

The May Crownings

The annual ceremony of crowning the statue of Our Lady began in 1928. On Sunday the 6th of June in that year, at about 6.45 in the evening, nine years old Marie Johnson placed the crown of flowers on the head of Our Lady's statue, the first May Queen to do so.

Marie's entourage was small, four younger girls carried her train, six pageboys attended her and one boy carried the crown. In later years, the May Queen would have twenty - eight attendants, fourteen maids of honour and fourteen pageboys in addition to the crown - bearer,

The procession would start from the school and proceed along Hardybutts to Chancery Street, then along McCormick Street to St. Patrick Street and back along Hardybutts to enter the Church.

Inside the packed church, the congregation would burst into the May hymn, "Bring flowers of the fairest" as the procession entered the church.

After proceeding around the church, the Queen and her group headed up the side aisle towards Our Lady's altar.



The first May Queen at St. Patrick's, Marie Johnson and her entourage. May 6th, 1928.

and it became the custom for the boys to carry the Queen's train.

To the youngsters who took part in them, the crownings were the "Little Walking Day" and on those sunny May evenings (most of them were sunny!), many parishioners lined the streets to watch the procession which preceded the crowning.

On this side of the sanctuary, on a raised platform, stood the statue of Our Lady. The little Queen mounted steps at the rear and on the second chorus of "O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today". she would lower the crown on to the head of the statue. Then in unison, every child in the church would raise the lily they were carrying and cry "O Mary I give the the lily of my heart. Be thou its fair guardian for ever!"

The order of events may have varied from time to time, but those elements were always there.

Mostly, the crownings went hand in hand with the Whit Walks. If you were lucky enough to be in a crowning group between 1928 and 1938, or 1950 to 1967, you got four bites at the cherry. You walked as the incumbent group at the crowning and again on Whit Monday. The following year, you did the same as the retiring group.

In the end, the crownings outlasted the Whit walks, carrying on into the seventies. In the very late ones, the queen no longer carried out the crowning. It was done instead by Fr. Lappin. The idea was to avoid jealousy and no doubt a wise one. Still later it was decided to stop the ceremony altogether and we are left to mourn the passing of another colourful occasion. So let's try to recapture some of the colour here.

"O Mary We Crown Thee ..."

RIGHT: The 1928 group move along Hardybutts to Chancery Street.

BELOW: The 1952 procession moves into McCormick Street behind the Church.



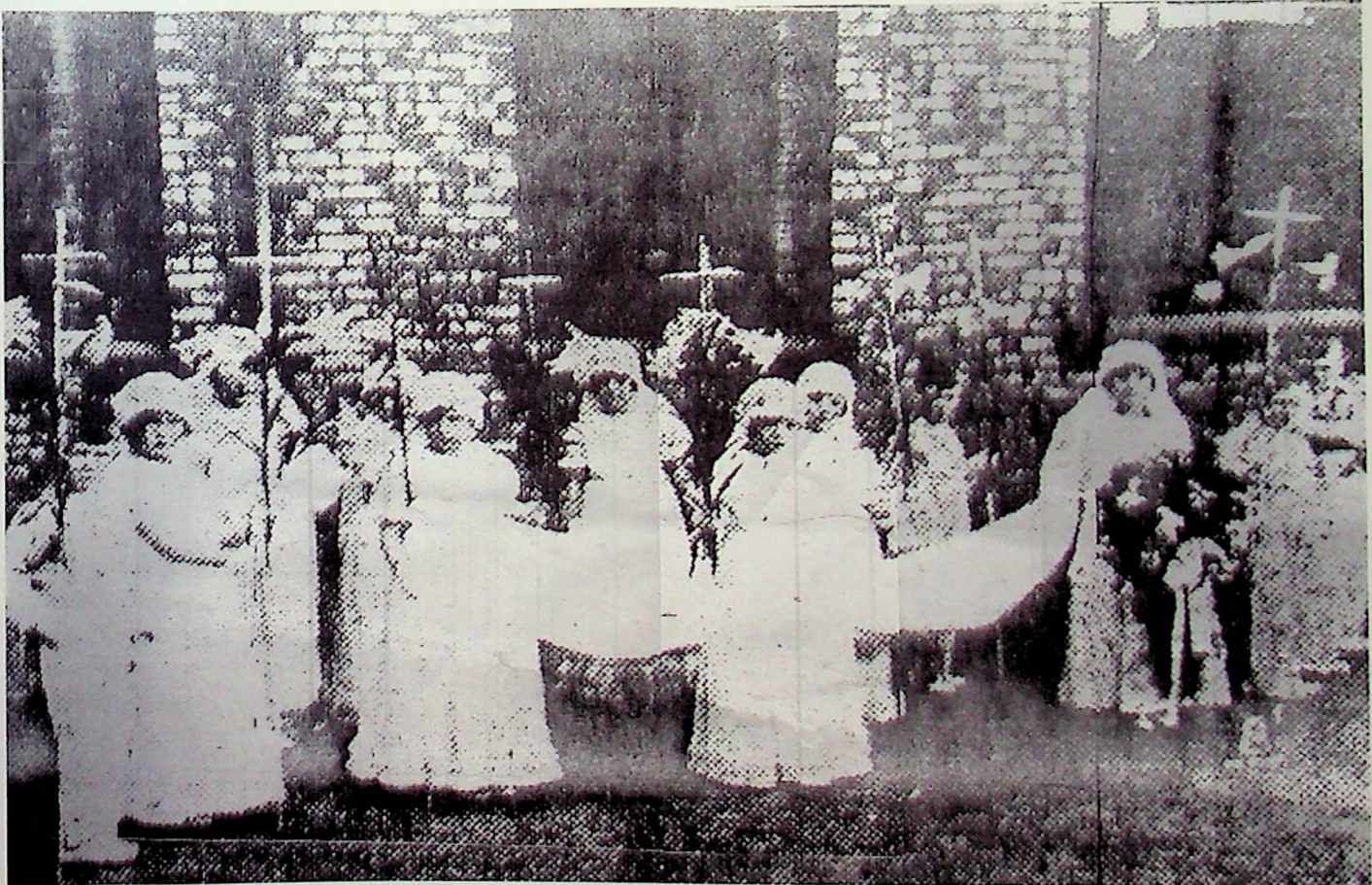
The 1928 procession moves out of McCormick Street and into St. Patrick Street.



The crowning moment: 1958: May Queen Sheila Connor places the crown of flowers on the head of the statue of Our Lady.



Twenty - eight years before, this young lady had done the same. May Queen of 1930, Miss Anne Lynch.



1931. May Queen Cecelia Murphy and her attendants.



LEFT:

**The 1939 group.
Queen
Teresa
Burns.**

RIGHT:

**The 1945 group, Queen
Margaret Molloy.**



**LEFT: 1946 : May Queen
Sheila Brown and
Attendants.**

**1949: May Queen
Annette Lathom
and retinue with
Fr. James Tarrant.**





ABOVE:

1950: This was Holy Year
May Queen Patricia Goulding
and her retinue wore white
and gold to mark it.



ABOVE: 1951: May Queen Ann
Hodkinson and page boys.

RIGHT: Some of Ann's group
at the Whit walk.



RIGHT:

May Queen
Maureen
Henry and
the group of
1952.





LEFT: 1954: May Queen Marie Coote and some of the Group.

RIGHT: Christine Bowler, the May Queen of 1955 with some pageboys.



LEFT: The group of 1958. May Queen Sheila Connor.

RIGHT: The last group to walk on Whit Monday. May Queen. Katherine Worthington 1968.



The May Queens (1928 - 1968)

NAME	YEAR	DATE	NUMBER
Marie Johnson	1928	MAY 6th	1
Philomena O' Donnell	1929	MAY 5th	2
Anne Lynch	1930	MAY 4th	3
Cecilia Murphy	1931	MAY 3rd	4
Nellie Rourke	1932	MAY 1st	5
Winnie Walsh	1933	MAY 7th	6
Nellie Heggarty	1934	MAY 5th	7
Betty Aspinall	1935 *	MAY 4th	8
Eileen Taylor	1936 *	MAY 3rd	9
Annie Phillips	1937	MAY 2nd	10
Kathleen Latham	1938	MAY 6th	11
Teresa Burns **	1939	MAY 14th	12
SECOND WORLD WAR		1940	
		1941	
		1942	
		1943	
		1944	
No Crownings Held		1945	MAY 13th 13 Leads walk round parish
		1946	MAY 4th 14
		1947	MAY 3rd 15 CENTENARY YEAR
		1948	MAY 2nd 16
		1949	MAY 1st 17
		1950	MAY 7th 18 Whit Walks resume
		1951	MAY 6th 19
		1952	MAY 4th 20
		1953	MAY 3rd 21
		1954	MAY 2nd 22
		1955	MAY 7th 23

* These may be in the wrong order.

** It has been assumed that with the known exceptions of 12 & 13, the crownings took place on the first Sunday in May.

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NAME	YEAR	DATE	NUMBER
Margaret Wade	1956	MAY 6th	24
Christine Howe	1957	MAY 5th	25
Sheila Connor	1958	MAY 4th	26
Mary Aspinwall	1959	MAY 3rd	27
Jean Groves	1960	MAY 1st	28
Marion Conway	1961	MAY 7th	29
Margaret Burley	1962	MAY 6th	30
Susan Gaskell	1963	MAY 5th	31
Rita Tinsley	1964	MAY 3rd	32
Maria Byrne	1965	MAY 2nd	33
Doreen Linley	1966	MAY 1st	34
Carol Baldwin	1967	MAY 7th	36

Katherine Worthington * 1968 MAY 5th 37 Last to walk on a Whit Monday.

* Katherine Worthington was not the last May Queen but in spite of strenuous efforts, it has not proved possible to identify the remaining ones or even fix the date of the last crowning. Katherine was however, the last reigning May Queen to walk in a Whit Monday procession.

Any reader who knows the missing queens should feel free to add them to the list.