He became curate at St. Joseph's, Sale and from there he went to St. Paul's, Hyde. He became Parish Priest at Greasby, succeeding there a former fellow student at Lisbon, the Reverend John A. Murphy who was later to be consecrated Bishop of Shrewsbury. Father Matthews was subsequently appointed to Sandbach, and then to Knutsford.

Since the end of the War and especially over the last two decades the population of Knutsford and its surrounding areas rose quite sharply due to the new housing estates being built. There was also the large estate to accommodate the overspill of people from the Manchester area. In 1962 the Catholic population of Knutsford and its neighbourhood had reached 700 with 115 school children.

It is interesting to note that Christopher John Walsh, born in Knutsford in 1940, was ordained Priest at Shrewsbury Cathedral in 1965. The son of Mrs. M. Walsh, and the late Mr. P. Walsh, former parishioners of St. Vincent's, Knutsford, he is, up to the time of completion of this history the only boy from the Parish who has been called to the Priesthood.

September 1966 was the occasion when a special Mass was said by Father Matthews celebrating 100 years of St. Vincent's Church in Knutsford, and in



Figure 4.16: In August 1961 the magnificent Grotto to Our Lady was built in the Gardens of the Church.



Figure 4.17: St. Vincents School - Exterior (1)

November the Union of Catholic Mothers held a Christmas Fair at Winstanley House and raised the sum of £180. The following year, in December, the sum of £250 was handed to Father Matthews, again raised by the Union of Catholic Mothers and ladies during the year.

1967 was a good year for Catholic education facilities in Knutsford, with the needs of the parish and the requirements of the New Education Act being met by the opening of the new school in Manor Park South at a cost of about £50,000. Mr. Ron McCormick was appointed Headmaster.

Father Matthews had arrived in Knutsford to find the old school buildings inadequate and the Church in need of repair. After nearly eight years service he 54 left the parish in June 1968 to live in retirement in Colwyn Bay. He was presented with a cheque for ISO guineas and a coffee percolator in the main hall of the new Catholic school for which he was responsible. A large number of people were present and wished his successor, Father Kelly from Crewe, every success. Father Matthews said "you have seen Parish Priests come and go, and no doubt you will see them come and go in the future, but the Parish will go on for ever".



Father Wilfrid Kelly, Ph.D., S.T.L was appointed to Knutsford in June 1968



Figure 4.18: St. Vincents School - Exterior (2)

from St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Crewe. He was born in Cheadle and educated at St. Bedes's and the English College in Rome, and ordained in Rome on 1st November 1932, He started the League for God, which distributed free religious leaflets, was a broadcaster, and was editor of a three-volume edition of the *Liber Ruber* of the English College, Rome. Translated, "The Red Book", which originated in early Reformation times, it is a record of all students from that time to the present who have been educated at the English College in Rome. and who were subsequently ordained in Rome.

This photograph shows a feature of and during Father Kelly's pastorate—the candlelit Christmas services, with hundreds of candles flickering And guttering at Midnight Mass, in every conceivable The numerous candlesticks required were fashioned out of sundry and surprising items purchased from the local hardware stores. It was a most beautiful and edifying sight to see the church thus illuminated. which attracted people from various places and many walks of life. I think a sight of relief always went up when the final hymn had been sung and the candles were extinguished without mishap.

The significance of the title is born out of the fact that many of the Priests recorded in its earlier pages were appointed to this country and elsewhere, and a number of them suffered martyrdom.

A man of many talents, Father Kelly's skill as an artist is also shown in the Stations of the Cross at St. Bedes's and the Monstrance at Hoylake Church.

The advent of Vatican II saw the new liturgy in English and the Priest facing the congregation. This meant the disappearance from the church pews of those

much treasured traditional Prayer and Hymn books such as The Manual of Prayer, Garden of the Soul. Key of Heaven and the Westminster Hymnal which had graced our Catholic lives for so many decades. Many of the old parishioners still feel the absence of the Latin Mass, but generally speaking the transition took place smoothly without any major hiccups and was accepted by everyone.

A number of the male parishioners, reinforced by the addition of two of our non-Catholic friends, undertook the formidable task of decorating the whole of the interior of the church, during the latter and early part of 1978/9.

Father Kelly, who had been at Knutsford for over 12 years, had suffered from ill-health at various times and few people realised that when he arrived in Knutsford his eyes had been affected by glaucoma. He retired to Merseyside in December 1980 and this also meant the departure of Miss Shelagh Moreland, his most loyal and devoted housekeeper and help.

Father Kelly left behind an impression of kindness and concern, particularly for the handicapped children from the Margaret Barclay School, Mobberley. He was popular with people of all denominations.

So concludes this chapter on the second Church.



The Third Church and Conclusion

FATHER Joseph Cahill took up his appointment to St. Vincent's, Knutsford just two weeks before Christmas Eve 1980. He was born in Cullahill. Co. Laois, Ireland and educated at St. Kiernan's College. Kilkenny and ordained at St. Mary's Cathedral Kilkenny on the 8th June 1952. It is interesting to note that he has two sisters who are both Nuns.

His first appointment after ordination was to St. Peter's. Wythenshawe as Curate, then to Saints Peter and Paul at New Brighton. and then to St. Laurence's, Birkenhead, from where he took up his duties of Parish Priest at All Saints, Ashton on Mersey in September 1965. Here he helped to complete the building of the new Church and School.

After conducting the Christmas services, Father Cahill quickly settled down to his first year as Parish Priest. His presence and leadership soon became felt by everyone in the parish. with the result that we all moved up a couple of gears without being aware of it. He soon revealed a penchant (tongue in cheek. of course) on certain Sunday mornings to commiserate with the Anglo Saxons in the congregation after our decline in the international field of sport and the (temporary) ascendancy of the Celtic and French packs, and I looked somewhat in vain through the stop press in the Sunday Bulletin for the Rugby results at these times as we Anglos sat and listened with bowed heads as if it were in penance, although not being a devotee of the irregular shaped-ball. I felt somewhat absolved.

One might have reasonably assumed that over 100 years effort, which included two churches and two schools, would have entitled the parish to look forward to a long period of consolidation and steady growth without further building burdens, but this was not to be for by the early 1950s ground subsidence had caused the East Gable of the Church to move downwards fracturing the structure with consequent twisting of the roof and the windows. The underpinning of the North East corner of the Church in 1956/57 failed to prevent the movement and the further deterioration of the building.

This situation had been developing over a number of decades, and several reasons and opinions were put forward by way of explanation. The main theory offered and advanced by local sages was brine production of the early 1900s by neighbouring industry with the establishing of wells and extraction of brine, with the brine streams or runs as they were then known extending into neighbouring territory for many miles.



Figure 5.1: Father Joseph Cahill

Father Cahill, realising prompt and immediate action had to be taken, was faced with two alternatives: first, to find and purchase a completely new site on which to build a new Church and Presbytery; or second, to demolish the second Church and Presbytery and rebuild on the same site after taking appropriate remedial action to the sub-soil. A temporary home to say and hear the Mass in would be needed, and our good friends the Methodists on hearing of our dilemma even offered to lend us their Church in a truly ecumenical gesture. Either of the two previous proposals would have proved most costly, for the Presbytery had been extensively repaired.

In the event, however, and after seeking and taking much professional advice, sample borings were made in a number of positions around the present site down to a considerable depth. These proved on analysis that it would be both feasible and possible to build a new Church there without any fear of future subsidence, which I suppose scotches all the opinions and tales of senior native Knutsford citizens... but try convincing them of this!

Armed with this knowledge and advice, and following the Engineer's Report in 1981 the decision of the Bishop and his Administration Board was that a new Church should be built. After much thought, consultation and discussion it was decided that an octagonal Church should be built on what had been the front garden of the second church, with eventually a complex of sacristy and the usual offices being built to link up the new Church with the front of the old presbytery.

The church was to be built to seat a congregation of 300, and there would be no traditional altar rail, the objective being to have a complete community church in line with modern liturgical thought.

This scheme also offered the decided advantage of still being able to use the

CHAPTER 5. THE THIRD CHURCH AND CONCLUSION

second Church for services in the normal manner until the near completion of the new one, with the minimum of discomfort and inconvenience to everyone, except of course Father Cahill and his housekeeper Miss Margaret Langdon who had accompanied him from All Saints.

In the meantime, for obvious safety reasons and regulations, the second Church was braced with flexible steel rods along its length outside and across its width inside to give temporary support to the structure until it was due to be demolished. Then a car park and forecourt would take the place of the second Church.

The first year of Father Cahill's pastorate quickly passed. A cheque for over £300, representing a collection taken in the parish, was sent to Father Kelly with all good wishes to mark his retirement. Ill health prevented him from being able to attend a personal presentation, and his letter of thanks was received by Father Cahill shortly afterwards and communicated to the Parish.

As we entered the year 1982 a new spirit was noticeable amongst the Parish, as was probably the same in every single Parish throughout England, Scotland and Wales. 1982 will go down in Catholic History as perhaps the most momentous and unforgettable year for all Catholics—the year of the visit to this country of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

On Sunday, 30th May 1982 over 80 Parishioners assembled in the evening at the Church gates and piled aboard a bus. Somehow we all squeezed in and the bus made the journey to its allocated parking place at the end of the motorway some distance from Heaton Park just north of Manchester. From there in safari-like fashion we all wended our way to the Park, and our allotted area which though some distance away, was right in front of the vast newly- 59 erected High Altar. Fortunately it was a fine and dry night and not too cold. Everyone settled down to keep the overnight vigil as best they could.

The expected attendance had been put at one million, and great precautions had been taken to deal with this vast throng, but in the event the final attendance was estimated at just a quarter of that figure.

Morning dawned and the helicopter bearing the Pope whirled over the multitude who were all craning their heads skywards. The Holy Father arrived at about 8 a.m. in His Popemobile, and ascended the steps to the High Altar to say Mass and to ordain a number of young men into the Priesthood.

As we made our way back across the Park to our bus, and homeward bound, a trifle weary in body but undaunted in spirit, everyone reflected on this never-to-be-forgotten happening, sensing that we had been privileged to witness at first hand a unique and historic occasion. We were filled with the everlasting impression of the serenity and humility of Pope John Paul II giving his final blessing to all sides as his Popemobile moved slowly away amongst his vast flock.

After this most remarkable and moving experience it was back to our own



Figure 5.2: Pope John Paul II

Parish affairs. An event that must not go unrecorded was celebrated in June 1982 with the completion by Father Cahill of 30 years in the Priesthood. The occasion was recognised in the School room at Manor Park South with a presentation of a Video Recorder which had been contributed to by all members of the Parish.

Came the day in September 1982 when with a touch of sadness I watched the arrival of the contractors with their excavators to start clearing away the front garden of the second church in preparation for the foundations of the proposed new church which were to be established down to a depth of some 8 to 10 feet.

During the ensuing weeks massive injections of reinforced concrete formed the 8 main foundation supports, which were then linked together by equally reinforced beams of concrete and steel rods and mesh constructed in-situ to form the main perimeter of the church foundations. The whole of the centre enclosed by this perimeter received layer after layer of hard core and aggregate rolled and interleaved with plastic membranes, and finally, the whole foundation was topped off with a further mixture of steel mesh and concrete in order to bind it together rather like icing a cake. The thought did occur to me at the time upon this rock .

..

The 11th December 1982 saw another milestone in our long history, in what was turning out to be a most memorable year, when His Lordship Bishop Gray of Shrewsbury laid the Foundation Stone of the third new Catholic Church of St. Vincent de Paul in Knutsford.

The congregation gathered in the old Church for Mass and then proceeded to



Figure 5.3: Photograph by permission of Knutsford Guardian

the site of the new Church for the ceremony. despite the threatening weather. His Lordship the Bishop was assisted during the Ceremonies by the Right Reverend John Brewer, Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury, Monsignor Lightbound, Father Cahill and a number of Priests from various surrounding 60 Photograph by permission of the Knutsford Guardian. parishes in the Diocese. One of the children from St. Vincent's School handed the Bishop a plastic bag containing a number of items such as coins and religious objects, etc.. representative of the year 1982, which was duly deposited beneath and before the Stone was laid.

The general construction was governed by the site; the need to keep within the budget figure, and a conscious determination to have a building relatively easy 10 heat and to maintain. It was also necessary to be sensitive to the requirements needed in design and lay-out for up-to-date liturgical celebration.

The Overall Contractors for building the third new church was Messrs. J. Yearsley & Sons of St. Helens, a Catholic family with members amongst Our own parishioners. The Architect was Mr. Edmondson of Ellis/Williams Partnership—Consulting Engineer Mr. Broxton of Ove Arup Partnership, and Quantity Surveyors. Flood & Wilson. all these firms being from Manchester. John Selby & Son of our own Parish installed the Heating system, and J. Priestnall & Sons were responsible for the lighting and electrical installation. Many Other trades and specialists were involved whose Combined efforts were eventually to produce a beautiful building of which we and the community in general are proud.

The overall figure of the cost of the new Church was contracted at a staggering £200,000. A Brick Fund had already been started to help produce 61 much



Figure 5.4: New Church Exterior - with old church still standing

needed revenue on a regular basis in order to help chip away at this astronomical figure, and parochial efforts had also been playing their part. Pride of place must surely go to a magnificent Christmas Fair held in the School in November 1982 when the truly astounding and remarkable sum of £2,500 was raised, a record if ever beyond all expectations. Father Cahill was able to top this up with £500 judiciously saved from housekeeping funds and sent a for £3,000 to the Diocesan Treasurer on account of the New Church Building Fund.

Father Cahill's second Christmas in Knutsford duly passed, and I watched the new building grow and take shape, establishing quite a rapport with all the workmen on the site, especially the Foreman Mr. John Duffy. They were all most kind and friendly, and willing to answer my many questions. Eventually the day arrived when the new church stood almost structurally complete alongside its illustrious predecessor and the 56-year life span of the second church was fast drawing to a close. It had to be emptied of all its adornments ready for demolition men to move in. A band of devoted parishioners swiftly removed many items to the safety of the old school in Queen Street which over the past months had been licked into shape as a future Parish Hall by Mr. Brehany, Mr. Houldsworth and Mr. Slater, with not a little help from a certain Parish Priest, who donned Overalls, and fairly in the building work, revealing what would certainly have

CHAPTER 5. THE THIRD CHURCH AND CONCLUSION

been his occupation but for the Grace of God in calling him to his vocation. Most of the old church benches had been sold off at about £20 each, and one or two found their way to a certain local hostelry.

The last Baptism was performed in the second church on 20th March 1983, the entry in the Register reading: "Anthony Robert Lewis ... Reverend Joseph Cahill".

On Sunday, 1st May 1983 Father Cahill offered up evening Mass in the second church for all those who worked to provide it, used it, prayed and honoured God there, were baptised and married there, for all priests and people, to thank God for them and to ask His blessing for the work in progress. The last Mass was a Requiem on 5th May 1983 for Mr. Sydney Pugh.

Sunday, May 8th 1983 saw the school in Manor Park South being used as a temporary church for Mass, and the Parishioners soon adapted themselves to this new Sunday routine.

The demolition squad supervised by Mr. Gordon Bishop, moved in with their bulldozers on Friday, 6th May and with almost surgical and clinical precision carried out their task of demolishing the old or second Church. By Saturday, 14th May, 1983 with the church almost reduced to rubble, the old Foundation and Memorial Stones were carefully removed. Beneath the Foundation Stone were the items placed there on the Laying of the Stone—a small sealed bottle containing a Silver Sixpenny piece dated 1926 and a piece of Parchment with the event written and recorded on it. Part of the writing has faded badly, but it reads as follows:

"Hunc lapidem praeclarum in lauda meritissima ecclesiae in honorem St. Vincentii, Benedixit et posuit reverendissimus D.D. Hugo Singleton Epus. Salopiensis die nona Octobris 1926."

"This splendid Stone in honour of St. Vincent and in greatly deserved praise of the Congregation Blessed and laid down by the Right Reverend Hugh Singleton D.D. Lord Bishop of Shrewsbury, on the Ninth day of October 1926."

A number of religious emblems were said to have been laid under the Stone, but a careful search revealed none, and they obviously must have disintegrated with the passing of the last 57 years,

The crucifix which was part of the War Memorial and which had graced the front of the first and second churches for over 60 years, was also carefully removed for re-erection on some suitable wall of the new Church, but a hidden crack, no doubt caused by stress over the years, resulted in its fracturing and breaking. However all is well and with suitable remedial action the cross, duly

repaired, will eventually take its place on the exterior wall of the new Church facing Garden Road.

In July 1983 a cheque for made up mostly from the covenant scheme was sent off to the Diocese to remove another considerable slice from our heavy debt on the third new Church.

Sunday, 24th July 1983 was the last occasion when the School was used as a temporary Church for the celebration of the Mass.

The building work on the new Church had been dogged by bad weather which had made conditions pretty appalling during the initial winter period, but after 11 months of slog and hard work and one month ahead of schedule, Father Cahill celebrated the First Mass in the third new Church on Wednesday, 27th July 1983. The Mass was at 7.30 p.m. and was a family one for Parishioners and friends, and more than 500 people were present. Assisting Father Cahill at the Mass were Monsignor Lightbound of Wilmslow, Dean Davenport of Congleton, Father Joyce of Macclesfield and Father W. Jukka of Poynton.

There was a beautiful arrangement of Rowers around the altar by Mrs. Boyce. This high standard of floral decoration by the ladies of the Parish, carried on from the second church, has been the hallmark of their efforts and devotion ever since.

The Mass was offered up for all who had worked to make the building possible, Engineers, Architect and Builders. Also for all Parishioners and Priests of the past on whose efforts and faith the parish had grown and developed, for the present Community of Faith in the Parish of St. Vincent de Paul without whose generosity and sturdy Faith the project would hardly have happened, and the gentle and patient neighbours who survived the inevitable dust, noise and heavy traffic of the building work without complaining.

Having completed the building of the new Church and linking it up with the sacristy complex to the old the end of the which had been connected to the old church was sealed off with matching bricks. With the completion of the garage, the new Church and complex stood proud and erect. It is a striking testimony to the skilful marriage of old and new and one might conclude that it was always there. Within a further short space of time the new Car Park had been leveled and laid with tarmacadam.

Tuesday, 27th September 1983 was the Feast Day of our Patron St. Vincent de Paul and a truly memorable day in our parish history when the third new church to be built in Knutsford during a span of 117 years was officially opened and blessed by the Right Reverend Joseph Gray, Bishop of Shrewsbury in the presence of a massed congregation which included local Civic Leaders and representatives of other denominations and organisations in and around Knutsford. Present also were many of the men who had helped to design and build the new Church. More than 30 Priests joined Bishop Gray and the Right Reverend John



Figure 5.5: New Church Exterior - with old church demolished



Figure 5.6: New Church Exterior - car park



Figure 5.7: New Church Exterior - from Tatton Street

Brewer, Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury, together with Monsignor Lightbound and Canon Burgon, the dedication service where the choir as always were in good voice, ably directed by Mrs. F. Sharkey.

At the outset of the service the keys of the building were accepted by the Bishop from the Architect and Contractor, and during the Mass of Dedication the Bishop anointed the Altar Stone and blessed each wall where candles were placed and lighted. During his address to the congregation he expressed the view that the task of building the church had been a formidable one, and Father Cahill and his parishioners had set about the task with faith and trust.

The Mass concluded with the Blessed Sacrament being placed in the Tabernacle in the Chapel, and the congregation received the Bishop's blessing before the procession of Bishops and Clergy made their exit down the centre aisle. Afterwards the principal guests and many of the congregation attended a reception at St. Vincent's School in Manor Park South.

As the year 1983 drew to a close the statues of Our Lady and St. Bernadette, removed from the old grotto, took up their rightful prominent places outside the entrance to the church, and on Christmas Eve of that year the first Midnight Mass was celebrated in the new church.

The 1983 Christmas Fair produced the bumper sum of over £2000, and during



Figure 5.8: New Church Interior - Photograph by permission of the Knutsford Guardian

the first few months of 1984 parochial affairs achieved a new high peak. The debt on the new church had been reduced by the remarkable sum of £35,000 in three short years.

As we moved along into 1984, spiritual matters were rightly taking a lead. A further step along the Ecumenical road was taken with a service held at St. John's Parish Church to mark the beginning of a week of prayer for Christian Unity, all denominations taking part. A National Day of Prayer for Peace was observed by the ladies of the parish along with the other denominations at a service held in the new church. Candidates were prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation later in the year, and the great Feast of the Risen Christ was celebrated at the first Easter in the new church.

Already the year has slipped by. Many events have taken place, including a fortnight's Mission conducted by Father Daniel appropriately of the Passionist Order and the appointment of a number of parishioners as Eucharistic Ministers. The first anniversary of the opening of the new church which stands as a monument and memorial to all priests and people connected with the establishing of our mission, and their many unmentioned supplies; and to all members of the Parish of St. Vincent de Paul, Knutsford, past and present, for their sacrifices and endeavours over the past 145 years.

The vigorous leadership and dedication of our present Parish Priest, Father Joseph Cahill inspired the Parish and set it on the right path. *Ad multos annos nobiscum.*

Future priests and generations, inspired by their predecessors, will make great efforts to carry on in the same devoted manner to ensure that our parish heritage will be kept in safe, sure and secure hands.

To complete our Parish Album we go round the New Church on a photographic conducted tour. Our first photograph is taken with a wide-angle lens.

The next three pictures have been taken with a fisheye lens, which though distorting, reveal the graceful symmetry of the building. The first of these, taken from just inside the inner porch doors, shows seven or the eight walls with their brick facing, and the main windows with the natural light controlled by vertical louvres. All the windows are tinted, giving a mellow and peaceful hue around the church. The main body of the church is covered with carpet squares, and the High Altar dais and steps which continue on the same level to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel are fitted with rich rust-coloured carpet extending to decorate the wall behind the Tabernacle in the Chapel.

The second photograph is a complementary reverse of the first one, taken from the altar steps showing the entrance and porch. The foundation stone is set in the interior back wall of the church, on the right-hand side of the inner porch doors in this shot. Matching it on the opposite side of the door is a plaque set in



Figure 5.9: The future of the Parish



Figure 5.10: Church interior - 1



Figure 5.11: Church interior - 3

the wall reading:

This plaque was blessed by
POPE JOHN PAUL II
for the new church of
St. Vincent de Paul, Knutsford
on the occasion of his visit to Manchester
May 31st 1982

The Confessional is situated just inside the inner doors of the side-entrance to the church, and the complex linking the church to the Presbytery houses the Priest's Sacristy, a working sacristy and the usual offices.

The third and most spectacular photograph captures the splendid geometrical pattern and network of steel beams. These, buttressed from the eight main foundation points, fall at a graceful angle to a centre locking ring, becoming self-supporting, and thus support the whole roof of the church.

We now turn to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which radiates spiritual warmth and beauty. Parishioners will recognize the Tabernacle from the old church. The firm Ormsby of Scarisbrick, Lancashire designed and constructed the Altar, and the woodwork behind the High Altar. They also provided the Church benches and kneelers for a congregation of 300—the Catholic population of Knutsford and District is now about 1000.



Figure 5.12: Church interior - 4

Next, the High Altar, paid for by the Parish in memory of their deceased relatives and friends, commands the central position, and is Clad With veined white marble quarried in Italy. This specialised work was carried out by Quiligotti of Manchester.

On the wall behind and above the High Altar is the large Cross with the figure of the Risen Christ, which was presented to the Church and Parish by the Catenian Circle. On either side of the Altar are the statues of Our Lady which was presented by the St. Vincent's Ladies' Association, and of St. Joseph which was presented by a private donor.

Our next photograph shows the 14th Station of the Cross, and part of one of the two stained glass windows which were supplied and fitted by Lightfoots of Manchester. The Stations were designed and sculptured by Carrara of Liverpool.

To James Anthony Stapleton fell the honour of receiving the first baptism in the new church on 31st July 1983, performed by our Parish Priest, Father Joseph Cahill. He had arrived a month too early to be baptised in the new Baptismal font which was designed and made by Mr. David Hensler, Head of the Fine Arts Department, Manchester Polytechnic. The motif on the front of the font is made up from 3 small stones which Father Cahill had gathered on a recent visit to the Holy Land The three stones, top, left and bottom are from Jerusalem, the Banks

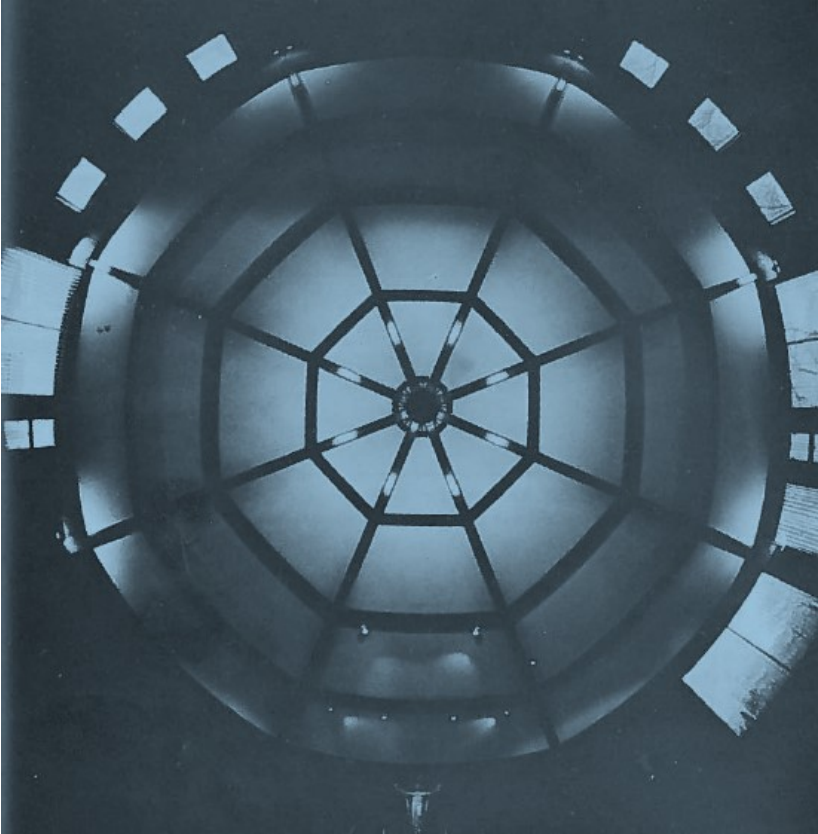


Figure 5.13: Church roof - 1

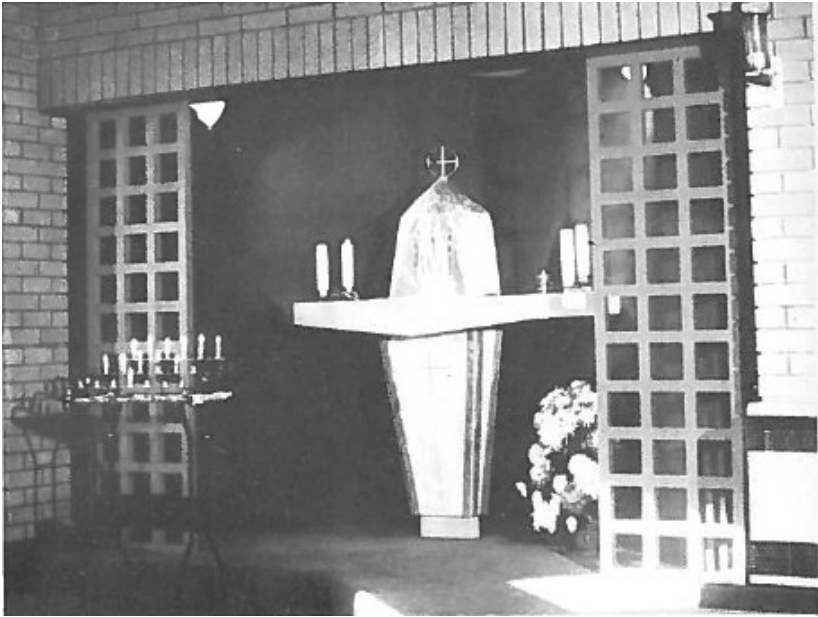


Figure 5.14: Blessed Sacrament Chapel



Figure 5.15: High Altar



Figure 5.16: 14th Station of the Cross

of the Jordan and Galilee in that order.

Father Cahill also expresses the view that whilst reading this narrative should help one to "feel" something of the history of the parish, a visit to the new Church should help One to "feel" something of salvation history, and I welcome his interpretation:

"The Books of the Old Testament" says the Vatican Council LG55 "recount the period of salvation history during which the coming of Christ into the world was slowly prepared for. These earliest documents, as they are read in the Church, and understood in the light of a further and full revelation, bring the figure of the woman, the Mother of the into a gradually sharper focus." The Biblical focus on the Mother of the Redeemer and her husband St. Joseph is underlined in the Church by the statues of both flanking the Sanctuary.

With the Cross and the steps leading to it not far away, the figure of the Risen Christ dominates the Church calling to mind "the paschal mystery of His Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and glorious Ascension." Lit. I 5.

The Church, however, is more than a building equipped with some "visual aids" to Faith, because as the Council underlined again "At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, Our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the



Figure 5.17: Baptismal Font

Cross throughout the centuries, until He should come again.” Lit. 7.

It is through this gift and the gift of the sacraments that the entire liturgical life of the church revolves.

Using the centres of celebration which are so obvious in the layout of the Sanctuary, the priest will preside from the **CHAIR** where “he gathers God’s family together as a brotherhood of living unity.”

From the **LECTERN** the treasures of the Bible are opened up more lavishly and finally moving to the **ALTAR** “the sacrifice of the Cross is made present” and the celebrating people grow together in unity by being united with His Body and Blood and continually grow in holiness by active, conscious and fruitful participation in the Eucharistic Mystery.” Gen. Inst. 5.

Linked to the Sanctuary and, as it were, flowing from it, is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel for personal prayer and public devotion to Our Lord present in this Sacrament.

A comment very often made when visitors come to See the Church is that it is a very solid building with a distinctive style. Father Cahill adds “While that applies to the building composed of bricks, etc., I think it also aptly describes the worshipping community within—a solid people with style—the real building ’that has the and Prophets for its foundation and Christ Jesus Himself as the chief

CHAPTER 5. THE THIRD CHURCH AND CONCLUSION

corner stone'. Ephesians 2:20."

CHAPTER 5. THE THIRD CHURCH AND CONCLUSION

A list in chronological order of all 21 Parish Priests who have been in residence or part-residence at the Roman Catholic Mission of St. Vincent de Paul, Knutsford, and the years of their respective pastorates:

Table 5.1: Parish Priests of St. Vincent de Paul, Knutsford

1861-1865	Father HUGH LYNCH
1865-1867	Fathers HENRY ALCOCK and DANIEL S. CASEY
1867-1876	Father DANIEL S. CASEY
1876-1879	Father PATRICK A. O'REILLY
1879-1900	Father ROBERT ROBERTS MAURICE
1900-1906	Father JOHN HENRY ROCHE
1906-1909	Father THOMAS MULLINS
1909-1917	Father ALBERT MORRISSY
1917-1920	Father EDWARD D. KIRBY
1920-1934	Father JOHN JAMES RYAN
1934-1935	Father J. H. CAMPBELL
1935-1941	Father PETER J. COUGHLAN
1941-1944	Father MAURICE A. STONE
1944-1948	Father WILLIAM C. CORCORAN
1948-1951	Father JOHN GILDEA
1951-1961	Father MICHAEL BARRY
1961-1968	Father JAMES JOSEPH MATTHEWS
1968-1980	Father WILFRID KELLY
1980-2001	Father JOSEPH CAHILL
2001-2020	Father JOHN JOYCE
2020-	Father DAVID LONG

Author's Note

THIS book is most unlikely to merit a place in the Bodleian Library as a classic reference or guide to future students, but I have endeavoured to portray with the material and information at my disposal as accurately and comprehensively as possible the History of our Parish.

From the time I set up camp in our local Guardian office to the time that I put down my pen in conclusion, I have met with nothing but kindness and the desire to help, and I am most grateful to all concerned for the information, material, photographs and help received along the way.

Any errors and omissions are mine, but I am sure any reader will appreciate that these are due, perhaps, to fragmentary and contradictory information or lack of it, or more than likely my own lack of experience in such matters.

Acknowledgements

For all the valuable information and assistance I have received :

The Right Reverend John Brewer, Bishop of Lancaster. The Diocese of Shrewsbury.

The Very Reverend Canon Burgon, St. Vincent's, Altrincham.

Father J. Cahill, St. Vincent's, Knutsford.

Father C. Dwyer, St. Alban's, Macclesfield.

Father E. M. Abbot, M.A., St. John the Baptist, Timperley.

Father Woods, St. Paul's, Hyde.

Father P. Dennison, St. Chad's, Birmingham. Upholland Library.

Mrs. Joan Leach, Historical & Archaeological Society, Knutsford.

The Knutsford Guardian Office.

The Tablet.

Manchester Central Library, and Libraries of Cheshire and Lancashire.

Members of the Parish and Citizens of Knutsford.

My two researchers at the British Newspaper Library, London.

Various Commercial Directories of the era.

My Family.

The Mansell Collection, London, for the print on the cover.

Kennedy McCreddie, L.R.P.S., of Hale, for interior photographs of the New Church.

Bibliography

- Monks of Chester, R.V.H. Bume, published 1962. SPCK, Holy Trinity Church.
Marylebone Road. London. NW 14DU.
- History of Cheshire Vol. I Omerod
- History of Cheshire, Lyson.
- Historical Antiquities of Gt. Britain and Ireland, particularly concerning Cheshire,
Leycester.
- Illustrated History of Gt. Britain (1984), ed. Kenneth O. Morgan. Oxford Uni-
versity Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP.
- Religious Houses, England and Wales, Davies Knowles & R. Neville Hadcock.
Longman, Longman House, Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex. CM20 2JE.
- Cheshire Sheaf 3rd Series, Vols. 10 and 18.
- Knutsford its Tradition & History, Henry Gren E. J. Morten (Booksellers) Ltd.,
6 Warburton Street. Didsbury, Manchester M20 0RA.
- History of Macclesfield, Stella Davies. Macclesfield Borough Council, P.O.
BOX 44, Stuart House, King Edward Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK
10 1DX.
- Catholic Exhibition Centenary *’uvenir, Manchester 1973.
- Victoria History of County of Cheshire Vol. LI. Oxford University Press, Ely 37
Dover Street, London, W 1X 4AH.
- History of Cheshire 1660—1780, Howard Hodson. Cheshire Community Coun-
cil, Watergate House, Watergate Street, Chester, CH1 2LW.
- North West Catholic History, Vol. IX (1982): Post Reformation Catholicism in
Cheshire, J. A. Hilton, 282 Whelley, Wigan, Lancs., WN2 1DA.
- North West Catholic History Society. Catholic Record Society, 1980 Occasional
Publication (1).
- Catholic Record Society, Records of Catholic Registers of St. Woolston, 1771—1834.
publication 1915.
- Catholic Record Society, Records of Catholic Registers of Culcheth Hall, 1791—1825.
Publication V3. 1913.
- Catholic Record Society. Records Catholic Registers of Southworth Hall. 1795—1827.
publication V13. 1913.
- St. Alban’s, Macclesfield, Michael Ullmann.
- Shrewsbury Diocesan Year Book 1968, Father Henry Alcock, Michael Connolly.
- Letters of Mary Sibylla Holland, Bernard Holland, published 1907. Edward
Arnold. 41 Bedford Square, London. WC 1B 3DQ.

Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary REOrd, 1851—1951 , Father E. Maurice Abbott, M.A.

8.1 CHESHIRE RECORD OFFICE

The record described below and reproduced on page 8 i' deposited in the Cheshire Record Office and is reproduced with the permission of the Cheshire County Council and the owner/depositor to whom copyright is reserved: Oath of Supremacy & Allegiance taken by Francis Pigot of Marcham in the County of Berks at the Quarter Sessions at Nether Knutsford on the 19th July 1673—Cheshire Record Office Ref. DLT,'D39/3.

The following are also acknowledged to Record Office:
 Visitation Returns for Knutsford, 1825 Ref. EDV 7/7/281.
 Tithe Apportionment & Map for Tabley Superior Ref. EDT 383/1 & 2.
 Returns of Papists 1767 Ref. EDA 6/5. Returns of parliamentary Electors (North) 1832/ Ref. QDV 3/7.
 Census Returns, 1841, Nether Knu(sford & Tabley Superior. Public Record Office (per Cheshire RO) Ref. H.O. 101/93/5-12, H.O- 107/94/13.14.
 Census Returns, 1851, Nether Knutsford & Tabley Superior, Public Record Office (per microfilm Cheshire RO Ref. H.O. 101/2163 F.Y. 354463; H.O. 107/2163 F.F. 231-247.
 Census Returns 1861 Knutsford.public R.O. (per microfilm Cheshire RO) RG g 2593—2598 19/8.
 Ecclesiastical Census Return of Great Britain 1851 microfilm Cheshire RO).

8.2 PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, (COPYRIGHT OFFICER). CHANCERY LANE, LONDON

The record described below and reproduced on page 17 is deposited in the Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, and is reproduced with the permission or the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office via the Keeper of Public Records to whom copyright is reserved :
 Census of the Population, 1851, a return of Place of public Worship for Knutsford.
 Public Record Ref. H.O. 129/454. XP 004401.

8.3 CHESTER CITY RECORD OFFICE

Cheshire Sheaf.

List of Figures

2.1	Cheshire Records Office - Oath of Allegiance	11
3.1	Father John Hall and Travel Chalice.	14
3.2	Father Michael O'Reilly.	19
3.3	George Street Church.	20
3.4	Ecclesiastical Census entry - Knutsford Church.	21
3.5	Father Henry Alcock.	23
3.6	This photograph was actually taken over 60 years later.	26
3.7	Father Daniel Casey.	27
3.8	Knutsford Church.	29
3.9	Great War - Crucifix Memorial	36
4.1	Father John James Ryan 1920-1934	40
4.2	Perhaps it is fitting that the last photograph of our first Church should be one of the interior taken, obviously, just before one Christmas Eve, some time I would think in the 1920s. It shows the framework that used to be built across the sanctuary at Christmas time. clad with evergreens. which the children used to thread into long garlands. These were suspended from the roof and can just be seen. The crib of course is off prior to its opening, and we can also see one or the Stations of the Cross. The two doors on the right are the entrance from the Church to the sacristy and Presbytery, and the Confessional.	41
4.3	The Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Right Rev. Hugh Singleton . . .	47
4.4	Houses built in Garden Road.	50
4.5	Part of the open field running from the back of the church up to the school bounded by the fence. part of which still remains . .	51
4.6	The second church - interior	51
4.7	This shot, taken just before demolition started, shows the centre aisle which had been cut through the benches.	51
4.8	An early photograph of the interior soon after the church was showing the Original decor and the benches running the full width and oak reredos forming the back or the altar.	52
4.9	Crucifix above the Porch	54
4.10	Station of the Cross	55

4.11	The Statue of St. Therese of Lisieux was given the Parish in July 1934 by Dr. and Mrs. Doherty of Toft Hall. Knutsford. and was solemnly blessed and dedicated by Father Campbell before a large congregation, one Sunday evening. The service concluded with Benediction and veneration of a relic of St. Therese.	58
4.12	The annual procession in honour of Our Lady was also a feature of the spiritual life of the parish : Miss Joan Hodgkinson leading. followed by Master Dennis Hennelly, Miss Vera Walsh, Miss Sexton the headmistress, and Miss Freda Murray. make their way to the front entrance of the second church.	60
4.13	Father Maurice Stone	61
4.14	Father John Gildea	62
4.15	Members of the Parish carrying the statue of Our Lady in the May Procession.	63
4.16	In August 1961 the magnificent Grotto to Our Lady was built in the Gardens of the Church.	65
4.17	St. Vincents School - Exterior (1)	66
4.18	St. Vincents School - Exterior (2)	67
5.1	Father Joseph Cahill	70
5.2	Pope John Paul II	72
5.3	Photograph by permission of Knutsford Guardian	73
5.4	New Church Exterior - with old church still standing	74
5.5	New Church Exterior - with old church demolished	77
5.6	New Church Exterior - car park	77
5.7	New Church Exterior - from Tatton Street	78
5.8	New Church Interior - Photograph by permission of the Knutsford Guardian	79
5.9	The future of the Parish	81
5.10	Church interior - 1	81
5.11	Church interior - 3	82
5.12	Church interior - 4	83
5.13	Church roof - 1	84
5.14	Blessed Sacrament Chapel	85
5.15	High Altar	86
5.16	14th Station of the Cross	87
5.17	Baptismal Font	88