



1847  1997

St. Patrick's
Wigan

**“ its warmth
undiminished.... ”**

**150 years of st patrick's
church, school and people**

the Lord
is my
shepherd

There is
n thing
I shall
want

The Tale of Years 1847 - 1997

1847

30th November. Bishop Brown officially opens St. Patrick's Church with a solemn pontifical high mass.

1848

October. Father James Nugent appointed first parish priest.

1849

January. Father Hugh McCormick becomes parish priest.

1856

17th March. Fr. McCormick lays foundation stone of first St. Patrick's school building.

1863

December. St. Patricks C. Y. M. S. formed.

1878

2nd September. Cardinal Manning lays foundation stone of present church.

1880

17th March. Official opening of present church. Old church becomes boys' school.

1889

19th March. Thomas Woodcock born in Belvoir Street.

1890

9th August. First combined processions of faith.

1893

22nd May. St Patrick's lead out in first walk to be held on Whit Monday. Extension added to boys' school later in year.

1897

7th June. St. Patrick's again lead the walks in the year of their Golden Jubilee.

8th August. Mary Penman (now Mary Griffiths) oldest living parishioner, born in John Street

1898

17th March. Golden Jubilee celebrations held on 50th St Patrick's Day from founding, not on actual date (November 30th, 1897). Sacred Heart altar consecrated.

1906

17th March. Our Lady's altar installed and consecrated.

1911

19th November. Present high altar installed and consecrated.

1917

17th October. Thomas Woodcock becomes first Wigan born soldier to win the Victoria Cross.

1918

17th March. Thomas Woodcock given hero's welcome at St. Patrick's.

27th March. Thomas Woodcock is killed in action in France.

1920

24th May. First Whit Walk after 1st World War.

1926

12th May. St. Patricks' Schoolboys Rugby League team become first-ever winners of Daily Dispatch Shield.

1927

Old school built in 1856 pulled down to make way for new girls' school.

1928

5th May. St. Pat's Soccer team win Universe Cup.

6th May. First May Crowning at St. Patrick's.

2nd December. New Girls' School opened on Rupert Street.

5th - 10th December. Operatic Society stages "Florodora" at St. John's Hall.

1945

13th May. Crownings resume.

21st May, Whit Monday. St. Patrick's hold Whit Walk of their own round parish.

1947

Centenary Celebrations. The church is redecorated.

19th October. Centenary Mass celebrated.

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Foreword

by

Father Naylor

The title of the booklet prepared for the 150th anniversary of the founding of St. Patrick's parish in Wigan is a quotation from the well - known hymn "Hail, glorious St. Patrick".

The third verse of the hymn reads:

Thy people, now exiles on many a shore,
 Shall love and revere thee till time be no more;
 and the fire thou has kindled shall ever burn bright,
 IT'S WARMTH UNDIMINISHED, undying it's Light.

The hymn may be restricted to the English - speaking territories of the world, but I have yet to find a Church territory which does not have a cathedral, church or, at least, chapel dedicated to the Saint . Their towers and spires, ancient or modern, testify to the firm Faith of Irish travellersmany missionaries, but others engaged in more worldly work. My very first parish was in Rawalpindi, now in Muslim Pakistan, where the High Altar is of white marble inlaid with green marble shamrock: the church was built by Irish regiments serving in India and the altar by men of the Connaught Rangers.

Our Wigan parish, as the booklet describes, was served at different times, by many Irish missionary priests, but its origins and life depended upon the enduring faith of its community in Scholes and surrounding areas. The booklet speaks of joys, of triumphs and of tragedies, of outstanding individuals and of a multitude of the less - knowna typical story of human community. Less typical is the truth that the bond uniting this community is FaithLove and sevice of God.

I must thank Colin, Gerald, the members of the 150th Committee and so many others, who have laboured to bring these chapters again to the light of day, and I congratulate them indeed.

As for you, dear reader, may I invite you to take some pride in this story but not to stop at that. History continues day-by-day. Your forefathers made you what you are: your children's children will be what you make them. Treasure your Faith, that they, too, may enjoy

"It's warmth undiminished, undying it's light".

F. Bill Naylor P.P.

DEDICATION

Half a century ago, at the centenary of this parish, Father John Beirne stated how on these occasions, the big events and the great personalities are recalled. But as he points out, "Many a name in the book of Life is not found in the (Wigan) Examiner." He goes on to pay tribute to all the loyal parishioners who cannot be mentioned individually and yet are the life blood of the parish. He calls them "the I. L. P.", "the Important Little People".

This work is dedicated to the "important little people" for they are not so "little", merely as Father Naylor says, "less - known". It is their story and they are still writing it. It is a story and not a balanced history. Economic trends, popular movements and great events are dealt with only slightly and where they had an effect on the life of the parish.

The wonders of modern technology have enabled far more of the "important little people" to feature in this work, either by mention or by visual record, than was possible fifty years ago. An effort has been made to feature as many of them as possible.

But even if you scan these pages in vain for the mention of your name or the sight of your face, no matter. If you are a present or past parishioner of St. Patrick's, you're here all the same.

Colin Blake
Gerald Fairhurst

IN MEMORIAM

Throughout these pages, Mary Griffiths is constantly spoken of as the "oldest living parishioner". Sadly, Mary passed away before publication. Her family have kindly given their permission to let the book stay as written.

May she rest in peace.

INTRODUCTION

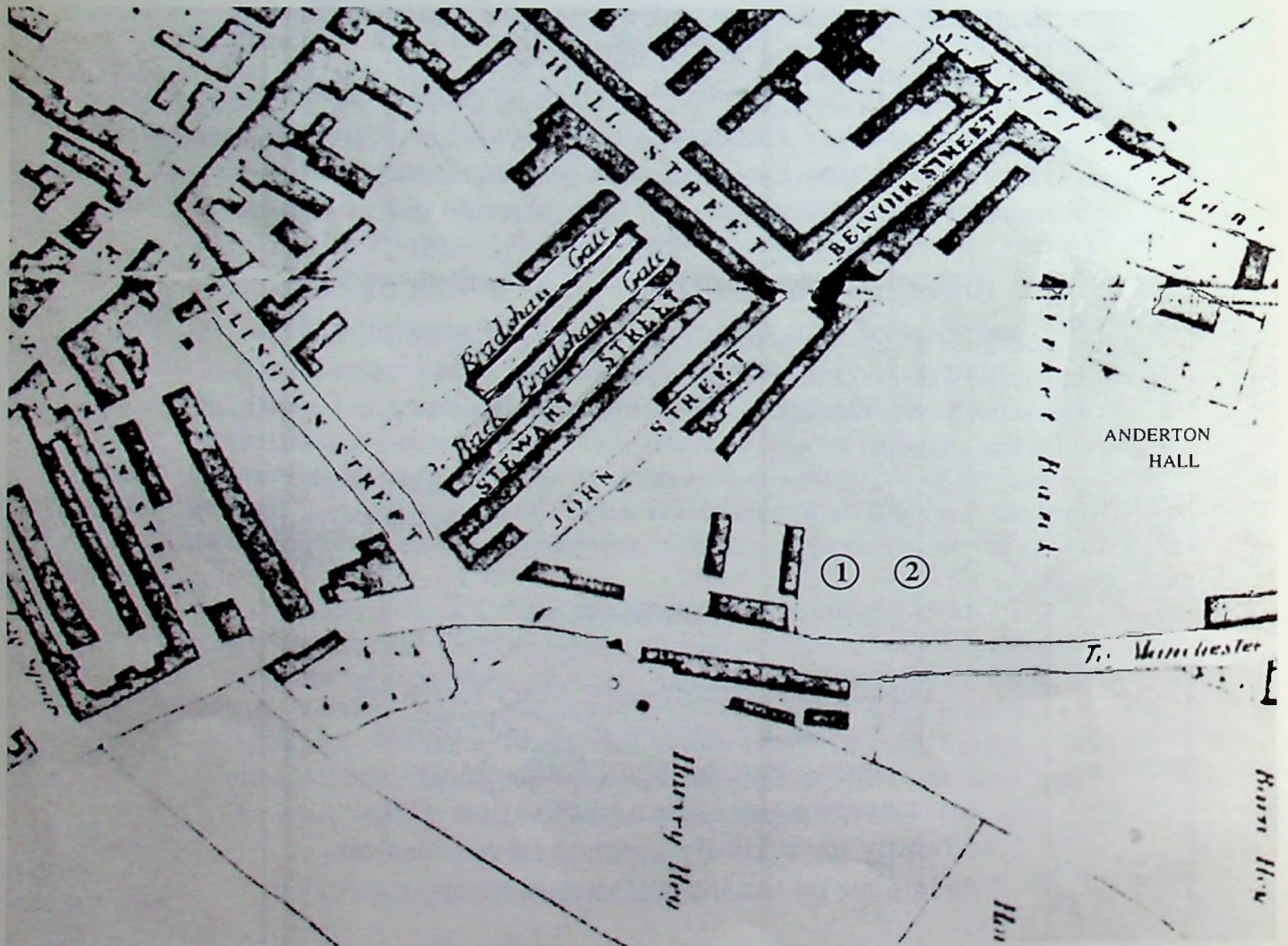
"In the beginning...."

The map below shows the Scholes area in 1827, twenty years before the parish of St. Patrick's was established. Already, the northern half of what was to become the centre of the parish, was in place. Familiar names are there; Wellington Street, Belvoir Street, John Street, Vauxhall Road, (then called Vauxhall Street), Bradshawgate and Scholefield Lane, so called because of "Scholes Field" which lay just behind it,

and of course Scholes itself, running down the north-west corner.

However, no St. Patrick Street yet! Where the top end of St. Patrick Street was to be, stood a large house. Anderton Hall.

Hardybutts is shown, though it is not named but simply indicated as the road "....to Manchester".



① = site of 1st church (1847)

② = site of present church (1880)

Below Hardybutts was a large open field called Harvey Hey. Fifty years later, this area would be filled with houses and be comprised of Cambridge Street, Rupert Street, Teck Street, Afghan Street and others. All of great empty slope crowned by Anderton Hall and reaching down to the line of the future Darlington Street East now known as Birket Bank.

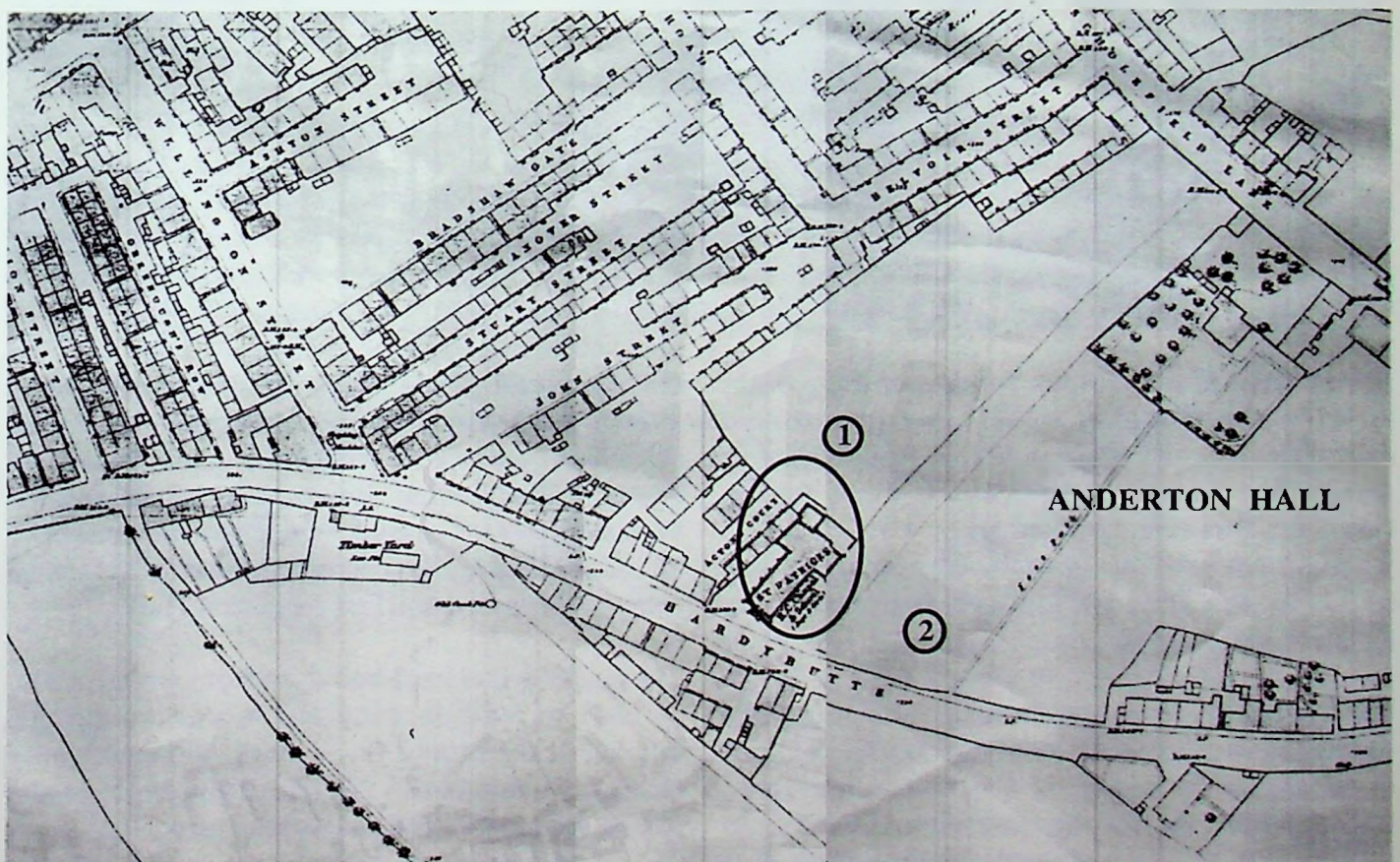
A steady stream of Irish immigrants had been moving into England over the past since the middle of the previous century, seeking work in the factories of the industrial north of England. Many came to Wigan and settled in the Scholes area. Most were Catholics and their needs were dealt with by the priests of the already established mission of St. Mary's.

In 1845, the Great Famine occurred in Ireland and the tragic conditions there caused the stream of Irish immigration to swell to a flood. The Catholic

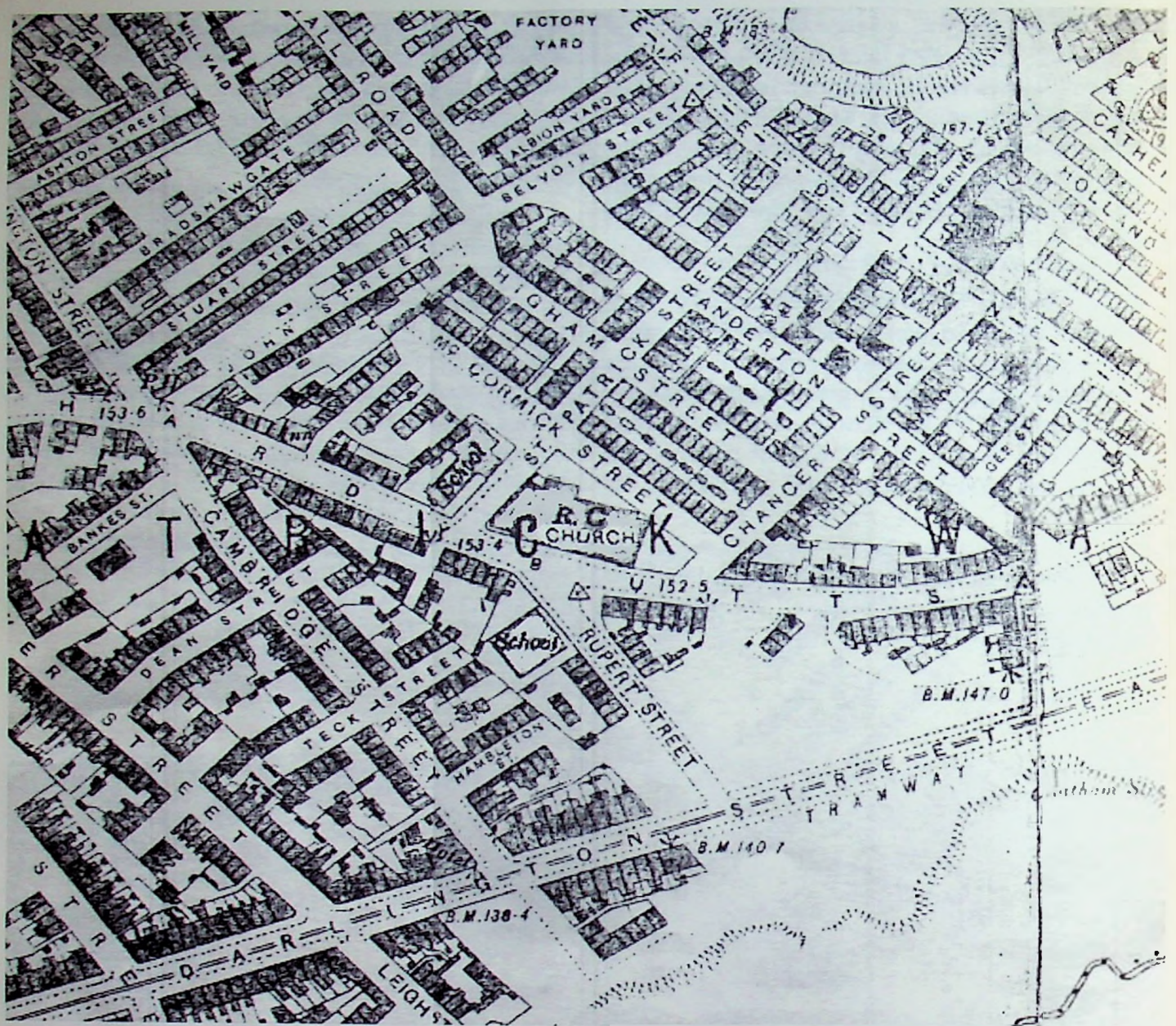
population of Scholes increased dramatically and there was clearly need for a parish church to be established in the area. This was built and opened by late 1847 and in keeping with the national character of the local Catholic population, it was dedicated to St. Patrick.

1848

The map below shows the heart of the parish in 1848. Shown on it now is the new church of St. Patrick which stood for over a hundred years, though for most of that time it served as a school not as a church. The rest of the area shows an increase in housing, Ashton Street has now appeared. However, the areas to the south and east of the church show little change. Harvey Hey and Birket Bank are still largely empty and Anderton Hall still stands.



① = 1847 church now built ② = site of present church

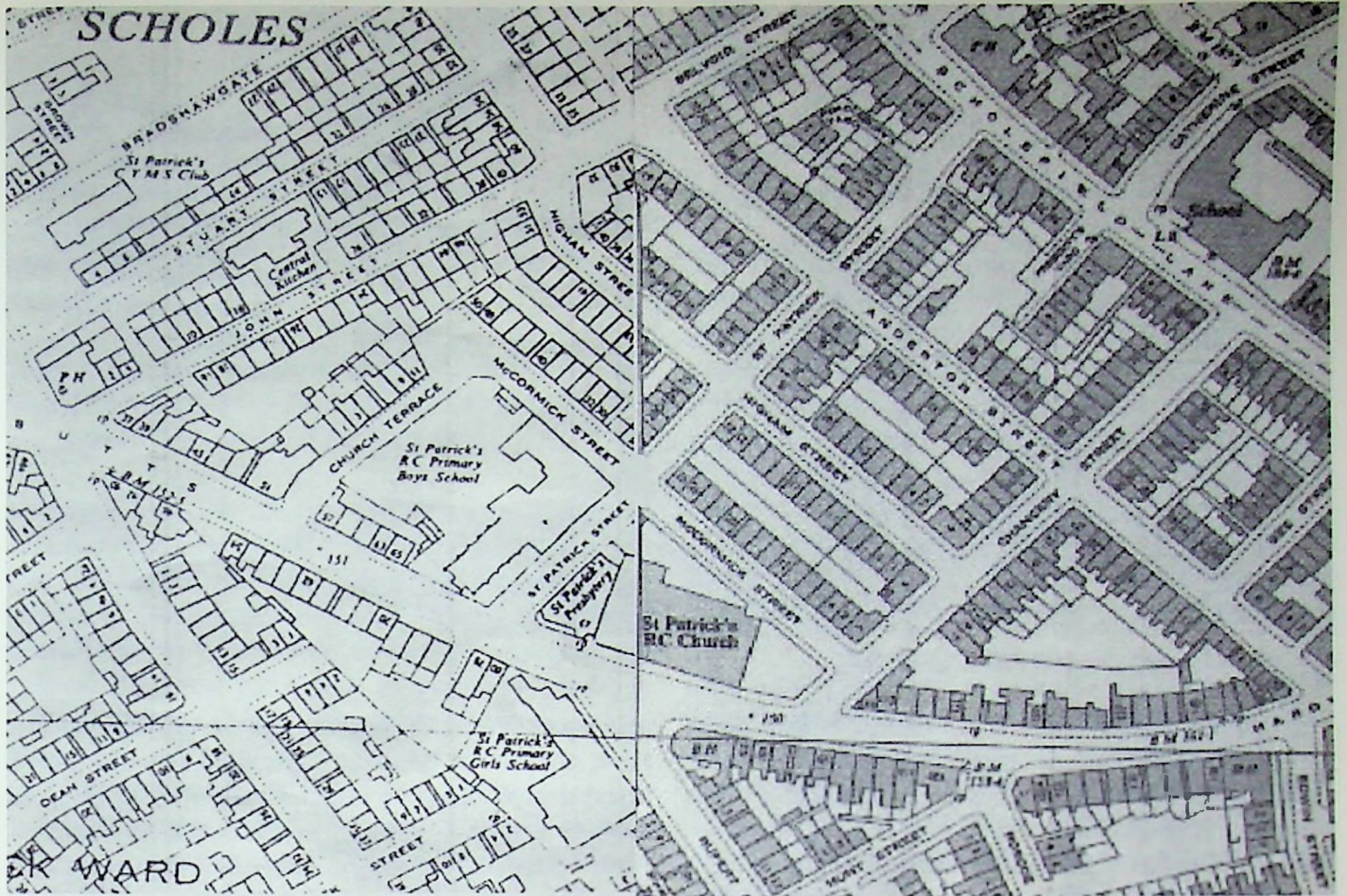


By the time of the Golden Jubilee of the parish, streets which would be associated with it for the next half - century were in place. Rupert Street, Cambridge Street, Silver Street, Teck Street, Chancery Street and of course, St. Patrick Street itself. The present church is now in place alongside the 1847 church, at this time serving as the Boys' School.

On Rupert Street, another school building has appeared but this is not the Girls' School remembered by many of us. This school was built in 1856 and was the first school building in the parish. It was demolished though not completely, in 1927.

On the eastern side of St. Patrick Street, other streets have appeared which were also to be associated with St. Patrick's for most of the next century. McCormick Street, named in honour of Father Hugh McCormick, (parish priest from 1849 to 1875), Higham Street, and Anderton Street, an echo of the now vanished Anderton Hall.

The parish population had risen from around 1200, in 1847 to 6000 in 1880 and it was around this number at the turn of the century. This, with only small changes, is the picture of the heart of the parish for most of the present century.



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1955

The picture of the centre of the parish fifty years on shows little change. There are however, a few points worth mentioning. The Girls' School on Rupert Street, is now the flat - roofed building well remembered by parishioners of let's say...er...middle years! The Boys' School also has changed. The 1847 church building had an extension added to it in 1893 (not shown on the 1893 OS map). The C.Y.M.S. club stood on Bradshawgate. It was located in a war - surplus army Nissen hut. Shortly, a new club building would be built at the foot of John Street where the public house, (The Prince Of Wales) is indicated on the above map.

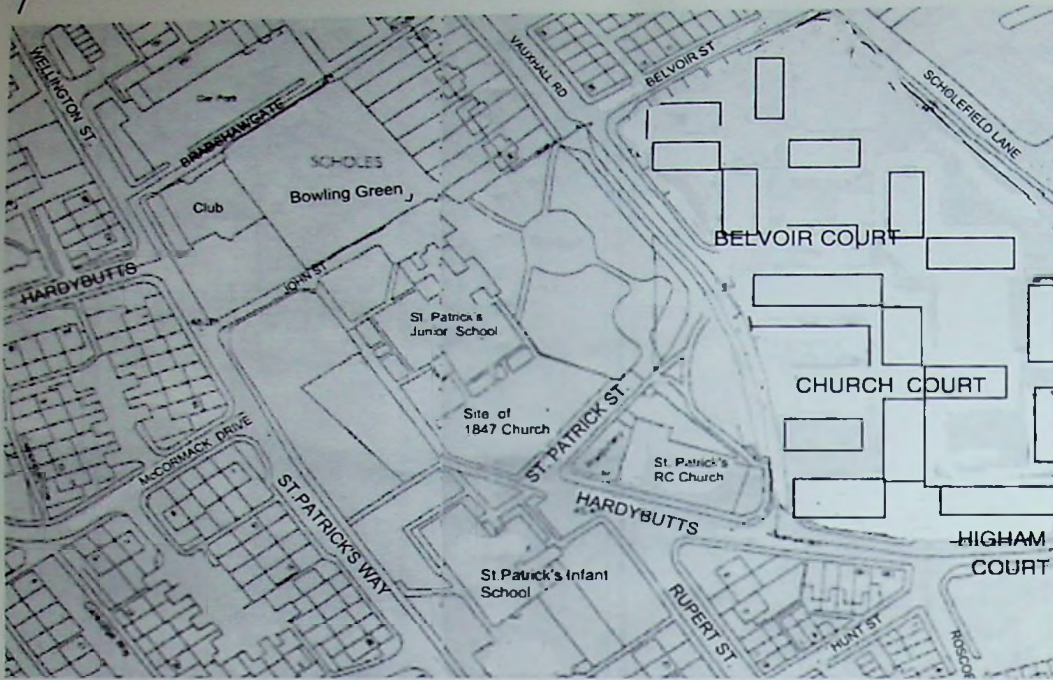
1976

In the late nineteen - sixties, the centre of the parish changed dramatically. Gone were Anderton Street, Higham Street, McCormick Street and Chancery Street. Vauxhall Road now runs clear through to

Hardybutts. The old 1847 church building has gone and so too has the Girl's School on Rupert Street. The present school buildings are now shown. In place of the old streets on the east, the notorious "upside - down" houses of Church Court, Higham Court and Belvoir Court now stand.

1997

The "upside - down" houses stood for nearly a quarter of a century until they were demolished in 1995. In their place we now have, Hackworth Close, Collett Close, Fowler Close and Gresley Close. They are named after the designers of railway locomotives. If historical names were sought however, it does seem a pity that no names with a connection to the parish were chosen. Would Chancery Close, Anderton Close and Higham Close have sounded so ill to the ear ?



The heart of the parish just before the demolition of the "upside - down" houses, showing their approximate position.

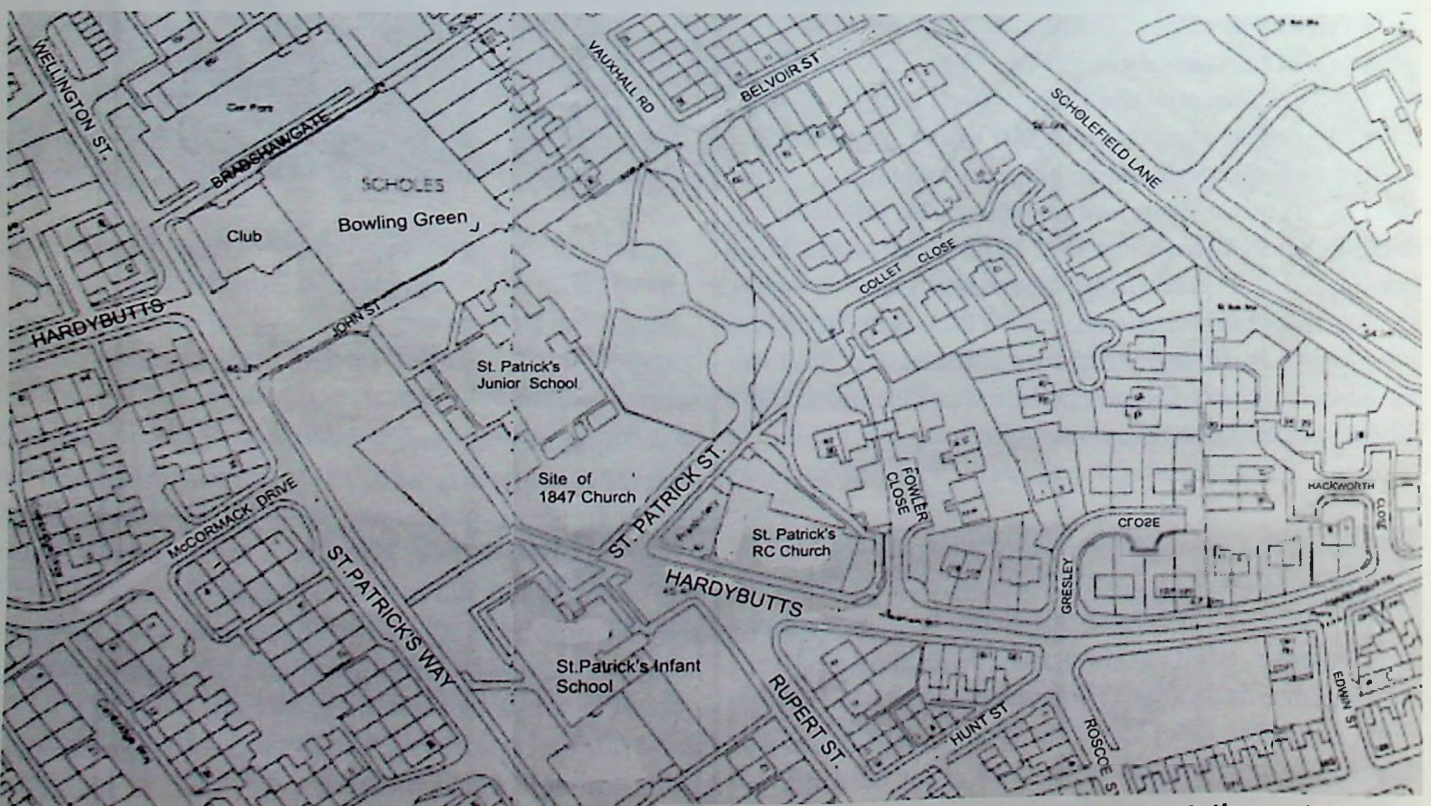
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The last map below shows the historic centre of the parish at the present time. Apart from the changes and street names already recorded, the greater part of what used to be called Cambridge Street is now called St. Patrick's Way. This is fitting as St. Patrick's Street itself has almost ceased to exist. At least we have a prominent thoroughfare in the parish which bears the parish name.

What is perhaps surprising is that some of the streets

that were there in the beginning are still with us. The most notable of these are Vauxhall Road, Belvoir Street and Wellington Street. Even John Street is still there in a way. It forms the drive into St. Patrick's Junior School, but on the latest OS maps it is still called John Street (see above).

But whatever the streets are called and however the buildings change, the story of St. Patrick's goes on. Here's to the next one hundred and fifty years.



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The heart of the parish at the present time - 1997

St. Patrick's Church (1847 - 1997)

1847

" 29th. November. "Went to Wigan"

" 30th. November. "Celebrated pontifically in the new chapel in that town which is in the part called Scholes."

With these two laconic entries in his diary for the year 1847, Bishop George Hilary Brown recorded the start of 150 years of St. Patrick's.

Bishop Brown was the first Bishop of the Liverpool diocese. Strictly speaking, however, he was not that when he celebrated that first mass in St. Patrick's. The restoration of the Catholic hierarchy was still three years away. Bishop Brown bore the title of "Bishop of Bugia in partibus" and his official rank was Vicar Apostolic of the Lancashire Vicariate.

Lancashire was already the most Catholic county in England at this time. Thus, when the waves of Irish immigration began, the Irish who came to Lancashire found a strong Catholic community already in existence. This was an experience not shared by their fellow countrymen who settled elsewhere. As J. A. Hilton puts it in "Catholic Lancashire". The native Lancastrian Catholics were re-inforced massively by Irish immigrants and the Irish were grafted on to the Lancastrian stock.

This merging produced a formidable breed, but it was not always painless, as we shall see.

The first wave of Irish immigration came in 1790, in response to the increased demand for labour, created by the Industrial Revolution. The second came after 1820, and the third and greatest in the famine years of 1845 to 1847. Mgr. Nugent's biographer tells us that in those years, a deck passage to Liverpool cost sixpence. This offered a means of escape to the thousands fleeing from famine and disease to an area where they would find friends among their fellow countrymen who had preceded them, and a Catholic community already established.

It was only to be expected that much of this influx would overspill into the area surrounding Liverpool

and penetrate a mere eighteen miles to Wigan.

The town had at that time, a Catholic population of seven thousand which included three thousand Irish. Their needs were served by the already existing missions of St. John's and St. Mary's. The St. Mary's mission included what was to become St. Patrick's parish and as a matter of record, what was to become St. Williams, Ince, as well. By 1851, this Catholic population had nearly doubled.

It seems safe to assume that this increase was mainly Irish, and that the increase peaked about 1846 - 1847.

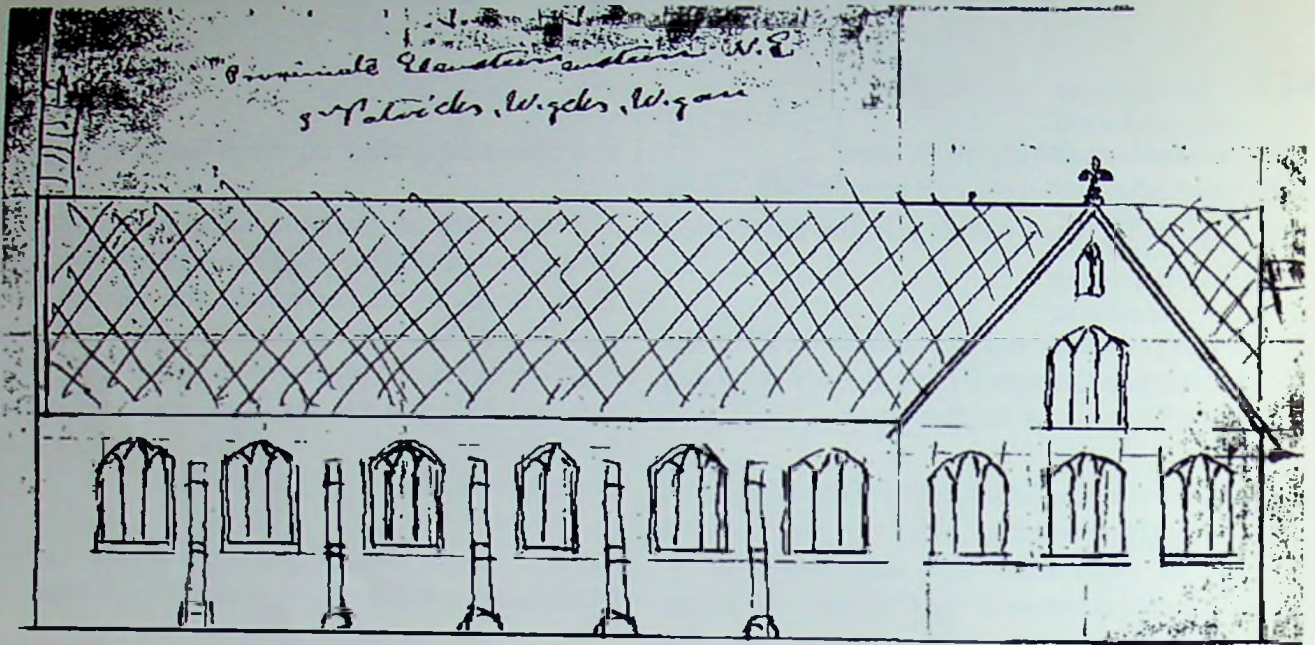
The first rector of St. Mary's was Fr. Charles Middlehurst whose tenure of office lasted from 1819 to 1848. A "Short History of St. Mary's by Dr. O' Donaghue (1913) tells us that the "great work" which claimed Fr. Middlehurst's attention in the 1840's was meeting the needs of the growing Catholic Irish population of Scholes. Dr. O' Donaghue recounts how he recalls a parishioner telling him how his father had accompanied Fr. Middlehurst around Scholes collecting funds to build St. Patrick's church.

The site the new church was to occupy was then settled. To the south-east of Belvoir Street and John Street and in the triangle formed by those streets, Hardybutts and Scholefield Lane, lay Anderton Hall, recently occupied, prior to this time, by the Anderton family, who were local Catholic gentry.

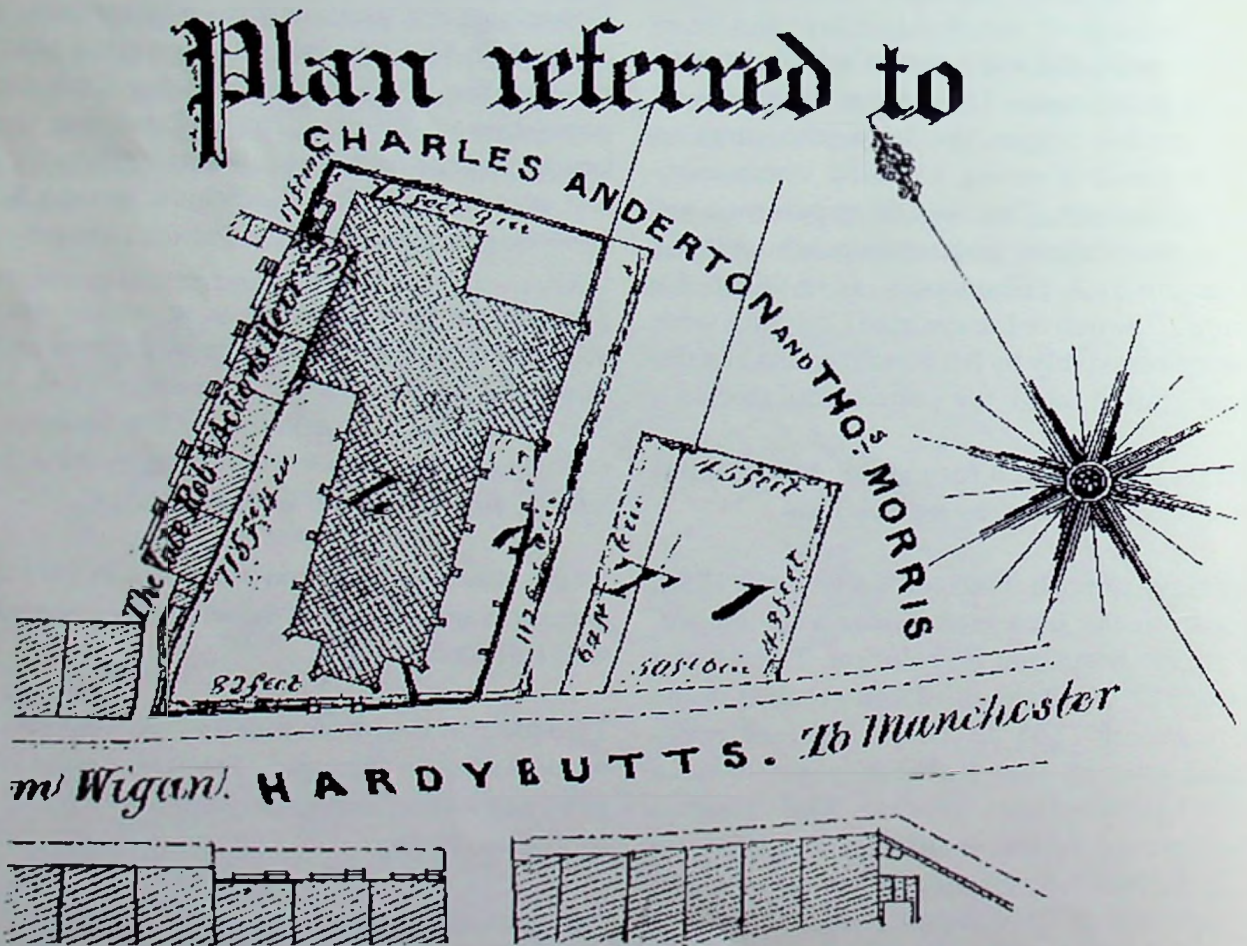
At this time, the Anderton estate was in the hands of executors and trustees of the will of Roger Anderton, who had died in 1833.

Two plots of land were found in the westerly corner of the Anderton "triangle". The larger plot (1017 sq. yds.) was for the chapel, the smaller (286 sq. yds.) was for the presbytery.

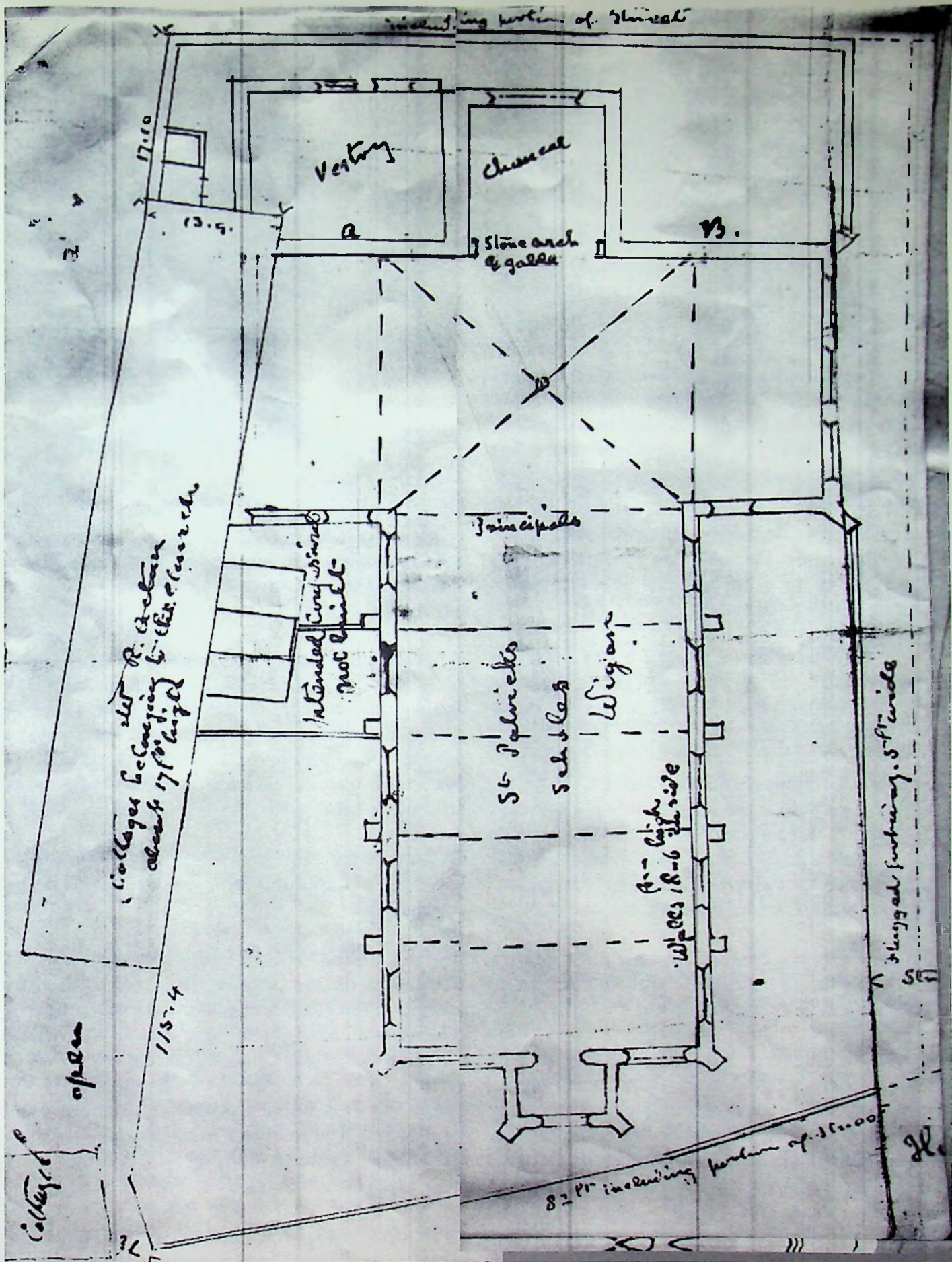
Enough money was found to make a start and the chosen architect and builder, Mr. James Fairclough of Wigan, duly completed his labours in time for the official opening on 30th. November, 1847, the feast of St. Andrew.



Early Sketch of St. Patrick's 1847. Found in the archdiocesan archives.



A plan of St. Patrick's from 1862. It looks as though it was felt that the church should be tucked away against existing buildings so as not to encroach to much on the estate. Note how the north-west transept is cut into by the houses belonging to "the late Robt. Acton's heirs". People old enough to remember the building when it was a school will recall the incongruous cement finish on the exterior transept wall at the side facing the school yard.



Early plan of St. Patrick's church showing position of vestry and chancel. Note the planned confessionals which were never built. According to a visitation return of Fr. McCormick in 1855, it was the joint design of Fr. Middlehurst and J. Fairclough, the architect and cost £1500.

(Diocesan Archives)

As there was no "Wigan Observer" at this time, we are indebted to an unknown correspondent of the "Tablet" who signs himself "a Catholic", for the only known press report of that occasion. The "Tablet" is the oldest Catholic newspaper in the country and was then as now, a reputable national Catholic weekly and it published the report of St. Patrick's opening in its edition of December 4th. 1847.

This report is reproduced in full on page 13. It gives a very detailed description of the church, particularly of the altar. This matches exactly the present Sacred Heart altar in the present church and gives rise to fascinating speculation about the identity of the latter.*

1848

In its early stages, St. Patrick's was a chapel of ease, served by the clergy of St. Mary's. Father Middlehurst died tragically, only two months after the opening of St. Patrick's. He died on the 18th January, 1848 of a fever he contracted whilst attending a sick parishioner.

He was succeeded at St. Mary's by Fr. William Wells and entries in the St. Mary's notice books of the period confirm that St. Patrick's was still being administered from St. Mary's.

However all references to St. Patrick's in the St. Mary's notice books, cease by October, 1848, and in that month the baptismal record of St. Patrick's begins. It looks fairly certain that this was the time when St. Patrick's was recognised as an independent "mission" with its own appointed rector.

This was Fr. James Nugent, a curate of St. Mary's who later achieved fame as the founder of Catholic social services in the archdiocese.

He was born in Liverpool in 1822, and according to his biographer, baptised most auspiciously on St. Patrick's day. However, neither his biographer, Canon Bennett nor Mr. Brian Plumb in his book, "Found Worthy" seem aware of his being the first rector of St. Patrick's. Mr. Plumb's work is full however of valuable information about Mgr. Nugent's later career and about most of the other priests who have served St. Patrick's.



Statue of Monsignor James Nugent in St. John's Gardens, Liverpool. The inscription describes him as "Apostle of Temperance, Protector of the Orphan, Consoler of the Prisoner, Reformer of the Criminal, Saviour of Fallen Womanhood and Friend to All in Poverty and Affliction".

After being educated at Ushaw and the English college in Rome, Fr. Nugent was ordained in 1846. In 1848, he became curate at St. Mary's and in October, he became rector at St. Patrick's. In January, 1849, he moved to Liverpool and there as Mr. Plumb puts it, "his name became synonymous with practical charity"

He died on the 20th. June, 1905, but not before he had made a couple of return visits to St. Patrick's as we shall see.

The first person baptised by Fr. Nugent was Ralph Fogg, born on 2nd October, 1848, son of Richard Fogg and Ann Fogg (nee Hodkinson), very probably a descendant of the John Fogg who in 1823, built Fogg's Place, (later Church Terrace).

Ralph Fogg's baptism was the first of many in the new parish. The marriage register does not begin until 1851, although marriages did continue to be celebrated at St. Mary's up to 1856.

In January 1849, Fr. Nugent departed to begin his illustrious career in Liverpool, and he was succeeded

* See Appendix A " The Identity of the Sacred Heart altar "

as rector of St. Patrick's by the Reverend Hugh Nugent McCormick, his cousin .

Fr. McCormick's tenure at St. Patrick's was to be altogether more permanent than his cousin's and if no statues were to be put up to him, he would not lack for other memorials to his memory as we shall see. This giant of our parish history served St. Patrick's for twenty - six years and until the days of Father Lappin, had the distinction of being the longest - serving rector (parish priest). More about him is written in the section on personalities.

1850

Fr. McCormick carried out his first baptism at St. Patrick's on 14th January, 1849. The following year, the Catholic hierarchy was restored and on the 29th of September, 1850, Pope Pius IX set up the diocese of Liverpool out of the old Vicariate of Lancashire with Bishop Brown as the first bishop. However, the Catholic church in England was still not canonically constituted into parishes. This did not happen until 1918. That is why at this time we talk of "missions " instead of "parishes" , "rectors" not "parish priests" and "chapels" instead of "churches" .

1851

Growth was rapid and a religious census taken on the 30th March, 1851, shows that St. Patrick's now beginning to approach parity with its " parent " parish of St. Mary's . Total Sunday mass attendance at St. Mary's was 1,565 and at St. Patrick's, 920.

The break between the missions was not entirely clean. As late as 1853, the diocesan treasurer, Fr. Crook, was writing to Fr. Wells of St. Mary's informing him of the result of a "most patient, laborious and painful scrutiny" concerning conflicting claims arising from the accounts of the two missions. It seems that Fr. Middlehurst had advanced money to St. Patrick's but that they had in turn advanced money to him. A confused situation had developed where it was not clear who owed what to who.

1858

In common with parish priests throughout the ages, Fr. McCormick was never free of the pressures of finance and fund - raising . A decade after the building of the church, the debt on it had not been paid off and extra debts had been incurred by building the new school in 1856 and the purchase of land for the same.

In 1858 , Fr. McCormick submitted a visitation return to Bishop Goss which gives many details about the church. Apart from those already mentioned in the "Tablet" report given earlier, we learn that the seating accommodation was 50 benches (most of which survive as the side benches in the present church). It had a bell weighing three and a half hundredweight and 15 windows (one of which was the sanctuary stained glass window as described in the " Tablet " report and which we are told cost £50).

The church was lit by gas and the only ventilation was by the windows. There was no heating system. There were two holy water stoups and the Baptismal font was on the left hand side of the entrance and railed off. There were two altars, the main altar of stone and the Lady altar of wood. There was one addition from the opening, which was down to Fr. McCormick. This was the "Via Crucis", the stations of the Cross.

Throughout the 1850's, an Annual Charity Ball was held to raise funds to wipe out the debts. The ball of February 1858 is reported on at length in both the "Wigan Observer" and the "Wigan Examiner".

The former paper tells us that those who attended were "ladies and gentlemen of the most respectable families in the town and neighbourhood" and that the company was "more select" than on any previous occasion. This event attended by two hundred people is described in the "Examiner" as "one of the most gay and festive" of the season. It passed off "with eclat" and was of a "rare splendour ". The report speaks of "charming music," "debonair stewards," "fascinating ladies" and "gentlemen gallant to perfection". Is this really the parishioners of St. Patrick's in 1858?

WIGAN.—OPENING OF ST. PARICK'S CHURCH.—On St. Andrew's Day the Bishops and Clergy opened this new and beautiful church with a Solemn High Mass and Sermon. The building is cruciform, measuring in the chancel and nave one hundred and ten feet; across the transepts fifty-six feet; and to the ridge of the high-pitched roof, forty-four feet. The style is pointed, from drawings by Mr. Fairclough, of Wigan. The front gable is surmounted by a belfry, below which is a niche and canopy to contain the figure of St. Patrick. The building was originally intended for a school, but the design was subsequently altered. The entrance is at present by a west porch. The somewhat small chancel is separated from the rest of the church by a roodscreen filled in with tracery, and diapered. On the capping of the screen is the inscription, "Oh! Jesu, miserere nobis" in antique characters; there is also an inscription on the tabernacle door, "Ecce Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi." The east window is of stained glass, with the Crucifixion in the centre compartment—St. John on one side and Mary on the other. At the top are the Evangelists, and various other figures, by Mr. Wailes, of Newcastle. The Altar is of carved stone, representing in the middle a pelican feeding its young, and the Evangelists in the extremities; each of the figures being surrounded with a quatrefoil, and otherwise enriched. The floor is covered with blue and red tiles, laid in diamond rows, and is flagged up the centre. The roof, which is open inside, is also slated diamond wise, which adds much to the external appearance. The highest praise is due to the rev. gentlemen of St. Mary's for their indefatigable exertions and perseverance in bringing about the erection of this Church, which was much required for the accommodation of the poor Irish resident in Scholes and others places.—Yours faithfully, A CATHOLIC.

The description of the opening of St. Patrick's Church, November 30th, 1847. The misprint of Patrick as "Parick" shows that even a classy paper like "The Tablet" could get it wrong, so make allowances for us. Note the description of the altar.

1864

An altogether different picture is presented by Bishop Goss's secretary on the occasion of his visit on 29th November, 1864 to carry out confirmations.

His secretary states that:

"..... the congregation was composed of the roughest description of labourers , basket - women , rag and bone gatherers those who cannot understand why a body may not cough freely and have not the least perception of what a nuisance it is to a public speaker".

It emerges that the Bishop's address to the congregation was constantly interrupted by coughing. He had to stop several times and eventually abandoned it altogether. He then resorted to the tactic of firing questions at his audience. This met with some success but not enough to improve the Bishop's mood. He told the congregation that "... he had never been among such a rude lot. He had often heard of them and now could readily believe all that he had heard".

His mood was worsened by some "considerable disorder" in arranging the confirmees. His secretary reports that he left St. Patrick's , "...not well pleased!"

Perhaps the Bishop was not at his best that day, for it does seem that he was being somewhat uncharitable. His secretary admits that it was a cold, damp day. We know that there was no heating in the church. Apart from the routine poverty and disease, this was the fourth year of the American Civil War and the consequent Lancashire Cotton Famine which bore heavily on Wigan and most heavily on the Scholes district. Small wonder that coughs abounded on a cold November day!

The following year Fr. McCormick submitted another visitation return which was in similar vein to his 1858 return, but we get the extra information that three young men of the parish were in training for the priesthood. They were a Mr. Taylor at Ampleforth, a Mr. Worsley at Ushaw and a Mr. Johnson who was only a month from his ordination.

More will be said in praise of Fr. McCormick in a later section , but it has to be said that administrative skills were not his strong point. In 1871, the diocesan auditor observed that his books were "very incorrectly kept, confused and well - nigh unintelligible".

(Having seen some of Fr. McCormick's returns your authors have some sympathy with the auditor).

However, the auditor, Fr. Lennon, was completely won over by Fr. McCormick's personality and his readiness to rectify matters.

1876

Ill - health overtook Fr. McCormick at length and he had to retire towards the end of 1875. He was succeeded by Fr. John Banks, a native Lancastrian who had been born in Euxton in 1845. Fr. Banks was educated at St. Edwards, Liverpool and at Ushaw and was ordained in 1868. Before arriving at St. Patrick's he had served at St. Oswald's, Old Swan; St. Mary's, Douglas; and at Great Eccleston.

St. Mary's had felt for some time, that St. Patrick's had taken over territory that more properly belonged to them. They took advantage of Fr. Banks's newness in the position to try to gain some of it back. Their views met with some support at diocesan level but the outcome is unclear. The affair does not seem to have caused any acrimony between St. Patrick's and its parent parish.

One of the first problems which confronted Fr. Banks was the inadequacy of the existing church to cater for a population which had grown from 1200 in 1847 to around 5000 in 1876. The official capacity of the church was 540 and it was necessary to double this. Additional stimulus came from the urgent need to provide more school space.

The land adjoining the church was still part of the Anderton estate. For some years it had been tied up "in Chancery." This was a lengthy legal process of the time, parodied by Charles Dickens in "Bleak House". We can see now how Chancery Street got its name.

The land became free to auction in 1876, and was appropriately auctioned off in lots on St. Patrick's Day, 1876.

Details of the lots are given in the extract on page 15, and the location of the lots on page 16.

Particulars

LOT 1.

A PIECE OF LAND

(Formerly known by the name of the SMITHY HEY)

on the North-easterly side of Saint Patrick's Catholic Chapel, in the Hardybutts or Warrington
 alleys in Wigan aforesaid, and adjoining on the Southerly side to a proposed new Street, called
 Saint Patrick's Street, between Hardybutts and Scholefield Lane, and containing 1187 Square Yards
 of measure or thereabouts, which last-mentioned Piece of Land is shown on the Plan, and thereon
 surrounded by a yellow line and marked "Lot 1."

LOT 2.

A PIECE OF LAND

Lots 1 and 3, and also adjoining on the Southerly side to Saint Patrick's Street, containing
 4901 Square Yards, and on the Plan surrounded by a pink line and marked "Lot 2."

LOT 3.

A PIECE OF LAND

on Scholefield Lane, adjoining Lot 2, and also adjoining on the Southerly side to Saint Patrick's
 Street aforesaid, and containing 1951 Square Yards on the said Plan, surrounded by a yellow line and
 marked "Lot 3."

LOT 4.

A PIECE OF LAND

on the Southerly side of and fronting the Hardybutts Street, and adjoining on the Northerly side to Saint
 Patrick's Street aforesaid, and on the Southerly side to a proposed new Street called Anderton Street, con-
 taining 2433 Square Yards, on the said Plan surrounded by a blue line and marked "Lot 4."

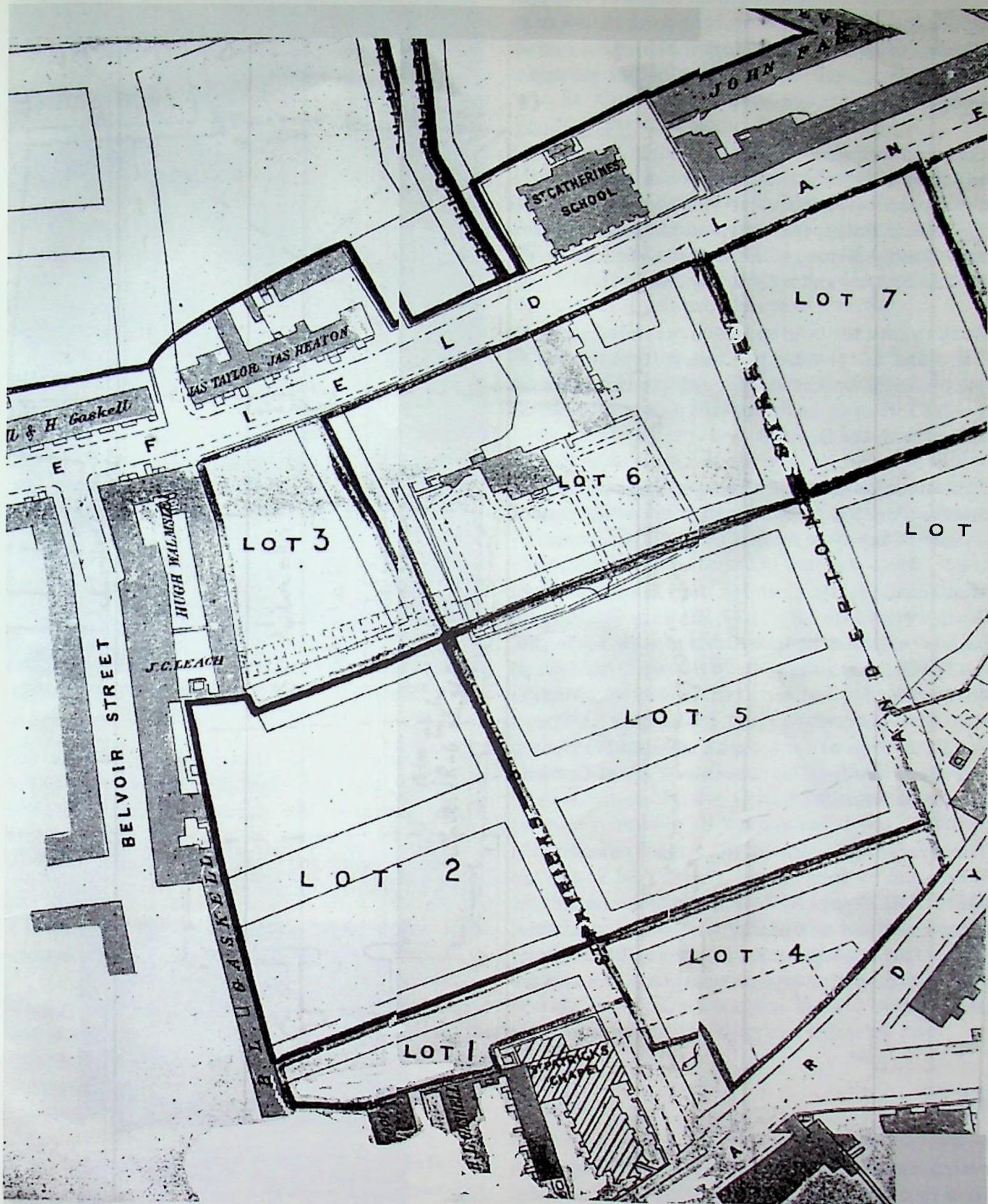
LOT 5.

A PIECE OF LAND

Lots 4 and 6, and adjoining on the Northerly side to Saint Patrick's Street aforesaid, and on the
 Southerly side to Anderton Street aforesaid, containing 6240 Square Yards, on the said Plan surrounded
 by a green line and marked "Lot 5."

LAND

Vest to Lot 5, on the North to Saint Patrick's



Plan showing some of the lots put up for auction on 17 March, 1876. Lot 4 is where the present church and presbytery now stand and lot 1 is where the extension to the Boy's school would eventually go. It can be seen that the proposed Anderton Street was renamed Chancery Street and Anderton Street would eventually run at right angles to it and parallel to Scholefield Lane. The outline of Anderton Hall and its grounds can be seen in Lot 6.

It appears that Fr. Banks got an attack of cold feet before the auction. Two days before, he wrote to Bishop O'Reilly describing the proposition as "extravagant" and wondering whether he might forego Lot 4.

One wonders what Fr. Banks thought he could do with Lot 1 alone, seeing that about half of it was earmarked for what became McCormick Street and St. Patrick Street, (perhaps a modest extension to the existing church, with the school headache left for another day and a different solution).

At all events, the bold approach prevailed and both Lot 1 and Lot 4 were purchased for a combined price of £820 which must have pleased Fr. Banks as it was £350 less than the reserve price which he had agreed with the Bishop.

Fund raising proceeded apace and some interesting methods were used. One such was the holding of "Annual Charity Sermons" by guest preachers.

Meantime, Fr. Mc Cormick died in retirement at Southport on 14th July, 1877. His body was brought back to the parish he had tended so well, for burial. His funeral mass was sung by Bishop O'Reilly and his cousin, the first rector of St. Patrick's, Father Nugent preached the sermon. Fr. Wells of St. Mary's and Fr. Lamon of St. Joseph's assisted the Bishop and in the words of his successor, "All of Catholic Wigan buried him".

The hearse was drawn to Wigan cemetery at Westwood by four horses. The C.Y.M.S. and the Guild of St. Agnes followed in procession and the route was lined all the way with silent spectators, many of them weeping. Shops in the neighbourhood were closed and every householder's blinds were drawn .

1878

It was not long before moves began to erect a permanent memorial to Fr. McCormick began. In spite of the demands already being made on them for the erection of the new church, the parishioners responded and the memorial cross was duly unveiled in June of the following year. It was Fr. McCormick's first but not his last. There was still to come McCormick Street and also the Girls' School which was erected in 1928 .



Fr. McCormick's grave and Memorial in Wigan Cemetery at Westwood.

The memorial still stands. As you enter the cemetery, take the broad path which leads to the right, towards the garden of remembrance extension. Before you reach the tablets commemorating the cremated deceased, you will see a large cross on the right as shown above.



See the inscription on the memorial. It reads "This monument was erected by public subscription and as a testimonial of general esteem".

Later, the names of Fr. Swarbrick, Fr. Morrissey and Fr. Murray were added to the monument, but they are not buried there.

In September, 1878, the parish received a very distinguished visitor. The great Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster came to lay the foundation stone of the present Church on the 2nd of the month.

It was a great occasion. The "Wigan Observer" gives a very detailed report. Flags were displayed not only on the main thoroughfares of Scholes, Hardybutts and Wellington Street but in all the side streets as well. A large street banner displayed the words "Success to St. Patrick's Church" on one side and "Success to Fr. Banks" on the other.

Cardinal Manning travelled to Wigan from Lord Gerard's home in the latter's horse-drawn carriage and was met at Scholes Bridge by the C.Y.M.S. the Children of Mary and the schoolchildren. A procession formed and escorted the carriage via Scholes, Wellington Street and Hardybutts, to the site of the new church. The weather was fine and thousands of people lined the streets cheering.

The inscription on the stone is in Latin and translated says: "In the Name of God, and to the honour of the Immaculate Virgin and St. Patrick, the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Henry Edward, Cardinal Manning placed me as the foundation on the second day of September, 1878".

Sealed inside the stone is a bottle containing the latest copies of the Wigan Observer and the Wigan Examiner, the Weekly Freeman, The Catholic Times and the Liverpool Daily Post. Also inside were coins of the current year and other information.

Cardinal Manning recounted the history of the parish and how it had grown to its present population. He exhorted them to build the church swiftly and in the meantime not to use the lack of room as an excuse for missing mass.

The Cardinal's exhortations seem to have been heeded for just over a year later on Sunday, 21st September, 1879, the new church had reached a sufficient state of readiness to be crowded to excess for the blessing of the new bell.

This had been provided by an anonymous donor. It cost £60 and weighed between 6 and 7cwt. It had been cast by Mr. Ratcliffe of Liverpool and was christened with the names of St. Patrick, St. Francis and St. George, the latter two being the patron saints of the sons of the donor.

The blessing was performed by Bishop O'Reilly in the presence of Fr. Banks, Fr. Ryan and Fr. McGrath. Just in case any descendants are reading this, Mr. William Richards was the Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Charles Darbyshire played the organ and Mr. Richard Higham had charge of the choir.

With everything moving apparently smoothly towards the opening of the new church (which had been set for next St. Patrick's Day), St. Patrick's was suddenly rocked by a controversy that threatened to split the parish in two and which resulted in all three priests being removed from the parish thus robbing Fr. Banks of seeing his dream realised. The matter is dealt with more fully in Appendix B, but the broad outlines can be stated here.

There seem to have been serious problems between Fr. Banks and one of his curates, Fr. McGrath. What the precise nature of the trouble was remains unclear but it seems fairly clear that there were some nationalistic overtones to it. Supporters of both priests made accusation and counter-accusation and Bishop O'Reilly took the draconian step of removing all three priests from the parish on 13th December, 1879.

Fr. Banks changed places with Fr. Joseph Fagan of Our Lady's, Eldon Street, Liverpool, but whereas Fr. Fagan became the rector of St. Patrick's, Fr. Banks had to put up with a temporary demotion to curate. Fr. McGrath was sent back to Ireland and it looks as though Fr. Ryan met the same fate.

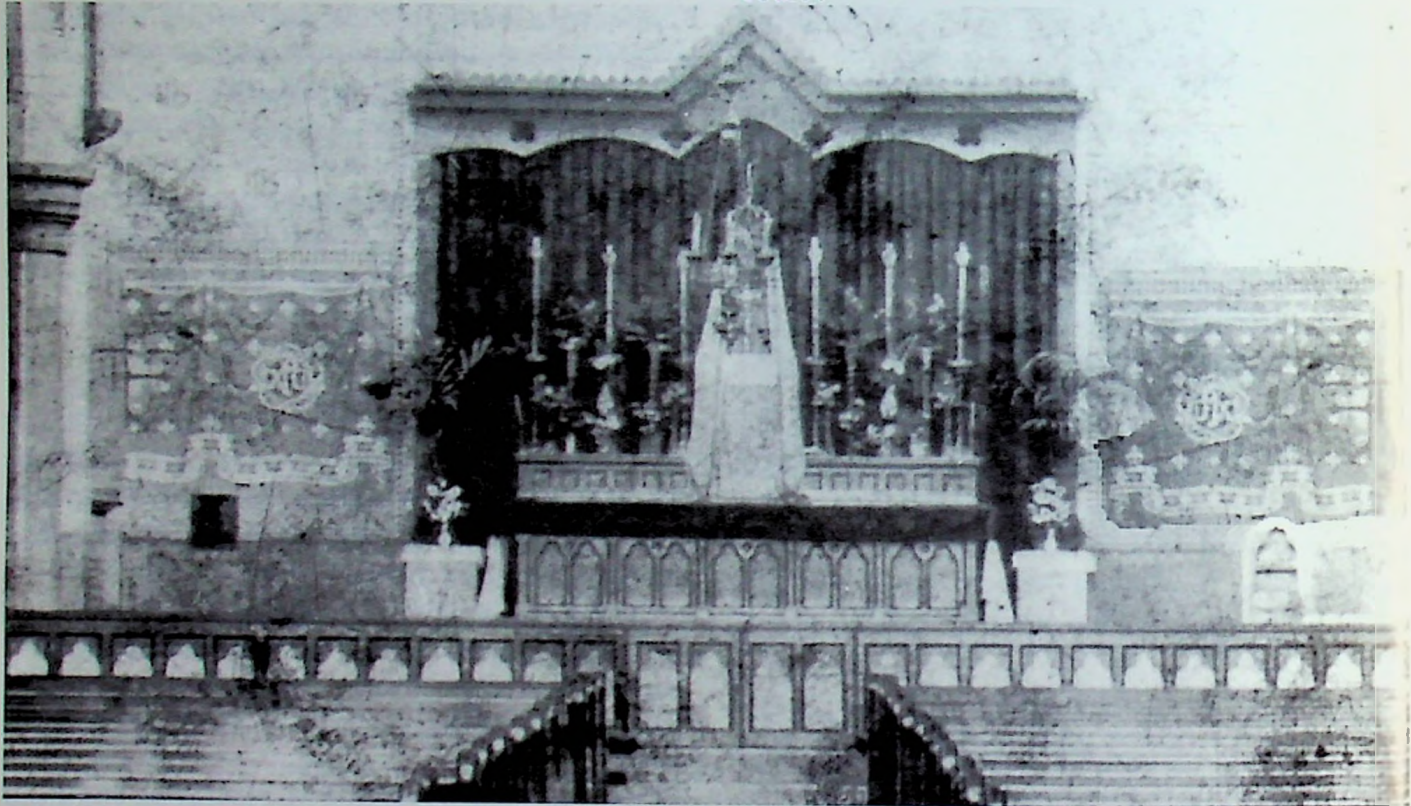
1880

The matter did not end there of course, nor did the career of Fr. Banks but it did mean that it was Fr. Fagan who was to preside at the opening of the new church and not Fr. Banks, the planner of the project.

March 7th, 1880 - The opening of the new church.

All the agitation temporarily ceased on St. Patrick's Day, when the new church was formally opened for public worship by Bishop O' Reilly .

The Observer reports that it was estimated to seat nearly 1000 people. The architect was Mr. James O' Byrne of Liverpool, and the builders were Messrs. Roberts and Robinson of Liverpool. The cost was £8000, a great part of which still had to be raised.



The first high altar in the new church. It was replaced by the present high altar in 1911

The Observer states "the building stands out prominently in the neighbourhood".

This is the church which is familiar to parishioners today and which is now itself 118 years old. If we could go back to that day however, some aspects of it would not be quite so familiar. The high altar was not the magnificent one we know so well, but the one shown above. This altar has its own charm but is small for the size of the church. This has given rise to some speculation that it was the original altar from the 1847 church, but it does not fit the description given in the "Tablet" and another stronger candidate has since emerged.

The "late unfortunate dispute" had not gone away, and there are signs of its continuing sensitivity in the opening ceremonies. Fr. Fagan was present but took no active part. Representations for the restoration of Fr. Banks continued up to 1881, and they cannot have helped Fr. Fagan.

His position was made more difficult by a dispute over funds with the Vicar - General of the diocese. This led to a court case. It was finally settled out of court .

The diocese acknowledged that certain funds at St. Patrick's were Father Fagan's private property and he on his part made a statement that he had had no intention of charging fraud or impropriety against either the defendant (the Vicar - General, Mgr. Carr) or the Bishop.

Though all parties expressed themselves satisfied with the outcome, it cannot have improved Fr. Fagan's career prospects. He left St. Patrick's in 1884 to take up a position as curate at St. Michael's, Liverpool, and in 1886, he moved to the Nottingham diocese where he served until his death in 1903.

*See Appendix A " The Identity of the Sacred Heart Altar "

1884

In the next appointment to St. Patrick's, it is tempting to discern the Bishop's revenge on the parish which had given him such Anglo - Irish grief. He sent the parish a German! As things turned out, it was an inspired choice. Father Dagobert Sommer was the second giant to bestride our parish history. It might be said that he bestrode two centuries, for he served St. Patrick's from 1884 to 1909, a period of some 25 years and until Father Lappin, he was the second longest- serving parish priest. (See Personalities)

Fr. Sommer had been forced to flee his native land when the German chancellor, Bismarck launched his anti - Catholic campaign of the 1870's. He was forced to give up a promising career as Cardinal Melchers' secretary and in addition was banished from Germany. In 1877, he was accepted by Bishop O'Reilly for the Liverpool diocese and in 1884, this cultured, brilliant man arrived in St. Patrick's to guide the fortunes of the parish.

Over the next 25 years, he would lift the crushing burden of debt on the parish, heal the lingering breaches caused by "the late unfortunate dispute" and greatly extend and improve the school. He would not live however, to see his greatest dream realised, the erection of a new high altar.

1892

Fr. Sommer seems to have added impetus to the parish tea parties. These were annual social events to raise funds. Benefactors from around the parish contributed " food trays". The donors of the food were not confined to St. Patricks nor to Catholics and no doubt some of our neighbours from St. Catherine's were among them.

The 1892 occasion will serve as an example. After the dining, Fr. Sommer reported on the state of the schools, mentioning particularly that the Boys' School had passed a very successful inspection. Attendance had improved and it would be necessary to enlarge the accommodation.

The entertainment for the evening was provided by The Wigan Old Borough Band and again for any descendants, songs were contributed by H. Barbour, H. O' Hara and D. Barton .

The names of entertainers in other years are intriguing. Among them were Ralph Lythgoe's Band, the Egremont Minstrels and in 1891, "Long Jim, an aborigine of the Rocky Mountains of Scholes" featured in the spectacular drama "A Showman in a Fix".

A fascinating thumbnail sketch of St. Patrick's in these days is given to us by the "Comet", a fortnightly journal which circulated in Wigan towards the end of the last century. On 20th August, 1892, it devoted its entire front page to an article on St. Patrick's entitled: "Round about the Churches. No. XII St. Patrick's: The Church of the Poor, An Example to All".

The article states, "Those to whom the name of Scholes signifies a title of reproach for a habitation of ignorance and vice , may despise alike the name of the quarter and the name of its dominant Church, saying "can any good thing come out of Scholes?" The writer urges such people to "Come and see!" He tells us that it was a pity he could not have left St. Patrick's till last, so that he could say", these things I have looked for in other Churches and Chapels and found them not!"

What he saw pleased him. Children attended individually, not in regimented groups. The men wore ties or neckcloths and the women their best shawls. He noticed some few "slumberers" who as he puts it "had carried Saturday night into Sunday morning", but generally the congregation's demeanour pleased him. He considered that the "humble could attend church here with self - respect and without fearing the scorn of well-dressed snobs as they would have feared among ultra - respectable churchgoers" in other places.

The writer was also impressed by Fr. Sommer. He comments on his accent and German nationality and amusingly imagines him as a simple village pastor. He was clearly unaware of Fr. Sommer's earlier career and his "cloak and dagger" involvement in high European politics!

It says a lot about Father Sommer that he impressed a neutral observer in this way. The writer was also impressed with Fr. Sommer's energy as he alternated between conducting the choir and speaking from the pulpit. The choir were singing Gounod's Mass and a detailed and appreciative critique of their performance is given.

1897 - 1898 Golden Jubilee

1897 was the true Golden Jubilee year but for some reason, the celebrations were not held until St. Patrick's Day in the following year. Firstly however, extensive alterations and improvements to the church were carried out. The church was closed for some time while these were carried out and a "Grand Re-opening" took place on Sunday, 19th September, 1897.

Dr. Whiteside was now the Bishop of Liverpool and he sang the Mass assisted by Dean Sommer (as he now was). The details of the alterations are not given, but re-decoration of the sanctuary was part of them.

The formal celebrations of the Golden Jubilee were held on St. Patrick's Day, 1898. Bishop Whiteside again officiated assisted by Dean Sommer. The sermon was preached by none other than Mgr. James Nugent, who was making his second return visit to St. Patrick.

He spoke of the day in 1848 when he had become the first pastor of the mission having left St. Mary's that he might work among his beloved Irish people of that district. Not neglecting the basics, he urged them to "give their gold and silver with a free and open hand".

This appeal was no doubt for the planned new high altar. Fr. Power of St. John's had made a similar appeal at the re-opening in the previous September. From all the comments made about this time, one gets the feeling that the new high altar was intended to make its appearance in the next year or so. In fact, it would be another 13 years before it finally took its place.

A new altar was about to make its appearance (or perhaps it was an old one making its re-appearance). As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations, a new side altar, the Sacred Heart altar, was installed in the church.



The Sacred Heart Altar installed in 1898. Compare the carving on the altar front with the "Tablet's" description of the altar in the 1847 church.

At least, the Wigan Observer calls it new. The newness however could refer to the upper wooden structure which bears the figure of the Sacred Heart and other figures. The altar table itself is of stone and the carvings on the front exactly match those described on the original altar of the 1847 church (see Appendix A)

1906

On St. Patrick's Day, 1906, Bishop Whiteside was again at St. Patrick's to consecrate a new altar. It was still not the long awaited new high altar but a beautiful new side altar dedicated to Our Blessed Lady. It had been presented to the Church by a member of the congregation, Mr. Michael Moore, the proprietor of the Sanatorium, (now Whelley Hospital). Pontifical High Mass was again celebrated.

was attended by the Auxiliary Bishop of Cologne and the Director of Education, Mr. G. H. Mockler, represented the Wigan Education Committee.

Canon Dagobert Sommer was laid to rest in his native town of Mersch, near Cologne, in the town churchyard to the left of the parish priest of Mersch.

The grief of St. Patrick's was great. They honoured their departed parish priest where he would have wished them to, in the church where he had officiated for so long, in the parish he had guided so well.

It being Lent, no high mass could be said, but Bishop Whiteside said low mass in a crowded church at St. Patrick's, timed to coincide exactly with the funeral mass in Call.

Perhaps some idea of Canon Sommer's achievement is given in a tribute expressed at a meeting of the Irish National League in Wigan. His vast services to education in the town were stressed but it was also said people would recall that when Canon Sommer first came to St. Patrick's, there had been political friction in the parish but he had done away with all that. An epitaph that would no doubt have pleased him.



Our Lady's side altar, installed in 1906

1908

On Sunday, August 18th, Canon Sommer (as he now was) had one of the saddest duties of his time at St. Patrick's, when he sang the solemn requiem mass for the men of the parish who perished in the disaster at the Maypole Pit. The details of the disaster are given fuller treatment in another part of this work. Suffice to say that it must have been his worst time at St. Patrick's.

1909

The edict banishing Canon Sommer from Germany was finally lifted, and in 1909 he returned to his native country for a holiday and for the good of his health. He visited his brother at Call, near Cologne with his niece Paula, who was a teacher at St. Patrick's. While there, he suffered a fatal heart attack on Thursday, 18th February.

The following Monday, the funeral was held in Call. An immense procession of children and people was followed by many priests of the neighbourhood. The funeral mass

1911

The man who now stepped into Canon Sommers shoes was another Lancastrian Englishman. Fr George Swarbrick. He had been at St. Patrick's before, coming straight from Upholland to St. Patrick's in 1888 as a curate to Canon Sommer.

He was later to recall some of those days with humour. He recounts how he succeeded a Fr. Burke who was six feet tall and built in proportion. One lady was over heard to say, "Eh my, he'll never do at St. Patrick's; he favvors nobbut a lad". Another lady wanted to know what right had the Bishop to remove Fr. Burke and send Fr. Swarbrick who was "not half his size and not a quarter as good". Fr. Swarbrick admits that "compared to Father Burke, I wasn't much to look at".

He became rector of St. Williams, Ince, in 1903 before returning to St. Patrick's to succeed Canon Sommer. It was a tall order but Fr. Swarbrick managed it.

1927

In 1927, Fr. Swarbrick began to suffer in health and it was considered that a move to a less arduous rural parish would be beneficial to him. He was offered a choice of three. He chose Corpus Christi at Rainford, because it was the nearest to Wigan.

When he left St. Patrick's on 6th April 1927, the Observer reports that many of the large crowd were visibly moved and gave him a remarkable ovation. The shades of the "unfortunate dispute" of 1879 were well and truly buried.

A testimonial was soon organised for him and the parish made a day out to the country for the presentation of £225 and another illuminated address. They engaged a special train to run to Rainford and were almost overwhelmed by the demand for tickets, the Wigan Observer of August 28th reports. A fuller description of this day out is merited but time and space do not permit it here. Suffice it to say that it was no mean feat to have won the hearts of St. Patrick's parishioners to such a degree.

When Father Swarbrick died on September 11th, 1940, his name was added to the Fr. McCormick monument. No greater tribute could have been made.



Fr. Swarbrick's plaque on the Fr. McCormick memorial cross.

1928 - 1932

Father Swarbrick was succeeded by Fr. Timothy Morrissey, who had been previously parish priest at Sacred Heart, Warrington. Like Fr. Swarbrick he had been ordained at Upholland. He came to St. Patrick's with a reputation for kind - heartedness

and geniality. After Fr. Swarbrick, he clearly had a lot to live up to, but in the following five years, he succeeded in leaving his own indelible mark.

Fifteen years after his death, he was spoken of in these terms: "Who can forget that kindly man of God, Father Morrisseyand his great devotion to the Mother of God ; his unceasing prayers for the sick and dying and his boisterous courage that faced the crippling debts on schools and church.

Two significant events occurred during Fr. Morrissey's time, both in 1928. In May of that year, he instituted the annual crownings of Our Lady's Statue and in December, the new Girls' School on Rupert Street was opened by Archbishop Downey. The new school was dedicated to Father McCormick's memory and when Fr. Morrissey's sad death occurred on November 12th 1932, his name was added to the Fr. McCormick monument.



Fr. Morrissey's plaque on the Fr. McCormick memorial cross.

1936

Fr Joseph Murray took up his duties at St. Patrick's in December 1932. He had previously been parish priest at Holy Trinity, Garston. He was to have charge of St. Patrick's for the next twenty-one years.

In 1936, the parish received a visit from famous author George Orwell. It is not likely that he met with Fr. Murray, but one wonders what they would have had to say to each other if they had.

1939 - 1945

These of course were the years of the Second World War, but during them, Fr. Murray gathered a formidable team of curates. By 1945, these were, Fr. Robert Lee, Fr. James Tarrant and Fr. John P. O' Hara.



Fr. Murray (seated) and his team, left to right Fr. Tarrant, Fr. O'Hara and Fr. Lee.

Even during the war years, Father Murray looked ahead to the coming centenary of the parish. In 1944, the Church Decoration Fund Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Fr. O'Hara whose fund raising abilities were to become legendary.

One week after the war ended, the May crownings were resumed and one week after that, May Queen Margaret Molloy of Rupert Street found herself and her retinue leading a Whit Monday procession of St. Patrick's around the parish.

Apart from the celebratory aspect of this there was a practical side. Our good neighbours at St. Catherine's once again assisted us and loaned their recreation ground free of charge for the field day which followed the procession and a sizeable amount of funds were raised as a result.

1947, Centenary Year

The enterprise of Fr. O'Hara and his Committee (known by the initials C. D. F.) earned them a formidable reputation and Fr. O'Hara told a witty story of an incident when Fr. Murray took his catechism class in the Girls' School. Talking of the three branches of the Church, he reminded the girls of the Church Suffering, the Church



The 1945 St. Patrick's procession sets off up Hardybutts with Fr. Murray in the lead.



The interior of St. Patrick's after the Centenary refurbishments. Senior parishioners will remember the pulpit being located halfway down the church.

Militant and then asked which was the third, the greatest, the happiest and the noblest branch of God's Church? The unanimous answer was "The C. D. F."

The work of re-decoration was carried out by Fred Pagett, local artist and former parishioner. Fr. Murray stated in the centenary booklet that "the skill and enthusiasm with which Mr. Pagett has carried out his work has given general and great satisfaction". This is no more than the truth and many of those who can remember how beautiful the church looked at that time are of the opinion that it has never looked as good since. The above photograph might give some idea but cannot convey the rich colours, the crimson, green and gold.

The Centenary was celebrated six weeks prematurely on October 19th, 1947, to coincide with the re-opening of the Church. Fr. Murray sang the high mass, assisted two priests who were twin brothers and "old boys" of St. Patrick's, Fr. James Beirne and Fr. John Beirne. Another "old boy" Father Cyril Higham, preached the sermon. It was Fr. Higham who paid the tribute to Fr. Morrissey which was mentioned earlier. He paid tribute to all the parish priests of the parish and ended by exhorting his listeners to "march forward

undaunted by the times, into another century of spiritual effort" and quoted from St. Teresa: "If God is with us, who can be against us".

1949

In 1949, Fr. O'Hara left St. Patrick's to become parish priest at St. Edwards and his place was taken by a man who became a legend in his lifetime and ultimately the longest serving of all our parish priests, Father James Lappin. At this time however, he came as a curate to assist Fr. Murray.

(More will be said about Fr. Lappin in his own section in the "Personalities" chapter).

1953

This was Coronation year, but for many people in St. Patrick's, it is recalled as the year Fr. Lappin became parish priest.

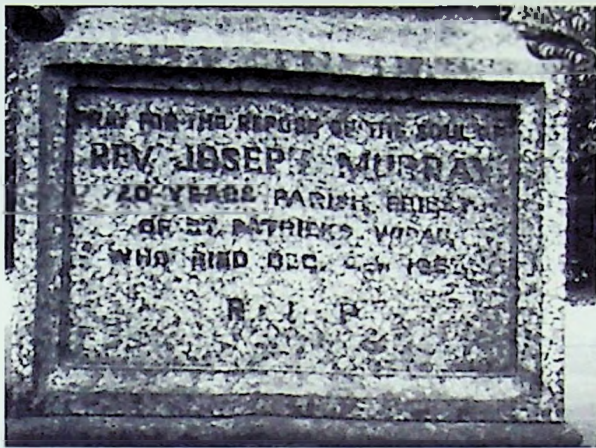
In April 1953, Fr. Murray wrote to Archbishop Downey about his worsening health. He considered that he was no longer able to carry out his duties satisfactorily

and

asked to be allowed to resign. Archbishop Downey granted this and Fr. Lappin was appointed to succeed Fr. Murray in May 1953. (Wigan Observer, 23rd May, 1953).

Father Murray's health continued to decline and sadly, he died in December 1953, at Bryn, to where he had retired.

Another "great" among our parish priests, Fr. Murray was honoured by becoming the last name to be placed on the Fr. McCormick memorial cross.



Fr. Murray's plaque on the Fr. McCormick memorial cross.

Fr. Lappin's long and loving tenure at St. Patrick's was not always crowned with success. One of his less than happy efforts was the business of the bell.

The old bell which had been blessed in 1879, shortly before "the unfortunate affair" of that year, had come to the end of its days. Fr. Lappin determined we should have a new one cast at Loughborough and fund raising began. The amount of enthusiasm which Fr. Lappin infused into the parishioners for this project was worthy of better success. In a short space of time it seemed that everybody in Scholes was either collecting or contributing to St. Patrick's new bell.

Unfortunately no-one had checked that the new bell could be mounted in the belfry. It turned out that it couldn't, either because it was too big or weighed too much or both. It was mounted in the Church yard on the Chancery St. side, where the opening to Fowler Close now is and every time it rang, the earth would shake.

Though many people recall the affair, no-one seems

to remember exact dates. At all events, the bell eventually disappeared and at the present time, we lack one.

1960 - 1980

It fell to Father Lappin to implement the liturgical changes ushered in by the Second Vatican Council. These included the Mass in English and Mass said facing the congregation. The latter meant that altars were now to be free-standing and temporary altars were immediately installed in Catholic churches throughout the country.



The "temporary" wooden altar installed in St. Patricks.

It is no secret, nor is it any disrespect to Fr. Lappin to state that being a strong traditionalist, he was not happy with the changes. Nevertheless, loyal son of the Church as he was, he implemented them.

A free-standing wooden altar was installed and we are now familiar with Mass said facing the congregation. However, having done his duty, Fr. Lappin was in no hurry to make permanent alterations perhaps because he hoped that the liturgical changes might not be permanent.

As the sixties progressed, the numbers in the parish began to decline. In part, this was due to the natural tendency of younger generations to move further afield, but more specifically to the Scholes Re-development Scheme. This impressive title hid what was in many ways the negation of town and country planning. It dispersed a community and replaced it with a floating population in accommodation which in thirty years would itself be uprooted and dispersed and their habitations demolished.

1980

On St. Patrick's Day, 1980, St. Patrick's celebrated the centenary of the present church which has only 23 years to go to its 150th Jubilee. Fr. Lappin and Bishop Gray concelebrated the mass at 10.00 am. Many of the surviving priests who had served at St. Patrick's attended and the schoolchildren sang the Gregorian chant as the children of former days used to. There was another mass at 7.30 p.m. for parishioners who had been to work.

1983

In June, 1983, Father Lappin celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest and was re-united with members of his family, some of whom had not met together for 42 years.



Fr. Lappin re-united with his brother and two sisters.
Mrs. E. McCall from Cowes (I. O. W.),
Sister Denise from Liege in Belgium and
Mr. John Lappin of St. Louis, Missouri, U. S. A.

1985

On Thursday, 28th February, 1985, St. Patrick's learned to its great grief that Fr. Lappin had died suddenly that day.

His was a life fulfilled and no doubt he would be happy to have died in office. He had been parish priest for 32 years, easily the longest - serving of them all.

On the Thursday night before the funeral, Fr. Lappin's remains were brought to St. Patrick's and the Church was packed for a service conducted by Fr. Joseph Burns.

The funeral was held the day after, Friday, 5th March. It was one of the epic occasions of the parish, rivalling the funeral of Fr. McCormick a century earlier.

Archbishop Derek Worlock celebrated the funeral mass which was attended by priests from all over the archdiocese. The church was packed to overflowing and hundreds waited outside. The eulogy was given by Mr. John McDermott, whose term of office as headmaster of St. Patrick's school ran almost in tandem with Fr. Lappin's term as parish priest. Among the mourners was Fr. Lappin's sister, Sister Denise.

Fr. Lappin was laid to rest at Gidlow cemetery. He is honoured by an engraved plaque in the present church and in the abiding memory of all who knew him.

1985 - 1997

Fr. Lappin was briefly succeeded by Fr. Gerard Snape who carried through some further liturgical changes. The most significant of these were the introduction of Eucharistic ministers and lay readers at mass.

Fr. Snape left after a year and was succeeded by Fr. Peter Sibert who was parish priest for the next ten years. This makes him the sixth in order of length of service. The parish celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest in 1991.

Though the parish seemed to jog along in a smooth routine in the Fr. Sibert's decade of office, in fact he was responsible for several initiatives, the last of which was the preliminary moves towards the re-ordering of the church and the 150th Jubilee celebrations.

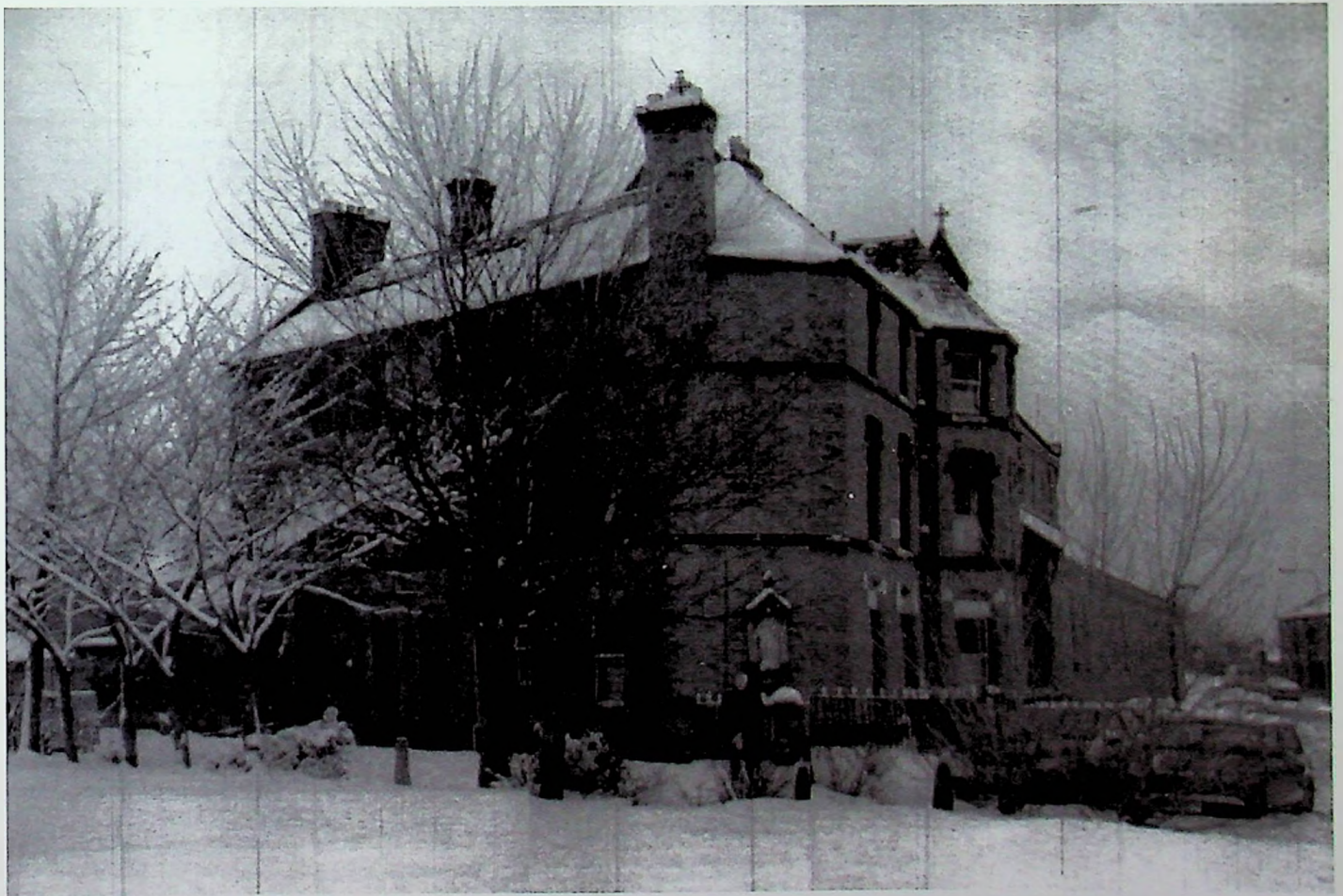
Fr. Sibert left in 1996 and was briefly succeeded by Fr. Aidan McAteer.

Fr. McAteer made his mark in a short space of time. He introduced altar girls and carried further the plans for the 150th Jubilee celebrations and Phase One of the church re-ordering. He left in 1996 to follow a lay career.

Fr. McAteer was succeeded by our present parish priest, Fr. William Naylor.



Friday 5th March, 1985. Archbishop Worlock blesses the coffin of Fr. Lappin watched by the massive crowd that were unable get into church to hear the requiem mass.



St. Patrick's in the snow. Fr. Peter Sibert stands outside the presbytery not long before he was to leave St. Patrick's.

1987, 150th Anniversary

It fell to Father Naylor to carry the various plans for this great event forward to their conclusion.

Phase 1 involved all necessary external repairs, a new heating system, a toilet and an external ramp to provide access for the disabled.

This was all completed in time for the Anniversary Mass on 11th December, 1997. This was celebrated by Archbishop Patrick Kelly assisted by Fr. Naylor and Fr. Sibert.

It was a great occasion. The church was almost full. Many priests attended and many ex-parishioners. Among the priests making return visits were Fr. Snape, Fr. Coughlan and Fr. Godfrey Carney who left St. Patrick's in 1942!

The schoolchildren performed and sang beautifully and the responsorial psalm was wonderfully rendered by Mr. Joseph Gleeson (an "old boy" of St. Patrick's) Miss Sheila Brown was magnificent at the organ.

However, none of the above will grudge the main plaudits being given to the congregation for as in days of yore, the old walls rang magnificently and timelessly to the strains of "Hail Glorious St. Patrick" and "Faith of Our Fathers".

Where Now ?

The story of course is not over. This is the first year of the next one hundred and fifty.

Most churches carried out their re-ordering to conform with the new liturgy long ago. We at St. Patrick's have dragged our feet a bit, but we get there in the end.

Let us heed Fr. Higham's advice of fifty years ago and "march forward, undaunted by the times, into a new century of spiritual effort..... strengthened by the knowledge of the past".



The most visible feature of Phase 1. the new access to the church

The Jubilee Mass



LEFT: Altar girls watch intently at a solemn moment in the mass.

RIGHT: Mr. Joseph Gleeson sings "Maranatha" accompanied by the schoolchildren.



LEFT: The offertory procession.

RIGHT: There's still work for an altar boy at the mass.





LEFT: Members of the 150th. Committee in good voice. With them, second from left, is Fr. Godfrey Carney who left St. Patrick's in 1942.

RIGHT: Visiting clergy, among them nearest camera, Fr. Coughlan and second in the row behind Fr. Snape.



LEFT: The Communion

RIGHT: The three con-celebrants: Fr. Naylor Archbishop Kelly and Fr. Sibert



The Parish Priests of St. Patrick's

(..... and their autographs!)

Father James Nugent (Oct. 1848 to Jan 1849)



First parish priest of St. Patrick's. Former curate at St. Mary's, Wigan. Later achieved great fame as "Friend of All in Poverty" when working in Liverpool. Founder of Nugent Care Society.

James Nugent

Canon Dagobert Sommer (1883 - 1907)



Third longest - serving parish priest of St. Patrick's. He overcame many financial difficulties and carried through the building of new school premises. He presided at the Golden Jubilee of 1897-1898 and steered the parish through the trauma of the Maypole disaster. The high altar is dedicated to his memory. (See Personalities Section).

D. Sommer

Father Hugh McCormick (1849 - 1875)



Until Father Lappin, he was the longest serving parish priest of St. Patrick's. He saw the parish through the terrible days of the Cotton famine of 1862 - 1865. He undertook the building of the first St. Patrick's school. Much loved and respected. McCormick Street was named after him as was the girls' school

built in 1928. A monument to him, raised by the people of the parish, stands over his grave in the Wigan cemetery at Westwood.

Hugh N. McCormick

Father George Swarbrick (1909 - 1927)



Father Swarbrick carried out Canon Sommer's dream and installed the present high altar. He steered the parish through the difficult years of the First World War. Fifth longest serving, his name was the first to be added to the Fr. McCormick Memorial.

Geo. Swarbrick

Father John Banks (1875 - 1879)

Father Banks initiated the process of providing a new church. He organised the paying off of the debt on the old 1847 church and organised the fund raising for the building of the present church but left the parish just before the opening.

John Banks

Father Joseph Fagan (1879 - 1883)

Father Fagan presided over the opening of the new (present) church.

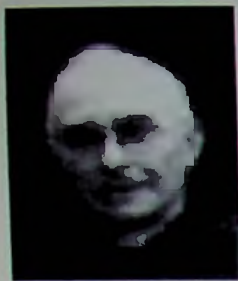
Joseph Fagan

Father Timothy Morrissey (1927 - 1932)



Father Morrissey made a big impression on the hearts of St. Patrick's parishioners in his five years as parish priest. His was the second name to be added to the Father McCormick memorial.

T. Morrissey

Father Joseph Murray (1932 - 1953)

Fourth longest - serving of the parish priests. Guided the parish through the Second World War. Presided over the Centenary celebrations and the refurbishing of the church in 1947. Re-instituted in May and took a leading role in the re-institution of the Whit Walks. Last name to be

added to the Father Mc Cormick memorial.

Joseph Murray

Father James Lappin (1953 - 1985)

Longest - serving of all our parish priests. Much loved and revered. He oversaw the changes in educational organisation and was in charge during the most radical liturgical changes which came about as a result of the Second Vatican

Council. He is honoured by a plaque in the present church.

James Lappin

(See Personalities section)

Father Gerard Snape (1985 - 1986)

Father Snape carried out further liturgical changes from Vatican II. He introduced Eucharistic Ministers and Readers .

Gerard Snape

Father Peter Sibert (1986 - 1996)

Father Sibert carried out the remaining liturgical changes and began the organising of the 150th Committee to oversee the re-furbishing and re-ordering of the church to be part of the 150th Jubilee celebration. Sixth in order of longest - serving.

Peter Sibert

Father Aidan McAteer (1996 - 1997)

Fr. McAteer introduced the first altar girls to serve mass in St. Patrick's and began the implementation of phase 1 of the church renovations .

A. McAteer

Father William Naylor (1997 -)

Fr. Naylor presided at 150th Jubilee Celebrations and saw through the completion of phase 1 of the church renovations. He is now preparing for Phase 2, the re-ordering of the Sanctuary and the re-decoration of the church.

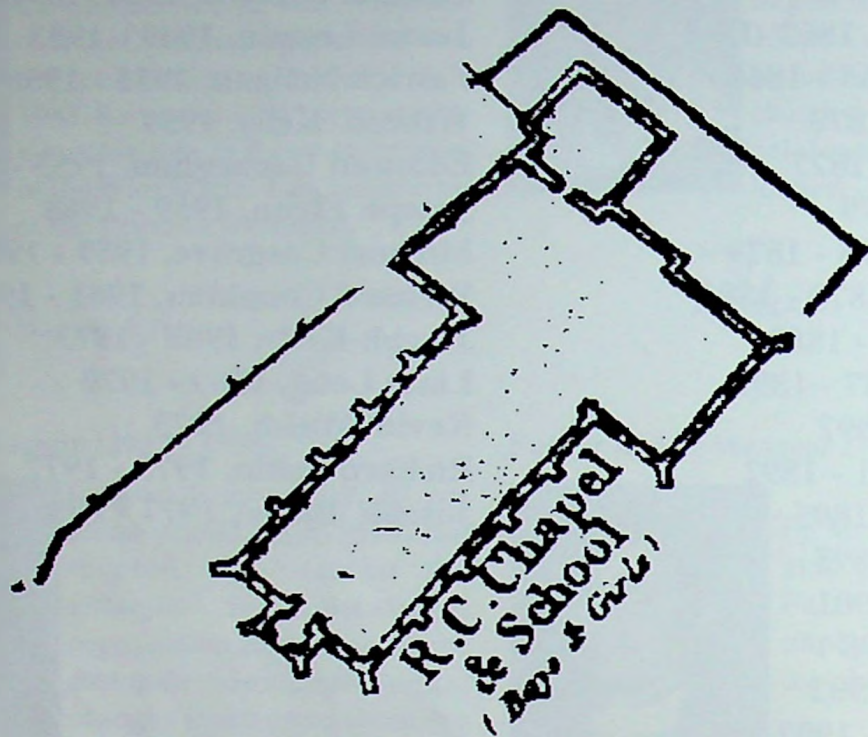
William Naylor

SOME OF THE CURATES

- W. J Sheehan, 1848
 Rich. Doyle, 1859 -1862
 Wm. Hy. Bradshaw, 1862 -1865
 Thomas Carroll, 1865 - 1866
 Hy. Lamon, 1868 - 1870
 Fran. Soden, 1870 - 1877
 M. Ryan, 1878 - 1879
 John Mc Grath, 1878 - 1879
 John Tomlinson , 1879 - 1882
 P. McCarron , 1884 - 1888
 Geo. Swarbrick, 1887 - 1892
 Jas. Hayes, 1890 - 1892
 Jn. O'Donohue, 1891 - 1892
 Jas. Hughes, 1892 - 1895
 Hy. Galvin, 1892 - 1895
 Wm. Kelly, 1895 - 1901
 Pk. Ryan, 1895 - 1898
 Pk. Woulfe, 1898 - 1902
 Jn. Penswick, 1899 - 1902
 Thos. Rigby, 1901 - 1906
 Denis O' Shea, 1902 - 1909
 Jn. McCarthy, 1902 - 1908
 Olph Van Wassenhove, 1906 - 1908
 Jn. Brennan, 1908 -
 Geo. Greaves, 1909 -
 Ed. Fox, 1909 -
 Edm. Punch, 1911 - 1914
 Wm. Westhead, 1912 - 1918
 Thos. Carney, 1912 - 1928
 Pk. Finn, 1918 - 1919
 Arthur Madden, 1918 - 1922
 Ernest Buck, 1922 - 1926
 P. Ward, 1926
 Jn. Quinlan, 1927 - 1928.
 Wm. McLoughlan, 1928 - 1937
 Jn. Coghlan, 1928 - 1939
 Edm. O' Brien, 1932 - 1939
 Jn. Bergin, 1937 - 1938
 Vinct. O' Reilly, 1938 - 1943
 Godfrey Carney, 1939 - 1942
 Robert. J. Lee, 1940 - 1955
 James Tarrant, 1942 - 1956
 John. P. O'Hara, 1944 - 1949
 James Lappin, 1949 - 1953
 Patrick Neligan, 1955 - 1958
 Wilfred Kelly, 1959
 Edmund Geoheghan 1953 - 1959
 Joseph Flynn, 1959 - 1968
 Michael Cosgrave, 1959 - 1961
 Richard Coughlan, 1961 - 1968
 Joseph Kelly, 1968 - 1973
 Liam Long, 1969 - 1970
 Kevin Walsh, 1973
 Richard Tobin, 1973 - 1977
 Joseph Burns, 1977 - 1986

St. Patrick's School 1847 – 1997

1847



St. Patrick's in 1848 (taken from the 1848 O. S. map).

In 1847, the Catholic Poor Schools Committee was established and soon began obtaining government grants in return for submitting its schools to government inspection.

St. Patrick's School was set up under this type of arrangement. It probably existed from 1847 but was certainly there by 1848. The building shown on the O. S. map of that year is quite clearly designated "R. C. Chapel and School".

It seems that for the first few years of its existence, the school was carried on in the Church building. It would return to this building in later years.

1856

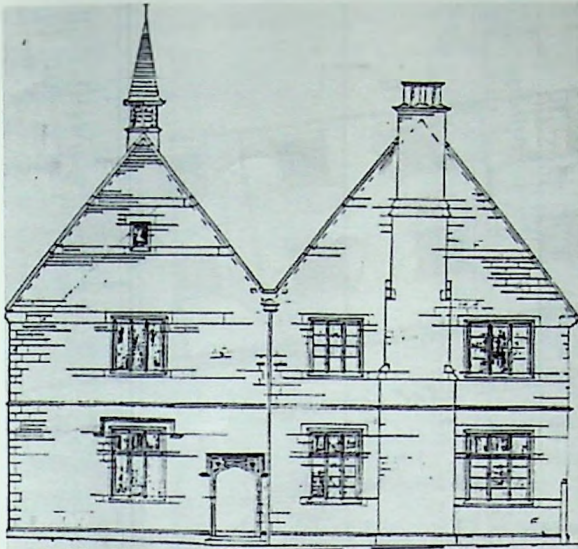
St. Patrick's School continued under this arrangement until 1856. On St. Patrick's Day in that year, Father Hugh McCormick laid the foundation stone of the first school building in St. Patrick's Parish. It stood at the corner of Hardybutts and what would become Rupert Street.

The Wigan Observer describes it as being "..... in the Gothic style of the Elizabethan period..... and will comprise a Boys and Girls large school and a Boys and Girls infants school. The infants school being surmounted by a lofty bell gablet " The Observer goes on to say that the school will be under government control but in connection with St. Patrick's Church and the paper compliments the Catholic community on their good sense in accepting the government's partnership in the education of poorer children.

The building is described as "a handsome structure" and although no photographs have come to light, architects drawings still survive and these are shown on the next page. A computer generated picture based on these drawings is shown on the next page after these. It shows the School as it would have looked in 1856, from the Rupert Street angle.

It lasted until 1927, when it was knocked down to make way for the new Girls' school. Some of the exterior wall was incorporated into the new structure and much of the original stone was also used.

Drawings of First School Building — 1856



' ELEVATION TO RUPERT ST. '

Front on Rupert Street.



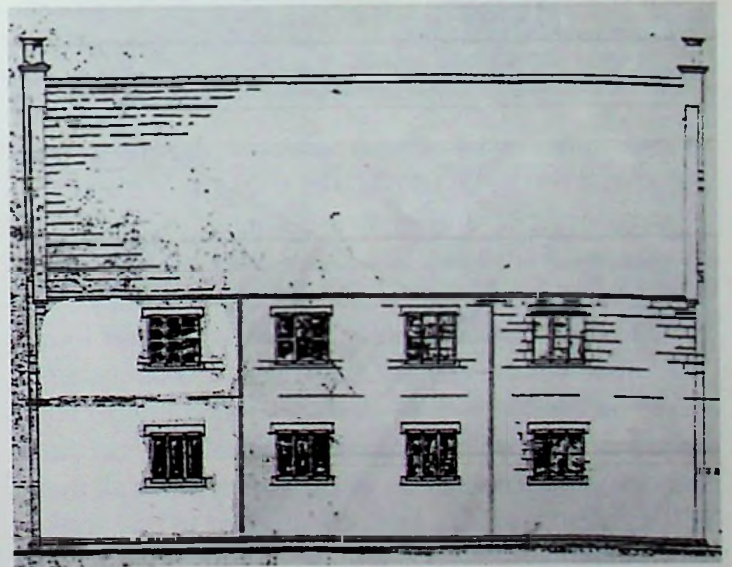
' SOUTH EAST ELEVATION '

End facing towards Darlington Street East.

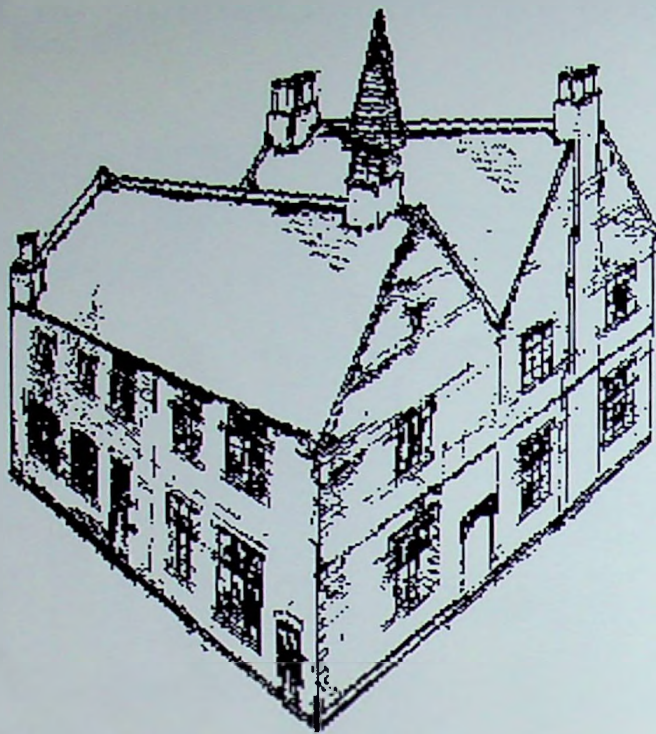


' BACK ELEVATION '

Backing on to Teck Street.



Facing on to Hardybutts.



The first St. Patrick's School Building, 1856 (looking from Rupert Street).

1862

Life in St. Patrick's parish was never easy in the 19th century but in 1862 it grew even harder. Three thousand miles across the the Atlantic Ocean, the American Civil War was raging. The Union Navy blockaded the Confederacy's coastline so that no Southern cotton could be exported to the Lancashire mills.

Wigan mills were almost entirely dependent on American cotton and the loss of it was disastrous. By November 1862, only eight mills out of thirty - six in Wigan, were working, and even these were only open for two or three days per week. Scholes was one of the two areas of Wigan where most cotton workers lived (the other was the Queen Street area). Consequently, many parishioners of St. Patrick's found themselves in severe financial distress. They eventually became so impoverished that they had to sell or pawn all their belongings including clothing in order to buy food.

Wigan was the first Lancashire town to set up a Relief Fund to help its suffering townfolk and St. Patrick's School was one of the centres for the granting and distribution of Relief.

The log - book of the Girl's school is very revealing. Throughout the winter of 1862 - 1863, the headmistress of the Girls' school, Miss Catherine Cowley, constantly records how attendance rocketed on days when the representatives of the Relief Committee were in the School. Most of the children came in the hope of being clothed. Miss Cowley also records many instances of children leaving school early on certain days of the week in order to receive food at a soup kitchen.

The school itself made a practical contribution to the relief of its pupils. Old clothing in need of repair or alteration was sent by the Relief Committee to the School. In sewing classes organised in school it was repaired and distributed among the neediest of the school population.

The greatly increased attendances brought problems for Miss Cowley and no doubt for her counterpart at the Boy's school.

1893

Children were advanced from the slower classes to make room for the newcomers. This had a detrimental effect on the progress of the higher classes. The newcomers and some of the regular attenders could not afford copy abooks and Miss Cowley complains about the shortage of paper which is holding back the progress in writing and spelling. She does report progress in Arithmetic due to the appointment of a monitor from the top class to enable the children to be taught in smaller groups.

One can only admire the efforts of Miss Cowley and her staff as they battled against almost impossible odds to educate the children in their care. Miss Cowley was the only qualified teacher of them. The others, Anne Foy, Mary Tyson and Mary Murray, were all pupil teachers and not long out of school themselves.

1880

In January 1878, the Inspectors threatened to recommend that the Government grant be withdrawn completely from St. Patrick's unless more accommodation was provided for the children, especially for the boys. Clearly the attendance situation had improved.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 had helped to bring this about. It was designed to ensure that enough school places of acceptable standard would be available for all the nation's children. It also made school attendance a legal requirement.

From Easter 1878, the infant department was located in the church even though this was still in use. The need for more school space had its effect on hastening the building of the new church in order that the old one could be used as a boys' school. In 1880, the present church was completed and for the next eighty-nine years, the old church building served as a school or part of a school. It was therefore, the longest-standing school building, and taking into account the thirty-three years it was a church, the longest-standing building associated with the parish to date.

St. Patrick's school continued to make every effort to provide for the good education of its pupils. This is borne out by a string of favourable reports from the inspectors over the next decade.

The Girls' School obtained the "excellent" grading for four years in succession while the Boys' and Infants' were always good. In 1887 all three areas were graded as "excellent".

The inspector considered that the boys' teachers merited "the highest praise" in view of "the very poor class of children attending".

The one area not found satisfactory was the attendance.

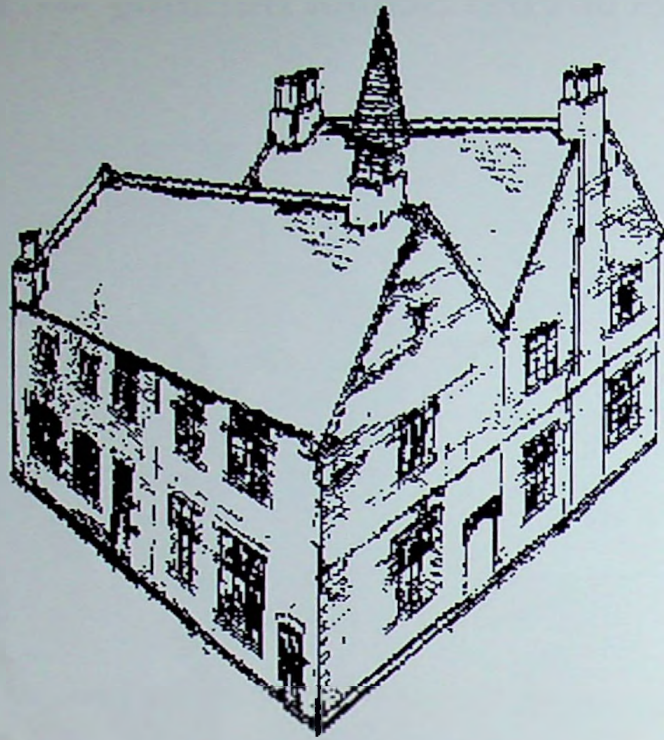
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Financial requirements played a part in this. Although school attendance was now compulsory, it was not free. "School pence" as the fees were called, were still a requirement for most people.

In 1891, the Free Education Act abolished school fees. In St. Patrick's School, this came into effect on August 31st, 1891.

By 1892, Canon Sommer was reporting that attendance had improved and that new classrooms would be needed. These were erected during 1893, when the numbers on roll were 1500 and the average weekly attendance was 1100, (73%). Canon Sommer still did not consider the attendance satisfactory however, and urged parents to send their children to school at an earlier age.

With the erection of the new extension, at a cost of £3000, St. Patrick's Boys School took the form it was to remain in for the next seventy-five or so years. For the last decade of its life it was a Junior Mixed School. The lighting in the old church part was still the same gas lighting in the 1950's as it had been a century earlier!



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