

A S H O R T  
H I S T O R Y  
O F  
S T . M A R Y ' S  
B U R N L E Y

By  
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The original 1949 cover





This excellent and detailed history of the former parish of St Mary of the Assumption, Burnley (now part of the Parish of the Good Samaritan) was written by Margaret Durkin and originally published in small booklet form to mark the first centenary of St Mary's church in 1949.

The website author has endeavoured to reproduce Mrs Durkin's work as accurately as he can, and as far as possible as it appeared in the original booklet, but acknowledges that any errors or omissions (hopefully none!) are his.

With grateful thanks to John Durkin, eldest son of the author for kind permission to publish on this website, thus ensuring that a wider audience will benefit from Margaret Durkin's treatise in future.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BURNLEY WOOD CHAPEL.

Until the Reformation, all the people of Burnley were professed Catholics and the Parish Church of St. Peter was the centre of the religious life of the town. At the church, people met on Sundays and Feast Days to hear Mass; on every day of the week the offices of the Sacred Liturgy were performed by the priests, and, in the chantry chapels,<sup>1</sup> Masses were offered up for the repose of the souls of the founders of the chantry and of their families.

It was in 1534 that, for those who wished to remain Catholics, the conflict began between loyalty to the Sovereign and fidelity to religious beliefs. All the priests in Burnley took the oath of allegiance to Henry VIII as "Supreme Head of the Church" and the majority of laymen accepted the new system. There was, however, a strong body of people who opposed the changes and who held to their beliefs without wavering or attempting, as some had done, to compromise by conforming outwardly while retaining in their services much of the old Catholic liturgy. The Towneley family of Towneley Hall, and the Woodruff family of Bank Hall were prominent among those who remained loyal.

In 1537, Whalley Abbey was dissolved. As St Peter's was served by priests appointed by the Abbot of Whalley, this event marked a change in the ecclesiastical authority governing Burnley people, and the cleavage between Catholics and those who accepted the new order of things became more apparent.

Some thirteen years later, when the tenets of the reformed religion had been made to replace Papal teaching, the vestments, chalices, sacred vessels and even the bells were taken away from St. Peter's, by order of Edward VI, and the chantry lands were sold. It is a tribute to the people of Burnley that they bought the chantry lands and gave them back to their priests for life. This act seems to have been prompted partly by the citizens' desire to see their pastors rescued from starvation, and partly by their belief that the chantries would be restored in Queen Mary's reign, and that, in this event, there would be little re-organization necessary.

By their edicts, King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth excluded Catholic teaching from the churches and supplanted it by the reformed doctrines. Edward VI enforced the use of the new Prayer Book in all churches and Queen Elizabeth completed the establishing of a Protestant religion by

ordering compulsory attendance at Protestant services and by making the profession and practice of the Catholic faith an offence punishable by fines, imprisonment and death.

From this time onward the Catholics of Burnley, like those in other parts of the country, were obliged to hear Mass secretly and in fear of their lives.

## II.

We know from historical records and from tradition how the practice of the Faith was carried on in penal days. The people met in private houses, usually before daybreak, and heard Mass in rooms which could be converted easily into chapels and swiftly disguised again if an informer came. From these rooms secret passages led to concealed chambers where priests could hide. At Towneley, where there had been a chapel since 1454, there were several of these hiding places, one of which could hold two people; but, at times, even these provisions for safety were not enough, and, at one period, the Towneleys used to go stealthily to the house of their agent, Mr. Burgess, to hear Mass at the foot of an altar, which, for camouflage, was made in the shape of an ordinary oaken wardrobe. Bank Hall, where the Woodruffs lived, and the Holme, both had their priests' hiding-places.

We still possess records of the Catholics who suffered imprisonment and torture for hearing Mass, harbouring priests and refusing to attend the Protestant services. John Towneley, known as the Confessor, whose portrait can be seen at the Hall, spent all the prime of his life in prison, paid more than £5,000 in fines for refusing to attend Protestant services, and died, old and blind, as a result of the sufferings he had undergone.

Robert Woodruff, a member of the family living at Bank Hall, was trained and ordained a priest at Douay returned to England, after visiting Rheims and Rome, to re-convert his native land; sheltered for a time at Bank Hall, was finally captured at Crosby Hall, and imprisoned and banished to Rheims, where he died.

Blessed John Nutter and the Venerable Robert Nutter, of New Laund (the people of Pendle Forest were especially loyal to the faith), and the Venerable Thomas Whittaker, the son of the headmaster of Burnley Grammar School, were all three natives of the Burnley district who became priests and were executed for saying Mass. It is interesting to know that the Venerable Thomas Whittaker was inspired to become a priest after he had met a recusant priest at Towneley.

There were many others who suffered penalties and privation for remaining true to their religion at this period of history. The following names are among those that have been recorded:—

John Woodruff, Mary Law, John Yate, Richard Wood, Evan Haydock, Anne Haydock, Andrew Grimshaw, William Clayton, William Hargreaves, William Bancroft, Mary Nutter, Elizabeth Nutter and Anne Nutter.

### III

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the persecution of Catholics continued, but with diminishing ferocity as time went on, until, in 1791, the Toleration Act, passed by the Parliament of George III, ensured freedom of worship for Catholics, although they were still excluded from many civil rights.

There is evidence to show that, in the seventeenth century the following families suffered heavy fines and penalties for their offences against the Protestant laws:—

Charles Towneley, of Towneley.  
John Towneley.  
Richard Towneley.  
Thomas Adamson.  
James Roberts, of Foxstones.  
John Hardie.  
John Robinson, of the Old Laund.  
Edmund Robinson, of the Old Laund.

Further proof of Catholic staunchness is given in the eighteenth century, when Burnley men came forward to take their part in conflicts on a national scale, in which Catholic and Protestant interests were opposed. So, for example in the first Jacobite Rebellion, 1715, Richard Towneley and two of his servants fought for the Stuarts at Preston, and were there captured. They were brought to trial: Richard Towneley himself was acquitted, but the servants were executed. Again, in 1745, Francis Towneley recruited and drilled a battalion of Lancashire men, who later marched with Towneley, to join Bonnie Prince Charlie as he advanced through the North of England. This time the Stuart cause was finally defeated, and Francis Towneley himself was executed, his head being exposed on Temple Bar. This head now lies buried in the Towneley vault of St. Peter's Church. <sup>2</sup>

Throughout this period Catholics were ostensibly parishioners of St. Peter's, and were always buried in St Peter's Churchyard. Between 1727 and 1755 it was the duty of parish clerks to register details of all burials which came to their notice.<sup>3</sup> Consequently we know that, in these twenty-eight years, seventy-nine Catholics were buried at St. Peter's. At the beginning of the seventeenth century there were about 120 Catholics within the parish of St. Peter's.<sup>4</sup> These people were served privately by priests at Towneley. Though the spirit of toleration grew from the time of William and Mary, the Penal Laws were nevertheless rigidly enforced in times of Jacobite insurrection.<sup>4</sup> For our priests there were at least five "bolt-holes" in existence at Towneley Hall during the eighteenth century, and it is a tradition that these priests, during their visits, were disguised as gardeners or servants, and that the word was passed from one Catholic family to another that "the gentleman is here." Dom F. O. Blundell describes the part played by the Towneley family in maintaining the Faith in Burnley during penal times. "In this chapel, hundreds of our Catholic forefathers, under varied conditions and great fear, have heard Mass and received the Sacraments; for long years, in penal times, it was the centre of Catholic life in the North of England." Of the priests who said Mass at Towneley between 1650 and 1819 we have records of these:—

Rev. William Richmond  
Rev. Peter Gifford  
Rev. John Howse  
Rev. Thomas Anderton  
Rev. Edmond Kendal  
Rev. John Harrison  
Rev. Thomas Caton  
Rev. Louis Merlin  
Rev. Charles Lupton

As the close of the century approached, it became possible for our priests to wear their clerical attire in public,<sup>4</sup> and, consequently, the Towneley priests could be openly acknowledged for the ministers they were. In 1791 an Act of Parliament granted freedom of public worship to Catholics in England, and so it became possible for the congregation to consider, from that time forward, the building of a public chapel to serve the increasing Catholic population of the district.

#### IV

In 1814 the need for such a chapel was urgent, because the number of Catholics had increased beyond all expectation and the chapel at Towneley

was far too small to hold its congregation. The reason for this increase in numbers is not far to seek. Burnley was rapidly developing its Industries, and people from country districts were pouring into the town to work in the factories. Labourers from Ireland were flooding into Lancashire, too, and they, of course, were Catholics.

In 1814 then, a meeting was called of the "respectable Catholics of Burnley," and the following gentlemen were appointed and nominated to compose a Committee "for taking into consideration the best and most convenient place adapted for building a Public Catholic Chapel and Sunday School." This Committee included—

P. E. Towneley, Esq.  
Mr. John Whitham  
Mr. E. Lovat  
Mr. Henry Eastwood  
Mr. George Haddock  
Mr. Henry Riley  
Mr. John Riley  
Mr. James Marsland

A few days after the meeting it was decided to obtain a site for the Chapel on the east side of Dawson's Buildings (that is to say, near the site of the present Dawson's Square behind Church Street and the District Nurses' Home); but this scheme seemed to have failed, because the next evidence we have of the decision to build a Chapel consists of documents dated 1817, and the site for the Chapel was to be given by Mr. Peregrine Towneley at Hand Bridge, in Burnley Wood. To raise the money for the Chapel, voluntary subscriptions were given by the Catholics of the neighbourhood, and, at the head of the list of donors, this notice appears:—

"Hitherto, for a very great number of years, the Towneley family, in the most generous manner, have submitted to a great many inconveniences to accommodate the Congregation of Burnley and the Vicinity in their Private Chapel at Towneley Hall, near Burnley, which Congregations are now too numerous to trespass longer upon the Charitable Benevolence so long experienced, for which their united Thanks of Gratitude are far inadequate. They have agreed and entered into resolutions to Build a Public Chapel and School at Burnley, with the assistance of their Generous Catholic Brethren and Others, to whom they present their Gratuitous thanks for any assistance they may think fit to Contribute."

Mr. Peregrine Towneley, of Towneley Hall, gave one thousand pounds, an instance of the spirit of charity that has always characterized the family, and other members gave open-handedly, according to their means. After subscriptions had been collected from the local Catholics, the following printed petition was circulated among the priests of other districts in the North of England:—

" Sir,

The Catholics of Burnley, having, by the generous donation of the Towneley Family, been encouraged to Build a Chapel and Dwelling near the Town, humbly solicit the charitable support of your Congregation towards raising a fund for this work of God; the great distance they are from other congregations, and their inability towards completing this task, it is hoped, will move the hearts of their benefactors, for which the constant prayers of this congregation will be offered up: the smallest donations will be most thankfully received by the following persons at Burnley: Mr. Whittam, Mr. E. Lovat, Mr. Booth, Mr. Eastwood, Mr. Hartley, Mr. Haddock, Mr. Marsland and Messrs. Ryley, being the committee chosen."

In addition to this means of raising money, members of the Committee went in person to see the priests and Catholic gentlemen of Lancashire, to enlist their financial help. These journeys must have been arduous, because they extended as far as Poulton, Lytham and Garstang, and would have to be travelled on horseback.

All together £2,000 was raised to build the Chapel and Presbytery, and when these were completed, in 1817, the people petitioned Bishop Smith to appoint a priest to take charge, pledging themselves to raise £60 a year to the fund for maintenance.

## V

It was fitting that Burnley Wood should be the site for the first public Catholic Chapel, because, for years before its erection, this district, lying near to Towneley, had been looked on as Catholic. Much of this land was the property of the Towneley family, consisting of farms with cottages near them, and most, if not all, the farmers of the Towneley lands were Catholics.

The Chapel was built on the land which is today occupied by Tarleton Avenue (opposite Brunswick Street) and the houses immediately surrounding it. There is a little, inconclusive evidence, indicating that the Presbytery was the house now known as Ivy Cottage, standing at the corner of Smalley Street and Todmorden Road. It is interesting to read accounts of Todmorden



Road, written in the last century, giving us a picture of the old Chapel in its contemporary setting:—

"Todmorden Road was a beautiful country lane, shaded in on both sides with overhanging trees. The only buildings on the east side of the road were Fulfilled House, the residence of the Grimshaws, an old Catholic family, with its white painted posts and heavy massive chains of the same colour hanging in festoons from post to post, enclosing the lawn, laid out as a carpet garden, with beautiful flowers; then came Towneley Lodge, St. Mary's Chapel, School and House, and Whittaker's Farm, at the junction of Huffling Lane and Todmorden Road." <sup>5</sup>

It is not hard to construct a picture of the Chapel in our minds, because the building itself survives substantially as it was in 1817. A few years after the present St. Mary's had been built, the old Chapel was taken down, stone by stone, and re-built into a school, which is now used as the Assembly Rooms. If we imagine these present Assembly Rooms with the porch moved from the north side (where it is now) and set in the east gable, and the whole chapel turned round, we can form a fairly accurate idea of the first St. Mary's. It was surrounded by a garden which was, in its turn, enclosed by trees.

Inside, the Chapel was comfortable and of pleasing appearance though small. There was an altar, of course, at the east end, and a gallery or organ loft at the west. There is a tradition that the painting of the Last Supper, which until recently used to hang near the vestry door in the present St. Mary's, was the altar piece in the old Chapel. The choir seems to have been exceptionally good, considering the size of the parish, for Novello, the Italian musician, in his tour through the North of England, said it was the best chapel choir he had heard outside London. Mr. Merrine played the organ, Mr. Walker conducted, and the following names are found in a list of singers:—

Miss Healey, Mrs. Henshaw, John Jackson, Robert Barker, Charles Massey, Joseph Comstive, William Lister, William Backhouse, C. Slater, Richard Watson, John Walker, William Comstive, James Taylor and Edward Heys.

It is recorded that, on fine Sunday mornings, small groups of non-Catholics from Burnley used to come and sit on the grass outside the Chapel to listen to the singing of the choir.

## VI

The first priest to serve the Chapel was Father Lupton. He lived at Towneley Hall, and seems to have combined his duties as chaplain with those of parish priest. He suffered from bad health, though, and a few months after his appointment Father Hodgson was sent to help him. The newly-appointed priest lived at the Presbytery, not at the Hall. In 1820 all the houses in the parish were visited by the priest, and it was estimated that there were two hundred and sixty-nine people attending Mass regularly. Three years after this, Father Lupton died, at the age of thirty-one, and was buried in St. Peter's Churchyard. From this time onward, Father Hodgson looked after the parish single-handed, and was chaplain also to Towneley Hall. He must have been an energetic man, because, in 1828, he began to serve a Chapel of Ease at Sunnyside (near Crawshawbooth), to accommodate Catholic families working in factories in Rossendale, and, in 1829, St. Mary's Chapel itself was enlarged.

It is hard to over-estimate the importance of the Chapel to the Catholics of North-East Lancashire at this time. Because it was small, we are inclined, perhaps, to regard it as insignificant; but, in reality, its erection was of the greatest importance. In the first place, it served a vast area. It was the only church for Burnley, Todmorden, Bacup, Colne, Barrowford, Nelson, Brierfield, Lowerhouse and Padiham. On a Sunday morning during the 'twenties and 'thirties of the 19th century, we are told that from ten o'clock until half-past, little groups of people converged on the Chapel from every direction, some of them having walked six or seven miles to get there. The people who travelled such distances followed the practice (common in other parts of the country, when the church was a long way from home) of bringing their dinner with them, eating it in the School after Mass, waiting for Benediction, and then walking home in the late afternoon or early evening. In the second place, the building of the Chapel was important, because the erection of a public place of worship was a symbol to Lancashire Catholics that the penal days were coming to an end; and when, in 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed, and Catholics obtained full civil rights the consciousness that they were re-emerging into national life stimulated and invigorated Catholics.

## VII

A little further up the road from the Chapel, and on the same side of the road, there stood the Catholic School (at the corner of what is now Todmorden Road and Smalley Street) and it was built long before the Chapel, being founded as early as 1798. It was a single-storey building, of stone, standing in a small garden. A house for the schoolmaster formed part of the

same premises. It was built and maintained, it is believed, by the Towneleys, and was first used as a Sunday School only, but children of all denominations attended.<sup>6</sup> Later it was used as a day-school too and as the number of scholars increased, a second storey was added. The boys were then taught upstairs, and the girls downstairs. All during its existence the Towneleys took a great interest in the school, as the following extract from a letter, written by a former parishioner of St. Mary's, will show:—

"The school-children paid a penny a week school-pence, which would be little more than would pay for the school cleaning and coal for the school fires .... The Catholic children were given a new suit of clothes every year, if they attended regularly, so that they could attend Church and Holy Mass respectably dressed. Girls got green frocks and bonnets. Boys got jackets and fustian trousers .... About twice a year all the scholars of the school went to Towneley Hall and dined in the Hall with the Towneley family. They provided all sorts of sports and amusements for the children, such as running races for prizes. Many of the prizes were articles which the school children had made in school, such as aprons, pocket handkerchiefs, shifts, shirts, stockings, crocheted shawls, and many other useful articles, as well as toys to please the lesser children."<sup>7</sup>

The teachers at this time were Mr. Weldon, who was probably followed by Mr. Cassidy, who, in turn, was succeeded by Miss Farrell.

As time went on, the parish increased in size. Father Hodgson was made a Canon, and, in 1845, a curate, Father Worthy, was appointed to help him with his duties. About this time it became clear that the little Chapel was no longer big enough to house its congregation, and so it was decided to build a large new church near the centre of the town. This church became our St. Mary's.

#### NOTES, Chapter I:

1 "A chantry was part of the church reserved for private altar, at which a priest regularly said prayers for the repose of the souls of certain people named in the deed under which the chantry was founded. The rent from the land with which the chantry was endowed was the salary of the chantry priest". (W. Bennett: "History of Burnley" Pt II page 109).

2 and 3 Mr. Bennett's "History of Burnley", Pt. III. Pages 102-103, 124-125.

- 4 Mr. Bennett's "History of Burnley", Pt. III, pages 124 and 125).
- 5 An extract from an article: "Catholicity in Burnley in The 'Forties and 'Fifties" by Mr. W. Aspinall in the Burnley Gazette of Saturday, 2nd March, 1899.
- 6 in those days as well as religious instruction, children in Sunday Schools often received instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic.
- 7 From a letter written by Mr. Richard Cunliffe and quoted in the "Chronicles of Blackburnshire" by Father Smith.

## CHAPTER II

### ST. MARY'S: THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

"Nothing can exceed the energy and resolution of the Roman Catholic Body."<sup>1</sup>

This was the opinion of a local historian as he reviewed the events of the nineteenth century in Burnley. When we examine the achievements of the parish of St. Mary's from 1846 to 1899, we find that the compliment is not exaggerated: a church was built and equipped, schools were erected, and many daughter missions were founded during these fifty years.

THE NEW CHURCH.—As soon as the need for a large church had been recognized, Canon Hodgson called a meeting in the Burnley Wood Chapel, and a group of laymen known as the Burnley Catholic Building Committee, was elected to arrange the raising of enough money for a new church. Two sites were offered: one, by Mr. Grimshaw in Manchester Road, and the other in Eastgate by Mr. Eastwood, who held the land on lease from Mr. Peregrine Towneley. The second was chosen, and, through the generosity of the donors, it included sufficient land to allow for the building of schools as well as the church. Once a site had been obtained, it was easy to find an architect and builders. Messrs. Weightman and Hadfield, of Sheffield, designed the church, and Duckett Brothers, a local firm of masons, were appointed as builders. The material, a fine yellow grit-stone, was obtained from a quarry, opened especially for the purpose, on the estate of Mr. Towneley in Todmorden and Walsden.

In 1846, on the Feast of the Annunciation, two years after the Building Committee had been formed, the foundation stone of the new church was laid by Bishop Brown, of the Lancashire district. This ceremony, at which clergy and laymen from all parts of the North of England were present, impressed the non-Catholic people of Burnley, and caused rejoicing among Catholics, who felt that this was a sign of the re-birth of Catholicity in England.<sup>2</sup>

THE EXTERIOR.—It took three years to build St. Mary's, and even then it was not completed according to the original plans. The cost was estimated at £15,000, but it seems that, for the sake of economy, this was reduced to £10,000. Consequently the church was left structurally unfinished, the state in which it still remains. For this reason the outside view which we see nowadays is very much the same as that our grandparents saw.



The Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, for such is its full title, is built in imitation of the 14th century Gothic style of pointed architecture, a style much admired during the middle years of the 19th century. It is cruciform in plan, and has nave, aisles, transept, chancel, north and south chapels, and, at the western end of the church, a massive tower. It was the intention of the builders to add a spire and steeple to the tower, but, for reasons just mentioned, the plan was not completed. The exceptionally strong buttresses and the great thickness of the walls themselves (6 feet) are evidence that preparation was made to add to the tower as soon as possible. Had this taken place, St. Mary's would have been a strong but graceful church, with a spire of 180 feet rising high above the smoke of the town. As it is, the Impression it gives is one of squat solidity: it is too powerful for its height. Though the result is unsatisfying, it is not ugly, for the general grouping of the parts of the building is particularly effective, because of the well-balanced proportions of the gables and masses constituting the whole. Great beauty is given, too, by what may be termed the decorations of the exterior—the window mouldings, the carvings and the statues.

The chancel, on the outside, has weathered buttresses at the angles, and its principal feature is a window of five lights filled with delicate tracery. The mixed geometrical and flowing lines of the design in the tracery are skilfully combined, and they reproduce a beautiful characteristic of the period of Gothic architecture which the builders of the Church attempted to revive. The window has a hood mould with carved angel corbels<sup>3</sup> in adoration. Above the window, in a gable, there is a triple niche with canopies, buttresses, stagings and corbels carved in high relief. The centre niche contains a statue of Our Lady crowned and holding the Infant Jesus in her arms. In the side niches there are figures of angels adoring. The gable is surmounted by a floriated cross.

The two side chapels have gabled roofs with three-light windows of varied patterns, and gabled crosses. The Towneley Chapel is approached by a north door above which there are the heraldic bearings of successive heads of the family. The north transept gable has a three-light window, and the north aisle is lighted with those of a similar design.

The main entrance to the church is a deeply moulded, pillared west doorway of great boldness and solidity. Above the door there is a five-light window of large size, beautifully traceried and having a crocheted hood mould terminating in a bracketed corbel which supports, under a rich canopy of tabernacle work, a statue of Our Lady represented as being "clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet." In addition to the principal doorway, there are two lateral porches, and, close to these, on the angles of the walls of the

main body of the church, there rise two small spires one to the north and the other to the south of the west entrance. These spires are purely decorative in function, but were intended as part of a system of external adornments which would have been completed if the main spire and steeple and a small spire above the Towneley Chapel had been added. In the original architect's plan all these features are shown, but only two of them were put into execution. Just below the miniature spire on each side, there is a figure carved in stone representing a devil climbing up the church wall.

The nave of St. Mary's is lighted by a clerestory having coupled windows of two lights. The south aisle is arranged in much the same fashion as the north, except that the transept has an elegantly designed rose window, circular with a trefoil arch. The south-east corner of the church is occupied by the vestry and passage.

THE INTERIOR.—Although the exterior has changed little, if at all, since 1849, the interior at the time of the solemn opening was very different from what it is now, not in essentials but in decorations and accessories. Very rightly, those who built the church concentrated on producing a structure that would last for generations and would be capable of holding a vast congregation.<sup>4</sup> They preferred to carry on the work on as large a scale as their money would allow, and left it to their successors to provide supplements. When the church was opened, all the windows were of clear glass, like that in the tower, the clerestory and the south transept to-day. The chancel lacked a reredos, tiled floor and altar rails, the only completed fitting being the elaborately carved double piscina. The two side chapels were incomplete, and the pulpit was a temporary wooden erection placed near the pillar of the chancel arch at the north side.

In essence, of course, the interior was the same then as it is now, and perhaps it was easier for those who were present at the opening to appreciate the general design of the church than it is for us, whose eyes may be distracted by details of decoration. One witness of the opening ceremony said that on entering St. Mary's no one could fail to admire the magnificent proportions of the church. A newcomer of our time would be similarly impressed. The appearance of majesty is created by the dignity of the architecture in the nave, the strong carpentry of the open roof, and the nobility of the chancel arch. The nave, about 90ft. long, is divided into five bays, and the clerestory above it is supported by arches and massive pillars of stone, alternately cylindrical and octagonal, with deeply moulded capitals and bases. The roof is lofty and open, and is of the single hammer-beam type. The wall posts of the roof rest on corbels projecting from the walls, and they represent angels bearing shields. The chancel arch is a striking piece of architecture. It

has clustered columns, moulded capitals and bases. The arch is also deeply moulded, and has a magnificent play of light and shade. The two side chapels are separated from the chancel by a double arcade with circular pillars, whose capitals are carved with a rich design of natural foliage.

At the west end of the south aisle there stands the baptismal font, whose design is pleasing in its simplicity. It is constructed from the same stone as the church, and is elevated on a square pedestal and step. The tower contains the choir gallery and the organ loft. The belfry at the top of the tower has one bell which is now out of use. Access to the choir gallery and belfry is by way of a spiral staircase built almost entirely in the thickness of the wall.

THE OPENING CELEBRATIONS.—In the summer of 1849 the church was ready for use, and the beginning of August was fixed as the time for the opening. The services and celebrations lasted for several days. On Thursday, August the 2nd there took place the dedication and formal opening of the church by Bishop Brown, the bishop of the Lancashire district. The following newspaper report of the ceremony gives us an idea of the dignity which attended the opening of St. Mary's:—

"The dedication of the church took place on Thursday last. The ceremony was performed with those august and solemn celebrations which are prescribed by the Catholic Church on these occasions. Invitations were issued to every priest in Lancashire and Cheshire; several came from Yorkshire and other places, and four bishops assisted at the ceremony. Early in the morning the church was blessed in its outer and in its inner walls by the Vicar-General, the Very Reverend W. Turner, assisted by the Reverend James Elsher and two acolytes. In every part—altars, screens, pier, arch, pulpit and organ loft—it (i.e. the interior of the church) was decorated with evergreens and flowers, blended with profusion and arranged with taste. A flag emblazoned with a cross fleuri waved from the summit of the tower. Soon after ten o'clock the western doors were thrown open and the visitors entered.

"The bishops in attendance were:—  
The Right Reverends Drs. Brown and Sharples,  
of Lancashire,  
The Right Reverend Dr. Briggs, of York.  
The Right Reverend Dr. J. Brown, of Wales.

"At eleven o'clock the procession of bishops and priests (all together there were about sixty members of the clergy present) issued from the

sacristy and moved down the south aisle and up the nave. During the procession the organ pealed and "Exsulta Sion" burst forth from the choir.<sup>5</sup> The minister of the altar and attendants having taken their places within the chancel, the service commenced with the office of Terce, the "Deus in Adjutorium" being intoned by the celebrating bishop, and the hymn "Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus" sung by the choir. Pontifical High Mass was next celebrated. The music was Haydn's Grand Mass No. 1, with full orchestral accompaniments.<sup>6</sup>

"Bishop J. Brown (of Wales) preached a sermon with the following text: 'My eyes also shall be open and my ears attentive to the prayers of him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen and sanctified this place that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually.'"<sup>7</sup>

The congregation at this, the first of the opening services, was composed mainly of the gentry, the professional men who had been concerned with the erection of the church the visitors from other towns, and those parishioners who were self-employed and could afford to leave their work for the morning. The Towneley Chapel was filled with the members of the Catholic gentry of the North of England, who were the guests of the Towneley family during the celebrations. Mr. Hadfield, the architect, and Mr. Duckett the builder, were there, and so were the members of those families whose wealth had been given freely to the new church:—the Marslands, Eastwoods, Whittams and others. After Mass, the visitors and specially invited guests, totalling over a hundred, were entertained to a banquet at the Bull Inn, during which, we are told, toasts to the parishioners and clergy of St. Mary's were "rapturously" drunk.

The majority of the parishioners, the working people, could not be present on the Thursday, but on the second day of the celebrations, Sunday, August the 5th, they filled the church, and to such an extent that the children were forced to sit on the altar steps. On this occasion Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by Bishop Brown, and the sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Bishop Wiseman,<sup>8</sup> who chose as his text the words from the Gospel according to St. Luke: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican." In the course of his sermon he showed how the doctrines of the Catholic Church were those which tend most of all to elevate man's nature, even though belief in these same doctrines often caused Catholics to be ridiculed as those who sacrifice reason to credulity. This discourse must have comforted the congregation, because when St. Mary's was opened there was an outburst of bigotry which, happily, has long since disappeared altogether.

On the same Sunday, in the evening, vespers were sung, there was Solemn Benediction, and the Reverend Dr. Weedall, of Birmingham, preached an excellent sermon. The proceeds of the collections on the two days of celebration amounted to nearly three hundred pounds.<sup>9</sup>

And so St. Mary's was opened; but not all who had laboured energetically were able to enjoy the results of their work. Mr. Peregrine Towneley, who had contributed vast sums of money both to the Burnley Wood Chapel and to the proposed new church, had died in 1846, and both Canon Hodgson and Father Worthy left Burnley in 1849 to take up duties in other parts of Lancashire. The last two, however, were present at the opening ceremonies as visitors.

CANON BOARDMAN.—Canon James Boardman was the first Rector of St. Mary's, and, though he stayed in Burnley for three years only, he and his lay advisers were zealous in their efforts to put the new parish on a sound financial footing. The members of the Catholic Building Committee bound themselves in 1849 to raise the sum of £300 annually for five years, to help to clear off a debt of £3,000 which remained on the church. Colonel Charles Towneley promised that he would personally contribute another £300 each year. The members of the Committee were:—

J. Marsland, Jun., Esq.	H. Fishwick, Esq.
Colonel Towneley	G. Eastwood, Esq.
J. Marsland, Esq.	Mr. N. Fletcher
R. Eastwood, Esq.	J. S. Whittam, Esq.

It will be noticed that there were several families whose generosity was the chief financial factor in building both the Burnley Wood Chapel and St. Mary's. All these families, it would seem, have now either died out or left the parish, but the church itself is their memorial.

CANON RIMMER.—When Canon Boardman left Burnley, he exchanged missions with Canon Rimmer, who, since his ordination in 1842, had worked in parishes in Manchester and Bury. Canon John Rimmer was destined to be Rector of St. Mary's for twenty-nine years, though his term of service was divided into two terms, the first from 1852 to 1861.

In these nine years he accomplished much, and he was able to achieve astounding results, because he possessed a large private fortune, which he devoted almost entirely to the provision of schools and to the purchasing of a convent for the Sisters of Charity, whom he brought to Burnley as teachers.



He was helped in this work, of course, by the congregation, but their efforts were principally devoted to reducing the debt on the church.

When St. Mary's was completed, the Burnley Wood Chapel fell into disuse for some three years. Canon Rimmer then had the building removed into the grounds of the church, and converted it into a school for girls and infants. This took place in 1853, and in the same year a new school, under the patronage of St. Aloysius, was built for the boys. Part of this school can be seen to-day, for it forms a section of the present Infants' School. While the new boys' school was being erected, the pupils were housed temporarily in a building in Red Lion Street, and then in the Temperance Hall in Hammerton Street. Shortly after this Canon Rimmer brought to Burnley a small company of the Sisters of Charity. Their work was to teach in the girls' school and to instruct the women of the parish. On their arrival the Sisters were housed in two cottages near the church; but a little later they may have moved to another house where the present Convent stands, because we know that during his first term of office Canon Rimmer bought three houses near the church and gave them to the diocese. One of them he intended for a convent, and the other two were bought to prevent a public house being built on the site. The Sisters of Charity did not stay very long in Burnley; they had certainly left in 1861, and for many years St. Mary's Girls' School was staffed by schoolmistresses: Miss Redman, Miss Bamford and Miss Walmsley. The Boys' School was always conducted by lay masters, and during Canon Rimmer's time the headmaster was Mr. Henry Roche.

When the two new schools were being built near St. Mary's the old school, which stood on Todmorden Road, passed entirely into the hands of the Towneleys, who removed the top storey and maintained the building as an infants' school for the Catholic children of Burnley Wood. We are told that Lady Caroline Towneley and Miss Farrell, the schoolmistress, went on foot from house to house seeking out the Catholic children, for this was in the days before compulsory education.

Through Canon Rimmer's energy, and the generosity of parishioners, improvements were made in the church, the presbytery and the grounds during these first few years of the life of the parish. The boundary walls were built on three sides of the church, the south side being open to Rope Walk (now Temple Street), and the East window of the chancel was filled with most beautiful stained glass, by the gift of the Marsland family, who probably intended that it should be a memorial to Mr. James Marsland, the head of the family, who died in 1851. This window, noticed most often, perhaps, by those who come into the church on sunny mornings, consists of five pictures. Its centre panel portrays Our Lady holding her Divine Son, and the others

depict St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Anne with Our Lady as a child and St. Joseph.

It was during this time that the Crimean War took place, and at the conclusion of the fighting a legion of Italian soldiers was sent to Burnley. These soldiers were all Catholics, and when they attended Mass at St. Mary's, accompanied by the band and wearing their brilliant uniform, they excited the curiosity and delight of the parishioners. Canon Rimmer preached on alternate Sundays in English and Italian, to provide for the new part of his congregation.

After nine years of strenuous work, Canon Rimmer, who suffered from bronchial asthma, was obliged to seek temporary retirement, and he left the care of the parish to Father Flanagan, who had been his curate since 1853.

FATHER FLANAGAN.—Father Thomas Joseph Flanagan spent all the years of his priestly life at St Mary's. He was curate for eight years, and parish priest for ten. During this time he won the respect and admiration not only of his parishioners but also of thousands of Burnley people, by his zealous pursuit of duty, his affable and tolerant nature, and his work for the education of the poor, as a member of the first School Board.

Father Flanagan was particularly anxious to see St. Mary's Church, which still lacked many interior features, completed in a fitting manner. During his time, owing to his own efforts and to the generosity of parishioners, the most beautiful interior additions were erected—the chancel was decorated, the high altar, reredos and pulpit were built. The high altar and reredos of St. Mary's have such an interesting history that it is worth recording in detail.

Mr. Richard Eastwood, the steward and agent of the Towneley estates, owned a racing mare named "Butterfly" which won the Oaks in 1860. With the prize money Mr. Eastwood financed the provision of a high altar, reredos, pulpit and decorations for the chancel. He was joined in this gift by Mr. Culshaw, who was Shorthorn keeper to Colonel Towneley. Together the two gentlemen contributed about £4,000. The high altar and reredos are made of Caen-stone and marble. The reredos, consisting of three intricately carved canopies and two bas-relief tableaux, shows angels in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The central canopy rises above the tabernacle, and, on either side, there is a tableau, one representing the Sermon on the Mount and the other the Last Supper. The side canopies shelter statues of St. Hubert and St. John the Evangelist. When the architect in charge of these additions, Edward Welby Pugin, designed the reredos, he incorporated features which would indicate its history. Accordingly there is the statue of St. Hubert, patron of the chase, and at the base of the tableaux there is a repetitive border-

carving, embodying the motifs of a racehorse, butterflies and oak leaves. The pattern of oak leaves is found in the pulpit, too. The design of the canopies repeats that of the ornamental spires, already referred to, on the outside of the church.

In the course of erecting the altar and reredos it was found that they would cover up the stained glass window, and to avoid this the window was raised. At the same time a new shell roof was made for the sanctuary, a tiled floor laid, and handsome brass paraclose screens built. To complete the work, arches were moulded, caps and bases formed, and granite pillars erected. All these works were carried out from a design by Edward Welby Pugin, and when finished they helped to make St. Mary's sanctuary one of the finest in the diocese. The pulpit, it will be noticed, is placed on the epistle rather than on the gospel side of the altar. Usually this position is found only in cathedrals, and it is thought that, in 1861, when the pulpit was built, people believed that St. Mary's might become the Cathedral Church of a second Lancashire diocese.

At this time St. Mary's choir was famous in Burnley, and non-Catholics, we are told,<sup>10</sup> were allowed to stand inside the door, beneath the organ loft, to listen. Several musicians in the town praised the choir, especially for its performance of Mozart's Twelfth Mass. In those days, when concerts were rare in towns like Burnley, the churches and chapels were the only places where people could hear good music.

In 1870 Father Flanagan arranged the decoration of the chancel roof. This was a project in which he was keenly interested, and it was said that, in his eagerness to make the church beautiful, the words of the psalmist—

"The zeal of thy house has eaten me up"

could be applied to him.

The wooden roof of the chancel is divided into panels, and the beams rest on corbels representing angels praising the Lord with sound of trumpet, with psaltery and harp, with timbrel and choir, with strings and organs, and on cymbals of joy. The paintings in the panels of the roof are designed to give a genealogical tree of women mentioned in the Old Testament, who, though not perfect in every trait of their character, are referred to in the works of the Fathers of the Church as types of the Blessed Virgin. These are the women represented in the paintings: Eve, Sarah, Agar, Rebecca, Rachel, the Mother of Moses, Miriam (the sister of Moses), Deborah, Delilah, Jephtha's daughter, Ruth, Anna, Abigail, the Sunamitess, Bethsabee, Judith, the Sunamitess (the

widow who showed hospitality to Eliseus), the widow of Sarephta, Esther, the mother of the Macchabees, the mother of Tobias, Sara (the wife of Tobias). Then there is a painting of Our Lady herself, surrounded by her nearest kin and companions: Anna the prophetess, St. Elizabeth, St. Anne, St. Mary of Salome, St. Mary of Cleophas, St. Martha and St. Mary Magdalene. In the panels of the bay of the roof, immediately over the altar, there are angels bearing censers in honour of the Blessed Sacrament.

Before this decoration was finished, Feather Flanagan died, after a short illness, at the age of forty-one. He was deeply mourned by the whole town, and his parishioners decided that the design on the chancel roof should be his memorial, because he wished so ardently for its completion. At a later date the stained glass window in the north transept was erected by Canon Morrissey, in memory of Father Flanagan and two of his curates, Father Hugh McGrath and Father James Standen.

CANON RIMMER.—Canon Rimmer returned to take charge of the Mission in 1871, and from that Year until his death the energies of the clergy and people of St. Mary's were devoted to the provision of adequate schools for all the Catholic children, since the Education Act of 1870 had made attendance at school obligatory, and to the establishment of branch missions to cater for the increasing Catholic population. Since the opening of St. Mary's the number of Catholics in Burnley had Increased enormously, owing to successive waves of Irish immigration, as demands for more industrial workers arose, and to a phenomenal natural increase of the birth rate which took place all over the country.

One of Canon Rimmer's first actions to provide Catholic education was to establish in Burnley a convent of the Sisters of Mercy in 1872, from which properly qualified teachers were to take charge of the Girls' and Infants' Schools. For some time before 1872 the low standard of efficiency in St. Mary's Schools had been a source of grave anxiety to the Rector, and he perceived that the deficiencies were caused by the lack of permanent certified mistresses. Matters reached a climax in 1872, when the Government threatened to stop all grants to the school unless the standard could be raised before the next annual examination. Accordingly, in July, 1872, Father Dillon was dispatched, as the Canon's envoy, to the Convent of Mercy, Commercial Road, London, to beg for volunteers from among the sisters to open a convent in Burnley. After two visits to London by Canon Rimmer himself, it was finally arranged that Reverend Mother Mary Angela, Mother Mary Ignatius and Mother Mary Catherine should be pioneers of the new foundation. On their arrival in Burnley the sisters occupied a cottage near the

church, and after about six months they moved into the house adjoining the presbytery. Mother Mary Ignatius and Mother Mary Catherine immediately took charge of the Girls' and Infants' Schools, and the favourable report of His Majesty's Inspector in the following year proved the value of their work.

Not only did the Sisters teach in the school, but they devoted nearly all their time to the service of the church and the parishioners. A great part of Sunday was spent in giving religious and secular Instruction. The young women of the parish received religious instruction for an hour after the second Mass on Sunday mornings, and returned in the afternoon for instruction in the three R's. Because St. Mary's was the only Catholic Church for a wide area, the young people of Nelson and Rosegrove were among those who attended the classes in religious instruction on Sundays. As the young girls of that time were sent to work in the factories at eight years of age, the Sisters organized evening classes to give them at least elementary instruction. Another notable feature of the Sisters' work was their compliance with Bishop Vaughan's request for cookery classes. Two demonstration lessons, lasting from seven to half-past nine, were held weekly in a room specially fitted out for that purpose, and were attended by ninety girls. Practical cookery occupied part of the Sisters' time on Saturdays, too, and at the request of the Head Inspector of Schools, needlework classes for teachers were held for several months.

The care of the vestments, sacred vessels and church linen has been the responsibility of one Sister of the Community since the foundation of the Convent. The visitation of the sick in the hospitals and in their own homes, and the instruction of converts, are among the works of mercy that have always been performed by the Community.

The Boys' School, however, was conducted by laymen, and Mr. Henry Roche was followed in succession as headmaster by Mr. Hugh Kelly, Mr. John Murray, Mr. William Donellan and Mr. John Sunderland.

Just after Father Flanagan's death, Canon Rimmer bought land in the Meadows district, and built there St. Thomas's Schools, at a cost of between three and four thousand pounds. He did this as an additional memorial to Father Flanagan, after whose patron saint, St. Thomas of Canterbury, the schools were named. In 1876 the new buildings were opened, and the Sisters of Mercy, whose Community had increased, took charge of instructing the children. Seven years later St. Mary Magdalene's School-Chapel was founded, and until it became an independent mission in 1887 it was served for Mass on Sundays from St. Mary's. The Sisters taught for a short time in the school, but were then obliged to relinquish their places. In 1885 a new



building to serve as a Boys' and Girls' School was put up in the grounds of St. Mary's, and the previous Girls' School building was used chiefly for an assembly room. We are told that, to provide all these new schools, Canon Rimmer supplied about four thousand pounds of his own money. He was generously supported by his congregation, of course, but he was so liberal himself that not even the wealthiest of his parishioners could keep pace with him.

The people of St. Mary's contributed most freely to raise money for the provision of a new block of buildings for the Convent. In this way they showed their gratitude to Canon Rimmer and the Sisters for the work they had done to provide education for the children. The new block was begun in 1881 and completed in 1885. In many homes in the parish there must still be souvenirs of the Convent Bazaar held in 1882.

Bazaars, concerts and reunions are traditional means of increasing parochial funds, and during these first fifty years of financial burden the people of St. Mary's used all forms of voluntary effort to reduce their debts. One organisation whose records have come down to us was St. Mary's Dramatic Class Company of Players, founded in 1873 and granted a licence to perform in St Aloysius' School, provided, among other things, that "order and decent behaviour" were maintained in the "theatre." The playbills of this company make interesting reading. The Christmas entertainment of 1874 presented two pieces:—

"St. Patrick's Day or The Scheming- Lieutenant" and the "screaming-farce" (for so it is described in the bill) of "Slasher and Crasher"

A year earlier there had been a performance of "The Colleen Bawn,"<sup>11</sup> which was patronised by the Towneleys and the local Catholic gentry. Perhaps the most surprising feature of these bills, to modern eyes, is the price of the seats. In 1864 the schoolchildren performed the "Miller of the Brun." The front seats were 6d. and 4d., and the side seats 2d.

THE TOWNELEY CHAPEL.—During this period the building of the Towneley Chapel was completed, and the finished work was to be a memorial to Colonel John Towneley, who had died in 1878, and to his son, Richard Henry, who had died in Rome a year earlier. With these two deaths the male line of the Towneleys ceased. The chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels, a tribute to Colonel John Townley's daughter, Mary Elizabeth, who had become a Sister of Notre Dame with the title "Sister Marie des Saints Anges." At the entrance to the chapel there is a screen of mahogany, marble and wrought brass. Over the screen there stands a carved statue of Our Lady

in the midst of adoring angels. The stained glass window above the altar also depicts Our Lady as Queen. Below there is a shield bearing the Coats of Arms of the Towneley and Tichborne families,<sup>12</sup> a scroll with the words " Ave Reglna Coelorum," and on either side of it the Towneley motto, " Tenez le vray." The panelling around the chapel is filled with frescoes in which are represented the patron saints of different members of the family—Our Lady, St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist, St. Lucy, St. Richard, St. Elizabeth, St. Theresa and many others. The Latin inscription above the frescoes reads: "Pray for the souls of John Towneley, who died the 21st February, 1878, and of his only son, Richard Henry Towneley, who died 2nd April, 1877, in whose memory this chapel was built by his sorrowing wife, mother, daughters and sisters." At the base of the altar there is a fine marble group showing the burial of Our Lord, and on either side there are statues of St. Michael and St. John the Baptist.

When Canon Rimmer undertook the work of parish priest for the second time, he was helped by several curates, one of whom, Father James Morrissey, was destined to spend the whole of his life, after his ordination, at St. Mary's and to take over the virtual leadership of the parish long before he was made Rector, on the death of Canon Rimmer. Shortly after Canon Morrissey's arrival in 1876, Canon Rimmer, though remaining at the presbytery, was obliged, because of his illness, to lead the life of a recluse. He retired from active duties, other than saying Mass, and though he directed all important matters, it was Father Morrissey who came into contact with the parishioners and inspired them with zeal to carry out all the plans which he and Canon Rimmer had made for the development of Catholic life.

Only two years after Father Morrissey came to Burnley there occurred a serious epidemic of smallpox, and many Catholic homes were stricken. Regardless of danger, and against the advice of the health authorities, Father Morrissey went from house to house, visiting patients and comforting them. By this action he earned the gratitude and affection of his own people and the admiration of the whole town.

The social life of St. Mary's was a concern of great importance to Father Morrissey. In 1879 he inaugurated the Reading Rooms—a club and lecture room for men of the parish. The rooms were built by the voluntary labour of the parishioners, and while the work was going on Father Morrissey toiled with pick and spade by the side of his men. He was President of the Reading Rooms from the beginning until his death. He organised a club for boys and girls, and, indeed, every section of the congregation was provided, through his care, with some form of recreation.

For fifteen years, in this way, Father Morrissey served Canon Rimmer, who, we are told, besought the Bishop to allow him to resign, because he could not actively carry out his duties himself. The Bishop, however, realising how valuable Canon Rimmer's guidance was, refused the resignation. In 1891 the Canon died, after a life whose active years were spent in zealous work and extreme generosity, and whose time of illness was devoted to prayer.

In a memorial published at the time of his death, Father Morrissey says of him:—

“If it had depended upon himself he would have resigned long ago. Again and again, to my own knowledge, he placed his resignation in the hands of the Bishop. This resignation the Bishop absolutely refused to accept. He would have none of it. His work was too important to be thus cut short. And so it happened that, by the command of his ecclesiastical superior, even against his own wishes, he was left amongst us, I might almost say, to the last. And what a life he led during those years of seclusion! We who lived with him can bear testimony to it. His life during the whole of that time was one continual round of prayer! From early morning, 5 in the summer, 6 in the winter, until evening, when he gathered his household together for devotions, his time was almost entirely occupied in prayer.”

CANON MORRISSEY.<sup>13</sup>———In the eight years which elapsed between Father Morrissey's appointment as Rector in 1891 and the celebration of the Golden Jubilee in 1899, the people of St. Mary's, through sacrifice and effort, raised more than £5,000 to establish a new mission in the town, provide a new Infants' School, improve the church premises and clear the debt from the church.

In 1893 the School-Chapel of St. John the Baptist, so named in memory of Canon Rimmer, whose patron was St. John the Baptist, was opened by Bishop Vaughan, and thus a third daughter-church sprang from St. Mary's. Almost at the same time as this project was in hand, the grounds of St. Mary's were planted, fenced and concreted. Before 1892, since the building of the church, only a very low stone wall separated the church grounds from Yorkshire Street, and it was a common thing for cattle and sheep to stray almost into the porch as they were being driven into Burnley from the farmhouses of Brunshaw and Towneley.

In 1895 a new Infants' School was built at the demand of the Education Department, the old building, the original St. Aloysius' School, being too small to hold all the scholars.

After this the energies of the congregation were bent towards the fitting celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the parish. Under Canon Morrissey's leadership the sum of £2,000 was raised for the decoration of the church, the installation of electric light, and the making of two new windows in the roof of the north and south transepts. A second object which the Canon put before his people as a suitable achievement to crown fifty years of effort was the paying off of the capital debt of £1,000 which still remained on the church. To accomplish this task every family in the parish contributed one week's wages, with the result that, in less than nine months, the whole sum was found.

As August, 1899, approached, the priests and people of St. Mary's had much to remember with just pride. From being a small and apparently unimportant section of Burnley's citizens in the 'forties and 'fifties, they had increased in numbers and esteem beyond all expectation. Their priests had won the admiration of non-Catholics by their courteous bearing and firm upholding of principles in all matters on which members of different religions met together—on the Board of Guardians, for example, or the Education Committee. The people of the parish earned for themselves the reputation of a zealous and generous laity.

#### NOTES, Chapter II:

- 1 From "A History of Burnley in the Nineteenth Century", by Kneeshaw, a book published as a memento of Queen Victoria's diamond Jubilee in 1897.
- 2 As a consequence of the Oxford Movement, many Catholics believed at this time not only that they were emerging to a new period of religious freedom and expansion, but that the conversion of England was an imminent probability
- 3 A corbel is "a support or bracket of stone projecting from the face of a wall to carry some structural feature". (Wyld's Dictionary of the English Language).
- 4 The church can accommodate from 1,200 – 1,300 people.
- 5 The choir at the opening ceremony included many of those

who had sung previously at the Burnley Wood Chapel.

- 6 At this time it was permissible for orchestras to perform in church (compare the account of the Golden Jubilee celebrations in Chapter III). At a later date the use of instruments other than the organ was prohibited.
- 7 This account is condensed from that published in the "Preston Guardian" of Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1849.
- 8 — who was later to become Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster.
- 9 The information relating to this second day of celebrations has been obtained from the issue of the "Preston Guardian" of Saturday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1849.
- 10 From the diary of Mr. Joseph Comstive, by kind permission of Miss Comstive.
- 11 The names of the caste of "Colleen Bawn" will be interesting to older members of the parish. They were: Miss B. Dillon, Miss M. A. Scully, Miss E. Brophy, Miss A. Coleman. Miss H. Dillon, Mr. W. Aspinall, Mr. W. Donnellan, Mr. Holden Mr. S. Smith, Mr. W. H. Whittle, Mr. Cowley, Mr. E. Smith, Mr. J. Gordon and Mr. C. Lane.
- 12 Colonel John Towneley married Lucy Ellen, sixth daughter of Sir Henry Tichborne.
- 13 Dean Morrissey was made a Canon of the Chapter of Salford Cathedral in 1898.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE, 1899—The Golden Jubilee was celebrated by a week of rejoicing from the 19th to the 27th of August. Cardinal Vaughan, the Archbishop of Westminster, and formerly the Bishop of Salford, came to Burnley to preach at High Mass and to congratulate the clergy and people on their achievements.

The official ceremonies began on the afternoon of Saturday, the 19th of August. Cardinal Vaughan arrived at Manchester Road Station and was met by the clergy of Burnley and nine hundred Catholic men who escorted him to St. Mary's. The procession was headed by the Catholic Brass Band, and the route was decorated with bunting and lined with cheering, respectful onlookers. When he arrived at the church, the Cardinal, after a visit to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, addressed the men who had welcomed him, and praised them and their priests for their zeal, public spirit and true Christian charity.

On the next day, Sunday, High Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Salford, Bishop Bilsborrow, in the presence of Cardinal Vaughan. The pageantry of the Cardinal's procession from the main door to the High Altar was a sight many still remember for its impressiveness. The Cardinal walked under a canopy carried by four of the oldest members of the congregation: Mr. Culshaw, Mr. Shea, Mr. Brennan and Mr. Aspinall. Some of these men had been present, in their boyhood, at the opening of the Church.

The choir, which was specially augmented for the occasion, sang Haydn's First Mass, and was accompanied by an organ and an orchestra.<sup>1</sup> During High Mass, the gong rung for the Sanctus was the one used for many years in the Burnley Wood Chapel.

In his address, the Cardinal spoke of the rapid progress made by the Church in England during the Nineteenth Century, emphasizing the influence of the conversion of Cardinal Manning and Cardinal Newman. He praised the people of Burnley for their share in spreading the Faith and commented that, since 1846, no less than fifteen centres of worship had sprung from St. Mary's.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the week the celebrations continued. On the Monday, Canon Morrissey entertained to dinner at the presbytery the clergy constituting the Cardinal's old Chapter; on the Tuesday, an organ recital was given in the

church by Mr. W. Richmond of Harrogate; social gatherings occupied the other evenings; on the following Saturday there was a field day held on the Lower Ridge for the children and, on the final Sunday, Canon Morrissey celebrated a High Mass of thanksgiving.

The Golden Jubilee is a landmark in the history of St. Mary's because it brought to a triumphant end fifty years of effort and because it marked the end of a period of expansion. At the turn of the century, there was another change:— Towneley Hall was sold to the Corporation and the surviving members of the family left the parish. This resulted in a gradual diminishing of the rural section of the parish, and after a time, St. Mary's served an almost exclusively industrial congregation. Of course, these changes did not take place suddenly but, as we look back, 1899 suggests itself as a convenient time for marking the beginning of a process whose continuance we are witnessing.

There are several reasons why the clergy and people of St. Mary's have had to consolidate rather than expand during the last fifty years. In the first place, as the daughter missions have become self-supporting, it has been unnecessary for St. Mary's to assist them, except in a moderate and temporary manner. As almost the whole Catholic population was served with churches before 1910, there has been little further need to create new churches. Secondly, the deterioration in the value of property created by the rising prices and shortage of labour consequent on two wars has necessitated enormous sums of money being spent on repairs which are largely invisible. Finally, the two wars have meant that the young members of the parish, to whom we must look for energy and enterprise, have been away in the Forces. If the years between 1846 and 1899 seem to us to have been more fruitful than our own times, we can remember with pride that, whereas our fathers extended the Faith in their own town, many of our contemporaries, through their example in the Services, have spread their beliefs in many parts of the world. The achievements of the second fifty years are more difficult to assess than those of the first fifty, but that does not mean that they are less real.

#### CANON MORRISSEY'S JUBILEE AND DEATH.—

In 1901, Canon Morrissey completed twenty-five years in the priesthood, and his jubilee provided an opportunity for his parishioners to express their gratitude. An enthusiastic meeting was held in the Assembly Rooms and an illuminated address and a cheque for £300 were presented to the Canon. With this gift, Canon Morrissey provided two stained-glass windows in memory of Canon Rimmer and Father Johnson. These are still to be seen in

the South Aisle. This generous example was followed by some of the congregation and, in all, the church was enriched by ten stained-glass windows, at a cost of about £1,000.<sup>3</sup> The affection with which the parishioners held Canon Morrissey is shown in the sincerity of their address to him:—

“We are proud of you because, throughout the whole of your priestly career, you have shown an unswerving fidelity to the work of God you undertook at your ordination. With guiding hand and generous encouragement, you have led us to do many things to the advancement of our religion in Burnley. You have always been a father and friend to us all, rich and poor alike, an heroic help to the sick, an adviser in difficulties, an all in all to all men. Moreover, mainly through your sterling qualities, you have made the Catholic body respected in the town by everyone, and we take the opportunity of thanking you publicly for all you have done for us.”

Unhappily, Canon Morrissey was to continue his work for only two years more. On Sunday, the 2nd of March, 1903, he died suddenly of pneumonia. He was mourned with sorrow by the whole town, but especially by his own people, who came in thousands to pay their last respects to him, when his body was laid in the church, on the evening before his funeral. During his twenty-seven years at St. Mary's, Canon Morrissey saw many changes: The Catholic population of the town had almost doubled, and where there had been one church in 1876, there were five missions in 1903:—St. Mary's, St. John's, St. Mary Magdalene's, St. Augustine's (where a school-chapel had been opened in 1898) and St. Thomas's, where the schools were enlarged and made into a chapel of ease during Canon Morrissey's rectorship. In addition, he had seen the church buildings and grounds improved and had bought the two statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph, which stand at either side of the chancel arch, while on holiday in Italy.<sup>4</sup> These statues are remarkably line works and blend harmoniously with the Gothic architecture.

On the day of Canon Morrissey's funeral, the whole town seemed to assemble to pay tribute to him. The mills were stopped, flags were flown at half-mast and the route from St. Mary's to the cemetery was lilted with crowds of mourners. Almost the whole of the parish, including all the sodalites, walked in the procession and practically every public body sent its representatives. The School Board, where Canon Morrissey had been respected as a man above intolerant and partisan attitudes, adjourned its meetings until after the funeral, and the Burnley Gazette praised him in these terms:—

“While he was a devout Catholic and never lost sight of the interests of his own Church, he was courteous and kindly to everyone, indeed a thorough



Christian gentleman, and his death will be regretted by many outside his own Communion.”<sup>5</sup>

**CANON CORBISHLEY.**——After Canon Morrissey, two rectors followed in quick succession. In 1903 Father McDermott Roe, who had been curate at St. Mary's from 1873 to 1875, took charge of the parish but, as he was in a very delicate state of health, he was given permission to undertake lighter duties after he had been in Burnley for a few months. He was succeeded later in the year by Canon Corbishley who, in the short time he was destined to remain, endeared himself to the people by his constant gentleness and fatherly bearing. We are told that he seldom left a parishioner without a kindly “God bless you” and an encouraging smile. In the winter of 1904, he contracted a chill, perhaps during one of his frequent journeys to Manchester, where he had most arduous work to do as a member of the Cathedral Chapter and, on New Year's Day, 1905 he died of pneumonia. Within two years, the people of St. Mary's lost two loved rectors.

**MONSIGNOR COOKE.**——From 1905 to 1913, Monsignor Cooke took charge of the parish and it was during this time that the South Chapel was fitted with an altar and a reredos, and dedicated to the Sacred Heart, as a memorial to Canon Morrissey. Ever since 1903, the people of the parish had wished to erect a memorial to Canon Morrissey but, owing to the rapid changes in rectors and the demands of other duties, it was not until 1911 that the scheme was carried into effect. The designs for the interior were prepared by Monsignor Cooke himself and the Chapel was opened by Bishop John Vaughan on the 8th of January, 1911. The reredos and altar rails are of black and white marble, the main feature of the reredos being a beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart. Behind the altar, there is a stained-glass window depicting the Last Supper. The Chapel has been used for many years by the Sisters of Mercy, when they attend Mass and Benediction in the church.

In 1912, the Sisters at the Convent extended their work for the education of Catholic children by adding a new wing to the main building and enlarging the private school. Those who attended the Convent School look back with affectionate gratitude on the days they spent there, remembering the thoroughness of the Sisters' teaching, their patience, firmness and kindness and, above all, the homely atmosphere that could always be found there. They remember, too, the highlights of those school-days—the riotous Christmas parties, and the times when the Reverend Mother used to assemble the children round a Christmas tree, on the last morning of the Autumn term, to give each child a present.

Monsignor Cooke, at this time, was rapidly failing in health, and, though he continued to perform his duties as long as he could, he was obliged early in 1913 to enter into retirement.

MONSIGNOR TYNAN.—On the 2nd of May, the same year, Monsignor Tynan came to St. Mary's, and was rector for 26 years. When he came he was already well-known as a scholar, theologian and educationist. He had been appointed to the Cathedral Chapter of Salford in 1904, and four years later he had been made a Domestic Prelate in the Pope's Household, with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. For several years before 1913 he had been a member of the Diocesan Penance Board, and of the Catholic Education Council of Great Britain. In addition to this, he had had a most successful rectorship at St. Gregory's, Farnworth, where he had made additions to the schools and reduced the capital debt on the church to a very small sum.

For the first few years of his time it was not possible to accomplish any new work, because the occurrence of the First World War, with all its anxiety and distress, robbed the parish of hundreds of young men and filled the members of the congregation with extra-parochial concerns. When the war was over, however, "Monsignor," as he was always known, bent his energies to two great objects—the removal of the debt on the church and its subsequent consecration, and the building of a new church, instead of the School Chapel at St. Thomas's, to serve the Manchester Road area.

Although the capital debt on the church had been removed in 1899, there still remained, in the 1920's, debts of interest and those incurred by normal maintenance repairs. For about nine years Monsignor Tynan and his congregation worked to raise money, and by 1929 the church was declared free from all debt and ready for consecration. This was no mean achievement, for the money necessary had been given in years of distress, slump and unemployment. In preparation for the consecration, the church was decorated and repairs were carried out to check dry rot in the rafters of the side aisles.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH.—On the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Thursday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, 1929, St. Mary's was consecrated by the Bishop of Salford, the Right Reverend Thomas Henshaw.

The ceremonies of consecration began on the Wednesday evening, when the Bishop, together with nine priests, recited Matins and Lauds in the church. On the next day the consecration proper began at 9 o'clock. The Bishop first made a triple circuit of the outside of the building, sprinkling it with

holy water, each time striking the main door with his pastoral staff and reciting Psalm XXIII in dialogue with the deacon within:—

“Lift up your gates, O ye princes,  
And be ye lifted up O eternal gates;  
And the King of Glory shall enter in.”

Before entering the church, Bishop Henshaw addressed a section of the congregation outside the west door. After outlining the ceremonies of consecration and explaining their significance, he expressed his great joy in being at St. Mary's, and congratulated the parishioners on having merited such a great privilege, and on having chosen 1929, the centenary of Catholic Emancipation, for the event. After this the Bishop and his ministers entered the church alone. Here the Bishop first performed the ancient rite of tracing the Greek and Latin alphabet with the end of his pastoral staff in ashes which had been strewn in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross on the floor of the church. Gregorian water<sup>6</sup> was then blessed, and with it the main door and High Altar were signed. Next, the altar, walls and floor were sprinkled and incensed, and the main door posts and the walls were anointed with chrism. The twelve small crosses which are attached to the inside of the church walls mark the places where the walls were anointed at the time of consecration. A bracket and candle are set before each cross, to be lit on the anniversary of the consecration, and the crosses may never be obliterated or removed.

The next stage in the ceremony was the consecration of the altar in the Sacred Heart Chapel. (The High Altar had been consecrated before the opening of the church, in 1849, and the altar in the Towneley Chapel at a later date.) Relics of St. Felix and St. Prosper were brought to the Sacred Heart Chapel and placed on the altar, which was then consecrated. During these ceremonies the Bishop was attended by the clergy of St. Mary's, and of the other Burnley parishes, and by many visiting priests.

About half-past eleven Pontifical High Mass was celebrated at the newly consecrated altar. The congregation was admitted, and a choir of schoolchildren, conducted by Mr. J. Parkinson, the headmaster, sang the “Missa de Angelis.” Bishop Hanlon and Monsignor Tynan assisted Bishop Henshaw at the Throne.

After this ceremony a luncheon was held in the Assembly Rooms, and in the evening the outside of the church was illuminated for two hours by a thousand coloured lights.<sup>7</sup>

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING.—In the year 1929, Monsignor Tynan had bought Springhill House, on Manchester Road, and the land surrounding it, as a site for a new church and a school to replace St. Thomas's. A priest was appointed soon after the purchase of the house, and for many years Sunday Mass and Benediction were celebrated in St. Thomas's School, and week-day Mass in the little chapel at Springhill House. At this time St. Thomas's ceased to be a chapel-of-ease, served from St. Mary's.

As time went on, the need for a new church was urgent. In consequence of housing reforms, new districts were created, and they could not be served easily by the existing churches. In 1935, then, the Church of Christ the King was built, and it served a parish composed of the Manchester Road area, new districts and sections of St. Mary's and St. Mary Magdalene's parishes.

Like so many of his predecessors, Monsignor Tynan was a member of the Burnley Education Committee from the time of his arrival at St. Mary's until his death, and his work, especially for the Catholic elementary schools, won him a name as an intrepid advocate of religious education. He had so clear an intellect and so forceful a mode of expression that his influence over his fellow members of the Education Committee was profound. During his time at St. Mary's, the Central School for Boys was opened in the Assembly Rooms, and the headship of the Boys' School was undertaken by Mr. J. Parkinson, who succeeded Mr. Sunderland. Monsignor Tynan not only safeguarded the interests of Catholic children by his work on committees, but he also made himself a friend of all those in the schools. He visited each class regularly, often with prizes for the best boy or girl.

In addition to his work for the parish, Monsignor Tynan, as Bishop's Canonist for thirty years, conducted all the correspondence between the diocese and the Holy See. From 1920 onwards he was Canon Theologian of the diocese, and as part of that office he was called upon to arrange the business of conferences and to conduct the Junior Clergy Examinations.

In 1935 Monsignor Tynan celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination, and, at his own request, the occasion was marked very simply. On Ascension Day he said the 9-15 Mass, which corresponded to his first Mass fifty years before, and on the following Sunday he sang High Mass. The only social event which commemorated the jubilee was a tea party, at which "Monsignor" entertained all the school children of St. Mary's.

For many years Monsignor Tynan had been suffering from diabetes, and after his jubilee his health seemed to fail day by day, though he continued to

perform as many duties as he could, until the day of his death, the 12th of August, 1939. The congregation of 1939, like their fathers and forefathers, were not slow to pay their last respects to their Rector. When his mortal remains were brought into the church there was only standing room for many hundreds of parishioners, and many more had to stand outside the church. In accordance with his wishes, Monsignor Tynan was buried in Burnley, among his own people, who, he said, would not forget to pray for the repose of his soul. He rests beside Canon Morrissey and Canon Corbishley.

CANON INGRAM.—Less than a month after Monsignor Tynan's death, the Second World War broke out, and it was made known about the same time that Father Ingram was to become the new parish priest. He arrived at St. Mary's on the 4th of October, 1939, and was formally inducted as Parish Priest by the Vicar General. He was made a Canon of the Chapter of Salford Cathedral in July, 1946. For ten years Canon Ingram and his parishioners have contended with war-time conditions and shortage of labour and materials in the upkeep of the church property. Nevertheless, much has been achieved. Since 1939, new heating apparatus has been installed in the church, the electrical equipment has been overhauled and the building completely re-wired. An electric motor has replaced the organ's hand-pump system, some beams in the north aisle have been replaced to prevent the spread of dry rot, the High Altar and Chancel have been decorated, and finally, at a cost of almost £1,000, the body of the church has been re-painted in preparation for the centenary celebrations in August of this year.

The war, in all its phases and its aftermath, has left its mark on the parish. Hundreds of young men and women left to join the Services, and many did not return. We still pray for those in the Forces, and remember the courage of the fallen, as we offer up Masses for the repose of their souls. During the years of the black-out, Midnight Mass was suspended, Benediction was given in the afternoons during the winter, and early mass on Sundays and weekdays was said in almost total darkness. In 1940, when the Channel Islands were invaded, several families of refugees found shelter here and became well-liked among us. They are now happily at home, some of them re-united to those they had thought never to see again.

In 1940, the women of the parish, under the presidency of Lady Alice Reyntiens, formed the Catholic Women's Working Party, affiliated to the W.V.S. They knitted garments for soldiers, and were trained to take charge of rest centres in case of heavy air raids. Hundreds of parcels were distributed by this organisation.

As the war dragged on and restrictions increased, it was impossible for Catholics living in Cliviger and Holme to come to St. Mary's for Mass, because the bus service was suspended on Sunday mornings. To meet this emergency the Chapel at Dyneley Hall, the home of Lady Alice Reyntiens, was opened to the Catholics of the district, and for several years a priest went from St. Mary's to say Mass there. Now Father Goolden is the resident chaplain. It is pleasing to think that once more Catholics may hear Mass in the home of a descendant of the Towneleys, as they did in Penal Times.

To-day, when the war has long been over, we still have with us people who suffered loss of home, relatives and friends in Eastern European countries, and who cannot return to their own country. These European Volunteer workers have provided us with the opportunity of occasionally hearing Mass celebrated in the Ukrainian rite, an opportunity which rarely occurs for English people. We are proud to have these Eastern Catholics with us, and are glad to give them shelter in our town. Just as in 1853 the Italian Legion, formerly mentioned, dared not return, for fear of tyrannical oppression, to Tuscany, so the Poles and Ukrainians must stay with us if they wish to avoid imprisonment.

There have been changes in the schools during the past ten years; the provisions of the Education Act of 1944 necessitated the regrouping of all Catholic children in the town to provide a secondary modern school. In April, 1948, therefore, St. Mary's Schools were arranged to accommodate infants and seniors only, and the Convent School was closed to provide extra classrooms. When this happened, the past pupils of the Convent presented to the chapel a marble and brass Communion rail, as a token of affection and gratitude. In 1943 Mr. Parkinson retired, after long years of service, and was succeeded as headmaster of the Boys' School by Mr. Walsh. To present the Catholic attitude towards the Education Act of 1944, and to safeguard our interests generally, the parish branch of the Catholic Parents and Electors' Association was formed in 1943, and is still active.

In 1942 the Sisters of Mercy opened a Branch House at Todmorden, as they had been invited by the Father Prior of St. Joseph's Servile Church to take charge of the school there. Six of the Community are now resident at the Branch House.

The social life of St. Mary's since 1939 has been varied. For several years the Social Club held dances each Saturday, and occasional "Gay Nineties" evenings. There have lately been regular inter-parochial re-unions in the Mechanics' Institute, St. Mary's people taking their turn to organize.

Nowadays the chief social feature is the Youth Club, which has a record membership, and equipment second to none in Burnley.

St. Mary's has always been noted for flourishing sodalities. In our day we can point to the Men's Sodality, the Women's Guild of the Blessed Sacrament, the Catenian Association, the Knights of St. Columba (where St. Mary's men are well represented), and to the groups who spend their efforts to help the poor: the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Ladies of Charity, and the Catholic Needlework Guild.

As the end of the first century of St. Mary's life draws near, we look back on past efforts and sacrifices with gratitude to the Rectors, curates (too numerous to mention individually) and laity, who have given us an inheritance to be proud of, and we look forward with confidence and determination to the beginning of the next hundred years.

#### NOTES, Chapter III:

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| 1 | Organist: Miss Ryan.<br>Violins: Messrs. C. A. Wood<br>and J. Keegan.<br>Bass: Mr. M. Eastwood.                  | Cornet: Mr. C. Nuttall.<br>Euphonium: Mr. T. Noble.<br>Flautists: Mr. Crane and<br>Master Nuttall. |
| 2 | These fourteen or fifteen missions include those as far afield as Padiham, Hapton, Brierfield, Nelson and Colne. |  |

#### 3 STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.

North Aisle: East, to West.  
1. The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple.  
2. The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven.  
3 The Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple.  
4, Our Lady of the Rosary,  
5, The Death of Our Lady.

South Aisle: East to West.  
1. The Nativity.  
2. The Sacred Heart.  
3. The Child Jesus in the Temple.  
4. The Baptism of Our Lord  
5. The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven,

- 4 It is not certain whether these statues were bought when Canon Morrissey was still a curate under Canon Rimmer or during his own rectorship.
- 5 From the "Burnley Gazette" of Wednesday, the 5th of March, 1903.
- 6 Gregorian water is water with which is mixed ashes, salt and wine. In accordance with a prescription of Pope St. Gregory I, it is blessed by the Bishop at, the consecration of a church. (Catholic Dictionary)
- 7 For much of this account, I am indebted to the "Burnley Express" of the 14th September, 1929.