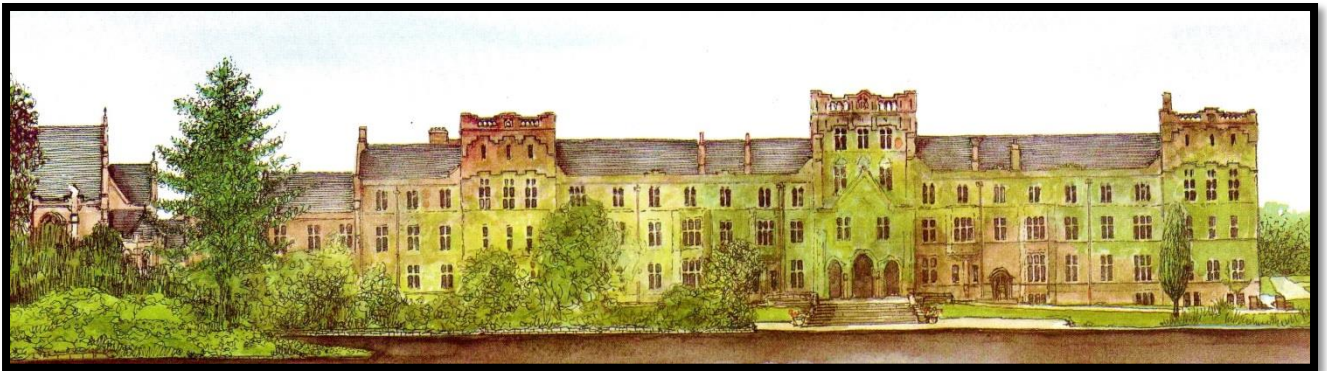


# St. Joseph's College, Upholland

“One of the glories of Catholicism in England”



Its rise and fall

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in collaboration with  
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2013



On the 8th September 1969, aged twenty-two, Michael Peyton set off from his family home in Bradford to St. Joseph's College, Upholland . He had been born in Dublin on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1947 into a family which had strong Irish Catholic roots but most of his childhood was spent near Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire where his primary education was entrusted to nuns from the Dominican Order. After the family moved northwards, St. Bede's Grammar School, Bradford provided a thorough and vigorous education. Increasingly immersed in Catholicism, he made the decision to train for the priesthood which involved periods of study in Rome and Liverpool. His years in Upholland were to be the final part of a process intended to lead to ordination.



St. Joseph's was one of the two senior seminaries serving the north of England, the other being Ushaw in County Durham. Their role was to train young men, generally between the ages of 18 and 24, for the Catholic priesthood. Some institutions, like Upholland, were also junior seminaries, taking boys from the age of 11 considered to have a clerical vocation. As a young man going through a daily and annual routine of religious observance he gave little thought to the nature of the institution in which he found himself. He never considered why it was there. Who had founded it? Who exactly were the people in clerical garb featured in large paintings along the corridors and in the Refectory? What difficulties had been overcome in its creation? What battles, theological and personal, internal and external, between tradition and liberalism, had taken place in determining the curriculum which he was to follow? How had the previous occupants of the room in which he slept and studied spent their time?

In this modest work we intend to explore the foundation of the College and its growth over fifty years until it became a building very much as it was at Mike's arrival. That done, we will recall the events of Michael's two years and one term in the College to allow some assessment of how far the aims and objectives of its founders were then being met. What is certain, however, is that no-one expected a College built to last for generations to promote the "Faith of Ages" would function for less than a century and would cease to operate a few years after Michael's departure.



The opening of St. Joseph's College, Upholland in 1883 was primarily due to the determined efforts of the Bishop of Liverpool, Bernard O'Reilly. He was born in Ballybeg, County Meath, on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1824. The *Lancaster Gazette* of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1894, published shortly after his death, gives an account of his early training:-

"In early years, Dr. O'Reilly was educated initially at the famous seminary of Navan – the nursing mother of innumerable priests...From Navan, Dr. O'Reilly proceeded to St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, aged 12, he was received as a student in June, 1836. His college course was marked by steady attention and diligence in the pursuit of his studies and by regular and exemplary conduct in the performance of all his duties..."

In 1845 he received the tonsure and four Minor Orders, was ordained deacon, and was raised to the priesthood on May 9<sup>th</sup> 1847 at the early age of 23. In Liverpool, the need for priests was great because of "a malignant fever striking down priest after priest". This deadly disease was cholera. He reached St. Patrick's, Toxteth within a week of his ordination, finding one priest dead and two others within hours of death. Father O'Reilly became ill himself but survived. Out of the 24 priests in Liverpool in that year, 12 died, being described as "martyrs of charity."

He was ordained as Bishop of Liverpool on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1873. Although comment was made on his "exemplary conduct" during training, he soon had to deal with members of his flock for whom this description was entirely inappropriate. The *Liverpool Mercury* of 17<sup>th</sup> June 1875 reported:-

"At a previous meeting of the clergy of Liverpool, Dr. O'Reilly forbade the annual trips or excursions of all Catholic associations; and yesterday this order was ratified, and now extends to the whole of the diocese. This prohibition has been found necessary on account of the many scandals that too often have arisen from these excursions; and in future the Catholic clergy are forbidden either to manage or lend their co-operation to excursions without the sanction of the provost...The same injunction applies to bazaars and public balls....."

He had also deprecated the services of female singers in choirs; "the clergy are generally invited to train up choirs of boys and male voices only".

Thomas Burke in "*The Catholic History of Liverpool*", 1910 refers to a description of the Bishop written after his death by Sir Edward Russell in *The Daily Post*.

"Dr. O'Reilly enjoyed the unqualified esteem of all who knew him. He was perhaps somewhat retiring, possibly somewhat shy.... His episcopate was very remarkable for church extension and the solid results that he achieved were the more notable because obtained in so quiet a manner and by means of such steady energy and perseverance."

Bishop Hedley, at his funeral said:-

"He loved cheerfulness in business; he could smile himself and liked those who dealt with him to smile also."

His humour was described as soft and dry, of a true Celtic kind. He had a pride in the clergy and the flock among whom he lived and he was popular with them. When he returned to Liverpool in 1883 after a period of absence of six months, some of which was spent in Cannes, he was met at Lime Street Station by a "huge and enthusiastic assemblage of his devoted people." Streets were decorated with banners and triumphal arches and a "Te Deum" sung in celebration.

According to Father Nugent, the Bishop's contemporary at Ushaw, writing in *The Catholic Times*, the building of St. Joseph's "was the cherished child of his heart, even to his last breath".

The problem which had to be tackled was how to find priests to cope with the spiritual needs of the large and growing Catholic population of the Liverpool diocese. This was summed up by the Very Rev. Canon Walker of Lancaster, as reported in *The Liverpool Mercury* of Monday, 19th April 1880.

He said that "in 1780 the Catholic population of England was estimated at 50,000. Forty years later, in Lancashire alone they numbered 73,500.... At this moment, in the dioceses of Liverpool and Salford there was a Catholic population of 515,000, there being 483 priests, and 283 churches."

The first Junior Seminary of the Diocese was founded at St. Edward's College, Everton in 1842 as a Catholic 'classical and commercial school' and in 1875 it was extended to accommodate double the number of students. The shortage of priests, however, was such that many had to be borrowed from Ireland. They proved to be very effective in working with the Irish people of Liverpool. It was decided that the longer term solution must be for the diocese to have its own seminary to produce the requisite number of priests, a view very much in line with the decisions of the sixteenth century Council of Trent. Initially, consideration was given to the expansion of St. Edward's but a more radical solution was favoured, the creation of a diocesan seminary elsewhere, but for this funds would have to be raised.

In his scholarly book, *"Mitres and Missions in Lancashire, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Liverpool 1850 to 2000"*, Peter Doyle explains that when the diocesan clergy were consulted "they were unanimous in expressing their opinion that the great work should be at once undertaken." The Bishop headed the subscription list by giving two sums of £1,700 and £2,000 which had been personal bequests to him. The clergy raised over £5,000 in amounts ranging from £200 to £5. In response to a pastoral letter, pledges of almost £35,000 were received. While the funds were still coming in the Bishop paid a visit to Rome where Pope Leo XIII encouraged the Bishop to lose no time on the project and to be sure to build it large. A site still had to be found.

The Bishop's Pastoral Letter of 12<sup>th</sup> April 1885 on the "NEW DIOCESAN COLLEGE OF ST. JOSEPH" recalls this search.

"In the meantime we were busily occupied in seeking for a locality suitable for the new college, and there were several who kindly aided us in our search. We looked out for land upon which there were no buildings, and for a long time we met with no success; the price asked for land in suitable localities placed it out of our power to purchase. We were beginning to weary of the delay, and, moreover, we did not know where to place a number of our ecclesiastical students, for at St. Edward's College there was no suitable accommodation for advanced students, and the rooms for theological students at other colleges were full. From this latter difficulty we were freed by the kindness of the Bishop of Leeds, who consented to receive some into his seminary (Ushaw). At one time there were seventeen placed there. To him and to the rector of his seminary we are deeply grateful, and we take this opportunity of returning our heartfelt thanks to each of them. At length we were informed that a farm, Walthew Park, near Upholland, was for sale. We asked some friends to visit it, and we did the same ourselves, and we were satisfied by their judgment and our own that it would be a most desirable site. Before, however, treating for the purchase, we consulted a gentleman employed by Government upon the Geological Survey as to the supply of water, and were assured by him that it would be sufficient and ample. We at once determined to purchase the farm, and we did so at the cost of £8,000, a large sum for us to expend, but not more than it was worth. In extent it measures over 153 acres. The price asked for land which we had seen elsewhere was from £6,000 to £15,000 for from about ten to twenty acres."

The estate, also known as Rough Park Farm, had been purchased at an auction held at the Victoria Hotel, Wigan on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1877.



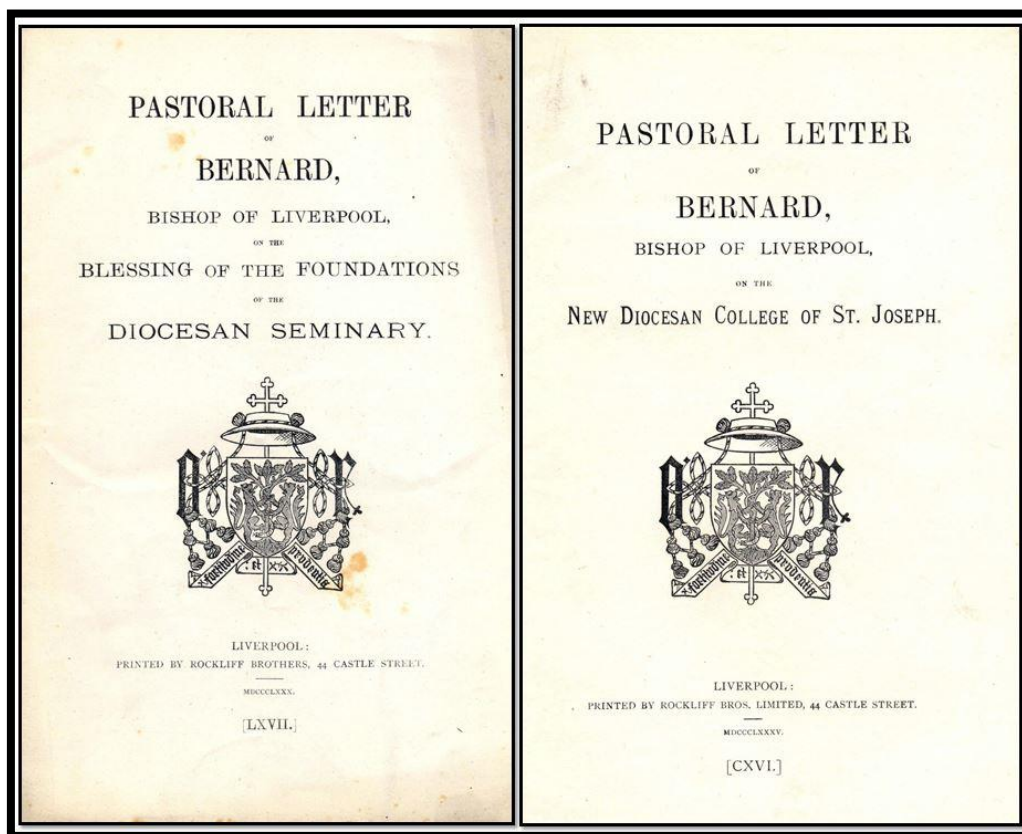
ROUGH PARK FARM,  
 UPHOLLAND, NEAR WIGAN, LANCASHIRE.

PARTICULARS AND PLAN  
 OF VALUABLE AND  
**FREEHOLD ESTATE,**  
 SITUATE at UPHOLLAND, near WIGAN, aforesaid,

**SALE BY AUCTION,**  
 BY MESSRS. LAMB & SONS,  
 AT THE VICTORIA HOTEL, WIGAN,  
 On FRIDAY, the 20th day of JULY next,

The Bishop's Pastoral Letter of 9<sup>th</sup> April 1880, dealing with the blessings of the foundations of the diocesan seminary, stated:-

"Everyone was delighted to obtain the site on a small farm which presented exceptional advantages – one mile from the village of Upholland and about two miles from two railway stations on different lines. It stands high, indeed close under Ashurst Beacon, and commands an uninterrupted view of all the country around. Upon it there is an abundant supply of good water and this cannot be interfered with by mining operations for the coal which underlies it is at such a depth and in such limited quantity that it could never be worked at a profit. Moreover, upon the site there is a quarry of that excellent stone known as Upholland Stone. Upon this farm which contains about 150 acres, sheltered from the North Western winds will shortly stand St. Joseph's College."



Once the land had been acquired detailed planning had to take place. The 1885 Pastoral Letter continues:-  
“For about three years we were busily occupied in considering plans for the new buildings; and here, again, we sought advice from those in whose judgment we had confidence. We spent many anxious days in weighing the various schemes proposed, and having, with the advice of many, determined upon a general plan, we engaged the services of an architect, Mr. James O'Byrne. He entered into all our views, carrying out our wishes as to the general arrangement, providing the accommodation required, and doing this at the lowest possible cost. We are indebted to him for very many improvements on our first suggestions. He devoted much time and study to the work, and his talent and experience have secured to us buildings in every way suitable for the purpose for which they are intended. And here it is but fair to him to say that he fully entered into our wish to keep the expense as low as possible.”

Canon Worthy, the Bishop's cousin, was appointed site manager. He re-drained the land, constructed the College drive, laid out the gardens and orchards and planted several thousand trees before starting building in 1880. A quarry was opened on site to provide almost all the stone for the College and the lodge, which the Canon occupied. On St. Joseph's Day, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1880, a special train was arranged to run from Liverpool to Orrell and people, led by Dr. O'Reilly converged on Upholland for the foundation ceremony.

The *Wigan Observer* reported that:-

“Several thousand people walked along the hedgebound and somewhat dusty road through the open country beyond the finger post that points to Roby Mill”.

A fuller account is contained in *The Liverpool Mercury*, Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1880:-

“In the presence of several thousand persons from all parts of Lancashire, the Right Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool, blessed and laid, yesterday, the foundation stone of St. Joseph's Seminary, an institution designed for the education of priests for the diocese under his pastoral care. This is a project which Dr. Reilly has cherished since his accession to the episcopate..... When he recently announced the desire he had in his heart, his people readily and heartily responded. Contributions to the amount of £22,000 were quickly given, and £8,300 of this has been expended in the purchase of 150 acres of land at Ashurst Beacon near Upholland. In the centre of this tract a seminary has been founded, and that section of it which is to be completed forthwith will cost from £25,000 to £30,000....After the stone had been laid the Very Rev. Canon Walker of Lancaster addressed the assemblage.... He earnestly hoped that not a single member of a Catholic family in that great diocese would miss the honour and privilege of contributing to this important work. Above all, let them recommend daily the success of this undertaking in their prayers to God, asking Him to make the seminary the fruitful mother of learned priests and apostolic men.”

The 1885 Pastoral Letter deals with the construction process:-

“He (Mr. O'Byrne) insisted that in the construction the strength of the building should be secured, and that nothing but the best materials and the best workmanship should be employed; but, whilst doing this, he did not hesitate to cut out ornamentation as far as was possible. He sacrificed his own views, but he has produced a work for which we have reason to be thankful, and which will add to his reputation. The contractors were the well-known and respected firm, Messrs. Roberts and Robinson, and we were fortunate in having engaged them, for thus we were relieved of much anxiety as the building was going up. There was nothing that their wide experience, nothing that the most careful superintendence could secure, that was not brought into requisition; none but the best material was employed; nothing but the most skilled and careful workmanship was allowed. Still, the time occupied in the building of the college was not altogether without its anxiety. It was a great work; so much depended upon its arrangements to secure convenience and efficiency in its working, so much upon its stability to keep down the expense of future repairs, that it could not be otherwise than an anxious time for us. We confess that it was a consolation and a real joy to us, and to those who with us were mainly responsible for the work in all its various stages, to hear the cheering remarks and the commendations which prevailed upon the occasion of the opening of the college.”

An enormous boost had been given to the building fund by a bequest of £17,000 from Gilbert Hayes which financed the building of another wing. This gift was recorded in Latin on a memorial tablet which says in translation:-

“To the Honour and Memory of Gilbert Hayes, a Citizen of Liverpool, sometime Illustrious Professor of Veterinary Art, a Munificent Benefactor to this Diocese, who died piously in the Lord, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1879, in the 53<sup>rd</sup> year of his age. Bernard, Third Bishop of Liverpool, wishing to record his great kindness, wished this addition to his seminary, built by his Gift, to be ever called by his name. In the Year of Our Lord, 1882.”

Before the College opened, however, *The Tablet* of 11<sup>th</sup> March 1882 gave an update on progress:-

“St. Joseph's Seminary—Diocese of Liverpool.

Perhaps the most important ecclesiastical works undertaken during the present century in England have been the Diocesan Seminaries for Ecclesiastical Education..... of all our Diocesan Seminaries the one laid out upon the largest scale is the new Seminary dedicated to St. Joseph, for the diocese of Liverpool. Liverpool is by far the most important diocese in England in point of population and of growing wants; and it has a Bishop with foresight and courage enough to meet these wants, and an enlightened clergy and a generous laity, willing to second and support their Bishop in his undertakings. The evidence of this is to be seen in St. Joseph's Seminary and the estate upon which it is being built.

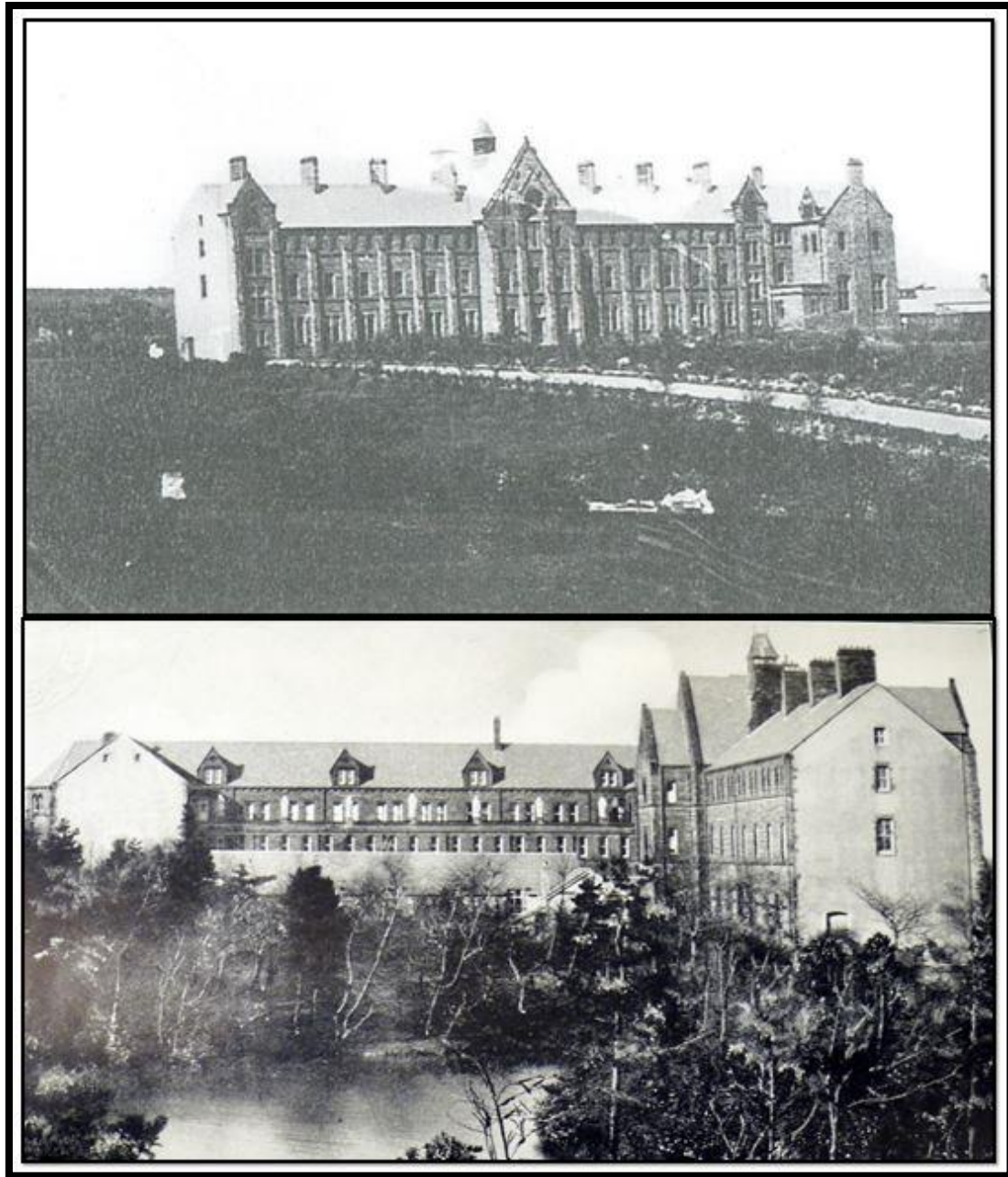
About four miles from Wigan, at two miles' distance from four different railway stations, and within an hour of Liverpool and of Southport, is a beautifully situated property of 153 acres, a little above the village of Upholland. This property has been purchased by the Bishop. And here in the centre of it has grown up the stately pile of St. Joseph's Seminary. It will be in form of a quadrangle when completed, with a quad very nearly an acre in size—considerably larger, therefore, than any of the famous quads in Oxford and Cambridge. At present two sides of the quadrangle have risen up. As you enter the building you find yourself in a corridor 228 feet long, and 13 feet wide: large windows in a simple Gothic style, with seats below them, are on the left, while on the right are class rooms, reception rooms, and approaches to staircases. Out of the north corridor are the temporary chapel, a room of 70 feet, and a room for defensions, as an ante-room to the dining hall, which is also of noble proportions. Attached to the north wing are the offices, which leave nothing whatever to be desired for the convenience and comfort of the servants of a large community; everything that is necessary has been provided. Very extensive and convenient cellarge for coals, stores, and whatever other purpose it may serve, has been procured under the north wing and part of the servants' wing, at an entire saving of the excavation which would otherwise have been necessary under the east, south, and west sides of the quadrangle. The south and west sides of the quadrangle have not been undertaken; and there is no present intention of beginning them.

The college is three storeys high, and, in addition to public rooms, it contains forty bed-rooms. The walls are of stone, lined with brick. The stone has been quarried chiefly on the property of the college. The red ashlar stone dressings of the windows are from Runcorn. Though all superfluous ornament has been scrupulously avoided, and a rigorous exclusion has been practised in regard to whatever was not essential, the appearance of the whole building is decidedly pleasing—grave and solid without being heavy, bright and light without being frivolous. The view from the east wing commands the distant hills of Cumberland, and from the Ashurst Beacon, on the top of the hill on the side of which the college is built, some ten counties can be seen lying before you, with the silver waters of St. George's Channel to the west.

The present contract will be completed and the seminary will be opened in the summer of next year. The grounds are already being laid out. It is reported that the seminary will open with about twenty-five Philosophers and Divines. There are at present over 150 ecclesiastical students belonging to the diocese of Liverpool, scattered through different colleges at home and abroad. The wants of the diocese, we are informed, cannot be met by a smaller supply of priests than ten every year. All this makes it clear how necessary it is that the Bishop should have a seminary of his own, in which he can watch over the education and character of the young men who are destined to become his future clergy.

The outlay, by the time the seminary is ready for use, will hardly be less than £40,000, and if furniture and the price of land be included, it will greatly exceed that figure, however prudently the expenditure may be made. It is said that the Bishop does not intend to open the seminary until it is free from debt, and to enable

him to open it free from debt he is cutting down the expenditure to the lowest possible figure. We shall be surprised if any delay occur on account of debt, for we cannot imagine that the Catholics of the diocese of Liverpool could be otherwise than proud of the splendid institution which they are founding for the education of their clergy—splendid in point of size and convenience, and simple and economical in respect of mere ornament and detail.”



**The original college, photographed in 1883 (front) and 1894 (rear)**

Opening was not long delayed. In September 1883, the appointed Rector, Canon Teebay, his housekeeper and niece travelled from Southport in an ancient carriage drawn by Canon Worthy’s strongest horse “old Bob” and driven by a short man in a long coat and top hat, known generally as “Little Jimmy”. With them came a German professor of Dogma Fr. Franz Steffens. The other professors arrived later on the same day:- Dr. Ernest Commer, professor of Philosophy; Father John Bilsborrow of Ushaw, Vice Rector and professor of Moral Theology; and Daniel O’Hare, also from Ushaw, Procurator.





**Canon C. Teebay and Fr. J. Bilsborrow**

A major article was written in the *Wigan Observer* on 3rd October 1883 entitled:-  
THE NEW ROMAN CATHOLIC SEMINARY AT UPHOLLAND

“We have says the Catholic Times, to chronicle an event of great importance to the future existence and advancement of Catholicity in England and especially in Lancashire. The new college of St. Joseph, Walthew Park, for the education of ecclesiastical students for the diocese of Liverpool, was opened on Tuesday last with celebrations continuing the two following days...”

The article summarises the features of the College, noting the dimensions of the six class or lecture rooms, the 18½ feet by 10 feet dimensions of the professors’ rooms; the students’ rooms of 13 feet by 11ft. 9 inches, furnished with a bureau, bookcase, drawers, desk, wardrobe, bed and fireplace. Corridors are well heated. There is a library, reading-room and museum. There is a servants’ dormitory and servants’ chapel, servants’ hall, laundries, washhouses and bakeries. The north and south wings are cellared throughout.

Thirty one students had assembled on Saturday, fourteen studying theology and seventeen philosophy. The six year course leading to ordination is explained; “two years of philosophy and four years of theology, canon law, sacred scriptures &c”

The article continues:-

“After dining with the students and professors, his Lordship blessed every room and corridor from roof to cellar, and was accompanied by all the professors and students chanting in procession the Miserere Psalm and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, after which there was benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.”

The *Wigan Observer* continued:-

“The Bishop proposed the toast of the Rector....The Rector, after thanking the Bishop...said that whatever facility of expression he might possess it would utterly fail him if he were to attempt to shape his feelings that day into words. He was conscious of the great work which was begun, and fully alive to the expectations of the diocese of the good which was to come from St. Joseph’s College....Feeling that much depended on himself, and knowing as no one knew so well, his own deficiency; he would have shrunk from the responsibility had he been allowed to decline the burden. Still with his misgivings he had many grounds of confidence and hope...”

It is evident therefore, that the Rector had, with some reluctance, complied with the Bishop’s request to accept this position, a significant point in view of the difficulties which were to arise. On the grounds of ill-health, he had already refused the post of President of Ushaw in 1877. Once appointed he had to deal with a

number of quite bitter controversies with people in the area, especially the miller in Roby Mill who saw his water supply as being affected, and a local farmer whose agricultural practices were less than ideal. Such disputes were to continue for many years and were damaging to his health.

Although the students had arrived, the College was not fully functional. Many doorways were without doors and at night a man was needed to patrol the corridors armed with a gun to ward off vagrants. Some financial problems arose initially since several of those who had pledged money with enthusiasm proved unwilling or unable to meet their obligations when called on to do so. However substantial donations enabled enlargement of the College to occur, thus increasing its ability to accommodate students. James O'Byrne, the architect, in 1897 left to the College a fine collection of works of art valued at £20,000, intended as the nucleus of a museum, and an additional sum which accumulated to £130,000 to finance further building. There was, however, only one bath in the College for the use of professors and students which meant a bath only at three monthly intervals. Students used to swim in local ponds or have a cold swill in a tin bath in their rooms.

The April 1891 National Census reveals some of the changes which had taken place during the early years of the College, some of which must have been disturbing to the Bishop. Charles Teebay was living in retirement in the College and at 67 afflicted with "old age". The Rector was The Right Rev. Monsignor Canon John Bilsborrow, who was also Professor of Scripture and Theology. The Vice Rector and Professor of Theology was Thomas Whiteside. The teaching body was completed by two further professors, Daniel Donoughue and John Turner, aged 26 and 31. There were 11 students of Theology, chiefly in their mid twenties, and 6 students of Philosophy aged 20 on average. The great majority of these students had been born in Lancashire but one of the students of Theology was American. To meet the needs of the professors and students there was a female housekeeper, aged 50; nine female servants, all of whom were single and typically in their twenties; plus two female sick nurses, one of whom had been born in France and the other in Luxemburg.

Drawing on the work of Peter Doyle, we can see an early battle between liberalism and tradition within both the diocese and the College with Rector Teebay being far more liberal than the majority of his peers. At its inception, a constitution for the College had to be established. Fr. James Swarbrick, a member of the Board given this task, believed that senior students should have as few rules as possible, consistent with good order and regularity. Lectures should be limited to an hour; these should be based on the works of approved authors and follow lines of argument approved by Rome. Some science should be studied alongside the traditional area of philosophy and theology. Stories of laxity grew with students being allowed to read newspapers, even those believed to be anti-religious. The President of St. Edward's despaired about what was happening to his junior seminarians when they went to Upholland – they were even allowed to play football in white trousers and "variegated jackets". They displayed "a sad tone of worldliness and vanity". He threatened resignation.

The Rector received the following letter from his Bishop:-

My Dear Charles,

I am very much pained to hear that the students at their games continue to dress in fancy costumes. I spoke to you on a former occasion saying how strongly I condemned this practice and forbidding its continuance and you promised that it would never again be allowed. During the past week I received a letter from one of our Priests in the Diocese stating that these costumes were still being used, and expressing his dissatisfaction and that of others that such a practice should be permitted in an Ecclesiastical College and by Ecclesiastics. Indeed, the letter was couched in such strong language that I was startled by reading it....

The practice must never again be allowed.

+ Bernard.

The Rector replied:-

“Some of them have worn jerseys over their waistcoats at football and a few flannel trousers. I thought that they would preserve their clothes. I never thought that they would be considered a uniform or a fancy dress.”

The American student listed in the 1891 Census commented favourably on Upholland’s “beautifully broad, general and liberal” regime which was so different from that of Ushaw where the students were mere machines. Some donors regretted contributing to the building of a College where there was a “want of Priestly discipline and Priestly spirit” manifested by students travelling to Wigan, going to shops, visiting their parents and reading unsuitable novels. Some, however, had found the demands of seminary training to be too great. The *Liverpool Mercury* of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1885 reported:-

Mr. James Henry, student at St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic College, Upholland, was found suspended by the neck by a cord in the wardrobe in his bedroom on Saturday. The deceased, who was 23 years of age, went to the college about 13 months ago, and had been in a depressed state of mind – it is supposed, through having failed in his examination at another college. When the body was found by the principal, life was extinct.”

Canon Teebay resigned in 1886 because of ill-health but continued to live in College until his death. He was replaced by the much less liberal Canon Bilsborrow who came from farming stock and consequently took great delight in the running of the College Farm. Frequent donations of cattle were received and a fine herd built up. Letters between the new Rector and a local farmer indicate that he had more than academic and ecclesiastical matters to deal with:-

To Mark Baldwin. 22 August, 1887

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to have to inform you that your cattle have been again in our turnips, potatoes and clover today. They, as well as your sheep, were in yesterday, when I sent a boy to tell you to keep them out.....

I am quite tired of warning you.... and this will be my final notice, and if disregarded I shall be compelled to take action which will be as unpleasant to myself as it will prove costly to you.

I am,

Yours truly,  
John Bilsborrow.

He became Bishop of Salford in 1892 to be followed as Rector by Dr. Whiteside until appointed as Bishop of Liverpool after the death of Dr. O’Reilly on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1894. He in turn was followed by Provost William Walmsley who remained as Rector until 1926.

Arrangements for the funeral of Dr. O’Reilly were described in the *Liverpool Mercury* of 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1894:-

“The body will be removed from St. Edward’s to the pro-Cathedral of St. Nicholas tomorrow afternoon, at three o’clock where a solemn dirge will be chanted in the evening and half past seven o’clock. Requiem Mass will be celebrated on Friday morning, at eleven, also in the cathedral. After the latter function the body of the Bishop will be removed to the Exchange Station at three o’clock, thence conveyed to St. Joseph’s College, Upholland where the internment will take place. Yesterday the body of the deceased prelate which is lying in state in the library of St. Edward’s College was viewed by a large number of people who wished to take a last look at their bishop.”

The *Liverpool Mercury*, of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1894 describes the funeral in detail. This fascinating article merits quotation at length in view of the remarkable occasion chronicled and the magnificence of its language. It is headed:-

“The Late Bishop O’Reilly  
Celebration of the Obsequies  
An Impressive Function.”

Amongst the enormous numbers of those listed as present, both clerical and lay, the chief mourner was identified as Very Rev. Dean O’Reilly, brother of the deceased. The celebrant of the mass was the Right Rev. Dr. Bilsborrow, one-time Rector of St. Joseph’s but at that time Bishop of Salford.

The writer refers to the pro-Cathedral as being “massive in drapery of black.... In front of the High Altar lay on a simple catafalque, surrounded by candelabra the oaken casket containing all that is mortal of him who for 21 years was the chief pastor of the diocese. On the lid of the coffin was a chasuble, a biretta, a mitre, a crosier, and a chalice, significant of the priestly and episcopal offices which had been held by the dead prelate. On either side of the catafalque and before it were gathered together the clergy, regular and secular, the former including the Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits and Passionists in their several habits. Here and there too were seen the dark garb and snow white head-dress of the Sisters of Bon Secœurs and the light blue gowns and spreading linen caps of the Sisters of Charity....As the recital of the Mass for the Dead went on, the voices of the priests in the choir rose and fell in the mournful measures of the ancient Gregorian plain song, whose pathos and majesty remain untouched, despite the lapse of centuries. ....

When the function was at its height, the scene in the pro-Cathedral, in which Bishop O’Reilly’s stately figure had been so often seen, and in which his voice had been so often heard, was most impressive.”

Bishop Hedley, who was the preacher took as his text “I know thy works, thy labour, and thy patience” (Apoc. II ,2) He “briefly sketched the career of his late episcopal brother...Framed in language lofty, but devoid of false ornament, its diction being chaste and lucid, the sermon abounded in felicitous phrases”. The Bishop explained that “For these last three years he (the deceased) has had to struggle against the visible approach of death and with profound submission to God’s holy will.....He celebrated his daily Mass as long as he could stand.”

The commentary continued:-

“After the imposing ceremony in the Pro-Cathedral the coffin was conveyed to the Exchange Station.... The platforms were crowded and the departure of the mourners was watched with deep interest. Orrell Station was reached shortly after four o’clock. Many availed themselves of the numerous vehicles in attendance in order to reach St. Joseph’s Seminary, Upholland, in the grounds of which the remains of the deceased prelate were laid to rest. From various parts of the district about two thousand persons had assembled.

“The massive oak coffin..... bore the following inscription

“Reverendissimus in Xto Pater  
Bernardus O’Reilly  
Bonus Pastor  
Obit die April ix, MDCCCXCIV  
Æt. 70  
Requiescat in Pace”

Impressiveness characterised the solemn service for the dead, and during its course the large gathering of several thousand persons remained with heads uncovered, though the air was cold and biting....The funeral service concluded at half-past five, and the mourners, who had journeyed from Liverpool, returned from Orrell where a special train was in waiting to convey them to their destination.”

The *Liverpool Mercury* of 11<sup>th</sup> June 1894 revealed that the net value of the late Bishop’s personal estate was £689 10s. 1d. This was to be divided in equal shares between the Very Rev. John Worthy, Monsignor Carr of St. Edward’s College, the Rev. Gerald O’Reilly, and the Rev. Charles Vincent Green.

Much work was done to the grounds of the College in the late nineteenth century. The first cricket pitch appeared between 1886 and 1888. The College cemetery was planned as early as 1884, its wall built in 1896,



the wrought-iron gates added in 1903. The central stone cross was erected in 1898 as a memorial to the late Bishop O'Reilly. When Canon Worthy died in 1893 he left £250 to be used for the construction of a swimming pool, which was never built.



Photographs show students, suitably dressed in waistcoats, digging out earth to form a college lake about the turn of the century. Heavy manual labour featured in the lives of most of the students, many being employed in creating and re-surfacing paths on the estate as well as maintaining the woodland and digging drains. A grass tennis court existed before 1914. From 1883 to 1920 there was only one football pitch, occupying the lower part of the field known as The Quarry.

By 1914, Upholland had produced 250 priests but The Great War had a major effect on St. Joseph's as on the rest of the country. When the garden staff were called-up the students had to take over the growing of fruit and vegetables. Those in Major Orders were exempt from call-up; priests were released to act as chaplains to the Forces. By mid 1918 there were only ten students left; four were ordained and the remainder sent to Ushaw. The College then closed down, becoming home for seventy Liverpool orphans under the care of some Sisters of Mercy. Then came the children of soldiers and sailors with their carers. Only Provost Walmsley remained in post. With the ending of the War, the junior seminary at St. Edward's was closed, the building being sold to the Christian Brothers with the junior seminarians being transferred to St. Joseph's to join the seniors. A contributor to the *Upholland Magazine* asserts that "it seems fair to say that most of the students were glad to escape from St. Edward's, which in its latter days had grown harsh even for those times. Upholland was the promised land – a place to be explored and even enjoyed without fear of summary reprisals."

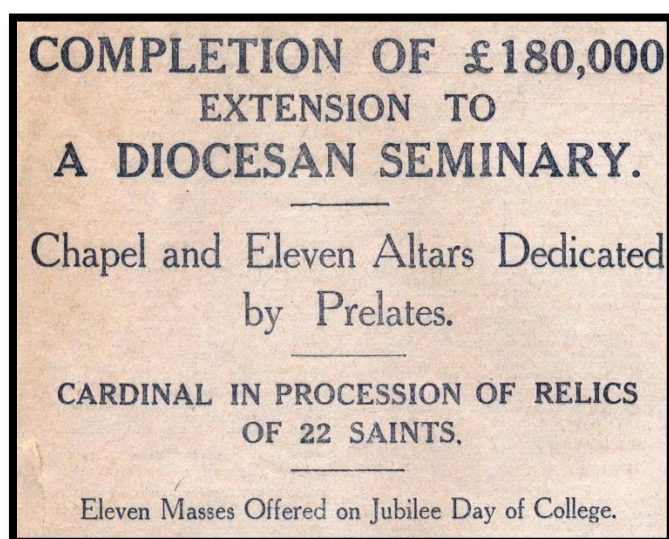
Archbishop Keating then planned a massive building programme to house the new influx and improve facilities for the senior seminarians. He had been born in Birmingham on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1859 and, according to *The Tablet*, was from a family "which had given several sons to the priesthood." He had studied at the Benedictine College at Douai and was ordained in 1882. He was appointed Bishop of Northampton in 1908 and was translated to Liverpool in 1921 after the death of Archbishop Whiteside. He had taken a particular interest in the conditions of the working class and was President of the Catholic Social Guild. He initiated work which was eventually to lead to the building of a new cathedral in Liverpool. His efforts in the development of the College led to his being described later in the *Upholland Magazine* as "Co-founder of Upholland". On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1923, he chaired the first meeting of a committee formed to discuss "the New College". From this group, two sub-committees were formed, the Building Committee and the Scholastic Committee. Plans were drawn by Messrs. Pugin and Pugin and on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1923 a new foundation stone was laid. This was the first of four foundation stone days marking the different phases of construction. The College magazine for 1923 reported the arrival of electricity saying that the College had been:-  
"delivered from a sojourn in twilight and shadow and a new lustre has been shed upon her hallowed walls."

A large quad was planned to go in front of the existing structure and a new chapel, to be built out of red sandstone. The edifice was surrounded by landscaped gardens and sports facilities. Some of the new building was opened in 1927, followed by a new chapel and numerous sub-chapels. The completed college was described in the 1929 Lenten Pastoral Letter as “one of the glories of Catholicism in England.” It was then very much as Michael saw it on his arrival.



**Archbishop Keating**

*The Catholic Herald* of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1930 contains a major article on the College.



“Seldom has the golden jubilee of an English seminary been celebrated with such ritualistic pomp and even nation-wide rejoicing as have marked the opening of the extensions to St. Joseph’s College and the consecration this week by Cardinal Bourne and ten mitred prelates of England, Scotland, and Wales of the

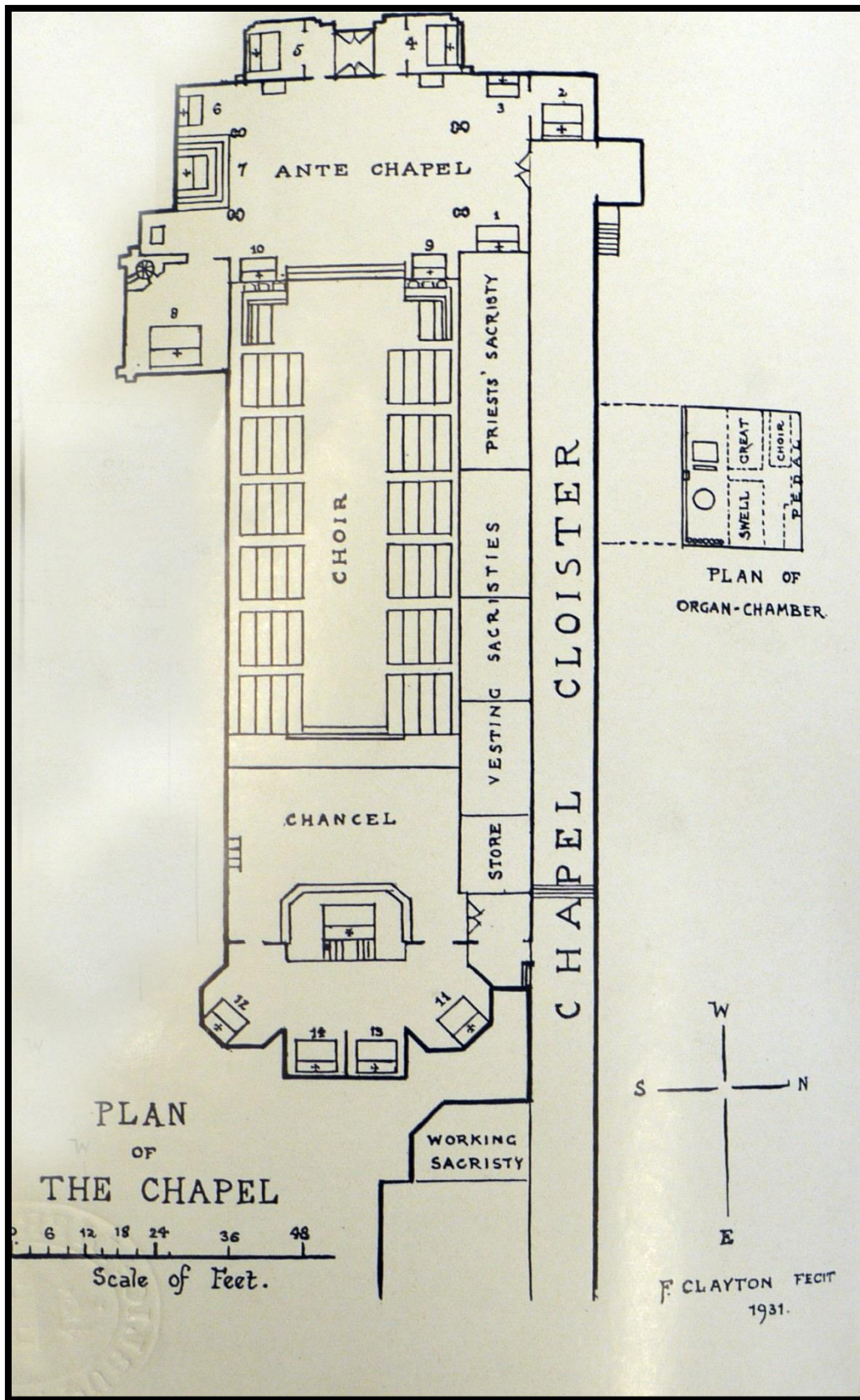


College chapel and its eleven stone altars of imposing design...the greatest event in the history of the Church in England since the Reformation. Twenty-two relics of the early saints from the Roman San Cabisto Catacombs, two for each of the eleven altars consecrated were borne in solemn procession. Fourteen Bishops, along with the Cardinal, abbots, monsignori and about a hundred priests marched in public veneration of the relics without which no altar can be dedicated. The relics were carried in a cabinet on a bier draped in red, symbolising the blood of martyrs. The eleven altars were consecrated simultaneously, and from the eleven thuribles incense filled the air with its sweet fragrance. The Cardinal from the high altar intoned the antiphons and psalms....The most beautiful of the altars is that built as a memorial to the English martyrs.... Each bishop gave (as is usual at consecration ceremonies) an indulgence to be gained on the day of consecration and on its anniversary in perpetuity to those who visit that particular altar....The high altar, composed of Forest of Dean pillars, is dedicated to St. Joseph, patron of the College...The College choir, under the conductorship of Fr. J. F. Turner, M.A., rendered the Vatican plain-chant all through the seven-hour ceremony – a feat scarcely without parallel...Besides the eleven consecrated, there are two of wood on the rood screen, and a third, also of wood, to Our Lady near the front entrance. Wooden altars cannot be consecrated....”

Could there be a better description of high Catholicism prevailing before the Second Vatican Council?

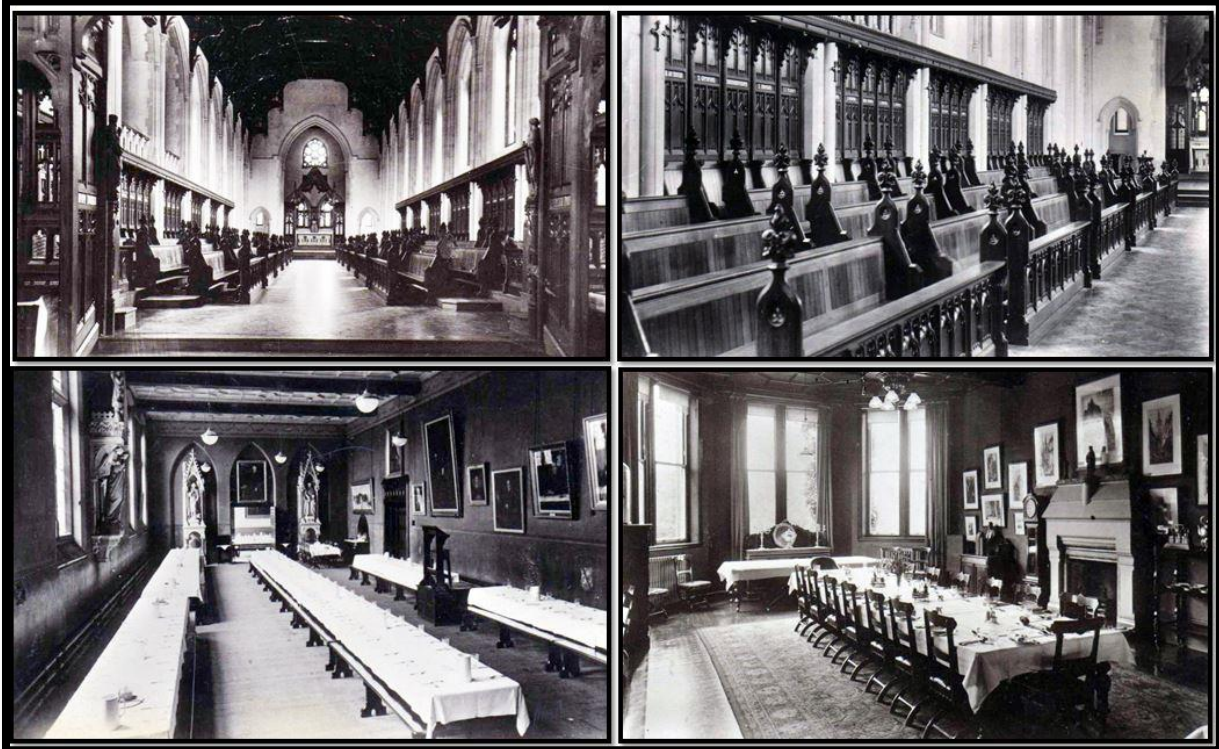
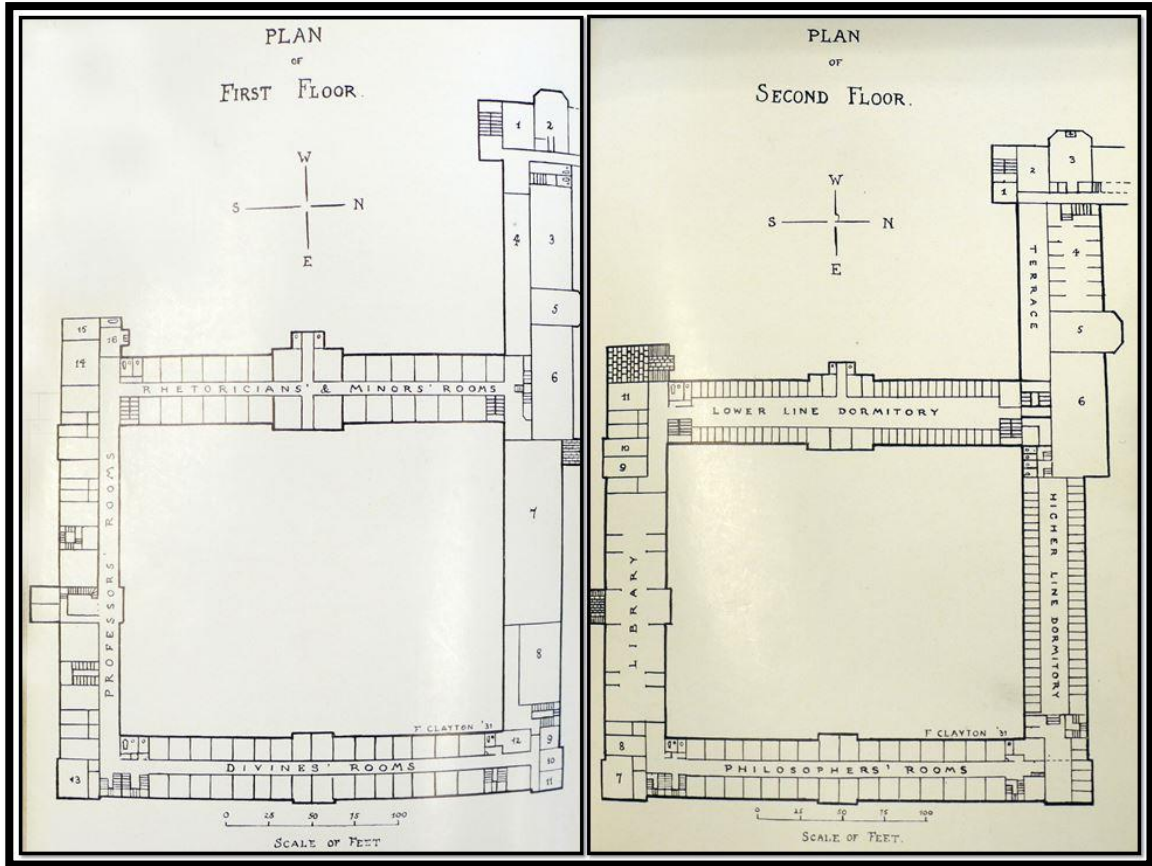


*Standing:* Bp. of Salford, Bp. of Menevia, Bp. of Hexham and Newcastle, Bp. of Lancaster, Bp. Biermans.  
*Sitting:* Bp. of Plymouth, Bp. of Northampton, Bp. of Shrewsbury, Archbp. of St. Andrews and Edinburgh,  
 Archbp. of Liverpool, Cardinal Archbp. of Westminster, Archbp. of Cardiff, Bp. of Leeds, Bp. of Brentwood.  
 May 6th, 1930.



Plan of The Chapel, showing the position of the altars





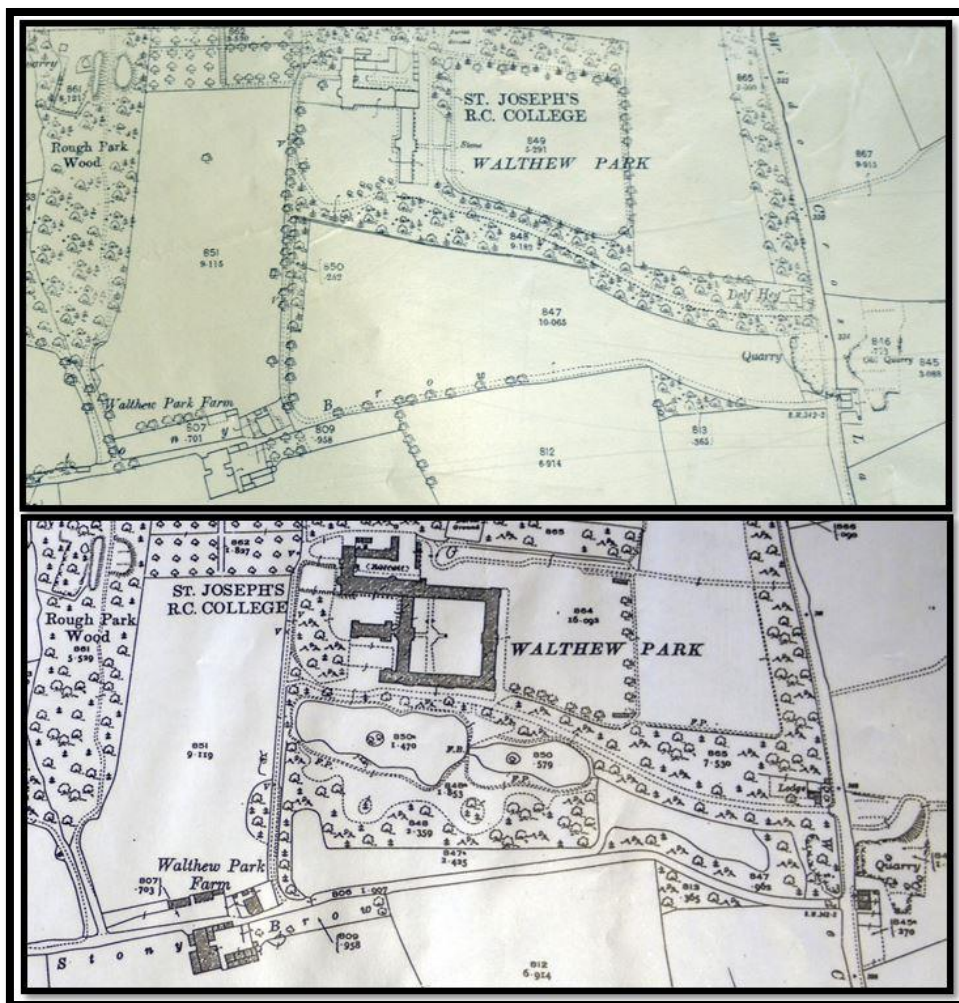
The Chapel, Refectory and Professors' Dining Room

**T**HE Consecration of the beautiful Chapel of Saint Joseph's College, Upholland, will always remain among the happy memories of my life, recalling a very special privilege and consolation. I trust that the present and all future generations of Students in the College will sometimes give a thought to and utter a prayer for the Archbishop of Westminster, who solemnly dedicated their Chapel to the unending worship of God.

Most earnestly do I beg the Divine Blessing upon the President, Professors, and all the Students of the College.

*Francis Cardinal Bourne*  
*Archbishop of Westminster*

May 8th, 1930.



The College shown on the 1893 and 1928 O.S. maps



In the course of the Ceremonies, a communication was received from Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) which expressed the Holy Father's joy and which granted the Apostolic Benediction to all engaged in the celebrations. We are fortunate today to have access through the internet to a *British Pathé* news clip of the event.

In the book "*Upholland College, A Record of the New Buildings*", edited by Rev. J. Ibison and Rev. Mr. J Maxwell, a telling comment is made:-

"and now we are privileged to look upon the whole majestic pile – to see the full mid-day glory of the "garden enclosed."

However, the College was not quite finished. A notable physical feature was to be the Observatory on the north tower of St. Edward's wing. The *Upholland Magazine*, Spring 1932 gives an account of its arrival. It explains that the telescope had previously been located in the grounds of St. Edward's College, Liverpool. Its "removal, overhauling and re-erection had been rendered possible only by the great courtesy of the Christian Brothers and the generous gift of £1,000 from an anonymous benefactor". The article explains that "the erection of the observatory was carried out by Messrs. Eaves and Co. Messrs. Cooke, Troughton & Simms constructed the papier-mache revolving dome, and overhauled and set up the telescope. The north tower was the choice of two astronomers from the Bidston Observatory who made previous and careful survey.....The length of the telescope is 9ft., and the diameter of the Object Glass is 7½".....Our telescope – granting perfect conditions – magnifies 400 to 500 times normal size....A clockwork apparatus or chronometer is attached to the telescope. This, when set in motion, will keep the telescope concentrated on some planet or star which one desires to keep in view..."

In August 1938, Monsignor T.J. Walshe of Waterloo, Lancashire left "£1,000 to the Rector of St. Joseph's College, Upholland to be applied in defraying the expenses of the Observatory or otherwise for the benefit of the College."

The period following the resignation of the first Rector was not only marked by physical changes but also a sterner attitude towards the proper training of future priests. To senior clerics, the world was seen as containing dangers from which tender minds should be sheltered. In 1873, at the Fourth Provincial Synod, the English bishops had stated that only approved books should be read in seminaries; students studying philosophy and theology should be separated from students of other disciplines lest their faith be challenged. Boys who were considering entering the priesthood should be separated from their peers. Provost William Walmsley had such traditional views. He was described as a "gruff, kindly man", willing to act as patron of the Upholland and District Annual Horse, Dog, Pigeon and Poultry Show.

Peter Doyle provides interesting information as the attitudes of Archbishop Keating. At the commencement of work on the enlargement of the College, the Archbishop said it was to be "a centre of sacred learning, an exemplar of religious observance, a treasure-house of ecclesiastical culture." Staff would be "unsullied by liberalism" and generally well qualified. The Archbishop's choice of Rector, Monsignor Joseph Dean, appointed in 1926, was a scripture scholar of ultra-conservative views who remained until 1942 enforcing unbending discipline and traditional practice on junior and senior seminarians alike. The Archbishop believed that the views expressed by the professors should always be in total conformity to those of Rome as conveyed through the Catholic hierarchy. Although lectures could be in English, he welcomed the concept of formal disputations being carried out in Latin. Staff were at all times to maintain professorial dignity, wearing academic dress within College and being back within the building by 10 p.m. Evidently some of the staff wished to change the postal address of the College to remove the name "Wigan" since the town had been the butt of music-hall jokes.

The Archbishop was not to see his project through to completion, dying after a short illness on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1928. He was thought to have got a chill while attending a memorial service for Bishop O'Reilly. His death and funeral is reported in *The Tablet*. His uncoffined, embalmed body laid in state in the pro-cathedral of St. Nicholas with a bodyguard of the Knight of St. Columba. At least 150,000 members of the public visited the

church to pay their respects. The funeral mass was celebrated by the Bishop Auxiliary, Monsignor Dobson, assisted by Canons Crank and Walmsley and the panegyric preached by the Very Rev. Dr. Downey, Vice-Rector of Upholland. The funeral service was in the presence of a score of Archbishops and Bishops representing the hierarchies of England, Wales and Ireland. They included His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishop of Cardiff, the Abbots of Ampleforth and Downing and Monsignor Vincent Keating, brother and sole surviving relative of the deceased. The coffin was taken from the church through a dense crowd of mourners for burial at Upholland, escorted by the Knights of St. Columba. The seminary students had drawn up in a long line at the approached to the College. He was buried next to the Bishop in the graveyard of the College. Bishop Dobson and Cardinal Bourne officiated at the graveside. A superb *British Pathé* film clip of the funeral is available on-line.

The Cardinal was himself opposed to Modernism. He was not overly supportive of interfaith dialogue nor of ecumenism. He condemned granting greater freedom to divorce or birth control. He also desired to see the United Kingdom adopt the Roman Catholic faith as its official religion.

In the post Second World War world, the traditional practices of the Church came under greater scrutiny, for example as regards their relevance in the developing world. This led ultimately to the calling of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII in 1959. A key issue to be addressed was the relationship between the Church and the “modern world”. His Holiness considered there to be a need to open the windows of the Church and let in some fresh air.

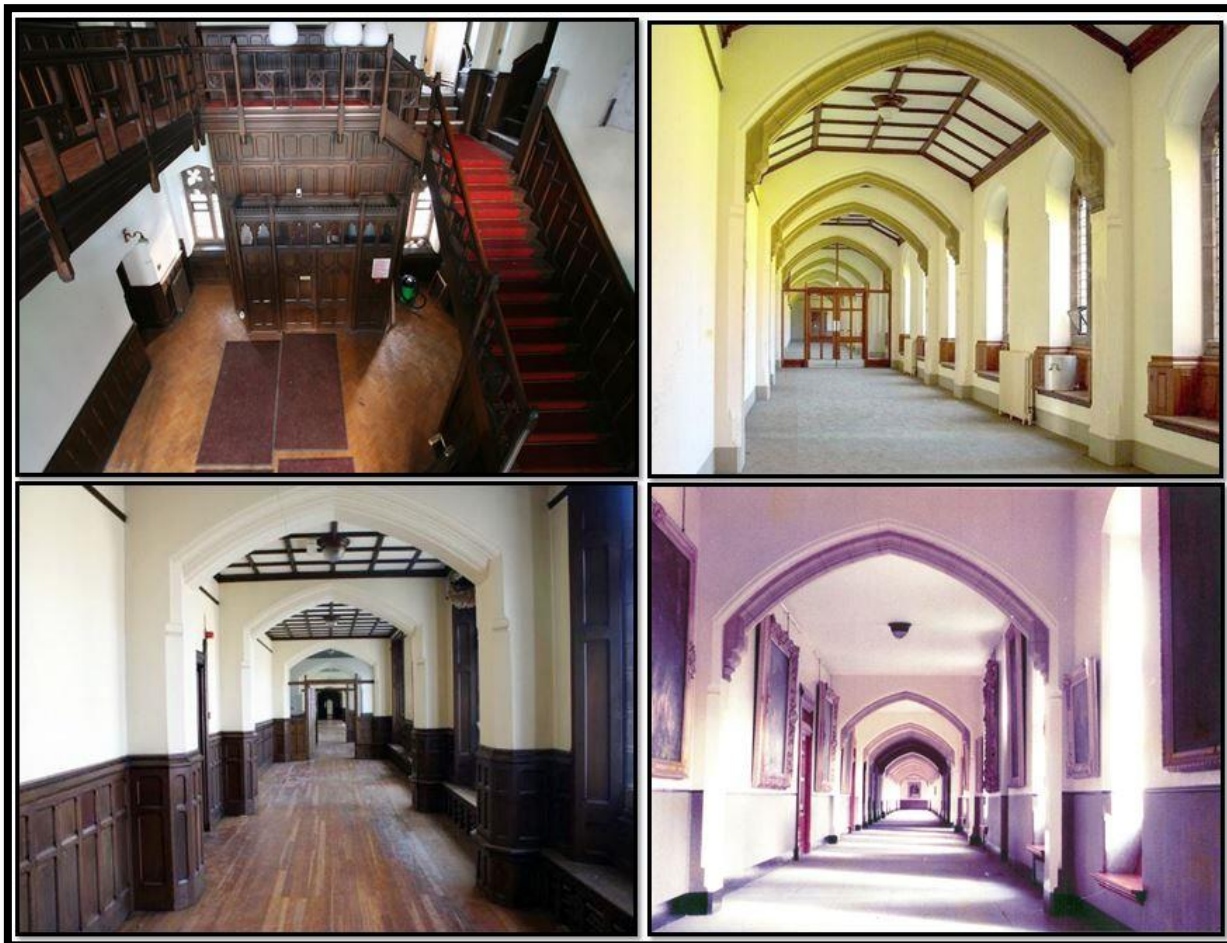
Seven new emphases resulted from the meetings of the Council between 1962 and 1965 - openness to the world, ecumenism, reform and renewal, historical consciousness, pluralism and diversity, collegiality and service which, collectively, were bound to lead to dramatic changes in the way in which young men were educated for priesthood. In 1965 the Council issued the “*Decree on Priestly Training*” (*Optatam Totius*). Seminary administrators and teachers should form a very closely knit community, both in spirit and activity, with their students. A better integration of philosophy and theology was urged. There should be awareness of traditional Catholic philosophy but this should be properly complemented with knowledge of contemporary philosophical investigations; there should be a strong pastoral emphasis in training and there should be willingness to draw on lessons from psychology, science and sociology. The intention was to educate students so that they could correctly understand the “characteristics of the contemporary mind” and be “prepared for dialogue for men of their time”. While some welcomed this modernisation wholeheartedly, traditionalists regarded it as undermining the Church’s centuries’ old work and beliefs. Although the impact was not immediate, inevitably Upholland was, by the time of Mike’s arrival, affected by these debates which challenged the enshrined practices of the seminaries. Clearly, the gate of the enclosed garden was to be opened but something was not to change. “*Optatam Totius*” stated that students were “to realize deeply how gratefully” they should receive “the venerable tradition of celibacy” as a “precious gift of God for which they should humbly pray” but they should be “warned of the dangers that threaten their chastity especially in present day society.”

## §

So far our concern has been with the leading clerical figures responsible for the creation, extension and operation of St. Joseph’s College. Little attention has been paid to the lives of the senior students within the institution. The complaints made during the Rectorship of Canon Teebay indicate that they may not then have conducted themselves with priestly dignity. Young intelligent men, even with an inclination to serve as priests, have always had a sense of humour and rarely conducted themselves as those in authority would hope and see as entirely “proper”. We now attempt to give some indication of life within the senior seminary of Upholland in the late 1960s and early 1970s; a life of ritual – meditation, prayer and study – fun, contentious change and increasing doubt. Were there then signs of threats to the College’s existence?



On 8th September 1969 Mike set off from Bradford for Upholland College, driven, with all his luggage, by a family friend. As they came to the end of a long driveway he caught his first glimpse of the College; massive, in extensive grounds with two lakes. He was met at the main door by a member of staff and students who helped him carry his luggage to his room. This was pleasant and functional with a wooden floor, a wash basin, relatively modern furniture – wardrobe, table, bookcase and bed – and it overlooked a quadrangle.



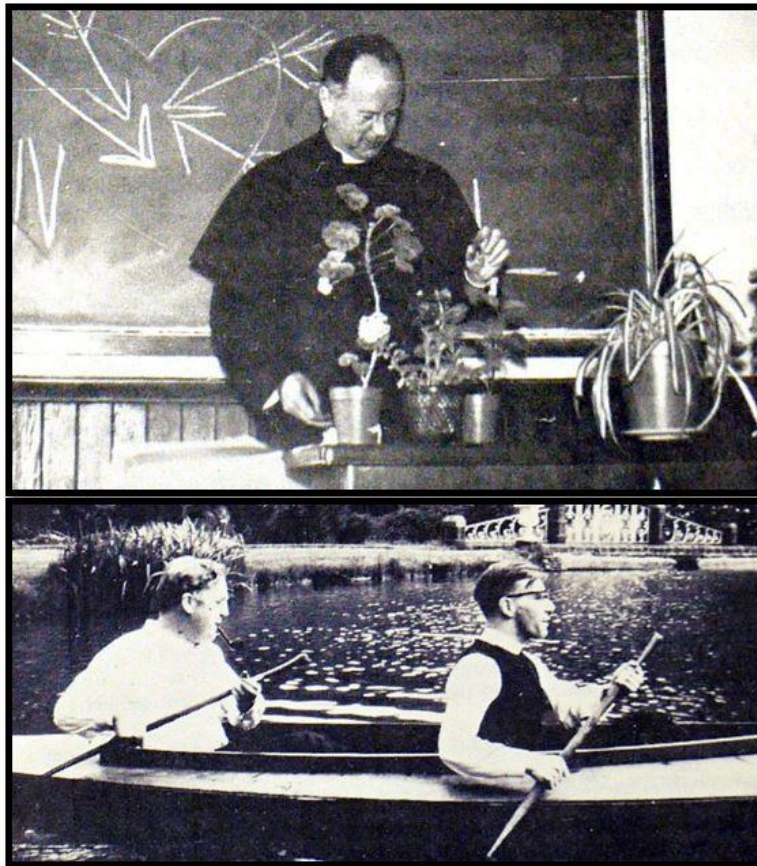
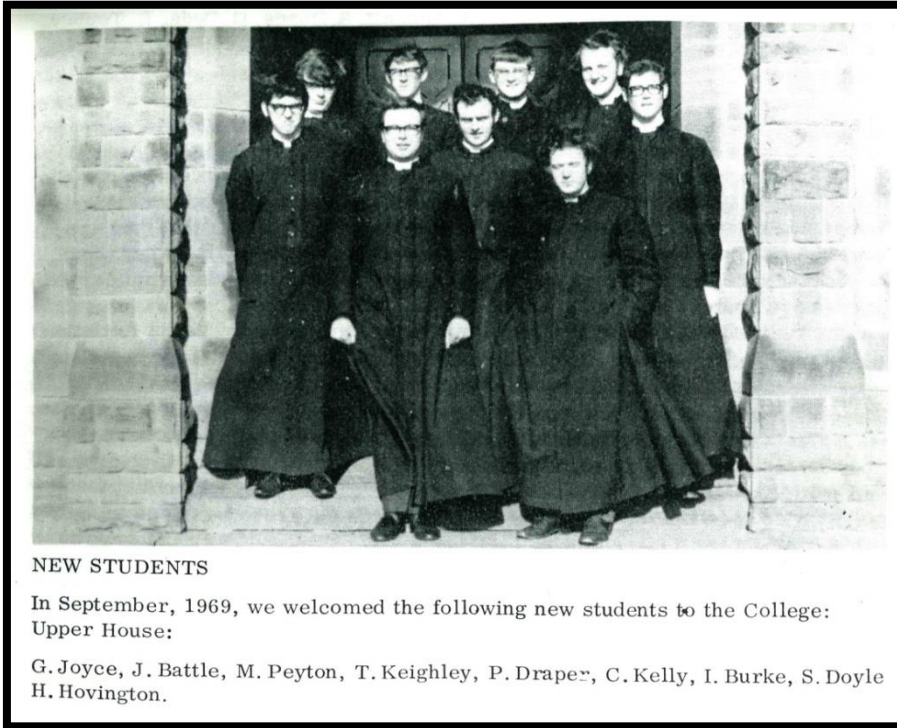
**Entrance Hall, Chapel Corridor, Professors' Corridor, Refectory Corridor.**

A few months after his arrival, in January 1970, in an attempt to reduce heating bills, a crude form of double glazing was installed in his and other students' bedrooms. This took the form of a wooden frame with a plastic insert which had to be wedged within the window recess. Of course it had to be removed should one wish to open the window.

The seminary had two divisions, the Lower House was for junior seminarians between the ages of eleven and eighteen, and the Upper House for adult students of whom there were about sixty. The two groups were segregated, with the younger students being at the back of the building. He was given a quick tour of the College which took in library, chapel, main corridors and refectory. The lecture rooms, of which there were three, were on the corridor below his room. Each member of staff had a small suite of rooms at the front of the College and sometimes used these for tutorials. The staff dining room was separate from that of the students. His normal daily wear was the cassock which he had been given by a priest in Bradford. This was worn in the chapel, lectures, tutorials, the refectory and when walking in the grounds. Casual dress was only to be worn while in his own room or in the students' corridor. For the first time in his training he found that he was expected to wear a biretta. This he acquired from a former Upholland student on his departure.

Mike was one of nine new students who entered the Upper House in September 1969. Some of his fellow students had been through the Junior Seminary at Upholland or at St. Michael's College, Underley Hall,

Kirkby Lonsdale, and so had been in a seminary since the age of eleven. Some were taking a two year course in Philosophy; others, having completed this, were at various stages of a four year course in Theology.



**Fathers John Gaine; Thomas Worden and Brian News**

The professors who were to be responsible for his intellectual and pastoral training were headed by The Rector, Monsignor Sidney Breen. He was born in 1914, studied at Upholland and Ushaw, was ordained priest at Upholland on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1940. He served as Rector between 1958 and July 1972, dying in 2007. His other tutors were Father Thomas Worden, Prefect of Studies, who, as a “peritus”, advised the English Bishops during their attendance at the Vatican Council; Father William Dalton, Church History; Father John Gaine, Philosophy and Prefect of Discipline; Canon P. Hanrahan, Moral Theology and Canon Law; Father Kevin Kelly, Moral Theology; Father John O’Hara, Scripture; Father Brian Newns, Liturgy; Dr. Forshaw, Dogmatic Theology and Father Peter Wilkinson, Church History.

Mike was surprised to find that the first event of note would be a “retreat”, under the direction of Father Brooks, S.J., starting after Benediction on the 8<sup>th</sup> September and which was to last until the 13<sup>th</sup> September. The purpose of the retreat was to make the student appreciate and feel the importance of seminary training. This and subsequent retreats involved periods of meditation, discussions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and consultations with a Spiritual Director “to bring the mind and heart under the influence of the great truths of religion”. Mike always found the periods of meditation to be difficult. During a later retreat on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1970, under the direction of Father Alfred Wilson, C.P., Mike, with a group of fellow students, decided that there was a need for some physical exercise and so they played a game of five-a side football in front of the College, an area known as The Quarry. Some had football boots and socks, others football shirts of various colours; Mike wore his tennis whites and pumps. In all they formed a motley crew of boisterous young men. Suddenly the Prefect of Discipline appeared. He had been informed of this activity and called the group together. Such an activity – the playing of football during a retreat – had never happened before and was totally contrary to ethos of a retreat as a period of calm reflection, silence and sanctity. The game was abandoned, with some mumblings of discontent. What would Bishop O’Reilly have thought of the recurrence of this breach of discipline after the events of eighty years earlier?

Retreats normally preceded the conferring of orders and priestly ordinations. Senior seminarians went through the “cursus honorum” or “course of honours” which involved a movement up the ecclesiastical ladder. A layman became a cleric through a ceremony known as “tonsure” which involved some strands of hair being cut as a sign of humility and service. Then there were the “Minor Orders” to be conferred at intervals – Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte. Originally holders of these orders had defined functions within religious ceremonies. A “Porter” was a doorkeeper; a “Lector” was a reader; an “Exorcist” cast out demons (an activity which could not in practice be carried out by seminarians!) and an “Acolyte” had the duty of lighting the candles and carrying them in procession. After these came the “Major Orders” of sub-deacon, which involved taking the vow of celibacy; deacon and presbyter (priest). In September 1969, the year Michael joined, twelve students received the tonsure; five from the diocese of Liverpool; four from Salford; two from Salford and one from Leeds. Being a new student, Mike was tonsured a year later on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1970 and became a Porter and Lector on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1971. In each case Bishop Gray (1919-1999) officiated, who was an auxiliary bishop of Liverpool, consecrated in 1967. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1972, Pope Paul VI abandoned the term “Minor Orders” in his “*motu proprio*” (by his own hand) document entitled “*Ministeria quaedam*”. Mike, therefore, was one of the last group of seminarians to have this status.

After the initial period of retreat, the College Diary records that on the 14<sup>th</sup> September “staff let their hair down – those lucky enough to have some – and launched the academic year with a bottle or two, or three....” and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, hangovers notwithstanding, the academic year formally opened.

Changes in priestly training are dealt with in depth in the writings of Rev. Dr. Kevin Kelly, “*50 Years Receiving Vatican II – a personal odyssey.*” He had trained at Upholland, then undertook further study at Fribourg and in Rome. He taught at Upholland between 1965 and 1975 and he was struck on his return by the attitude to senior seminarians. He saw these young men as having little chance to mature personally and to gain the experience essential for them to carry out their priestly functions. He pays credit to Father Tom Worden for renewing the whole approach to theological and biblical studies. Formal lectures were reduced to a



minimum. Regular essay writing encouraged personal thought and reflection. Weekly seminars allowed students to exchange ideas and explore challenging concepts. The intention was to follow the spirit of Vatican II and make students feel at home at a time of radical change. Instead of certainties, students would have to live with uncertainty. Times certainly had changed from Dr. Kevin Kelly's years in the junior seminary at Upholland when "the image of a priest put before us was of a man, strong, independent, able to control himself and others, and totally obedient to the will of God which came through the voice of authority and the rules of the seminary."

Mike was one of the senior students who followed a curriculum based on this new line of thought. The work was quite demanding with end of year examinations following assignments given within each course and dates set for completion. These would be marked and comments appended. Mike developed an interest in Canon Law, a course delivered by Dr. Hanrahan, an Irish gentleman. During casual conversation it emerged that he was planning to go to the west of Ireland over the summer in 1971. Mike told him about his aunt being the Reverend Mother in Spanish Point on the west coast of Ireland. Mike was surprised to find out after the summer vacation that he had paid his aunt a visit and had been welcomed with afternoon tea. A fellow student, set an essay on Canon Law by Dr. Hanrahan resorted to the writings of a fictional "Canon Bullwash" to illustrate an abstruse point. His tutor summoned him to explain the pedigree of this unknown scholar. Embarrassed back-peddling followed.

Academic work took up only part of the College life. Except on Sundays, the daily routine started with meditation, then mass, breakfast, two lectures, lunch, private study and an evening meal followed by evening prayer. Although in the Junior Seminary, the "magnum silentium" – the great silence – was supposed to be observed between evening prayers and the ending of final word of grace at breakfast, this was not practised by most of the senior students. Students had free time on Saturday afternoons. On Sunday, more emphasis was given to religious observance with solemn sung mass in the morning and solemn Benediction in the afternoon. A hearty Sunday lunch was followed by a light evening meal to give the domestic staff an opportunity to relax. Cereals and boiled eggs were the staple fare at breakfast. Some students were not beyond removing an additional egg to consume later in the day. David Macfarlane was spotted placing a boiled egg in his cassock pocket which was brushed against as he left the Refectory with unfortunate results. This led to a Diary entry on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1971, "Rumour has it that an egg in the pocket is not worth two on the plate, especially if it is only soft boiled."



For a while, in order to prepare himself mentally for the day, he would do a three mile early morning run around Roby Mill and Upholland. The time to get up, breakfast, lunch and supper, the start of lectures and services were all marked by the ringing of bells. During the day's services, the professors would gather

around the altar and mass would be concelebrated. Those students who had been ordained as deacons would also assist in the concelebration of the mass. An important element in the social life of the students was "Brew Up". Groups of students would gather for a cup of tea and a chat. A person could be invited to attend a session in the same or a different year group. During mass there was and is the "Kiss of Peace" which involved the students ceremonially bowing and embracing each other and uttering the words in Latin "Pax vobiscum" or in English "Peace be with you" to which the response is "And also with you." Often, unnoticed by the casual observer, the solemn liturgy was supplemented with the words "Brew-up afterwards in room....."

During the day, free time could be spent in the common room, which had a television, or ensuring that one's own room was clean and tidy. Although much of the housekeeping work was carried out by domestic staff students were expected to play their part. In his second year in College, Mike and a fellow student were given the task of serving meals and collecting dishes, wearing white aprons and white protective sleeves over their cassocks. Occasionally Mike would play football or walk along the one-way system around the lake. The village of Upholland, with its ancient priory, was a quarter of an hour's stroll away. The village's shops provided tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits and powdered milk. If he had a day or Saturday afternoon off a longer trip could be made to Wigan, involving half an hour's bus ride. Lunch could be taken at The Grand Hotel, then a fine establishment, preceded by a schooner of sherry. Sometimes he would go to the pictures and watched films ranging from "A Man for All Seasons" to the definitely unclerical "A Clockwork Orange". The town's Olympic-standard swimming pool was particularly attractive to Mike and some of his fellow students. When new priests were ordained, often fellow diocesan students were invited to the ceremony and a subsequent meal. After a decision to allow students to have their own cars on site, in July 1971 Mike bought a second-hand Austin Cambridge A16 for £300. This increased his opportunities to get to Wigan, or even Liverpool, during his free time.

Some idea of Mike's life during his time at Upholland College may be gleaned from the College Diary for which he was responsible for part of his stay. This refers to routines within College enlivened by celebrations to mark lengthy periods of service as a priest, the end of exams, the start and end of terms and dramatic productions involving the students. "*The Royal Hunt of the Sun*" by Peter Shaffer was performed on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 1969. "*A Man for All Seasons*" by Robert Bolt was performed on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December 1970 in honour of the 40 Martyrs. Outside events were noted such as the introduction of decimal coinage and industrial disputes hitting bus travel and electricity supplies.



**Peter Bristow and David Macfarlane**



Mike had close friends amongst his fellow students. One of these was David Macfarlane who, when ordained a priest, came to play a notable role in the life of Mike and his family. Another was Peter Bristow who had a considerable interest in astronomy which allowed him to have the key to the Observatory. After being ordained he was sent to Rome where he specialised in Canon Law but later left the Catholic Church to become an Anglican priest.

On September 25<sup>th</sup> 1969, for the first time the *New Order of the Mass* was used in College rather than the traditional Latin Tridentine form. The “*New Order*” or “*Ordinary Form*” (sometimes called the Mass of Paul VI) is the liturgy of the Catholic Mass promulgated by Paul VI in 1969 after the Second Vatican Council. The purpose of the changes considered by the Council was “that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963). The changes included the use of the vernacular language instead of Latin and the priest being allowed to face towards the congregation. (Mike had experience of misconceptions which could arise from the priest making preparations for the Eucharist with his back to the people. For many years, a great-aunt in Bradford had thought that the elaborate movements of the priest were some sort of baking activity which resulted in the production of the communion bread.) After changes had been made to earlier proposals, a synod of bishops in Rome in October 1967 had, by a large majority, supported the New Order, in some cases with some reservations. Not everyone had been convinced, for example two retired cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci. A group of theologians under the direction of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre warned that the New Order “represented a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated by the Council of Trent.” They said that on many points the New Mass “had much to gladden the heart of even the most modernist Protestant”. Despite the opposition of some, the New Order was introduced. On 11<sup>th</sup> February 1970, the Latin Mass was celebrated for the last time at Upholland.



**Monsignor William Dalton.  
The last Rector.**

In the late 1960s, considerable efforts were being made by mainstream churches to promote Christian Unity. Within the Catholic Church, a leading figure in this movement was Cardinal Johannes Willebrands. The College Diary records that on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1970 the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool, formally called The Cathedral Church of Christ, hosted an ecumenical service during which the Cardinal was to preach. This was seen by some members of the Protestant community as a dire affront and they were determined to display their displeasure. Several followers of the Rev. Ian Paisley scattered themselves amongst the congregation to maximise their effect and began their work as the Cardinal began to speak. A cry of “No Popery” was heard which led to strenuous attempts by the ushers to remove the heckler. That done, another protestor would pop up. The reaction of other members of the congregation included shock, disgust and amusement. Mike was sitting on a bench near to a professor from Upholland, William Dalton, whose special field of study was Church History. When one demonstrator popped up very close to them with the cry of “No Popery here!” his rather mischievous comment to Mike was “Well not too much, eh!” Eventually the Cardinal was able to deliver his message of unity and friendship. A year later, the Anglican Canon Smith from Wigan led a week of prayer within the College to promote Christian Unity.

Although in 1965 the Vatican Council had expressed its aim to change the way in which priests were trained in the Decree of Priestly Training, these changes still needed to be implemented in each country. To this end, in January 1970, the “*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*” (*Basic Scheme for Priestly Training*) was issued by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Although national conferences of bishops were to devise their own appropriate schemes of training they had to conform to the spirit and norms of the Second Vatican Council. The Upholland College Diary records that this document was discussed on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1970.

The curriculum already in place in Upholland, owing to the work of Father Worden, seemed to be very much in line with contemporary thinking.

In 1970 the students of Upholland were involved in another highly significant event, namely the Canonisation of the Forty Martyrs. These were a group of Catholic men and women executed for treason in England between 1535 and 1679, including John Rigby and Edmund Arrowsmith, and canonised on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 by Pope Paul VI. The College was given a week's holiday in honour of the occasion. Some of the College's students had been to Rome for the service. In College, an exhibition in honour of the Forty Martyrs opened, to put the martyrs in their historical context and explore issues of the English Reformation. Contemporary chalices and vestments were borrowed from St. Mary's, Standish and St. Joseph's Wrightington. The College library was drawn on to display contemporary books, a major item was a two-volume breviary belonging to St. John Plessington. In Liverpool Archbishop Beck (in office 1964-76) held a celebratory mass which the Upholland students attended. They vested with the clergy at the Cathedral of Christ the King; the Archbishop and senior clerics separate from the others. The students, wearing cassocks, surplices and with birettas, led the procession into the Cathedral for this important occasion. The Archbishop was keen to stress that the canonisation was not meant to lay any blame any other Christian group or hinder the growth of ecumenism. After the proceedings were complete Mike went on to a talk given by Mother Teresa (1910-1997) at Notre Dame College of Education. She was an Albanian-born Indian Roman Catholic sister who founded the Missionaries of Charity, working with the poor, the sick and the orphaned. She had gained an international reputation and was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and was beatified in 2003.

During his second year at Upholland, Mike started to have liturgy lectures from Father Brian Newns and, with the other twelve theology students, had to prepare and deliver sermons based on a text given by the tutor. The students had to go down to the antechapel and gather chairs together. Each student in turn would give a sermon standing on the altar steps, speaking loudly since there was no microphone. Performance was judged on voice projection, intonation, gestures, whether or not the student could capture the attention of the congregation, relevance, use of personal examples and reference to the Eucharist, since the homily formed part of the mass. Fellow students would make comments and the tutor would give his assessment. Although somewhat dry himself he was very perceptive and the whole process was extremely useful. Mike summarised the essence of giving a sermon as "Stand Up! Shout Up! Shut Up!" Long, boring sermons were given short shrift.

Increasing emphasis on pastoral work meant that this was offered on Wednesday afternoons. For one year he and some contemporaries were assigned to Wrightington Hospital. They were taken there by minibus and they would have a talk with patients in the wards. Their intention was certainly not to spread the Catholic faith. Mike had experience of this type of activity from his school days in Bradford where he had been a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, dedicated to giving practical assistance to anyone in need. This group of about a dozen Bradford schoolboys visited hospitals, giving packets of five Woodbines and humbugs to old men which would do little to aid their recovery! In Wrightington Mike found many of the patients to be both chatty and interesting. The students had to make their own way back to College which involved a two mile walk. If it was cold he would wear an overcoat of old-fashioned design once owned by his grandfather. One day, while wearing this on his progress around a ward, a lady clearly mistook him for a junior doctor and proceeded to remove some clothing to display her operation scar. A hasty explanation was required followed by an embarrassed retreat.

A totally different involvement in pastoral work involved visiting Walton Prison, Liverpool each week over a period of several weeks. The purpose was to give the prisoners some idea of religion in its broad sense. Mike and a fellow student would speak with a group of ten to fifteen inmates in the chapel, with a warder stationed outside "just in case". The prisoners found this a pleasant alternative to being in their cells. In fact Mike and his friend rarely got anywhere. The inmates were chiefly concerned with being able to tell them

their life stories and what had led them to being imprisoned. Some of the tales were quite gruesome. Mike's enduring memories are of the suicide nets and the clanging of doors, very much as in the scenes from "*Porridge*". Some of the prisoners asked them to contact friends or relatives outside, a request which was difficult to respond to since such action was definitely taboo. Perhaps the intention of the College staff was to allow those in their charge to learn something of the people they may encounter in their priestly role rather than to spread the Christian message of "do unto others..." Further understanding of the criminal world was provided by a visit to Wigan Magistrates' Court where the Clerk, Mr. T. Moran gave a talk on its role.

In his second year he went to the parish of St. Oswald and St. Edmund Arrowsmith, Ashton in Makerfield, the church of which housed the hand of Saint Edmund, one of the martyrs recently canonised. The parish priest was Canon Francis Joseph Ripley. In 1951, the Canon had written "*This Is The Faith. A Complete Explanation of the Catholic Faith.*" He was described by Peter Doyle as the "high priest of the certainties of a by-gone age". Late on Wednesday afternoons Mike and a couple of his fellows were transported by the College minibus and arrived in time for a hearty supper prepared by the housekeeper. Then they were given various areas to visit. The houses were not always inhabited by Catholic families but, even so, their welcome was normally polite and there were many offerings of tea and biscuits. Initially his approach was to describe himself and what he was doing at Upholland. With experience he found it far more fruitful to let the householders talk about their lives and families. Inevitably a number of contemporary issues were raised, for example the Church's attitude to contraception. Going solo in this way was good training for the priesthood but care had to be taken to follow approved lines of argument, especially since academic and pastoral training were incomplete. The parish priest had chosen the area well and sometimes it was hard to terminate a visit. Mike and his fellow students were keen to get back to the Presbytery since the Wednesday evening play on television was often rather racy and gritty. Unfortunately viewing was sometimes curtailed by the early return of the minibus or the entry of the parish priest. They would normally be back at College by about 10p.m..

Mike had been involved in the life of the Catholic Church from his primary school days when he had been fascinated by the ritual and language of religious life. During his time in a Catholic grammar school staff had sought to increase knowledge of religious texts and practice rather than to deepen faith. He had certainly not had the training in meditation and techniques of prayer which presumably would have been experienced in a junior seminary. His parents and grandparents had been supportive but he had never faced family pressure to pursue priestly training. His paternal grandfather had been more guarded, recalling the traditional Irish advice that "If you see a Peeler or a priest coming, cross to the other side of the road." In his interview with the parish priest to assess his suitability for training, the priest asked whether there was any insanity in the family. Mike, amazed at this approach stated that "It is riddled with it." He coped with the academic demands of university in Rome but even then doubts were growing. He questioned the nature of a course which required hundreds of students to sit on long wooden benches in lecture theatres. Anthony Kelly in his book "*A Path from Rome*" recalls his memories of the same system - "Many of us for a long time, an all of us for some time, found the Latin of the lectures to be incomprehensible". After the Second Vatican Council a marked split occurred within the Church between the modernisers and the traditionalists. A prominent figure in the latter group was Cardinal Ottaviani. When Mike and his fellow students attended a service presided over by the Cardinal and they lined up to give him his vestments, one of Mike's fellows, a Welshman, muttered "The Druids had nothing on this!" This remark certainly struck a chord. The lifestyle of the Church in Rome did not fit well with increasing interest in "liberation theology". He noted the extremes of wealth in the city. He was part of a group which was in sympathy with the ideas expressed in the journal *Slant* - a Catholic magazine associated with the University of Cambridge and the Dominican Order in the 1960s. It sought to combine Catholic beliefs with left-wing policies and was influenced by the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Marx. These factors led to his decision to return to England to study in Liverpool for a year. There he encountered the work of a wider range of philosophers and people, staff and students, from non-religious backgrounds.

He entered Upholland for theological training already well-read in philosophy. The expression "*Fides Quarerns Intellectum*" (Faith Seeking Understanding) - the subtitle of St. Anselm's "*Proslogion*" - relates to how philosophy helps one who has faith to understand what he believes. In Mike's case, however, his knowledge of philosophy increased his doubts. He had intellectual and emotional difficulty with some of the Seven Sacraments, for example Penance and Anointing of the Sick. In general he was comfortable with the course at St. Joseph's. Scripture lectures and assignments were exciting and challenging, especially when being taught by Father Worden. Canon Law was fascinating, partly because of the amusing applications devised by Canon Hanrahan. The practical training was very much a case of learning from experience. His very poor singing voice led him to worry how he would be able to cope with services in front of a large congregation.

Naturally Mike had been aware that celibacy was a requirement for the secular priesthood. This never featured in discussion with any tutors in Upholland, or in Rome, or even with fellow students. The vow of celibacy would be required when taking Major Orders and, at length, he decided that could not really accept it philosophically since the requirement seemed partially tied up with medieval problems of the transfer of property rights. Anglican, Methodist and clergy from other denominations who were married seemed to function effectively. His concerns were reflected in the wider Church. In 1970, nine German theologians, including Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XV, signed a letter calling for a new discussion on the requirement for celibacy, without indicating whether it should be maintained. (*Ratzinger, Rahner, et al. On Celibacy. (1970)*)

By summer 1971, he had more or less decided that he could not become a priest. In the event he left towards the end of the Christmas term, 1971. He left quietly. He packed his bags and loaded his car. He did not attend meditation or mass on that day and said goodbye to his friends and some staff with whom he was on good terms and explained to them his reasons for departing. These were based on doubts about the concepts of God, revelation and papal authority. He was well on the way to Bradford before mass ended. He had no professional qualifications, little idea of what he wished to do and no immediate source of income. In the event, he decided to enter the teaching profession and, quickly moving up the ladder, became a deputy head in a Catholic comprehensive school. He married and had a son.

Some of his contemporaries also failed to complete the course for a variety of personal reasons. In 1934, the successor to Archbishop Keating, Archbishop Downey, argued that the ideal candidate for priesthood should not be encouraged to be clever or smart, not be encouraged to hold strange and original ideas or to break away from abiding, age-long traditions of the Church. The aim of institutions such as St. Joseph's was then to withdraw candidates within sheltering walls and promote chastity, humility and obedience. His was a perfect description of a Tridentine seminary as a "*hortus conclusus*", "an enclosed garden", designed to promote spiritual growth. It is highly unlikely that Mike could ever have conformed to this ideal but the wind of change being deliberately let loose into the Church in the 1960s threatened the entire seminary model.

When Mike left he and his fellow students did not imagine that the senior seminary would close in 1975. It was only in the early 1960s that an increase in the number of boys entering the Junior Seminary had led to the College's expansion. Superficially, all seemed tranquil but underneath there was a bubbling cauldron. Peter Doyle gives a succinct explanation of the events which led to the closure. In 1965, Archbishop Beck had pointed out that the fall in the numbers of young men being ordained would lead to an estimated shortage of 160 priests by 1980. It was thought that, by that date, there may not be enough priests to serve the people. In the north of England there were two senior seminaries, Upholland and Ushaw. The belief grew that it may be necessary to close one and use the other to house a united junior seminary. Discussions were complicated by consideration being given to changes in the nature of priestly training to allow a period to be spent at university before undergoing specialist education in a senior seminary. Although the number of senior seminarians at Upholland was as high as it had been for twenty years, the real problem was the Junior Seminary. In 1974, none of the original thirty three boys who had originally joined the Junior Seminary had been ordained priest. The diocese had incurred a huge cost and had little to show for it; the seminary was



not bearing fruit. Perhaps in the days of the Beatles and teenage culture the era of junior seminaries was over. Rome gave support to the idea of Ushaw being the single senior seminary. According to Doyle “for the sake of peace” Archbishop Beck agreed to the closure of the senior seminary at Upholland. It would continue as a junior seminary and also remain a Theological Institute. When the planned closure and transfer of senior seminarians was announced to the students in the Refectory, their reaction was to bang spoons on the tables as an indication of disapproval. The last senior students left Upholland in 1975.

These proposals were unworkable. Doyle writes “The closure caused considerable bitterness, coming as it did when new ideas on the training of priests had been carefully thought through and accepted by most of the clergy; a sense of excitement turned into a sense of loss which was not eased by the nebulous idea of a Theological Institute, something that many suspected had been thought up in haste...”

The criteria for the entry of pupils to Upholland became far wider, it became “a boarding school for boys considering a vocation” but, even so, the last boys left in 1992. The building became the Upholland Northern Institute, and was used as a retreat and conference centre for the archdiocese, under the management of Monsignor John Devine, one of Mike’s contemporaries. The end came with the decision of Archbishop Kelly to sell the building and grounds to a development company.

So what brought about the rapid decline of St. Joseph’s? It is impossible to separate this from analysis of the wider Catholic Church in England and Wales where attendance at mass has halved in the past fifty years. Dr. Joseph Shaw, chairman of the Latin Mass Society, wrote in May 2013 “that something went seriously wrong in the Church in England and Wales in the 1960s and 1970s. Catholics ceased quite suddenly to see the value of getting married, having large families, and having their children baptised. Non-Catholics no longer perceived the Church as the ark of salvation, and ceased to seek admission. Young men no longer offered themselves for the priesthood in the same numbers as before”. The Society points out that in 1965 there were 233 ordinations, falling to 14 in 2009. A marked improvement occurred in 2010 with a rise to 23 to drop again to 16 in 2011.

It is easy for traditionalists to see the decline of the Church as following the changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council. The truth is rarely pure and simple. Major changes in society had taken place. Theological and moral concepts were no longer static and were continuing to evolve. However, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) warned us in “*The Prince*”:-

“There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to institute a new order of things.”

For an institution like the Church, historically based on concepts of faith, obedience and infallibility, to encourage the faithful and their priests to seek inspiration from sources as diverse as psychology, physics, Buddhism and “*Wind in the Willows*” to fit in with the modern world, may have been asking for trouble. Perhaps once people start to ask the fundamental question “Why?” possibly nothing is sacred.

And what of St. Joseph’s? Obviously it was affected by changes within the wider Church but it also had its own problems. It was an ideal “enclosed garden” but its remoteness from secular universities and lack of good transport links made it unsuitable at a time when integration of priestly training with wider society was being stressed. At the first Wesminster Synod in 1852, Cardinal John Henry Newman preached his sermon on “The Second Spring”. He said:-

“The past never returns. It is never good. If we are to escape existing ills, it must be about going forward. The past is out of date. The past is dead.”

The magnificent edifice of St. Joseph’s, loved by many, is slowly decaying. Its burial ground, open to public access, contains the graves of some former rectors, professors and students. At its centre, under a memorial cross, lie the mortal remains of Bishop O’Reilly and Archbishop Keating, the two men chiefly responsible for the creation of the College. Whatever the future holds for the former St. Joseph’s it will never again be “one of the glories of Catholicism in England.”



**Rectors William Walmsley and Joseph Dean**



**The graves of Bishop O'Reilly and Archbishop Keating**

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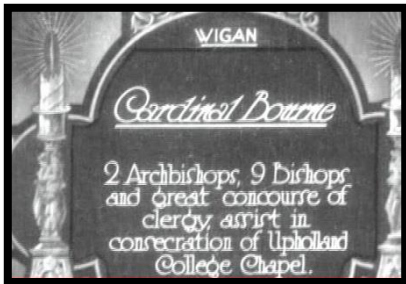
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