

St Cuthbert

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During the time of his exile at Iona, Oswald had been baptised a Christian and, after taking the crown, he asked the island monks to send missionaries to his pagan kingdom. One of these was the Irishman, Aidan. Oswald and Aidan became close friends and the king appointed the Celtic monk to the position of bishop with Lindisfarne as his See.

Oswald met a martyr's death in 642, killed by the soldiers of the King of Mercia at Maserfield (present day Oswestry in Shropshire). His mutilated body was returned to Aidan for burial in the monastery which he had founded on Holy Island.

Aidan died at Bamburgh in 651 and at the hour of the saint's death a young shepherd named Cuthbert was tending his flock on the hills at Lammermoor. Cuthbert had a vision of a host of angels transporting the soul of St Aidan to Heaven. So profound was his experience that the youth confided it to local monks who directed him to Melrose Abbey, some thirty miles away. At Melrose he was received by the abbot, Eata, and was placed in the care of the prior, Boisel, who taught the novice monk to read.

Cuthbert entered happily into the life of prayer and devotion to God and when Boisel died he succeeded his mentor as prior. He travelled the surrounding countryside, first on foot and then on horseback as he ventured further afield spreading the Christian message through Northumbria and the Scottish border areas. According to St Bede, "Cuthbert had such a light in his angelic face and such a love for proclaiming the good news that wherever he went none held their innermost secrets from him." He was a holy man "of extraordinary charm and practical ability" and was believed to possess miraculous healing powers, once reviving a dying child with a kiss.

Yet Cuthbert was a man who preferred solitude to the congregational life. He withdrew to the windswept islet of Farne and there he lived as a hermit for eight years. In 684AD, and despite his protestations, he was appointed Bishop of Hexham. Cuthbert pleaded with Eata, his superior and his former abbot at Melrose, to be spared the duties of so large an episcopate. Eata relented and agreed to exchange his own bishopric at Lindisfarne with that at Hexham, allowing Cuthbert to return to the rugged north east shorelines where he was at one with God, but by then he had only two more years to live.

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Continued on inside back cover

R. HUNT

**St Cuthbert's
Pemberton, Wigan**

**Parish History
1871-2000**

**Compiled by
Brian Murphy**

Foreword by
The Most Rev Patrick Kelly KHS PhL
Archbishop of Liverpool

Cover Photography by Nick Fairhurst

**ST CUTHBERT'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
LARCH AVENUE, PEMBERTON, WIGAN**

Jubilee 2000 -A Year of Grace

In unison with the Holy Father, St Cuthbert's began Jubilee Year 2000 with the celebration of Christmas Midnight Mass. Each household in the parish had received a leaflet from the church inviting everyone to attend that Mass so that, together, the people of St Cuthbert's could welcome the Holy Year that marked the beginning of a new millennium.

The leaflet distribution was one of several initiatives decided upon by Parish Priest Father Simon Henry and a small Jubilee Year committee formed to devise a programme of events and projects whereby parishioners could collectively observe Jubilee 2000. As well as the leaflets, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Cuthbert at Durham Cathedral was arranged; a special monthly Benediction with guest celebrants was introduced, and there was a Mass for the sick and housebound.

The committee also decided to adopt a project that would reach beyond the parish and this took the form of a fund to sponsor the building of wells in deprived villages in the Third World. It was a worthwhile scheme that brought an immediate and typical generous response.

Other work was planned, including the re-decoration of the Lady Chapel and the church's side altars, the labour provided by parish volunteers, and there was a Service when couples gathered to renew their Marriage Vows. The highlight of the year comes in September when the Archbishop visits St Cuthbert's to consecrate the Church.

It was also decided to produce a book on the history of St Cuthbert's - its churches, its schools, and its people, and an appeal was made for old photographs and memorabilia. Hundreds of pictures, newspaper articles and souvenirs came in, so many that it has been impossible to include them all in the book you now hold. Making a final decision as to what could be used was difficult but, hopefully, people will understand and forgive the omission of their own particular material so kindly loaned for the project.

Many names are recorded in this story. Names of people who, down the years, have made St Cuthbert's the proud parish it is today. Others have shared their personal memories to create vivid images of the past for us to savour - but, again, for every person mentioned in the following pages there are others, equally deserving of recognition, whose names you will not find but who have been neither overlooked nor ignored.

Thank you to everyone who has helped in any way at all to make this publication possible.

Foreword



Archbishop's House
Carnatic Road
Mossley Hill
Liverpool

It will be good in this year of Jubilee to celebrate the consecration of the church of St Cuthbert's but there will be a surer celebration through this history of the parish

While it is absolutely right and fitting that we should build fitting places for us to receive the Word and the Body and Blood of Our Lord, He would always call on us to keep in mind that we are all called to be living stones in the temple which is the Church.

The history of the parish is precisely the history of those living stones.

I always find when I visit parishes and go to the homes of the housebound how many stories there are of generosity and fidelity which helps us in the service of Our Lord.

I am sure this history by will be a source of that same gratitude and inspiration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Parral'.

Archbishop of Liverpool

Introduction

by Rev Simon Henry, B.A., M.A.
Parish Priest, St Cuthbert's

As God's pilgrim people, the Church is always looking forward to journey's end - the new and heavenly Jerusalem. However, the sense of who we are and the history of salvation is also important.

This book tells us something about the history of salvation in this corner of the world; calling to mind forgotten events of the past for some and bringing others to a new awareness of the struggles and joys that have formed God's Church in Pemberton over the last 130 years. It reminds us that none of us makes the Christian pilgrimage alone but always as part of a people gathered together, both here and in Pemberton and as a people sharing in the whole history of the Church since its foundation by our Lord and Saviour on the rock of Peter's faith.

It is a reminder too, that we in our turn are passing on the Faith we ultimately trace back to the Apostles; that our words and actions - our faith will in its turn become part of the history of salvation. Let us pray that we will be able to look back on it with pride and thanksgiving.



Pemberton Mission

Roman Catholicism in England has had a turbulent history and it was not until the late eighteenth century, in the 200 years aftermath of the Reformation and the discrimination that followed, that Catholics were able to practice their religion openly.

Nowhere in the country had the faith remained stronger than in Lancashire where the Catholic gentry had secretly protected the outlawed clergy and made provisions for the celebration of the Holy Mass. When the anti-Catholic laws were relaxed those same landowners built private chapels on their estates, installing their own chaplains, and these became the rallying points for the Catholic fraternity who sometimes had to travel many miles to attend the services there.

The Industrial Revolution brought a huge growth in urban communities across the north of England. This development, and the influx of Irish immigrants into Liverpool following the nightmare years of the potato crop failures in the mid-18th century, produced a heavy concentration of Roman Catholics in towns like Wigan with the result that the country chapels were inadequate for the increasing number of worshippers.

New Catholic churches were built, one of the first locally was the small chapel of the Wigan mission in Standishgate which became known as St John's. This served the whole Catholic population of Wigan for sixty years until it was replaced by the present church in 1819. St Mary's church, just one hundred yards away, was erected at about the same time against a background of bitter controversy involving rival Catholic factions of the period. Happily, amicable relations between the two parishes were quickly established.

By the middle of the 19th century when the population of Wigan was around 45,000, there were thirty places of worship in the borough including six Roman Catholic missions. Three of these were in the outlying districts of Standish; Hindley; and Ashton with others at St Mary's; St John's; and the parish church of St Patrick's, built in 1847. St Joseph's in Caroline Street, was added in 1871 and in the same year the Pemberton Mission was established to serve those living in the large south-west sector of the town which stretched to the parish boundaries of St Mary's, Birchley; and St Oswald's, Ashton-in-Makerfield. This constituted the ancient parish of Orrell and covered Orrell itself and the townships of Upholland, Billinge, Winstanley and Pemberton. It was served by clergy from the Crossbrook Mission founded in 1691 and built on a site occupied today by Orrell Hall Farm. In the years when Catholics were being persecuted, the Crossbrook Mission was protected and sponsored by successive families residing at nearby Ackhurst Hall.

In 1805, the Mission moved into a new chapel at Moor Ditch, Orrell where the present St James' parish church stands. The original building was enlarged to hold 332 persons in 1841 and the church was re-named and dedicated to St James in 1848. In the years that followed, each of the respective Orrell communities became independent parishes.

The mother church of St James relinquished the Pemberton district in 1871 when the new Mission was founded by Father Bernard Brady who set up temporary Mass Centres in Newtown and Goose Green.

A plot of land, sandwiched between Ormskirk Road and Ellesmere Road, was acquired at Spring Bank, Pemberton and here the first St Cuthbert's mission school for mixed ages was built, opening on January 7, 1873. A year later the infants school opened and Sunday services were held in a school room used as a chapel while money was raised to build a parish church.



The former Bird i'th' Hand public house in Newtown.

In 1871 this building was the site of one of the two Mass Centres for the early Pemberton Mission. Another at the Pack Horse, Smithy Brook, Goose Green has been demolished.

The Tin Church

Father James Manning was appointed Rector of St Cuthbert's in 1883 and almost immediately he began to plan for a parish church to be built at Spring Bank, Pemberton, but there was to be an early set-back.

A surveyor's report revealed that the site proposed was over underground mine workings making the land liable to subsidence. A church document read: "The parish property stands within a triangle of what are known as 'faults'. A 'fault' exists when a seam of coal stops short before a wall of rock. The seam may continue on the other side of the wall, but at a higher or lower level. The space enclosed within this particular triangle is so small that, although there are eighteen seams (one of which was being worked at the time), it has not been judged worthwhile to burrow through the rock face to find them."

In the light of these findings it was, therefore, deemed impractical to fill in the worked out seams and the surveyors advised against the erection of a stone or brick structure because of the effect the massive weight might have on the weakened sub-strata. If the project was to go ahead at the chosen site then light-weight materials would have to be used. An alternative location was considered but rejected as inviable. It was eventually decided to proceed with the option of a light-weight building.

Handsome

The architecture for the new church followed the traditional lines of A W Pugin, a well known designer of numerous Catholic churches during the 19th century, and was for a construction made of wood and corrugated iron.

Corrugated iron is not a material usually associated with classical architecture but when the new church was completed and opened by the Bishop of Liverpool on February 13, 1887 it immediately became a source of widespread admiration and was considered the most handsome building of its kind in the country. It was the work of Messrs Bruce & Still of Liverpool and although nothing could disguise the plainness of the corrugated iron cladding and even with a bell-cote that was far too big in proportion to the rest of the building, the 'Tin Church', as locals were soon referring to it, with its open aspect on Ellesmere Road, was most pleasing to the eye and there was certainly nothing inelegant about the interior.

The nave was fifty feet high from floor to roof ridge and an arcade of wooden clustered arches ran the length of the building separating the side aisles and supporting the decorative hammer-beamed ceiling. The Baptistry was to the right of the entrance and the right-hand aisle gave access to the sacristy and the confessional booths while the Lady Altar dominated the left transept. St Joseph's shrine was located at the rear of the left aisle. The choir loft above the main central entrance overlooked the body of the church.

The interior walls were lined with stained wood panels of different tints and the High Altar, ornately carved in wood by Mullen of Liverpool to a design by the architect Burns, was set

against a magnificent throne constructed by a Pemberton carpenter, Mr Regan. Messrs Metcalfe & Dilworth, Preston installed the heating system and the gas lighting fittings were designed by Connor, McIntyre & Co, Liverpool. The bell for the new church was cast by Murphy's of Dublin.

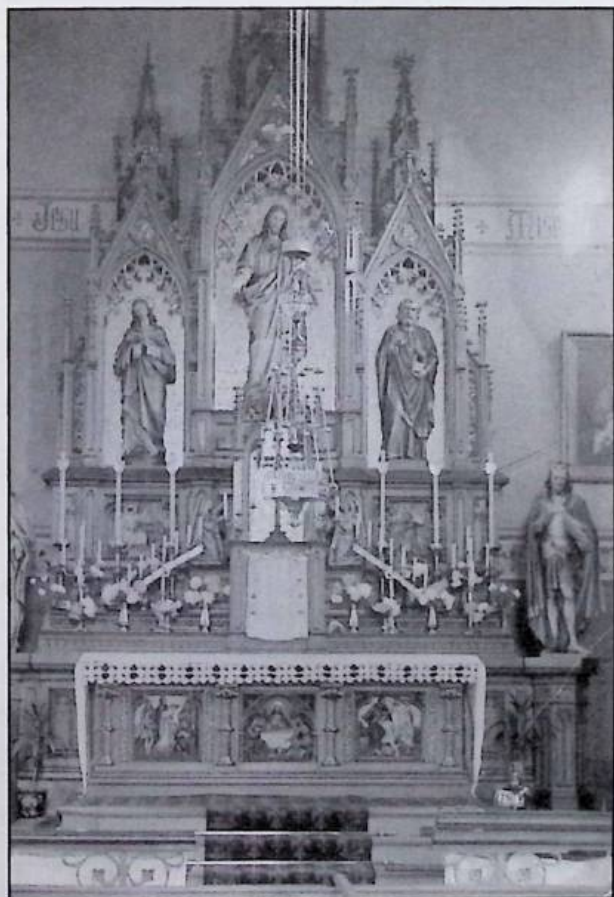
Bishop O'Reilly was assisted in the Celebratory Opening Mass by a proud Fr Manning, Parish Priest of St Cuthbert's; Fr Sommers, St Patrick's; Fr Melling, St Mary's; Fr Chapman, St Joseph's, Wigan; and Fr Whiteside, St Joseph's, Upholland. Music for the service was rendered by Mr W Green on the harmonium and the choir sang Schmidt's Mass in A by Ignatius Argent with the hymns 'Jesu Dulcis Memoria' and 'Faith Of Our Fathers'.



A fine view of the first church of St Cuthbert's with Ellesmere Road to the left

Agonizing Years

It was said that the church had cost £1600, a substantial sum at the time although the bill would have been considerably higher had the stone church originally envisaged been a practical alternative. It was forecast that the Ellesmere Road church would serve the parish for twenty five years during which time money would be raised to clear the original debt and then finance a new building elsewhere but, as so often happens, events would decide such matters and the Tin Church would still be in use not just in twenty five years, but eighty.



The magnificent High Altar. The brass sanctuary lamp which now hangs in the Larch Avenue church can be seen suspended in the centre.

The statuary was also moved to the new church except for the figure of St Edward (right) which was presented to the church of St Edward in Scot Lane when it was built.

First of all, there was going to be a constant drain on parish funds for maintaining and repairing the flimsy church and there was also the question of school accommodation. The existing building was overcrowded and there was a steady large intake of Catholic children of all ages from all over Pemberton. Of necessity therefore money was channelled into a school building programme. The church and the presbytery were extended and electric lighting was installed around the turn of the century and we are told that Fr Smith 'enriched the church with a new High Altar and Pulpit' during his rectorship (1900-1911). In 1914 the Great War started and it is doubtful whether a new church building was even thought about for the next four agonizing years.

War was declared on August 8 and by the first of September more than 1000 Wigan men enlisted including many from St Cuthbert's. There are few more graphic illustrations of the extent of the casualties among local servicemen than the columns of the Wigan Observer and Wigan Examiner newspapers of the period. Week after week there are

pages of photographs and the names of Wigan men killed or missing in action, wounded and mutilated.

The people of St Cuthbert's honoured their war dead with a commemorative plaque bearing the names of parishioners killed, paid for by public subscription, and an anonymous donor presented the church with a new organ and stations of the cross as another gesture in memory of the fallen.



A packed Mass at Ellesmere Road for children making their First Holy Communion



*The Tin Church.
View from Ellersmere Road*

Miracle

Wind and weather and the passage of time all took their toll and the old church began to look as though its days were numbered. The wooden bell-cote, that had blemished the church when it was first built, started to rot and was replaced by a smaller version which suffered the same fate and it too was removed. The roof leaked but that was temporarily remedied by Fr Almond who paid for a covering of a plastic material called 'Matex', while frequent applications of paint on the exterior walls failed to disguise for very long the fact that the corrugated iron was rusting away. Altogether it was a miracle that the church remained standing for as long as it did.

Yet inside, there was always that tranquility and simple beauty that people loved and, among the parishioners themselves, there was never any great desire to move to another building



The Ellesmere Road church in 1965.

except, perhaps, by brides and their mothers who would have preferred somewhere that provided a more picturesque background in their wedding day photographs. But the advancement towards the day when St Cuthbert's would have the new parish church it had been promised continued undramatically, although there was the occasion in 1950 when the sacristy caught fire.

The outbreak occurred after there had been a children's Benediction service on Thursday, January 26 and was caused by a hot charcoal ember left in the incense burner which set a cupboard alight. Two altar boys who arrived for the evening devotion found the church filled with smoke and ran to the Presbytery to call Fr Carney and he raised the alarm.

The Fire Brigade reached the building in a matter of minutes but during that time Fr Carney along with his assistant priests Fr Rice and Fr Stirzaker fought the blaze with buckets of water and managed to prevent it spreading. The main damage was to the sacristy cupboard where the fire had started and, apart from the effects of the thick smoke, the main body of the church was untouched. It all seemed like God's way of telling everybody that the Tin Church should serve for just a few years longer.

Re-located

There were many times when discussions about a new church were cut short, usually because school accomodation was the priority, and in 1948 there was an exchange of letters between the parish priest, Fr Reape, and Wigan Corporation about a section of land in Bell Lane, Orrell which was being considered as a suitable site but the location was some way from the hub of the parish.

In the five years that followed World War II, the rusting walls of the delapidated Tin Church were bursting at the seams every Sunday at the four Masses attended by, growing congregations who were crammed into a space designed for only a few more than 300 persons, and the situation was likely to get worse.

The whole area from Newtown to Kitt Green was the scene of a huge house building programme which changed the face of Wigan. Sprawling council estates in Worsley Hall and Norley Hall saw hundreds of families, many of them Catholic, re-located within the St Cuthbert's parish boundaries while new housing developments began in Valley Road and Highfield. The time for a new church had arrived and it made sense to build it at the centre of these estates.

Fr Carney was made parish priest in 1949 and it was he who negotiated with the authorities for the purchase of a 2 acre plot at the corner of Sherwood Drive and Larch Avenue. In May, 1958 the site was reserved for the new St Cuthbert's Church, Presbytery and Hall and the sale was sanctioned by the Wigan County Borough Council at its meeting on July, 1, 1958.



A snapshot of the Ellesmere Road church during a wedding service taken around 1965

Larch Avenue

In 1961, the Archdiocesan Finance and Development Committee approved a loan of £102,000 for the erection of new church buildings on a site in Larch Avenue at its junction with Sherwood Drive. Contracts were signed with Reynolds & Scott of 9 Albert Square, Manchester in February 1962 and exactly one year later they had produced final drawings for a re-inforced concrete church capable of accomodating 700 people with an adjoining brick built presbytery of seven bedrooms.



*St Cuthbert's,
Larch Avenue
on its opening*

The Reverend Canon Carney had at first considered something in the modern vein of architecture but had eventually decided on an orthodox design with, in his words - "something of the Gothic look about it". The Reynolds & Scott's plans were precisely what Canon Carney had visualised and he was happy to send them to be 'rubber-stamped' by the Archdiocesan Council of Administration but the Council's reaction came as a bombshell to the Parish Priest after all his careful planning. Their letter of reply said: *"The Council frankly dislike the appearance of the church as planned"*. A building in a more modern style was proposed instead. This, Canon Carney stubbornly refused to accept. He provided a miniature model of his church for their closer inspection but the members of the Council remained unimpressed.

The Canon decided to take the matter to the Archbishop himself and Archbishop Heenan responded in a letter dated August 22, 1963: *"I understand that there was unanimous agreement (among the Council) that the design of your church is very poor. This creates a very delicate situation. You*

are presumably satisfied that your architects have produced something beautiful while all the members of the Council regard the architect's work as second rate. When we are all dead, the church will still be standing and it is a matter of conscience to decide whether it is right to approve a plan against our better judgement".

The tone of the message was discouraging but His Grace, reluctantly perhaps, gave his consent for the building of the church to go ahead, working to the original plans.

Before the mechanical diggers arrived in Larch Avenue, Canon Carney had again crossed swords with the people on Brownlow Hill over the new church. A list of building contractors had been drawn up and tenders invited for the project. At a late date, the Canon contacted the Archdiocesan Surveyor with the name of another contractor he wished to have included. The firm was James Gee of Ormskirk Road, Pemberton, a company already engaged on St Edward's new church being built in Scot Lane.

The Liverpool office turned down Canon Carney's request, claiming that James Gee was a company with limited resources which did not have the capacity to complete two projects of such magnitude at the same time.

Once again, St Cuthbert's normally benign parish priest dug in his heels and refused to be dictated to. After an exchange of correspondence which was, putting it mildly 'prickly', he had his way. Significantly, Gee's bid was successful and they were given the contract.



Canon Carney shows schoolchildren the model of the proposed new church

Foundations

Just like the site of the church in Ellesmere Road, there were old mine workings running below Larch Avenue but there was never any danger that they might jeopardise the project as had happened with the old church. This time, following the recommendations of a surveyor's report, special precautions were taken where outcrops of coal seams were traced and, during construction, provision was made to pump away any ground water that seeped into the excavations. This continued until the foundation designs were complete.

The original building estimates were: Church - £69,250, Presbytery - £15,250, External Works - £4,800, but the figures were spiralling upward in less than a year, the church building alone rising to £74,000. Some early cost cutting was needed and the intended boundary fence for the church grounds was cancelled. (*A proposed new parish centre had already been deferred at the planning stage.*) The full register of contractors and sub-contractors when construction work began was:

Architects -	Reynolds & Scott, Manchester.
Main Building Contractor -	James Gee, Pemberton.
Terrazzo Floors -	Conway's Ltd.
Heating Installation -	Houghton Engineers, Stockport.
Light Fittings -	Messrs Falks.
Re-inforced Concrete -	Fram Co Ltd, Manchester. Girlings Ferro Concrete, Leeds
Joinery -	Wm C Gore, Pemberton.
Benches -	Walmsley's of Preston, fitted by Wm C Gore.

Leaded glass windows were designed by Joseph E Nuttgens of High Wycombe and produced at the family's factory.

The marble altars and tabernacle, pulpit, altar rails, baptismal font and holy water stoups were by Patterson Ltd, Old Trafford, Manchester and from the same company came the foundation stone in polished Westmorland green slate with gold incised lettering.

A sound system was fitted by Marconi Marine Ltd., Fleetwood and the church organ was installed by Messrs Hamblet's.

The main altar fittings and furniture were supplied by J & C McLoughlin Ltd., Dublin.

Stations Of The Cross, in limewood with gilded titles, from H J Fitzsimmons Ltd., Liverpool

A lightning conductor in the form of a crucifix was erected by Doodson & Bain at the roof apex above the West window.

Building work began in 1965 and on Sunday, March 20, 1966, the feast of St Cuthbert, a large congregation gathered on the site for the blessing of the foundation stone by the Rt Rev Augustine Harris, Auxilliary Bishop of Liverpool. Canon Carney signed a parchment recording the history of the parish which was sealed in a metal tube and buried beneath the foundation stone.

The new church was due to be completed by October 30, 1966 and it was Canon Carney's intention to have the official opening at Christmas with the celebration of Midnight Mass. Although the priests were able to occupy the presbytery in August, interior work continued



Bishop Augustine Harris (centre) who laid the foundation stone at the new church in 1966, returns to attend the first celebratory Benediction for Jubilee 2000. Fr Simon Henry PP and Fr O'Toole of St Edwards are seen with the bishop.

commitment and the parish debt was now of astronomic proportions. When Fr Connery was transferred, and with Canon Carney still an invalid, it was left to Frs Carden and McCartan to look for ways of raising the vast sums of money required. A parishioner recalls a conversation he once had with Canon Carney when they talked about that massive debt. "You could do with winning the football pools, Father," to which Canon Carney replied, "I don't need to win the pools. The people of St Cuthbert's will find the money for me." And so they did.

Biggest Parish

A Planned Offertory Campaign was launched in December 1967. Today's parishioners are familiar with the small envelopes and the Archdiocesan Covenant Scheme which were both introduced about the same time. When the concept of 'planned giving' first started, the idea called for great organisational skills on the part of the clergy and the men and women of St Cuthbert's who piloted the scheme and the initial income was a commendable £300 per week plus the benefits from the covenants. These initiatives and the people's generosity saw St Cuthbert's through a turbulent period of financial difficulty.

Canon Carney passed away in 1968 and his place was taken by Father McCawley who inherited all the parish's money problems. In an interview for the local Post and Chronicle published on June 12, 1969, Fr McCawley was quoted as saying: "St Cuthbert's is now the biggest single parish in the area. Each Sunday, a total of 3000 worshippers pack the pews of the church. Fr Carden and I visit between 120 and 150 families a week. Over the next ten years we must find more

at the church after the promised date. However, the entire programme was thrown into disarray when Canon Carney, then in his 80th year, suffered a severe stroke and was admitted to Providence Hospital, St Helens. He remained there for several weeks but was eventually allowed to return to live in the Presbytery although he remained very ill and was never able to say Mass in the church he had worked so hard to build.

The final stages of the construction work were supervised by the acting parish priest, Father Connery, ably assisted by Father McCartan and Father Carden. Without any formal ceremony, the first Mass in the new Parish Church of St Cuthbert's was said on Sunday February 19, 1967.

After everybody had admired the "gleaming and noble edifice", as Fr Carden is remembered as describing the newly opened church, attention turned to the matter of paying for it. St Cuthbert's already had a huge school building

than £75,000 to clear the debt on the church and house. On top of that, the parish will also have to build a new Infants school. We also have to pay £2300 a year renting temporary classrooms from the council to accommodate our children. But, we will manage it with the goodwill and the co-operation of our people." It was a familiar message.



The coffin of Canon Carney is carried from the Presbytery to the church for a Service of Remembrance.

Changes

The years spent planning and building the Larch Avenue church coincided with the historic Second Vatican Council (1962-65) initiated by Pope John XXIII and continued by Paul VI. The reforms introduced by the Council were many and far reaching and included a new Constitution on the Liturgy, proclaimed in 1963.

The most visible changes witnessed by regular Roman Catholic churchgoers were:- the demise of the Latin liturgy which was replaced by the English language Mass; alterations to the church sanctuary layout; and the beginnings of the Ecumenical movement with its ultimate goal of Christian unity.

Although they were not entirely unheard of before Vatican II, Lay Scripture Readers were widely introduced as part of the revised English liturgy. More innovative were Eucharistic Ministers. These were lay people chosen to support the dwindling ranks of priests in the Church by distributing Holy Communion at masses and on visits to the sick. The first

Eucharistic Ministers at St Cuthbert's were: Lilian Carey, Jean Chamock, Patricia Sudworth, Lew Evans, Peter Smith and Bill Thorpe and they all had to attend special instruction classes at Upholland prior to the start of their duties in 1986. They encountered some initial reluctance on the part of many people who found it disconcerting to receive the Blessed Sacrament from anyone other than an ordained priest. Communicants had the option of taking the Host in their hands rather than it be placed on their tongues and this seemed to make the ritual more acceptable.

Strumming guitars and electronic synthesisers were heard, replacing the solemn church organ at Folk Masses when traditional hymns gave way to a more 'trendy' brand of music. Not everyone cared for that sort of thing. There seemed to be so many changes - something different practically every Sunday and, for many Catholics, this transition was unsettling.

Designing the interior of the Larch Avenue church came, more or less, at the same time that many of these reforms were taking effect. The High Altar was built to conform with the newly defined Sanctuary layout. It had to be free standing, allowing the priest to take a position facing the congregation with the tabernacle fixed to the wall behind him. (For centuries, Mass in the Tridentine Rite was said while the priest had his back to the congregation for most of the service.) Controversy arose at St Cuthbert's when the Archdiocese ordered that another altar should be made which was close enough to the congregation to make people feel more involved in the modern liturgy. The second altar became an issue when parish priest Father Murphy applied to the Archbishop for permission to consecrate the Larch Avenue church.

Consecration

The practice of Consecration is traditionally sanctioned when a church has been paid for. When it becomes, in effect, the property of the parish rather than the bank's. St Cuthbert's had reached this happy situation some years before Fr Murphy's rectorship but, now, Consecration was ruled out until the small altar, complying with the Archbishop's directive, was installed. Fr Murphy was able to obtain a wooden altar, (it was nothing more than a stout table but, nevertheless, acceptable) and this was positioned on the middle level of the Sanctuary steps.

Shortly after the altar had been put into place, Fr Murphy left St Cuthbert's. His replacement, Father O'Hara was a priest from the 'old school' and he began to make changes of his own. He dispensed with the female altar servers - young girls brought in by Fr Murphy in a welcome move to reinforce the falling number of male servers - and he took away the wooden altar, using the High Altar at all times. With the removal of the small altar went the immediate prospects of the Consecration ceremony. It is only in the Holy Jubilee Year 2000 that the matter arose again and Father Henry was at last able to arrange for St Cuthbert's to be consecrated.

Finishing Touches

Canon Carney and every parish priest who has followed him has had more than the spiritual well-being of their parishioners to care about. The financial burdens they have all carried

burdens which have been at times overwhelming. Their predecessors at the Tin Church experienced the same problems and who can say whether the demands have been greater for Larch Avenue. They never seem to show signs of ending. After what only seemed to be a short passage of time after the opening of the new church, bills began to arrive for all manner of maintenance work. The design of the church and its sheer height has caused all kinds of headaches. During the building stage, the contractor had expressed the view that the church was at least 16 feet too tall, although when he said so it was far too late for anyone to do anything about it even if they had been inclined to. This height factor has added to the cost of re-decoration while a failed electric light bulb in the fittings suspended high in the roof meant a visit from the scaffolders to make a simple replacement. (This particular problem has subsequently been solved with the purchase of 'everlasting' bulbs - expensive but cost effective.) The church is lofty. So much space. Costly to heat in cold weather. The original heating system was inadequate and has been replaced. More expense!

When the present system was installed the boiler was located in the baptistry at the rear of the left aisle. To make room, the beautiful marble baptismal font was put into storage and christening ceremonies took place at the altar rails using jugs and bowls of water. Fr Henry brought the font back into the body of the church in 1999. It now stands close to the main entrance. A section of the benches was moved to accommodate it but everyone agrees that the



The Lady Chapel



The figure of the Risen Christ in the Easter Tableaux



The Pulpit



Larch Avenue Church interior, 2000



The Baptismal Font

new location is excellent. It was Fr Henry too who decided to put into use the fine Victorian brass sanctuary lamp which had once hung in the Tin Church. Like the baptismal font, this was an inspired decision and Fr Henry is also to be thanked on his creative idea of utilising the lower window alcoves as miniature shrines, a most interesting and charming feature in today's St Cuthbert's as is the positioning on the Altar steps of the Nativity crib at Christmas and the striking Easter tableaux. These improvisations by Fr Henry have come at virtually no expense but have greatly enhanced the character of the church.

In recent years, the blight of vandalism to church property has been a worry and a drain on parish coffers. As a security measure, the church is locked nowadays when it is not being used - a situation that would have been unheard of half a century ago. The leaded windows have been targeted by air rifle pellets and other missiles and glass panes were continually having to be replaced.

A transparent screen now protects each window. People arriving for Mass one Sunday morning in 1999 found that thieves had stolen several of the huge slabs of quarried stone which formed the steps into the church. In an effort to reduce vandalism in the church grounds, a steel perimeter fence has been erected. The result is that over thirty years after construction costs were trimmed by cancelling the boundary fence originally planned, it is there now and Canon Carney's church is at last completed.

The Clergy

Father **Bernard Brady** was assistant priest at St Mary's, Standishgate when he was entrusted with the mission to establish a new parish in the Pemberton area. It was a huge undertaking but Bishop Goss told him how confident he was that he would succeed and so, with great enthusiasm, Fr Brady applied himself to the task. Uppermost on his list of priorities was the education of the young. The first fruits of his labours were seen within a year of his appointment - a school for mixed-age children which was extended twelve months later to be occupied by the Infants department while the Junior children remained in the original classroom. One of the rooms in the new wing was used as a chapel. Before there was such a facility, Sunday services were conducted on alternate weeks at Mass Centres based in two public houses, one in Newtown, the other in Goose Green.

Fr Brady's whole-hearted involvement in the fledgling parish in the next year was to take its toll and in 1882 he suffered a seizure which left him partly paralysed. A few months passed and it became clear there would never be a full recovery and that the worn out priest could not continue his work. He left the Mission which, so full of hope, he had founded and passed his final years in peaceful retirement until his death in June, 1931.

When Fr Brady first fell ill his duties were taken over temporarily by **Father James Manning**, a young priest borrowed from the diocese of Ardagh in Ireland but the newcomer assumed full responsibility for the Mission in October 1883 and he immediately began to prepare the way for the church which his predecessor had dreamed of building.

February 13, 1887 was the historic day when the new parish church of St Cuthbert's in Ellesmere Road was opened by Bishop O'Reilly. Unfortunately, just a few months after his endeavours had thus been crowned with success, Fr Manning was recalled to Ireland. His replacement was **Father Francis Blake** who came from the country parish of Croft, near Warrington. Under his vigorous administration the parish boomed. The presbytery and the mission buildings were enlarged and, indeed, growth was such that more priests were appointed to assist Fr Blake, starting with **Father Patrick Kelly** who was sent to St Cuthbert's in 1890. He served for six years during which time he was joined by **Father Henry Blanchard**. Fr Blanchard's stay was short and for a while, the presbytery housed two Father Kellys (altogether there have been five priests with the name Kelly at St Cuthbert's). However, **Father Thomas Kelly's** time in the parish was also brief.

Father Daniel Moloney came next and, in the final year of Fr Blake's rectorship before the illness that forced his retirement in 1900 and his death at Croft six years later, **Father William Southworth** began his ministry as curate of St Cuthbert's. This young man was to become one of the most popular, charismatic figures ever to serve the parish.

Boyhood Friends

'Willie' Southworth was born in Liverpool on May 17, 1870. At the end of his college course at St Edward's, Liverpool he studied for the priesthood at Upholland and was ordained on June 12, 1897. His first parish was St Joseph's, Liverpool and, after only a year there, he was sent to St Cuthbert's. During the fifteen years he spent in Pemberton, Fr Southworth was assistant to three parish priests, although his association with Fr Blake was short and only lasted for a few months until the appointment as Rector of **Father Edward Lawrence Smith**.

Fr Smith had previously established the country mission of Pilling, near Fleetwood and, despite poor health during his nine years at St Cuthbert's, he did much good work, receiving sterling support from his able lieutenant, Fr Southworth. Together, they saw the parish debts cleared and many necessary repairs and alterations to the mission buildings and schools were carried out. Fr Southworth was a tower of strength for the ailing parish priest. He was tireless as a visitor to the sick across the expanding parish as well as with the many converts who came to him to receive instruction in the faith.



Fr William Southworth

When Fr Smith's health deteriorated the clergy was restored to its complement of three priests when **Father Thomas Colbert** was installed in 1908. Fr Smith eventually resigned and retired to the country mission of Lea, in the Fylde, to be succeeded by **Father John Almond**. Another formidable partnership was forged with Fr Southworth once more playing a vital role. The two men were the same age and had been boyhood friends in Liverpool. Both followed identical paths into the priesthood and they had studied together at Upholland. Fr Almond had been curate at St Peter's, Lytham until September 1909 and his appointment at St Cuthbert's. He was a cheerful, great hearted priest who carried on with the maintenance work on the Tin Church instigated by Fr Smith and he supervised many organisational changes.

In 1914, Fr Southworth was given his own parish at the Church of All Saints, Liverpool. He left Pemberton with the deep felt gratitude and good wishes of hundreds of parishioners, all of whom were devoted to their industrious, caring brother in Christ, just as he had been devoted to them. Fr Southworth met a tragic end when he was fatally injured in a motor cycle accident and he died from his injuries in Kidderminster Hospital on June 1, 1921.

At a Solemn Requiem Mass at his All Saints Parish Church, the funeral panegyric to Fr Southworth was preached by his old friend and colleague at St Cuthbert's, Fr Almond. Speaking of the years they had spent together in Pemberton, Fr Almond said, "To describe his good works during that time would fill a volume, for his energy was tireless, and always beneficial."

War and Peace


Fr Almond's tenure at St Cuthbert's came between 1909 and 1924 and, of course, during that period the first World War was fought. Many young men of the parish lost their lives in the conflict while others returned scarred in mind and body. In those war years, Fr Almond was assisted by **Father Charles Kelly** and their pastoral work would almost certainly have been overshadowed by the effects of the war, especially among the families of the bereaved.

After more than fourteen years as Parish Priest Fr Almond's health began to fail. On medical advice he went for treatment to Nauheim, in Germany. Sadly, it proved unavailing and this kindly priest died and was buried in a strange land in July 1924, far away from the people he loved, but always near to their hearts.

Fr Almond was followed by **Reverend William Kelly**, formerly Parish Priest at All Saints, Golborne. His first act was to decorate the interior of the church as a memorial to his predecessor. Then he turned his attention to the problem of school accomodation.

In spite of poor health, Fr Kelly continued to serve the parish faithfully until his death on April 19, 1934. He lies buried in Orrell St James' Cemetery.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least just my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" - Job xiv, 3.



OF YOUR CHARITY
Pray for the Soul of
Father John S. Almond,
Rector of St. Cuthbert's, Pemberton,
Who died at Nauheim, Germany,
July 24th, 1924.
In the 55th Year of his Age.
And the 30th of his Priesthood.
Catholic with the Rites of Holy Church.
Interred at Nauheim, July 23rd, 1924.
Oh where God, ever Jesus, have mercy.

☩

☩ G.O.B.s who amongst the Apostolic Priests, have called up Thy servants, JOHN S., to the dignity of a Priest, grant us grace, O Lord, that he may be also admitted in Heaven, to their everlasting fellowship: through Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen.
May he rest in peace. - Amen.



Fr Joseph Hindley

Long serving curate Fr Charles Kelly assisted first, Fr Almond and then his own namesake until 1928 after which there were three junior clergy appointments prior to the arrival of the next parish priest. These were, **Father James Burke**, **Father Thomas Dunne** and **Father Joseph Hindley**, the departure of the latter more or less coinciding with the appointment of **Father Echlin O'Lavery** as Rector on May 27, 1934.



Fr James Burke

Fr O'Lavery inherited a substantial parish debt, the result of his predecessor's school building programme. In what were difficult economic days for everyone, he found it necessary to appeal to the traditional generosity of the people of St Cuthbert's in his effort to handle the financial plight in which he found himself. Over a period of three years the debt was reduced by almost £1000, but at the start of 1938 there was still over £3000 to be re-paid, plus interest. For Fr

O'Lavery there was the added headache of the parish's commitment to contribute, along with St Joseph's, Caroline Street, to the cost of building a new Roman Catholic secondary school but that project lost its urgency with the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939.

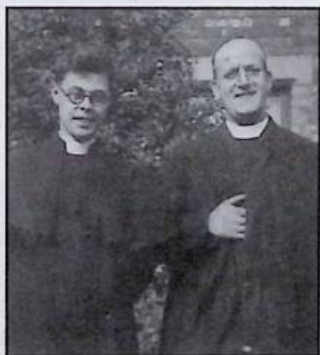
Personality

Fr O'Lavery's senior assistant between 1935 and 1938 was **Fr Denis Kelly**, who came to St Cuthbert's at the age of 31 having served at St Patrick's and St John's, Liverpool. He left to take up an appointment with the Apostleship of the Sea and during the war he was captured at sea and detained on a German prison ship. He was rescued and taken to Australia where he remained until the war ended, serving at the Cathedral at Wagga-Wagga. He spent the final years before his retirement at Our Lady's of the Rosary, Bryn



Fr Denis Kelly

Fr Kelly's fellow curates at St Cuthbert's were **Fr Leo Ball** and **Fr Joseph Burke**. Father Joe was a great favourite during his time at St Cuthbert's. A tiny man with a big personality, he was the founder and main fund-raiser when the men's club opened in Ormskirk Road, and it was an indication of his popularity that when he moved to St Paul of the Cross in Burtonwood his many friends from St Cuthbert's regularly went to visit him by the coach load. It was the same when he was given his own parish at St Catherine's, Farington.



Curate Fr Leo Ball with parish priest Fr Echlin O'Lavery

Fr Bernard Joseph Keating was born in Co Clare, Ireland and educated at St Flannan's College, Ennis. Ordained in 1938, he was sent to St Cuthbert's after brief spells at Sacred Heart and St Joseph's, Liverpool. He spent eight busy years in Pemberton before returning to Liverpool to work in several parishes. Ill health brought his retirement in 1974 whilst serving as parish priest at St Mary & St John's, Newton-le-Willows and he died in a Manchester nursing home at the age of 61.

Fr Vincent Reape was the industrious parish priest who took over from Fr O'Lavery in 1940. He was in charge during the hectic years that followed the war and campaigned tirelessly for a new church in Pemberton. Illness forced him to relinquish his duties at St Cuthbert's although he was still Parish Priest when he died at the early age of 47 on March 25, 1949.

Temporary cover at the start of Fr Reape's indisposition came from **Fr Patrick Rice** who had been ordained at the Basilica of St John Lateran, Rome in 1924. He was still at the reins when he celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his ordination assisted by three curates: **Fr Patrick Bermingham**, who was only at St Cuthbert's for a few months; **Fr Brendan Hogan**, a



Children of Mary, with Fr Vincent Reape

partly man who, during his short stay, had to endure some good natured name calling from the school children who thought he resembled the chubby Friar Tuck character in the Robin Hood films. Third was **Fr Gerard Storzaker** who spent four years in Pemberton from 1948. His older brother **Fr Austin Storzaker** had earlier served at St Cuthbert's following his ordination in 1941 but was in the parish for a very short time and, indeed, his name does not feature in the official list of Parish Clergy.

After Fr Reape's death, most people thought that Fr Rice would succeed him, he having acted as parish priest for so long and it is believed that Fr Rice himself was very disappointed at being overlooked. However, he was at St Cuthbert's for another two years until his transfer to a parish in Crosby.

Canon Carney

Thomas Carney was born in 1887, which was the same year the first St Cuthbert's parish church opened in Ellesmere Road. Sixty-two years later Fr Carney, as he was by then, moved into the presbytery at that very church.

He remained to become the longest serving parish priest in the history of St Cuthbert's, twenty-two years, and when he died at the age of 81, he was the oldest man ever to hold the office and also the best loved. In November 1961, Archbishop Heenan appointed him Honorary Canon of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral Chapter and it is by this title he is forever remembered by the people of St Cuthbert's whose lives he touched.

A native of Lancaster, he trained for the priesthood at Ushaw College and was ordained on January 1, 1912. His first appointment was at Wigan St Patrick's serving just one Parish



A young Fr Thomas Carney



Lollipops for the Infants from Canon Carney after receiving their gift of an armchair to mark his Golden Jubilee - June 1, 1962

Priest, Fr Swarbrick (1909-27). He was transferred to St Joseph's, Brinscall in 1921 and was there for seventeen years. It is a feature of Canon Carney's career that he spent extraordinary lengths of time at all the parishes where he worked. Always a joker, with tongue in cheek, he used to say that Penicilin was the worst thing ever discovered because it kept old parish priests alive for so long, younger men had to wait forever before they were given their own parishes.

Canon Carney was given his first parish in 1938 when he took over St Alban's in Liverpool, an area which was heavily bombed in the second World War blitz. While in Liverpool he was engaged as the city's Schools' Religious Examiner. When he came to St Cuthbert's in 1948 to prepare the way for the much needed new parish church, a lot of the 'spadework' had already been done by his predecessor Fr Reape but it was some time before the dream became a reality. When it did, the blueprints may have borne an architect's name but the design of the new St Cuthbert's was the Canon's, no-one else's, and not even the Archbishop could persuade him to change an inch of it.

Canon Carney celebrated fifty years of priesthood in 1962 and it was a great parochial occasion. If a priest's popularity can be judged by the number of photographs of him that are owned by his parishioners then clearly the revered Canon was a very popular man indeed.



Canon Carney with guests on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee.

Photographs of him have poured in for inclusion in this publication, most of them scenes from Canon Carney's golden jubilee celebrations. So many people own at least one of the souvenir cards issued to mark the anniversary. Fr Connery, his assistant, made a presentation to the Canon on behalf of the parishioners but the man himself was particularly moved and delighted by the gift he received from the school children of St Cuthbert's - an armchair.

He loved children and they so obviously loved him. He baffled them with little conjuring tricks and staff at the Infant's school remember the Canon crossing the playground with the children flocking around him and forming a chain as they held each other by the hand with Canon Carney in the middle, a beaming smile on his face.

It was heart-breaking that he was never to say Mass in the Larch Avenue church. The stroke he suffered in late 1966 virtually brought to an end his duties as Parish Priest. It was some consolation that the last months of his long life were spent in the presbytery he had built. His quarters were moved to the ground floor and people passing by would wave to his window, knowing that if he was looking, he would be waving back, blessing them perhaps.

Canon Carney, great father figure of the modern St Cuthbert's, died in his room on Wednesday, June the fifth, 1968. On the following Sunday evening his coffin was carried the short distance from the Presbytery along Larch Avenue into his church which was packed for a Mass of Remembrance. The funeral was the following day and after a Solemn Requiem Mass, Canon Carney was taken to St James' churchyard, Orrell where he is buried.



Frs Rice and Stirzaker were Canon Carney's earliest companions in the Ellesmere Road presbytery and they were replaced in 1952 by Fr **Dermot O'Donohue** and Fr **Richard Colbert** who themselves had moved on by the time the new church was opened in 1967.

Fr **Joseph Connery** joined the St Cuthbert's clergy in 1960. He came from Derry, Northern Ireland and had been ordained at Wexford in 1943. He was Canon Carney's right hand while the old priest was ill but he left the parish in the same year that the Larch Avenue church was finished and Fr Connery was another priest who later served at Our Lady of the Rosary, Bryn.

The parish was steered through an awkward period following the opening of the new church by two dedicated assistant priests, Fr **Michael McCartan** and Fr **William Carden**. Between them they supervised the complications of the Diocesan Covenant Scheme which was introduced at St Cuthbert's at the end of 1967. Fr McCartan was a County Mayo man, ordained at St Patrick's College, Carlow in 1947, who came to the parish after serving as assistant at St Matthew's, Old Roan, Liverpool. From St Cuthbert's he moved to St Bede's, Widnes in 1968 and five years later he was appointed Parish Priest at St Columba's, Huyton. He died after a long illness in September 1978 at the age of 55.

Fr **William Gerard Carden** - he of the stentorian voice - was born in Bootle on April 11, 1919 and was ordained in Bootle's St Monica's church in 1946. His first appointment was at St Francis Xavier, Falkirk in the Archdiocese of Edinburgh but he returned to Liverpool in 1948. He was assigned to St Cuthbert's in 1966 and served until 1974. He became Parish Priest of SS Mary & John, Newton le Willows and remained there until his death in 1988.



Fr Richard Colbert

Amiable

The man chosen to succeed Canon Carney as Parish Priest was Fr **Martin McCawley**. Born in Dublin, Fr McCawley was ordained in Ireland in 1939 and came to the Liverpool diocese the same year. Before coming to Pemberton in 1968, he had served as assistant priest at several churches including parishes in Widnes and Astley. He is remembered as an amiable man and a 'good mixer' who was instrumental in building the Parish Club in Larch Avenue which he saw opened in 1970.

In his early days at St Cuthbert's Fr McCawley had the able support of Fr Carden but there was a short period when assistants came and went in quick succession. Fr **John Dunleavy** was from the Society of African Missions (SMA) and served the parish for less than a year. He had spent many years as a missionary priest in Nigeria and witnessed many appalling incidents there during the Biafran War. He was recalled by the SMA and served in Ireland and the USA.

Fr Alfred McCarthy was another who came from the Missions. He was in his advanced years and stayed in the parish for only a short time before he too retired and Fr McCawley was joined by Fr Marsh. **Fr Joseph Marsh** was a popular curate and a well known figure around Pemberton. He gave great service to the parish club and was its chaplain. Although the parishioners were sad to see him leave, it was no surprise when, in 1977, after six years at St Cuthbert's, Fr Marsh was given his own parish at St Patrick's, Liverpool.

Fr Leo Stoker was curate at St Cuthbert's for about a year and a half and came to the parish at the age of thirty having spent four years at St Aidan's, Huyton. A native of Southport, Fr Stoker, who was ordained in 1968, left St Cuthbert's when the newly appointed Archbishop Derek Worlock sent him to study at the Irish Centre for Pastoral Liturgy in Portarlington. Having gained his diploma, Fr Stoker was given the responsibility for Liturgy in the South Liverpool Deanery. Now elevated with the title Canon, he is currently Dean of St Helens, serving as Parish Priest at Corpus Christi, Rainford and is a member of the Archbishop's Council at the Metropolitan Cathedral.



Fr Thomas Naughton enjoys an ice cream with Harry Carey at Napoleon's Bridge, Lourdes, 1983

Fr Thomas Naughton, who celebrates the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood in the Holy Year 2000, was from a Widnes family and was parish priest for thirteen years. A private, studious man, Fr Naughton was a fine preacher and was for several years Dean of Wigan. In 1989 he was transferred to SS Mary & John in Newton le Willows after the death of former St Cuthbert's priest Fr Carden and is still there. During his rectorship at Newton le Willows, Fr Naughton was appointed Canon of the Metropolitan Cathedral and now carries that title.

Priestly 'L' plates

Like Fr Naughton, **Fr Richard Sloan** also came to the parish in 1976, the year of his ordination. Richard Sloan was born in Crosby in 1951 and from SS Peter & Paul's school in Crosby he studied at the Junior Seminary of the White Fathers until he was 16 going on to St Mary's College. He did his priest's training at Upholland and was ordained by Archbishop Worlock at the Cathedral on May 9, 1976. He will be known to former students at St John Rigby where he was chaplain as well as parishioners at St James', Orrell where he served after leaving St Cuthbert's. He was six years with LAMP at Padres Santiago Apostol Casilla, St Cruz in Bolivia and is now studying Psycho-Synthetics in London. During his final year at St Cuthbert's, Fr Sloan shared the parish duties with **Fr Thomas Francis Burrowes** and **Fr Peter Fleetwood**, two quite remarkable men but with completely different personalities.

Fr Burrowes, who was shy and reserved, had worked for the Meteorological Office and served in the RAF during the war. After graduating in Mathematics at Southampton University he studied for the priesthood at the English College, Lisbon where he was ordained in 1959. He was curate at a number of Liverpool parishes until 1966 and then went to do missionary work in Uganda. After eight years he returned to the archdiocese to teach for three years but took up parochial duties again when he came to St Cuthbert's in 1978 but then went back to missionary work in Nigeria. There followed a spell as parish priest at St Raphael's, Widnes but due to failing health he retired, and died in the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus, Hastings in 1989.

While Fr Burrowes was a quiet introvert, his fellow curate at St Cuthbert's, Fr Fleetwood was full of life, always a smile on his face. "*St Cuthbert's is where I wore my priestly L-plates*", is how Fr Fleetwood remembers his work in Pemberton. It was certainly the prelude to a career of exceptional variety. Born in Liverpool in 1953, Peter Fleetwood attended St John the Evangelist School and St Francis Xavier College. He trained for the priesthood in Rome, specialising in Marxist Philosophy. St Cuthbert's was his first parish after ordination. He spent four years in Pemberton and his parochial duties included the chaplaincy of St Thomas More High School. He was sent back to Rome for three years prior to his appointment to teach philosophy at Ushaw College, where present St Cuthbert's parish priest Fr Henry was one of his students.

From 1988 to 1993, Fr Fleetwood was on the committee for the National Conference of Priests of England and Wales, and the Council of European Priests' Conferences, representing that body at the first Synod of European Bishops in the Vatican in 1991. In March 1992 he found himself back in the UK for a three year term as Parish Priest at St Raphael's, Widnes also serving as secretary of the English and Welsh Bishop's Committee for Dialogue with Non-Believers (later the Committee for Faith and Culture).

Fr Fleetwood is now back in Rome again, an official at the Pontifical Council for Culture, Vatican City, and is a part-time assistant in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University while also with the external teaching staff of the Pontifical Beda College.

Such a remarkable c.v. for a man still in his forties. What next, one wonders, for Father Peter Fleetwood?

Blending In

The fifth of the seven assistant priests to work alongside Fr Naughton was **Fr Thomas Neylon**. Fr Tom was a great favourite with younger parishioners and he liked to discard his priest's collar occasionally, pull on a sweater and 'blend in'. He was a keen sportsman and played football with a local side whenever his duties permitted. At the 4 o'clock Mass once held on Sunday afternoons, Fr Tom frequently began his homily by announcing the latest scores in the day's Rugby League games. His favourite team was, and still is, his home-town

club Warrington. He was born there in 1958 and went to St Oswald's Primary School, Padgate and English Martyrs in Orford. In 1974 he entered Upholland for seminary training followed by six years at Ushaw.

He was one of twelve priests ordained on May 31, 1982 by Pope John Paul II when the Holy Father celebrated an open-air Mass at Heaton Park, Manchester during his historic visit to Great Britain.

St Cuthbert's was Fr Neylon's first parish and his 'district' was Norley Hall and Kitt Green, an area he covered on foot for three months until, with the help of his father, he bought a car. After that he took his exercise with Clem, a dog belonging to Fr Naughton which, according to Fr Tom, "used to take me for a walk!" Fr Neylon left St Cuthbert's in 1986 and spent the next nine years in Skelmersdale. Since 1995 he has been Parish Priest at St Julie's, St Helens.



Fr Tom Neylon at Lourdes

St Cuthbert's was the first parish for a youthful **Fr Barry McAllister** who was ordained in 1986. A local man from a family of St Mary's parishioners, Fr McAllister was not in Pemberton long before moving to St Alban's, Warrington. He is currently parish priest at St Elizabeth's, Litherland.

To paraphrase that popular saying - "*You can take the priest out of Liverpool, but you can't take Liverpool out of the priest!*" and despite the cosmopolitan flavour of his years of training in the United States and Ireland, **Fr Patrick Sexton** had lost none of those well known 'Scouse' characteristics when he came to St Cuthbert's in 1988. The congregation was taken aback when he went into the pulpit and began his first sermon with a joke. The people didn't know whether they were expected to laugh out loud or not and so the response was deathly silence. "Please yourself," said Father Pat, "But you'd better get used to it." From then on there was a 'funny' from the cheery, red-headed Liverpudlian every Sunday.



Fr Patrick Sexton

Fr Sexton was ordained in 1981 after four years study at St John's Seminary in Waterford, Ireland. Before that there were four years in Seattle, USA at St Thomas' Seminary and running a summer camp in Anchorage, Alaska. His first parish in the Liverpool Diocese was St Clare's, where he spent six years, followed by a period at Our Lady of Reconciliation prior to his appointment at St Cuthbert's. He served three parish priests until 1991 when he took over as Rector at St Williams and is still there, making more friends and, no doubt, adding more jokes to his repertoire.

Father Bill

Fr William Murphy was born in Birmingham of Irish parents in 1943 and when he was two the family returned to live in Dublin. He left school to start work at 14 and, nine years later, he entered Campion House, a college for late vocations. From there he began his seminary training at the English College, Lisbon and studied at Upholland for three and a half years. He was 31 years old when he was ordained at the Metropolitan Cathedral in May 1975 and after appointments in St Helens and Liverpool he volunteered to serve as a L.A.M.P. priest in South America. He spent six years in Bolivia before returning to this country and on February 1, 1989 he replaced Fr Naughton as Parish Priest at St Cuthbert's.



Fr Bill Murphy in the L.A.M.P. Soup Kitchen, Oruro, Bolivia - 1991

St Cuthbert's had been slow in adopting many of the modernisation policies of Vatican II and soon after his arrival, Fr Bill made changes at a startling rate which many traditionalists in the parish found unsettling. However, they were innovations which everybody knew were necessary and that St Cuthbert's had to move with the times. Some of the changes brought great joy to the people such as Fr Bill's first Christmas at St Cuthbert's when the church was beautifully decorated as it had never been before, with all the traditional trimmings plus a display of splendid banners designed by art student Lucy Cranston of Orrell. These banners

are still hung every Christmas. The Lourdes Grotto in the church grounds is another feature of today's St Cuthbert's for which we can thank Fr Bill. His love of folk music as it was played and sung at Saturday evening Mass was well known as was his enthusiasm for Sponsored Fun Walks in which he persuaded many parishioners to take part.

In 1990 an unexpected L.A.M.P. vacancy arose in Bolivia and Fr Bill volunteered for another term. He left St Cuthbert's on August 6 and altogether, he spent a total of 15 years as a L.A.M.P. priest. He was seen again when he brought a group of Bolivian folk singers to perform at St Cuthbert's during a tour he had arranged for them.

Fr Bill Murphy is back in England, this time for good, he says, and today he is Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Assumption, Gateacre, Liverpool.

Fr Murphy's replacement was Fr **John O'Hara**, born in Cork, Ireland on September 12, 1938 who died of cancer on March 20, 1998 - the feast of St Cuthbert.

The 1980s had seen a sharp decline in the number of priests active in the Archdiocese and after the departure of Fr Sexton in 1991, Fr O'Hara was the first in modern times to run the parish single-handedly. He did so for over seven years and few were to know how seriously ill he was for most of that time. All of the first impressions one gained of him were that he was a man who liked solitude but everyone who came close to him would say otherwise. He was quiet and an academic but he was an entertaining conversationalist with a good sense of humour and there was genuine grief throughout the parish when the news was broken that Fr O'Hara had died after months of suffering.

Over the years, every church will have its share of visiting clergy, missionary fathers and lay speakers, among others, who come to the parish for a variety of reasons. Perhaps it is to appeal for offerings; deliver a special message; as cover for an absent priest; or even to spend a holiday. St

Obituary

Fr John O'Hara

FATHER John O'Hara, much-loved parish priest of St Cuthbert's parish, Wigan, has died aged 59.

Born in Cork, Ireland, in September 1938, Fr O'Hara was educated at St Patrick's Boys National School and St Ronan's Secondary School, Duamnonway, Cork.

He later studied for the priesthood at St Joseph's College, Upland, and was ordained at Waterford Cathedral on June 17, 1962.

Fascinated by original scripture, he undertook further studies in Jerusalem and Rome for the Licentiate of Sacred Scripture. Before this he had studied at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland for the Licentiate of Sacred Theology.

In 1966 he joined the staff at St Joseph's College teaching scripture and in September 1975 he moved to Ushaw College, Durham, to lecture in the subject.

He was popular with students from Upland

and Ushaw Colleges and was acknowledged for his teaching skills.

In October 1978 he returned to the Archdiocese of Liverpool to serve as assistant priest at St Agnes, Huyton, before moving in September 1981 to Christ the King, Liverpool.

The following year he was appointed as parish priest of St Robert Bellarmine, Bootle, and in September 1990 he took up his appointment as parish priest of St Cuthbert's, Pemberton, Wigan.

An avid hill-walker, he is remembered by friends as a great wit and entertaining company.

Cannon Peter Wilkinson from St Clare's, Sefton Park, who studied at St Joseph's College with Fr O'Hara, said: 'I met him when I was a student at Upland in 1960. He was a great friend and host. He was a very humorous man who always looked on the bright side of things even at dark moments in his life.'

Fr Patrick O'Brien from St Francis of Assisi parish, Garston,



added: 'I found him to be a very dependable friend who was great fun and good company. He loved travelling to foreign countries and studying new languages. He was a very sociable and entertaining person who will be sadly missed.'

A funeral Mass was celebrated at St Cuthbert's church, Wigan, on Friday March 27, and he was later buried at St James', Orrell.

Cuthbert's has played host to many such guests and, often, they go away having made a lasting impression.

During the long, dark months when Fr O'Hara was so desperately ill, when there were no priests available to stand in, two delightful characters were called from their retirement home at St Joseph's, Upholland to help out at St Cuthbert's. They were **Fr 'Dan' Cadogan** and **Canon 'Jimmy' Collins**. What a comfort and a pleasure it was to have these two wonderful men of God at that dreadful time. Fr Cadogan, warm and humorous and so Irish; Canon Collins, a priest of such wisdom and understanding.

The Polish Priest

Another visitor welcomed with open arms by the people of St Cuthbert's was **Fr Marian Juszczyk**, 'the Polish priest' as all who have difficulty pronouncing his name refer to him. It seems incredible to discover that Father Marian has been coming to St Cuthbert's for more than 25 years and for long periods it has seemed as though he was a permanent fixture in the parish clergy. The fact is, he has only ever been a 'supply' priest in the Archdiocese but every time he has been to St Cuthbert's he has been both industrious and interesting, a man with a fascinating background.



Fr Marian Juszczyk with workmen at his unfinished Parish Church of the Immaculate Conception, Psary, Poland - 1986

Fr Marian was born in Mlodzawy Duze in central Poland and ordained in the diocese of Kielce in 1958. At that time, it was a courageous step for a young man to become a Catholic priest in a Communist bloc country and Fr Juszczyk was no stranger to confrontations with Russian controlled bureaucracy. He made his first visit to England in 1974 and was sent to St Cuthbert's as temporary relief for Fr Marsh. He was to return to Pemberton many times but in 1979 he was recalled to Poland when he was appointed parish priest at Psary - some 100 miles from Warsaw. By 1983, having overcome numerous obstacles, he received permission from the Polish authorities to build a new parish church at Psary. He had to raise all of the money himself and the coffers were empty.

On one of his spells at St Cuthbert's, the late Miss Greta Brown of Edinburgh Drive, one of the many parishioners who befriended Fr Marian, offered to help him raise some of the money he needed. With the backing of Fr Naughton, Greta launched her 'Buy A Brick' fund which had remarkable success. Donations ranging from 50 pence to £100 were received with everyone receiving one of the holy pictures of Our Lady sent from Poland. When she had finished, Greta was able to give Fr Marian a cheque for £2000. This figure was increased after Lew Evans organised a collection among members of St Cuthbert's Club while Fr Naughton was supportive in the most practical manner.

The Psary Church of the Immaculate Conception was a beautiful building on its completion in 1988 and Fr Marian's benefactor Greta Brown was able to see it when she visited Poland prior to her untimely death.

Fr Juszczyk is currently chaplain of St Benedict's Convent School in Andover, Hants. He has never forgotten the kindness of people such as Greta Brown and through this publication he sends his greeting: *"The people of St Cuthbert's touched my heart with their generosity. God Bless You."*

In the Holy Year 'Jubilee 2000' the Parish Priest at St Cuthbert's is **Reverend Simon Paul Henry** who was born in Liverpool on August 27, 1964.

As a child his parents took him to live in South Africa until he was nine and he recalls what a shock it was when he returned to England to see the behaviour of young schoolchildren after the strict discipline he experienced in South African schools.

The family went back to the Wirral where they lived for the five years after their son was born and Simon was enrolled as a pupil at St Mary's College, Wallasey. He graduated to the Jesuit-run *Campion House* in West London and from 1985 he studied at Ushaw, Co Durham. He was accepted for Seminary training by Archbishop Worlock having first applied to the Shrewsbury diocese and read Theology at Durham University. He was appointed Deacon at English Martyrs', Litherland and that was where he was ordained as a priest by the Archbishop on October 12, 1991.



Fr Simon Henry.

After ordination he was one year at St Jude's, Worsley Mesnes and it was during that time he first met and made friends with Fr John O'Hara. He had another short term appointment at St Joseph's, Penketh followed by a year at London University's Catholic Heythrop College where he gained his MA degree in Pastoral Liturgy.

Fr Henry came back to the Wigan area for two-and-a-half years as full time schools chaplain, working at St Peter's High School, Orrell and St John Rigby VI Form College (in this, he was following in the footsteps of the new Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols) and during this period he did supply work at weekends in many parishes - including St Cuthbert's.

In the latter stages of Fr O'Hara's illness, Fr Henry was asked to look after St Cuthbert's while his old friend convalesced in the presbytery. Unfortunately, he was never able to come back to St Cuthbert's and one of Fr Henry's first tasks was to organise Fr O'Hara's funeral which was attended by three bishops and a hundred priests.

He took over full responsibilities as Parish Priest in 1998 and after suffering a long debilitating illness himself during his first months in office, Fr Simon made a full recovery to find a place in the hearts of the people of St Cuthbert's through his enthusiasm and his desire to serve the parish in every possible way.