

**A**  
**History of the Parish of**  
**St James-the-Great**  
**Haydock**



# A History of the Church of St James the Great Haydock

*Eric Lowe*

*Preface by Fr Paul Nener and  
Fr Rodney Middleton*

The last history of the Parish of St James the Great, Haydock, was written to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the Parish. We have just completed 129 years, and Eric Lowe has kindly offered to up date the history. It gives us pleasure to preface the work with these few remarks. The history seems as if it is the story of successive Vicars! This is inevitable since each Parish Priest leaves his own mark and style on any Parish. Sensible parishioners retain what is beneficial, and forget those things which fail to meet their needs, or become outdated. Despite this, what we have here is actually a history of a Parish and its people, in particular the faithful worshippers over 129 years. It is the story of an Anglican parish firmly rooted in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England - a tradition that goes back to quite early days in the 'Oxford Movement'. It was in this movement and its aftermath that St James' was a pioneer in the North of England. The Church itself bears witness to this tradition, not only because of the external signs, important as they are, but also, more significantly, because of the immediate sense of prayer, devotion and holiness that inspires even the most casual visitor to our Parish church. There are few sacred building which so wonderfully enfold one with a sense of the presence of God. This cannot be told in history, nor can it adequately be described in words. It is the reality which has to be sensed and experienced by the worshipper, and the individual at private prayer. It comes about we believe, because generations of worshippers have offered their prayer together, because the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, because of the careful attention to beauty and order, because of the images and ornaments which point us to heaven, and because the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar is offered regularly, day by day and week by week, for the living and the dead, who together make up the Body of Christ in this place. A church building ought to point to the continuity between heaven and earth, and behind these following stories, many of which seem quite ordinary and to some people quite uninteresting, there lies this reality. Any parish history will naturally be tales of doings of ordinary people, but these people form a living community. They are the local manifestations of the Church Catholic - The Body of Christ. They are His agents in the world. Without such ordinary, holy folk in the churches and chapels

of the world, the eternal message of God's love would eventually wither away and be lost. All people need God, and those who read this book cannot be exceptional. In this world whilst individualism, material gain and a constant search for entertainment seem to dominate our society, it is salutary to look at a place like St James' where the important things are community, generosity and the quiet beauty of holiness. This is how God is allowed to shine through and make his presence felt. We should like to thank Eric Lowe for all the time, care and devotion which he has applied to the preparation of this book. We hope the history of an ordinary parish church, its people and its life, will give readers some sense of the joys and sorrows of the Christian pilgrimage lived over several generations - generations who, under the inspiration of many devoted leaders, began to glimpse something of the glorious vision of the eternal God, revealed to us in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Rodney Middleton*  
*Vicar 1995 - present*

*Paul Nener*  
*Vicar 1983 - 1995*

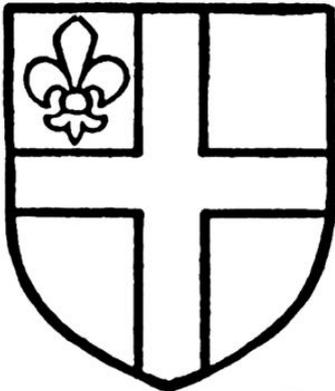
Author's Footnote:

The author wishes to apologise for any omissions and for not mentioning many individual people - the latter a deliberate policy. However, the work of all who help in the parish is gratefully acknowledged, including the clergy, the church council and other officials, the organisations, the choir and the servers, the sacristans and cleaners, the Sunday school teachers and those who work so hard in the churchyard. For us who live away from Haydock, it is always a joy, an inspiration and a privilege to visit St James' and to return home refreshed by its atmosphere of peace, prayer and holiness. Remember too, the souls of all the faithful departed who worshipped at St James' and in their time helped make our beloved parish church so very beautiful. Our thanks to them also. So begins a new phase of the history of a parish church, both ordinary and extraordinary. The history will continue as God blesses the parish of St James the Great, Haydock. And to the same God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be all praise, majesty, honour and power for ever and ever. Amen.

*Eric Lowe*

## Early History of the area and its church

In AD 1168, Orm, the first recorded lord of the manor of Haydock, owed money to the King, Henry II. Until this money was paid, the King 'eclipsed' part of Orm's lands in Haydock, and this event is perpetuated by the name Clipsley Lane today. Some 700 years later, plans were made to build a church in this vicinity, the approximate centre of Haydock, to serve the growing needs of the district's Anglicans. The church was never built on that site - the reason why will be revealed in this brief history. Haydock is an ancient place. A stone spindle wheel found here suggests human occupation during the later Stone Age, whilst some thousand years later, the Romans built a road north from Warrington, which passed through the eastern parts of the district. After the Norman conquest, the Haydock family as lords of the manor, grew in importance and in 1330, Sir Gilbert de Haydock



**HAYDOCK of Haydock.** *Argent a cross with a fleur-de-lis sable in the first quarter.*

### ***Haydock family coat of arms***

house was demolished to make way for the East Lancashire Road. The holy water stoup from this oratory bearing the arms of the Haydock family, is preserved at Lyme Hall in Cheshire. Lyme Hall is the seat of the Legh family who acquired the Haydock estates when the last of the main Haydock line, Joanna, married Sir Peter Legh in 1414. After this, the Haydock chantry in Winwick church gradually became wrongly known as the Legh chantry. The Legh family continued to own

founded a chantry in the Winwick church 'for a fit and honest chaplain who was to pray for the founder by name in every Mass'. Sir Gilbert and another local knight also rebuilt the nave and tower of Winwick church adding the Haydock coat of arms high on the battlements. He was also granted permission by Edward II to make a park at Haydock, a now famous racecourse.

In 1387, a later Sir Gilbert asked the Bishop of Lichfield to licence the oratory in his manor house for divine worship. Haydock was at that time still in the diocese of Lichfield, that of Chester not having been created until 1541. This oratory was almost certainly the first place of Christian worship in Haydock, but sadly was destroyed when the manor

lands at Haydock, and in 1795 they built Haydock lodge in the park made by Sir Gilbert de Haydock in 1344.

Several branches of the family lived here including the Claughtons, who provided the Anglican church with two bishops in the nineteenth century. Thomas Legh Claughton was born at Haydock Lodge in 1808, made Bishop of Rochester in 1867 and subsequently first bishop of St Albans in 1877. His brother Piers Calverley Claughton was born at Haydock Lodge in 1814, and later as rector of Elton, claimed among others to have introduced the service of Harvest Festival to England. In 1859, he was made Bishop of St Helena, and subsequently, Bishop of Colombo. Earlier, Haydock was the birthplace of a Roman Catholic martyr, Edmund Arrowsmith, born at Piele Hall in 1585. After training and ordination abroad, Fr Arrowsmith returned to practice a clandestine ministry in south Lancashire, but was caught, and later hanged, drawn and quartered at Lancaster in 1628. His hand is preserved in the Roman Catholic church of St Oswald and St Edmund Arrowsmith

in Ashton in Makerfield. Fr Arrowsmith was beatified in 1929 and acclaimed a saint in 1970. The site of Piele Hall, his birthplace, is now covered by a row of shops near the west end of Sherlock Avenue in Haydock.



***Bishop Claughton of St Alban,  
born at Haydock Lodge***

Haydock grew slowly throughout the centuries, the inhabitants continuing to worship at their ancient parish church at Winwick, then later at churches built nearer such as Downall Green and Ashton, when Haydock became part of those parishes. Coal mining began to increase during the early 19th century and consequently, the population of Haydock rose dramatically from 734 in 1801 to 1994 in 1851. In 1830, when the population had reached 934, some of the inhabitants held a

public meeting to discuss the provision of a new school which would replace the old cottage school which had functioned from about 1760 on the site of the present vicarage. The Haydock National School was opened in 1837, the main room being

used on Sundays for church services conducted by clergy from Ashton. However, by 1861, the population of Haydock had risen to 3615, making the schoolroom quite inadequate for church services. The building of a parish church was discussed and it was decided to plan a large parish church on land in Clipsley Lane opposite the now demolished old vicarage, and roughly at the centre of Haydock. However, to solve the immediate problem, it was decided as an interim measure, to build a chapel of ease attached to the National School, which would later become a mission chapel to the new parish church.

The parish was formed from parts of the two Ashton parishes of Holy Trinity and St Thomas, the former's rector being appointed patron of the new parish. Work soon began on the new chapel and it was dedicated in the name of St Alban when the foundation stone was laid. This chapel, our present Lady Chapel, was so built that at the West end, large doors could be opened into the schoolroom to provide extra nave seating. The simple gothic chapel was built by George Harris of St Helens to designs by W. and J. Hay of Liverpool at a total cost of £1350. Built mainly of brick with stone dressings, the chapel consist of a 40 ft by 20 ft nave, and a 16 ft square chancel rising by six steps to the altar. A south west porch and a north east vestry completed the building, which though simple in design, was richly furnished by gifts from parishioners and friends, and as a contemporary account stated 'fully fitted up for Catholic worship'. Many of these furnishings are still in use, including the pulpit and the font. However, early in 1866 when the petition for consecration of the new chapel-of-ease was being prepared, it was discovered that no such consecration could take place without converting the chapel into the parish church of Haydock. Eventually the congregation agreed to this change, but more money was needed since a burial ground had to be provided for the new parish church. Finally, on Tuesday, December 11th, 1866, the new parish church of St James the Great and its burial ground were consecrated by Bishop Jacobson of Chester in the presence of many local clergy and Alan Greenwell and Alexander McLeay, respectively vicar and assistant curate of the new parish.

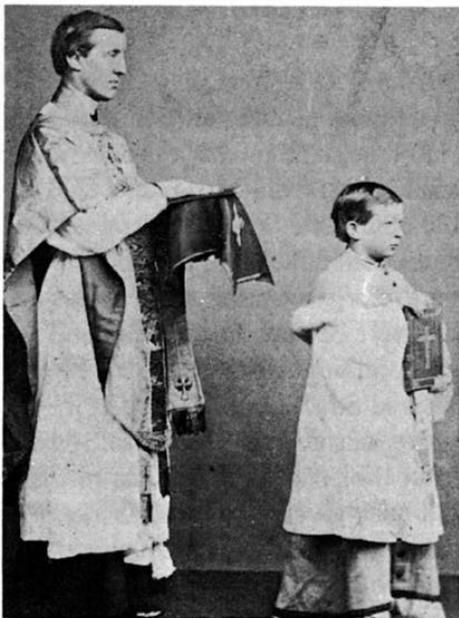
## **Fame and Infamy**

### **Fr Alan Greenwell**

### **1866-1869**

By the middle of the 19th century, the Oxford Movement begun earlier in the century by Newman, Pusey and Keble among others, was having considerable influence in re-establishing Catholic teaching and practices in the Church of England, despite hostile and sometimes violent opposition from some clergy,

laymen and Queen Victoria herself Nevertheless, it is surprising and fortunate that the first vicar of Haydock, Fr Alan Greenwell decided to immediately introduce full catholic teaching and practices at St James', a brave action indeed in an area which had long been, and still is, predominantly Protestant in tradition. One contributory factor might have been the widespread belief that attractive and colourful services encouraged working people to escape from the poverty and dreary environment to attend them and learn the faith by eye and ear. Fr Greenwell came from an old Durham family, his brother Nicholas was also a priest and his sister a well known poetess and essayist. He had been first rector of Golbome, then chaplain of Durham goal before coming to Haydock, where, despite poor health, he worked hard to establish the high church tradition at St James'. Whilst at Haydock he lived at 366 Church Road, now demolished.



***Fr Alan Greenwell, first vicar of Haydock,  
with a server, Edmund Eddleston. circa  
1867***

The first Christmas at the new parish church was celebrated with great ceremony, and at the first Eucharist of Christmas, the joyful hymns, blaze of light, the barmers, the altar lights, the rich vestments of the altar and the cloth of gold and white stole gave a Catholic tone to the service. With a surpliced choir of 28 and an already loyal congregation, Fr Greenwell was able to 'expound the Church's teaching in the fullness of her doctrine and splendour of her ritual without flinching'. The newspaper report describing these events also noted 'strong attempts at injury on the part of non-church people', an ominous sign. In fact, not a month alter the consecration of St James', the Haydock Anti-Ritualist Society was formed, principally to oppose and destroy the work of the vicar of Haydock. The minority group, most not even members of the established church, held rival meetings in a local hall and sponsored many lectures by Protestant rabble rousers against Fr Greenwell and his congregation. They tried unsuccessfully to appoint a non church goer as people's warden, his nomination failing because he had not taken communion during the previous twelve months. Like most vindictive sects, the

Society caused some distress in the parish but eventually faded away allowing Fr Greenwell to continue his admirable work.

The 1867 Christmas morning service continued the tradition now established at St James'. 'All being ready, the banner bearer returned in violet cassock, cotta and tippet, alter him came the two servers in violet cassocks, cottas and fur tippets, followed by the celebrant in cassock, alb, amice, girdle, maniple, stole and chasuble - being the proper eucharistic vestments as ordered by the church. This service was indeed like Christmas and the faithful had come in large numbers to meet their New King. Missa Cantata was then sung amidst a blaze of light'. Complete Mass vestments seem to have been presented to the church at its consecration, but were not used generally until early in 1867.



***The Harvest Festival Procession to St James', 1868, culminating in the pig's head incident.***

For the 1868 harvest festival, Fr Greenwell and his parishioners planned an elaborate two day celebration beginning with a procession of the harvest offerings from Mr Slater's field opposite the church on Saturday, August 29th. The large procession included a surpliced choir, servers, clergy wearing white stoles and birettas, members of the congregation and school children, many of them carrying baskets of bread, fruit, eggs, flowers and vegetables. Banner bearers carried banners of St James the Great, the Holy Spirit, St Cuthbert, the Blessed Sacrament, and the Holy Catholic Church. The new white silk vestments were bom on a crimson velvet cushion covered with Brussels lace, and a figure of the patron saint was also carried in the procession. After the procession, the harvest gifts were offered at the altar during Evensong, including a pig's head which had been given by a local farmer. This item gave the anti - ritualists a perfect opportunity to pour

ridicule on Fr Greenwell and his parish church. Up to now, controversy at St James' had been purely local, but with the inclusion of the pig's head in the procession, there were repercussions of national importance with an outburst of mainly critical discussion in both local and national newspapers. The Times said 'There has lately been a grand ritualistic revival at Haydock by way of Harvest Festival, which we defy Rhineland to surpass', and in another, 'The Haydock festival has attracted as much notice as any event of the year with the exception of the Abergele Railway accident'.

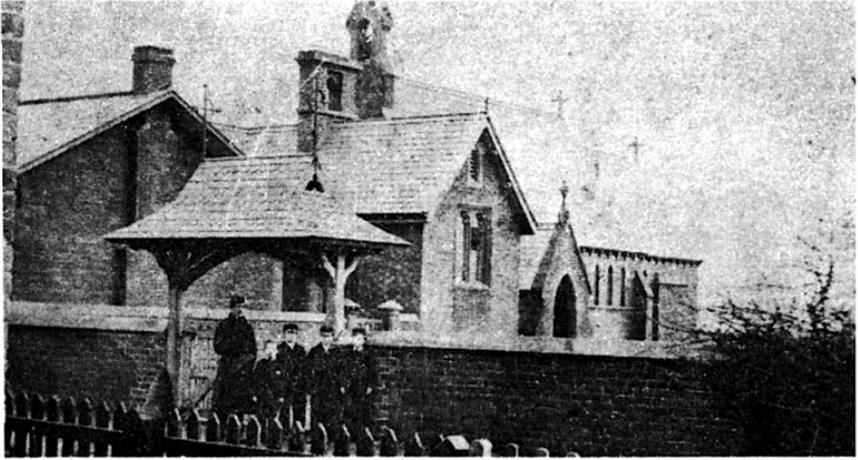
A letter to the local 'Guardian' said, 'the recent harvest thanksgiving services held at Haydock seem to have made quite a sensation amongst every sect and denomination of the church in England. Nor is this a thing to be wondered at all; for I suppose such a service England has never witnessed, at any rate in an Episcopal church. Ritualism, one would think, reached its highest point at the Haydock services'. National newspapers also gave train times to Haydock so that visitors could witness the exotic nature of the services at St James'.

Later the satirical magazine 'Punch', which was violently opposed to Anglo - Catholic practices, published a full page cartoon with the caption 'Pig Headed ritualism', showing a vested priest offering a pig's head at the altar amidst clouds of incense. National interest grew to such a level that Madame Tussaud of waxwork fame had a letter sent to Haydock asking the price of the pig's head, the letter concluding, 'It will be a valuable addition to her collection, as it has attracted so much attention, and if cured, she is prepared to give a good price for it'. It was not sold to Madame Tussaud, but like the other offerings, was sold for charity.

As Fr Greenwell and his intelligent sacristan pointed out in letters to the press, the pig's head, which caused the furore, had been given quite innocently as a thank-offering by the farmer, and although carried in the procession, was not offered on the altar, but merely put on a side table in the church with the other offerings. The Festival continued the next day, Sunday, ending with a Solemn Te Deum when, 'the altar stood out grandly, a blaze of light with its 22 candles and massive cross well raised on a crimson and gold stand. Many banners and painted devices adorned the walls and the church was very fragrant with incense which had been freely used'.

The 1868 harvest festival was a great success but the notoriety achieved by the pig's head incident caused some discomfort for Fr Greenwell and his congregation. It is interesting that over a hundred years later, Professor Owen Chadwick in his 1972 book on the Victorian church, refers to the pig's head incident when, in discussing ritualism, he says, 'opposition was fanned by the occasional folly, such as the

inexperienced enthusiast was able to perpetrate, as when the vicar of Haydock in Lancashire carried a pig's head in procession at the harvest festival'.



***The Original church and school. The priest under the lych gate is probably Fr Greenwell. circa 1869***

Fr Greenwell's interest in church affairs was not confined to his tireless work in Haydock, for as well as being chaplain to the Order of the Holy Redeemer, he was treasurer of the Plainsong Union, which held its first festival at Haydock in 1868. Perhaps the rather frail vicar became exhausted after the many lively events at St James' whilst he fervently continued his work amongst the Haydock poor, receiving little monetary reward since his stipend was but £125 per annum.

He resigned the living early in 1869. a correspondent said that he 'must be warmly congratulated on the success that has attended his efforts to introduce a Catholic ritual into part of the diocese where all is comparatively a barren waste as regards the worship of God in the beauty of holiness. The preparatory Catholic character of his teaching is bearing fruit and he has now around him a warm hearted band of church people busily engaged as missionaries in the cause of the great revival of doctrine and practice'. When his resignation became known, another writer said that this zealous and kind- hearted pastor had established a tradition at the parish church and that it 'would certainly seem desirable after all the success which has attended his ministrations, that there should be no violent change at St James'.

In less than three years, Fr Greenwell and his loyal congregation established the Catholic tradition at St James', helped by visits from sympathetic clergy such as Dr Gray, bishop of Capetown, several local clergy including Fr Henry Sherlock, who

was to be the next vicar of Haydock, and many well known anglo-catholic clergy from all over Britain. St James' was one of the first anglo-catholic parishes in the north, and almost certainly the first to reintroduce Mass vestments and the use of incense in the area. It is interesting that vestments were made and sold in Haydock at this time, and the art has been until recently carried on by the sacristan at St James', Mabel Mather.

After leaving Haydock in 1869, Fr Greenwell lived mostly in Clifton, Bristol. His name last appeared in the 1914 Crockford's Clerical directory, suggesting that he died in that year or shortly afterwards. His achievements at St James' in such a short time were remarkable, and we owe him a great deal.

## **Consolidation of the Faith**

### **Fr Henry Sherlock**

### **1869-1884**

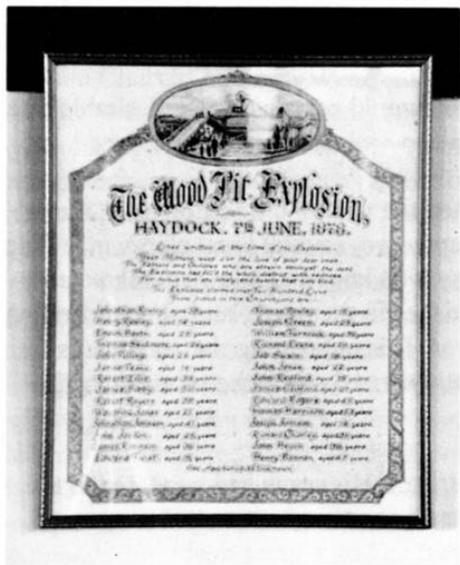
After the brief but tumultuous beginning of the new parish of Haydock, one might have expected the excitement to subside, and in fact, hostile opposition did die down, but the teaching and practices continued as fervently as before under the new vicar, Fr Henry Sherlock. Fr Sherlock was the son of the patron of the living, and had been curate at Buglawton in Cheshire, and at nearby Ashton, before coming as the second vicar of Haydock in 1869, where his main task was to consolidate the faith as taught at St James' by Fr. Greenwell. Already, the new church was too small for the growing population of Haydock, and of course, because of the events described earlier, it was situated at one end of the straggling township. A contemporary writer said that 'it is hoped ere long something will be done, either to build a mission chapel for the Haydockers, or to enlarge their church. Here is a field ripe for harvest if ever there was one, as they are all good hearted people, but not over blessed with this world's goods'.

These comments were made during the 1869 harvest festival celebrations when the 'ritual observed in the four services was of the 'high order', but it was divested of the extraordinary accessories for which this church obtained great notoriety last year'. The famous Fr Stanton of St Alban's, Holborn celebrated and preached during the festival, and the presence of this noted Anglo-Catholic priest confirms that there had been no lowering of the standards at St James' under the new vicar. Fr Stanton officiated at St James' several times during Fr Sherlock's vicariate, and his face is portrayed in the St Alban window above the Lady altar. Because of his teachings, Fr Stanton was inhibited from preaching in several British dioceses, and it is ironic

that one of them, Rochester, had as its bishop, Thomas Legh Claughton, born at Haydock Lodge in 1808. The rector of Ashton, the Rev W.J.Melville preaching at the 1873 harvest festival, spoke of the 'immense benefit to religion as were such hearty soul stirring catholic worship and services as those which he had been privileged to join in that day'.

Reporting these services, a local correspondent wrote, 'true catholic doctrine as proclaimed by her clergy, true catholic worship offered up to God at her altar and catholic ritual maintained within her holy walls'. The tradition at St James' was truly consolidated. One practical result was that the alms at the festival exceeded £60. Fr Stanton of St Alban's, Holborn, preached and celebrated again at the 1876 Harvest festival, when the service finished with a solemn Te Deum. Despite its poverty, the parish was obviously thriving, and the enthusiasm and generosity of both clergy and parishioners ensured the success of several new projects, including the publication of a parish magazine which began in 1875. An ambitious building programme included the construction of St Alban's mission chapel in 1877 at the other end of the parish on the site now occupied by St Mark's church. This little chapel, often known as the 'colliers chapel', had an enthusiastic congregation, served by the clergy from St James', with services similar to those at the mother church of St James'. Nothing now remains of St Alban's mission chapel as it was

demolished to make space for the new church, but St Alban's bell is supposedly still in use in St Mark's belfry. The now demolished old vicarage in Clipsley Lane was built in 1878 at a cost of £1,742. 9s.7p on land opposite the site on which it was still hoped to build a large central parish church for Haydock at a later date. Obviously, the distance from the new vicarage to the parish church and its chapel was a problem, but for Fr Sherlock, who lived at Newton, it was quite a relief The building programme continued with the construction of a new and separate school for infants in 1879, and finally, the curate's house, (Church Cottage) was built in 1880 at a cost of £258. This was a remarkable achievement in a poor parish where the



*The illuminated list in the church with the names of Woodpit disaster victims buried in the churchyard*

majority of wage earners worked in the Haydock coal mines.

Many households became even more poor when they lost relatives in the pit disasters of the period. An explosion at Queen pit on December 30th, 1868 killed 26 men and boys, and at the same pit, 57 lives were lost after a disaster on 21st June, 1869. However, the worst disaster occurred on June 7th, 1878 at Wood pit when more than 200 men and boys died after an explosion. Memorial services were held at churches throughout the area, including St James', when on Whitsunday, a very distressed Fr Sherlock, who had spent the previous day at the scene of the disaster and visiting bereaved families, preached an emotional sermon on the text, 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you'. All the collections at the memorial services were given to the dependants of the disaster victims. At least 29 (or possibly 30) of the victims were buried at St James' on various days in June and July, 1878. This disaster brought great distress and hardship to the parish, yet the people of Haydock still helped to complete the expensive developments described earlier.



***The original Parish Church, now the Lady Chapel, circa 1870***

During his fifteen years at St James', Fr Sherlock consolidated, developed, and continued the traditional worship in his parish church. This was not easy, because although local hostility had decreased, there was increasing national opposition in the form of prosecutions of Anglo-Catholic clergy by the wealthy Protestant Church Association, resulting in expensive court cases and the occasional

imprisonment of clergy. His work at Haydock was also not made easier by the formation of the Liverpool Diocese from that of Chester in 1880, with its first bishop, J .C.Ryle, an extreme evangelical who disliked all Anglo - Catholic practices. However, despite the ambitious building programme at Haydock, no decision had yet been implemented to enlarge the existing church, or to build the projected large central parish church, when Fr Sherlock left Haydock in 1884 to become vicar of Coldham in Cambridgeshire. In 1897, he was appointed rector of Bildeston, Suffolk, where he stayed until his retirement in 1914. He died in 1918.

## **Plans to Enlarge the Church**

### **Fr A.H. Kearney**

### **1884-1888**

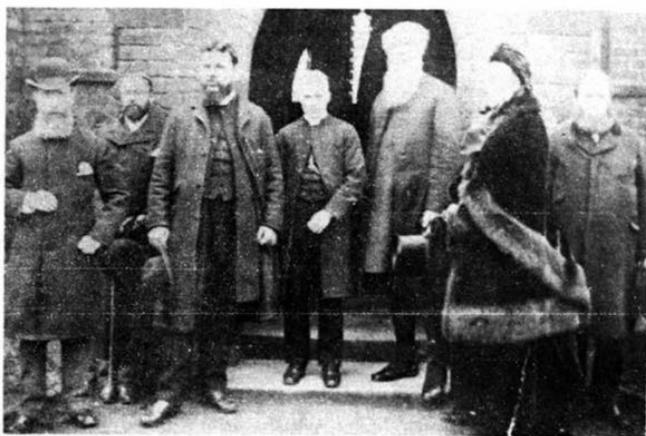
A thriving congregation, but a church building totally inadequate for the parish awaited the new vicar, Fr A.H.Kearney, who came to Haydock from Coldham presumably on exchange with Fr Sherlock. As the new vicar of an Anglo-Catholic parish, he faced opposition from the Church Association already mentioned, and from his diocesan, Bishop Ryle, who had no sympathy for parishes which did not conform to his extreme evangelical persuasions. The modifications in the catholic tradition at St James' beginning at this time, would seem to stem from these influences. However, despite these restrictions, Fr Kearney and his curate, Fr Tebbs, tried to alleviate the crowded conditions in both church and school, caused by an ever-increasing population - it had reached 6000 by 1888.

The church was repaired, cleaned and decorated in 1886, and later, the schools were enlarged. Nevertheless, the problem of church extension remained and plans were discussed at length on the form to be taken, although the idea of a completely new church in Clipsley Lane seems to have become more remote despite the fact that the vicarage had been built there. The first plan envisaged lengthening the nave of the existing church, an impractical idea since the west end already continued into the school, and any extension eastwards would involve the demolition of the existing chancel and sanctuary.

A second plan involved the construction of a completely new church on the existing site, which meant the total demolition of the church built in 1866. This new church, designed by the architect George Smith of Chester, consisted of a brick and stone building with a tower capped by a spire, and would accommodate 480 people. Sadly, George Smith died shortly after completing the plans, but his design was evidently highly thought of, since it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887. In that year, it was announced that the architects Douglas and Fordham of Chester would carry out George Smith's design.

However, the parishioners loved their little church which had earlier been the centre of so much interest and controversy, and they wished it to be preserved by incorporation into any new building. Therefore, a third set of plans was made by Douglas and Fordham, consisting of an oak framed building filled with brick and plaster which would be added to the existing church, the latter forming a north aisle or chapel to the new building. The spacious new design was probably influenced by John Douglas' earlier plaster and timber work in Chester and in several Cheshire churches.

There was some opposition to the new plans, particularly from Bishop Ryle, who desperately wanted the original church to be demolished, possibly because of his abhorrence of side chapels, but more likely due to the famous Anglo-Catholic tradition of the little church, which was anathema to him. Some years later, when the new church was almost completed, Bishop Ryle wrote, 'I heartily wish you



*A group in front of the old church porch, circa 1885. L to R, Mr Turnbull, Mr Arthur Evans, Mr Yebbs (assistant curate), Fr Kearney (vicar), Bishop Ryle, and Mr and Mrs Brooks.*

could see your way to pull down the old church altogether. Is it quite too late?'. Fortunately for us, the parishioners, backed by their clergy, remained adamant, thus thwarting the bishop's hearty wish, and the beautiful Lady Chapel of today owes its survival to their determination.

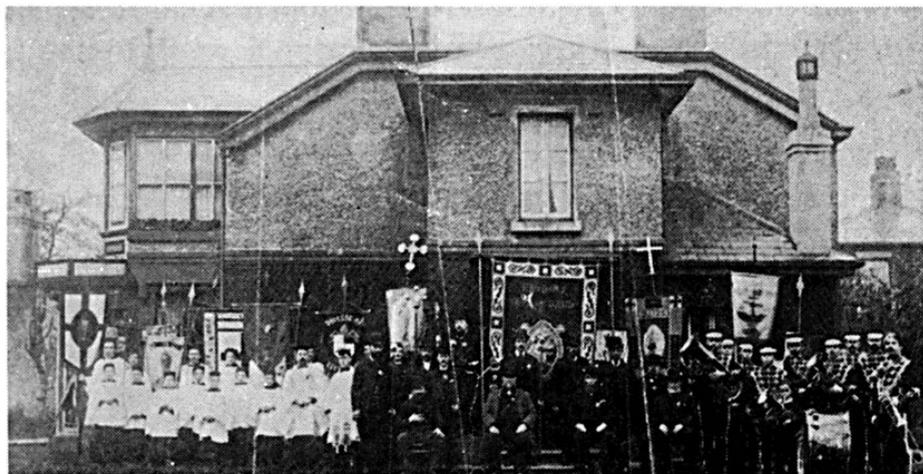
It is still loved by the parishioners to this day.

The new plans were still being discussed when Fr Kearney left Haydock in 1888 to become vicar of Ash in Martock, Somerset. Many years later in 1928, he wrote from retirement to the vicar of Haydock, Fr Stanton, enclosing a donation for the restoration fund of the church which was not even built when he was vicar of Haydock. Fr Kearney died in 1935.

## **The New Church Built Fr A.M.Lewis 1888-1891**

In 1889, the church council finally approved the extension plans for St James', and in the same year, Fr A.M. Lewis, who had been vicar of Ash, was inducted to the Haydock benefice. The foundation stone of the new church was laid on October 5th, 1889, by Mrs Legh of Lyme, Cheshire, before a large crowd of parishioners, local clergy and local dignitaries. The music was provided by the Haydock brass band and speeches were made by Bishop Ryle of Liverpool and Mr T.W. Legh, the local member of parliament. Bishop Ryle mentioned that when he had visited St James' some nine years earlier, he had observed that Haydock had the worst church provision in the diocese except for Skelmersdale. The new church would solve the problem, providing accommodation for some 400 people. The site for the new church and a further £2,000 were given by the Legh family, and the building was begun immediately to the design of Douglas and Fordham of Chester.

However, it was a long time under construction and the delay in completion evoked much criticism of the vicar and his church officers in local newspapers. The churchwardens replied that 'Although we deplore the circumstances, we are powerless in the matter', and Fr Lewis said that there had been difficulties with the conveyance of land, but that it would be opened on St James' day, 1891. On the 25th July, 1891, the church was duly opened, but not consecrated, by the suffragan bishop of the diocese, Bishop Royston. The unusual design and combination of materials of the new church caused much comment, the design supposedly having been chosen to guard against possible future mining subsidence. The most striking external feature was the 90 feet high octagonal spire which soon became a landmark in Haydock.



***Choir, clergymen and Haydock band in front of the 'Homestead', October, 1889, before the foundation stone of the new church was laid. The clergymen are Mr Foulkes (assistant curate), and Fr Lewis (vicar).***

Inside the church, the black and white appearance coupled with the lofty and spacious design, and the well raised altar was simple and dignified, and obviously designed for catholic worship. At last, the parishioners had an adequate parish church, although there was still a debt on it, and because of this the church was still unconsecrated. Despite the joy of having a new church joined to the much loved old church, relations between the vicar and some sections of the congregation became very strained, and the criticism of him became a regular feature in the local press. One letter claimed that he was not in Haydock from one month to another, and that choir practices and other parish functions had ceased completely. The local press, including the St Helens Lantern, referred to these and other stories as gossip, but carefully recorded every detail. When Fr Lewis resigned because of ill-health in November, 1891, a note in the 'Lantern' said that 'he had not given the satisfaction to the parishioners and there was no harmony between him and the leaders of the church'. After working in Somerset and London, Fr Lewis became curate at Morwenstow on the north Cornish coast, where he was a popular assistant to the vicar. Until a new vicar of Haydock was appointed, the Rev J.C. Cater, curate at Holy Trinity, Downall Green, helped at St James' and became very popular with the congregation.

In December, 1891, Fr Cater was nominated for the Haydock incumbency by the patron of the living, Rector Melville of Holy Trinity, to whose daughter, Fr Cater

was engaged to be married. Unfortunately, the Archbishop of York refused to admit the nomination on the grounds that Fr Cater was too young, and because his ordination had taken place in America. Naturally, the congregation at St James' were unhappy with this decision, and appealed without success to the Archbishop, whilst the curate, Fr Bartram, made a heated speech on the subject for which he was promptly suspended. The Archbishop remained adamant, and at a later date, the congregation accepted his decision and the church vestiy sent an apology to him. Fr Cater went to Glencarse, Fifeshire, in May, 1892, and was married to Gertrude Mary Melville at Downall Green in October of the same year. At All Saints, Glencarse, he succeeded F r C.E. Bowden, who had been appointed the new vicar of Haydock.

## **Consecration of the New Church**

### **Fr C.E.Bowden**

### **1892-1895**

In 1892, the situation at St James' was not a happy one, for there was still a debt on the unconsecrated new church, congregations had dwindled due to the trouble with the former vicar, whilst there was also hostility because of the non-appointment of Fr Cater. The situation was further inflamed when Protestant agitation again broke out in 1892 when the church flag was flown at half mast on Good Friday. The agitators described this commemoration of Christ's death as ritualistic, although they had no objection to its use on the deaths of royal persons.

Despite the problems facing the new vicar, Fr C.E.Bowden, and his congregation, the long awaited consecration of the new church took place in June, 1892, conducted by Bishop Ryle. Contemporary accounts of the consecration point out its delay was due to legal difficulties and the character of the pastorate, and also describe the dimensions and furnishings of the church, including the elaborate font cover from Oberammergau, and the huge dorsal, now removed, which hung behind the high altar, and was eventually, according to the plans, to be replaced by a carved rearedos.



*Baptism of Christ above the font, carved in Oberammergau*



*The new organ situated over the West door*



*The original dedication plaque for the new organ*

The organ from the old church was given to St Alban's mission chapel, and was replaced in the new church by an organ bought from Nantwich parish church in Cheshire. The organ was built by Grey of London at a cost of £1,000 and was installed at Nantwich in 1809. Thus when this organ was replaced by St James' in 1986, it had provided church music for more than 170 years. The total cost of the new church was £3,500. Unfortunately, Fr Bowden's wife was in poor health, and to find a more suitable climate, he exchanged

livings with the incumbent of Ellough, Suffolk, Fr F.Ireland.

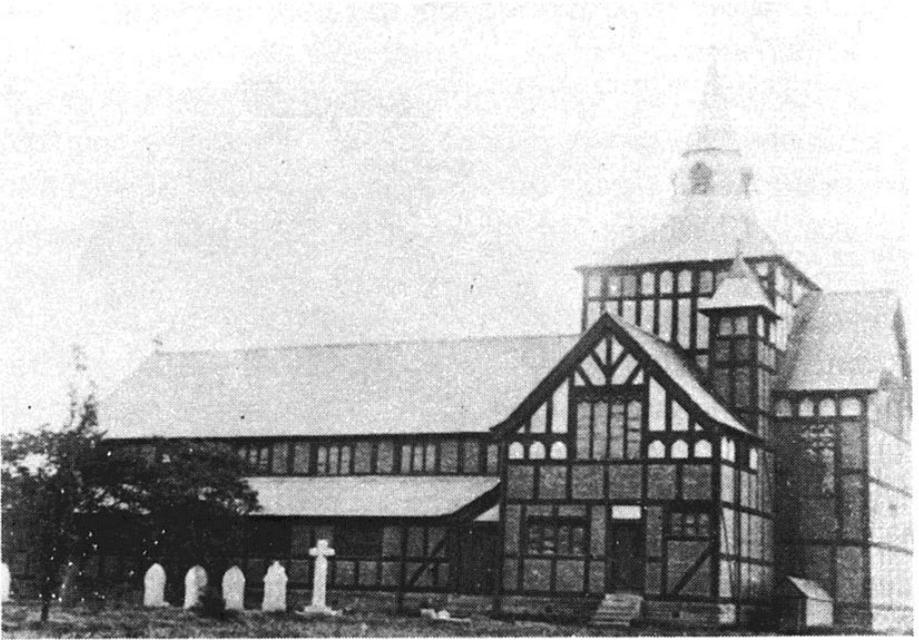
## **Stormy Times Ahead Fr Francis Ireland 1896-1925**

The congregation was still faced with removing the debt from the new church when Fr Francis Ireland was inducted to the living on February 1st, 1896. He lost a great supporter of St James' when the sad news came in August 1896 of the death of Arthur Evans in Oberammergau. Arthur Evans was a member of the local mine owning family and a great patron of the arts, and had been a generous benefactor and church official at St James' since its consecration in 1866. He first saw the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1890, and was so impressed that he gave a series of lectures on the play, his audiences including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Prince Christian, son-in-law of Queen Victoria, and many other dignitaries. He had gone to Oberammergau to recover after an illness, but died from an accidentally self-inflicted shot wound there on August 7th, 1896. He was greatly liked and respected in Oberammergau, and reports said that almost the whole village population attended his funeral, a great tribute as he was not of their faith.



*Fr Ireland, vicar of Haydock, 1896-1925*

Arthur Evans almost certainly brought the four carved angels, which stand on brackets in the chancel, from Oberammergau. During his lifetime, he was a fervent supporter of St James' and its clergy, acting as sacristan and churchwarden at various times. He married Mary Sherlock, the daughter of the rector of Holy Trinity, Downall Green, in 1872, and lived at the Homestead near St James'. The brass cross, once on the high altar, but now on the organ case, is a memorial to him, and a likeness of his face is perpetuated in the Lady Chapel St David window.



***The new Church, circa 1900***

His support would have been a great help to Fr Ireland when, in October, 1896, the first signs of yet another protestant agitation began in the parish. After a meeting in the National Schools, events were reported as ending satisfactorily. However, this was a mistaken belief, for in 1897, there began a carefully planned and influentially sponsored malicious campaign to take control of St James' for protestant extremists in the parish, led by John Robinson, an employee of Messrs Richard Evans and Company. It was an insidious campaign in that its sole purpose was to destroy the high church tradition at St James' without any consideration for the distress which might be caused to the clergy and people. The agitators did not consider building their own church and leaving St James' in peace until all their subterfuges had failed.

The campaign began with an attempt to infiltrate the parish vestry by appointing their supporters as church officials. Mr Joseph Hilton, a self-confessed Orangeman and close supporter of John Robinson, was eventually made a churchwarden, though only after two attempts had been made to obtain a seconder for the nomination. Others present refused to be nominated because of fears of recrimination, a point which will be explained later. On being appointed church warden, Mr Hilton immediately launched the usual protestant diatribe against the

high church practices at St James', and told Fr Ireland 'to take up his bed and walk', an extreme discourtesy when he had just been elected to serve the church and its vicar.

As a member of the National Protestant League, Joseph Hilton caused frequent disturbances during church services, and was summoned to the Newton court sessions in 1898 for brawling in church. The powerful influence of the agitators was shown when the case was dismissed for what contemporary newspapers described as a nonsensical argument. The virulent personal attack on Fr Ireland began in 1897, when John Robinson reported twelve points to Bishop Ryle, concerning St James' and its vicar. These included the wearing of vestments and the use of candles, crosses, sanctus bells and other adjuncts to worship. The bishop was of course a great friend of the protestants, and showed no tolerance to Anglo Catholic parishes in his diocese. In a later pastoral letter, he told his clergy, 'not to meddle with such things as incense, lighted candles, sacrificial vestments, prayers for the dead, reservation of the sacrament and the use of the word Mass'.

Despite his personal bias, the bishop merely suggested to Fr Ireland that he refrain from wearing the chasuble, and mixing the elements before consecration, which inferred that most of John Robinson's twelve points were the usual trivialities used by protestant extremists to create trouble. Fr Ireland did not reply to Bishop Ryle until 1898, when the agitators held a meeting in the churchyard, to where they had retired after being locked out of church by Fr Ireland, who obviously feared yet another protestant brawl. Joseph Hilton delivered one of his usual harangues, this time against the crucifix above the pulpit, shouting, 'the cross is a pagan emblem, a symbol of Satan's fury and hatred to the truth of the Saviour - an honest man if he had any modesty would be shocked by the shameful figure hanging from the pulpit with a small strip round its loins'.

Mr Hilton's curious and self righteous pronouncements are difficult to reconcile with his appalling behaviour in church. The unplanned open air meeting reaffirmed the protests concerning ceremonies at St James' to Bishop Ryle, and he then threatened to cancel the curate's license unless the use of the chasuble was stopped. To protect the curate, Fr Gamer, and 'for the sake of peace and restoration of harmony in the parish', Fr Ireland replied that he would cease wearing the chasuble.

Of course the agitators had no intention of allowing peace to prevail in the parish, for after their apparent victory over the use of the chasuble, they wished to destroy completely the tradition at St James' and drive away its vicar. They continued to cause demonstrations and brawls in the church similar to those made earlier by

Joseph Hilton, and as a result, Fr Ireland reversed his decision and continued to wear the chasuble and to use such practices as were traditional to St James'. The curate, Fr Gamer, left Haydock in 1899, and unfortunately for the parish which needed help and support, there was no further assistant curate until 1903.

Although the agitators had partially succeeded in disrupting the parish, and creating difficulties between Fr Ireland and his bishop, they continued their policy of causing disturbances in church, and writing to local newspapers with their absurd lists of so called evils at St James'. Gradually however, despite their influential backing, the agitators began to realise they could not quell Fr Ireland, who was sufficiently brave and intelligent to withstand all their threats and intimidation. Because of this, the dissidents gradually left St James' and began to hold separate services in the colliery schools at the top of Grange Valley, ministered to by Wycliffe preachers, an extreme protestant body.

Now began the most odious part of the campaign against St James', involving the very livelihoods of the parishioners. John Robinson, one of the main agitators, was a senior official in the firm of Richard Evans and Company, and had a direct influence on the working lives and prospects of men employed in the Haydock coal mines, many of whom worshipped at St James'. Mr Robinson watched each Sunday to see if any of his workers went to St James', viewing such persons with extreme disfavour. In a period when employment was not easy to find, it needed brave miners to defy John Robinson by attending St James'. Some did leave the congregation to join him, and can scarcely be blamed for this, especially as it proved remunerative to support John Robinson as a man suggested at a meeting when he shouted, 'He's one of Mr Robinson's men and he'll be made a fireman for this'. Obviously, the troubles at St James' abated somewhat after the objectors had left to form their own congregation, but they wanted their own church, a fact only realised after their failure to destroy the tradition at the parish church and make it their own.

In 1904, John Robinson and Archdeacon Madden of Warrington asked Dr Chavasse, (Bishop of Liverpool since Bishop Ryle's retirement in 1990) for help in their problem, and he offered them the use of St Alban's mission chapel (which belonged to St James') if they would accept a clergyman of his choice, with a view to the ultimate division of the parish. The bishop asked the Rev Travers Stoney to take the job, which he accepted after a difficult meeting at John Robinson's house. Still smarting from their defeats by Fr Ireland, the dissidents were determined to control Mr Stoney, but he made it quite clear that, as a clergyman, he could not be dictated to by his church officials. They began to raise money for a new church and

foundation stone was laid on November 14th, 1907, on the site of the now demolished St Alban's mission.

Soon after this event, Fr Ireland, as vicar of the mother parish, legally claimed the patronage of the new living of St Mark, and Mr Stoney promptly resigned and called a meeting of his church council. Naturally, they did not want the patronage of their new church to be in the hands of their adversary, the vicar of St James'. All work on the new church was stopped until a solution could be found. Considering the persecution suffered by Fr Ireland at their hands, it seems just, if ironical that they should be caused some inconvenience by his claiming the patronage as a legal right. The Haydock church dispute took much discussion to solve, and as usual, many people interfered who had little right to do so, including the Rev C.C.B. Bardsley, vicar of St Helens and subsequently Bishop of Leicester, whose only connection with Haydock was his sister's marriage to Mr Stoney, and his extreme evangelical opposition to St James'. Finally the Bishop of Liverpool, Dr Chavasse, persuaded Fr Ireland to forfeit his claim to the patronage so that peace might be finally restored in the troubled parish.

The construction of St Mark's church was re-started, financed from many sources, an attempt even being made to deduct a levy from the wages of Messrs Richard Evans' employees, presumably instigated by John Robinson. Eventually, the parish was divided and Mr Stoney became first vicar of the new parish of St Mark. It is interesting that he still encouraged extremist protestant missionaries to his parish, including Mr E.M. Robinson, who is described in a contemporary newspaper as 'an Irish Orange agitator paid by Messrs Richard Evans and Company', and this is

confirmed by the fact that all other Haydock clergy, (Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Congregational, and Fr Ireland) refused to have any dealings with him.



*The high chancel, circa 1910*

Despite the fact that the congregation and clergy at St James' were much concerned with church disputes, they did not forget the needs of the parish, the most

important being the building of the Lyme Street school. The board of Education had said in 1906 that the old National Schools built in 1837 and later enlarged, were unsatisfactory, and intimated that they would cease to recognise it unless new accommodation was provided. The Lyme Street school was planned, costing £4,126, and the foundation stone, which was paid for by the mothers of Haydock, was laid by Bishop Chavasse on November 19th, 1907. The new school designed by Isaac Talbot and built by Mr H. Heaton of Golbome, was financed by subscriptions, rates and a bazaar held in the completed school on October, 1909, the patrons including Lady Gerard, Lord Wolmer and Mr Walden, who had been the respected headmaster of the Haydock National Schools since 1873. A large part of the construction was done by Haydock men, including the stonework by Mr John Mather and the decoration by Mr D. Towers. The parishioners gave generously in time and money for the new school.

Social life in the parish flourished despite the troubles, with musical services and concerts as regular features, a minstrel band being formed for the latter, whilst a parish football team provided more strenuous activity. In addition to the troubles and financial burdens just described, Fr Ireland and the people of St James' had yet another major problem to face, this being the church building itself. By 1906, only fifteen years after the construction, major faults were apparent in the structure, and supporting props had to be erected. Minor repairs were undertaken, but the faults increased, and the fact had to be faced that although the church was very beautiful in design, insufficient care had been taken in detailed planning, construction and choice of materials. One example was that the large spire was supported on one side by a high wall only nine inches thick. In addition, some of the timber used was not properly seasoned. For these and other reasons, the building deteriorated rapidly and was soon in a ruinous condition. Fr Ireland was now over seventy years of age and in failing health, caused in part by the persecutions of earlier years, and the death of his wife in 1922. In 1925 he retired after 29 years as vicar, and went to live in West Kirby, where his health improved slightly. He died in 1932 and his body was brought back to Haydock and buried behind the church which he served so long and so bravely

## **Ruins and Restoration**

### **Fr Sydney Gladstone Stanton**

### **1925-1937**

There remained a loyal congregation at St James' in 1925 but they needed courage and leadership to face the huge problem of a now ruinous church building, coupled

with a diminution in spiritual well being caused by the troubles in the parish. Their new leader, Fr S.G. Stanton helped provide the necessary incentives. He had worked as a curate in Warrington and in Selly Oak, Birmingham before coming to Haydock, his induction taking place on November 13th, 1925. Working closely with his congregation, Fr Stanton attacked the problems boldly. In January, 1926, he restarted the parish magazine, using it for articles on the teachings of the church, and as a means of publicity in raising money for the now urgently needed church restoration. In 1926 also, Fr Stanton applied to, and was granted permission by, the Bishop of Liverpool to reserve the Blessed Sacrament perpetually in an aumbry. In April 1926, the graveyard extension was consecrated, and in May, it was decided to raise money for the complete restoration of the old chapel, and to do essential repairs to the big church. Although money was scarce during this period which included the 1926 strike, more than £700 was raised by the hardworking congregation. The restored 'old church' was rededicated by the Bishop of Liverpool on July 31st, 1927, 'to the special honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary', and since then has been known as the Lady Chapel.

The alterations to the big church included the fixing of the four Oberammergau carved angels in the high sanctuary. Plans were now made for a more comprehensive restoration of the big church, beginning with the chancel and sanctuary, and then continuing with other repairs as money became available. However, in June, 1929, Mr Dod, the diocesan architect, issued a grave report on the state of the church building, saying, 'as the superstructure of the church is in such a dangerous condition, it is imperative that the church and churchyard should be kept closed during a storm or the approach thereof. Because of this most serious news, Fr Stanton and his church council decided to launch an appeal for money to restore the church completely. This restoration unfortunately included the demolition of the spire which had become a famous local landmark, and the replacing of it with a fleche (not built through lack of funds), and a complete rebuilding of the chancel, sanctuary and west wall, including the porch.

Meanwhile, measures were taken to ensure the public safety, such as the removal of the high altar from the dangerous sanctuary walls. The appeal was launched in Spring, 1930, when a pamphlet called 'For God and his church' was distributed widely. The illustrations showed the terrible rot in the woodwork and holes in the walls through which daylight and rain streamed into the church. The response was magnificent, with contributions from all over Britain, and of foreign donations, one came from missionaries in remote Manchuria. During the demolition of the ruinous parts, the foundation stone, laid in October, 1889 was removed, revealing coins and newspapers of that date. When the stone was re-laid on April 10th, 1931, these were

replaced together with some contemporary additions. As rebuilding continued, the major structural changes became apparent, including the removal of the high east window (elevated to leave space for a reredos), through which sunlight had dazzled many morning congregations at St James', the switch of the organ to the north side with a new organ chamber, construction of new vestries on the opposite side, and of course, the removal of the spire.



***The Choir with Fr Foyster (assistant curate) and Fr Stanton (vicar), circa 1930. The church still complete with spire, is in the background.***

The restored church was re-hallowed by Dr David, bishop of Liverpool, on Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1931, beginning a week of thanksgiving and rejoicing. In his sermon, the bishop said 'You celebrate and we celebrate this restoration and recovery of your church from decay, which has been performed by the co-operation of people of this parish under wise and courageous leadership. The building has been rescued from imminent danger, made safe for many years, and made even more beautiful than it was'. The repairs had cost some £5,000, and a great debt is owed to Fr Stanton, his curate Fr Foyster, and the people of the parish for their great efforts in raising this amount in a hard period of industrial strife.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932, news came of Fr Ireland's death. Vespers of the Dead, and the Litany of the Faithful Departed were said at St James' on the following day, and

after Requiem Masses on the 11th August, Fr Ireland's body was buried behind the restored church.

In 1933, the restored roof of the church was dedicated by the Bishop of Warrington, and later the same year, Fr Foyster left Haydock to minister in Ilfracombe. He subsequently visited Oberammergau and found the grave of Arthur Evans, talking to the Zwink family, who had befriended him up to his tragic death in 1896. For many years after leaving Haydock, Fr Foyster sent mosses, lichens and wild flowers to decorate the Easter garden at St James'. He was succeeded at St James' by Mr S.F.H. Knight.

In addition to his efforts for church restoration, Fr Stanton laboured to renew the spiritual well-being of his congregation, helped by his curate, and by a convention and mission in 1932 and 1934 respectively, conducted by priests from the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield. During the mission, conducted by Fr King and Fr Blair, some protestant agitators came to St James' distributing leaflets which criticised the Mirfield Monks, but they were so completely ignored, that they did not return. Fr Stanton fervently preached the catholic faith of the Church of England both in his sermons and magazine articles, and some of his teachings caused friction with Mr Wilkinson, vicar of St Mark's, who wrote some quite scathing articles in his parish magazine, obviously aimed at Fr Stanton. These articles included the keeping of Lent and the Thirty Nine Articles, both of which had been considered earlier by Fr Stanton in St. James' parish magazine. The trouble came to a head when Fr Stanton advised his parishioners (and no one else) to withdraw their children from the new secondary modern school (or senior school as it was then known) for religious instruction, as permitted under the Anson byelaw. Mr Wilkinson promptly sent a letter to a local newspaper pleading that children should not be withdrawn. Because of this, and other thinly veiled attacks, and the fact that Mr Wilkinson was visiting people in St James' parish without permission, Fr Stanton wrote to the Bishop of Liverpool stating the facts and asking for advice. He also informed Mr Wilkinson of his letter to the bishop. The bishop interviewed Mr Wilkinson and one of his churchwardens on January 14th, 1932, and later wrote to Fr Stanton, describing the meeting. In his letter, the bishop said that he had explained to Mr Wilkinson that he should not visit people in St James' parish unless they were on St Mark's electoral roll, and had also tried to obtain a change of spirit in Mr Wilkinson. The letter continued, 'I faced him with Christ's commandment of love, and tried to refer everything to that. I pointed out how many wounds we are adding to the suffering of Christ by conflicts within the ministerial brotherhood, and urged that if we really love our Master, we must prepare to suffer patiently when differences become apparent as they are bound to. Mr Wilkinson

promised me that he would pray about it'. The bishop was greatly distressed by the affair, which is shown by a further excerpt from his letter, 'The trouble has laid a great burden of suffering on me. Nothing gives me more pain. I spent a long time over it last night, and today I am feeling more confident that God will use us to bring good out of evil'. The letter added, 'I think you will find that his (Mr Wilkinson's) attitude will change to both you personally and also in regard to his magazine articles'. The bishop's intervention seems to have solved the unpleasant situation, for Mr Wilkinson made no further open attacks on Fr Stanton or St James'.

As so much money had to be raised for church repairs, there were many and varied parish activities in fund raising. The different church societies presented gifts to beautify the restored church, especially the Dorcas Society, which gave vestments and linen. These gifts helped towards Fr Stanton's known ideal of a beautiful church with reverent services, and a devout and happy congregation. Time was also found for the pleasures of parochial pilgrimages to Ripon Cathedral, Fountains Abbey, St Asaph Cathedral, Chester and other places. Whilst at Haydock, Fr Stanton established the children's corner in 1929, and in 1932, he introduced the Christmas crib. He also renamed the old schoolroom as the Parish Room, to serve as a centre for church activities. On one wall of this room are stone tablets recording donations to the Haydock Linen Charity, formed in 1650, and the Haydock Apprentices Charity, founded in 1731. Later, during Fr Wilson's incumbency, these charities were merged into the Haydock Poor Fund, administered by five trustees. In the parish magazine for November, 1936, it was announced that Fr Stanton was to become vicar of Fleetwood, after eleven devoted and hardworking years as vicar of Haydock. That he went with mixed feelings is shown by his words in an article at that time, 'How I love that church. How I wish for my own sake - though not for yours - that it could be lifted bodily and dropped in Fleetwood'. Fr Stanton's achievements were outstanding, and in this he was helped and encouraged magnificently by his congregation, his curate, Fr Foyster, and Mrs Stanton, who was involved in many parish activities. Fr Stanton remained in Fleetwood until his death in 1955, when his body was brought back to St James' for burial behind the church he loved so much and served so well. Until a new vicar of Haydock was appointed, the curate, Fr Knight, managed affairs at St James', although he himself had resigned to take up a post in South Africa. Whilst serving during the Second World War, Fr Knight was captured and imprisoned, first in Italy, then in Germany. After the war he returned to Africa, eventually becoming archdeacon for Matatiele. He subsequently lived in retirement in South Africa.

## **Consolidation**

### **Fr Richard Ambrose Reeves**

### **1937-1942**

The Rev R.A.Reeves was instituted to the parish of St James the Great on April 15th, 1937. Before this, he had worked in London, Scotland and for the Student Christian Movement in Geneva. His main task in Haydock was to consolidate the work of his very popular predecessor by further teaching of the church's beliefs and duties. This he did most ably, but with a minimum of sentiment, which at first was not fully appreciated by his new congregation, who were accustomed to more rather more emotional sermons. He stated by reorganising the many societies and groups which had grown up at St James', explaining in the parish magazine that, 'whatever the nature of the organisation, its only justification for existing is that it is serving a useful purpose for some section of the church, and in so doing is ministering to the well-being of the church as a whole'. During his first year in office, the altar servers were incorporated into a guild, the senior Sunday School changed to a youth fellowship in June, holding meetings in the church and the vicarage, and the Men's Society was reconstructed with its first meeting in August. The Women's Guild was formed from the Dorcas Society and the Women's Fellowship, whilst the Girl's Fellowship was disbanded and its members integrated into the newly formed groups. Much encouragement was given to the middle and infant Sunday schools, and in 1937, there were 220 children in regular attendance. A missionary association was formed with some 70 members, who worked and prayed for the church overseas. In 1938, the choir, under its organist, Alan Greenough, held the first of a series of annual festivals, the 1939 festival including works by Mozart, Handel and Mendelssohn. In 1939, the St Nicholas Guild was formed following a teachers training week in November of that year, and in 1941, the King's Messengers and the Youth Fellowship council were started. However, Fr Reeves was not only interested in the regular congregation at St James', and in 1938, he began, helped by his curate and congregation, a great evangelistic campaign to preach the faith throughout the parish. After dividing the parish into four sections, a year of intensive work was spent in each section, with open-air sermons and services, processions, visits and cottage meetings. Fr Reeves insisted that nothing could be achieved without hard work, and undoubtedly, some of his helpers were overworked. The success of the campaign owed much to those members of the congregation known as bishop's couriers, who publicised the activities in their sectors. Fr Reeves and his wife were very interested in the arts, and music and drama became a feature at St James'. The Merseyside String Orchestra, recruited from members of the Liverpool Philharmonic, gave concerts in the church and

schools, and nativity, passion and other plays became a notable feature of the parish. These included the passion plays 'Christ crucified' and 'Prisoner of hope', nativity plays 'The Crown of Light' and the 'Story of Christmas in mime', whilst the pageants 'The Christian year' and 'Te Deum' were performed for the patronal festivals of 1937 and 1938. In addition to his more active work in evangelising the parish, Fr Reeves urged study of the bible and other books of interest to churchgoers. He formed a bible study group which met monthly, and he wrote reviews of relevant new books in the parish magazine, thus encouraging interest in the church library. Quiet days of prayer were held in church and were particularly comforting during the early war years. Church repairs also concerned the parish, but naturally to a much lesser extent than earlier. However, the church interior was decorated, minor repairs were done to the parish room and church exterior, and a new heating system was installed. Obviously, the war affected much of Fr Reeves' work in the parish, bringing with it the problems of parishioners in the armed forces, the safety of children in the schools during air raids, and the 'blackouts' at night, an obvious problem when lighting a large building like the church. On Christmas Eve, 1940, because of the blackout and possible air raids, it was not known until the very last moment if the Midnight Mass, which Fr Reeves had introduced on Christmas Eve, 1937, could be celebrated. It was celebrated, and proved a most moving experience for the congregation. The effects of the war were even more dramatically demonstrated in 1941, when many evacuees from bomb ravaged Liverpool sought shelter in St James' church and schools. In 1942, Fr Reeves wrote of his interest in the Industrial Christian Fellowship, which had been formed after a meeting at Malvern, to solve the problems of workers in industry. A study conference was held at St James' in May 1942, resulting in the formation of a study group which met regularly to discuss problems facing the Fellowship. One welcome development during Fr Reeves' time in Haydock was the slight improvement in relations between the clergy of St James' and the vicar of its daughter church of St Mark. That relations had been strained is obvious from incidents already mentioned, but a step forward was noted when the vicars of both parishes travelled to, and walked together into, their first meeting of the Prescott Deanery Chapter. Fr Reeves and Mr Billingham (vicar of St Mark's) improved harmony between the two churches, but it was a long time before greater inter-church activity became a fact. Fr Reeves was appointed Rector of Liverpool early in 1942 and was inducted in the bomb-ruined church of Our Lady and St Nicholas in June the same year. His five years as vicar of Haydock made a great impact on the parish, his work being helped by Mrs Reeves and their children, who took active parts in parish affairs and sustained their interest after leaving Haydock. In 1949, Fr Reeves was consecrated Bishop of Johannesburg, and his former parishioners at St James' presented him with two mitres to celebrate the event. In South Africa, he

fought a brave campaign against the evils of apartheid, publishing several books on the problem. His controversial relations with the South African authorities eventually made his position as bishop quite untenable, and after they expelled him he returned to England in 1961. He served as assistant bishop of London from 1962 to 1966, and then was appointed assistant bishop in the diocese of Chichester from 1966, also serving at the same time, as priest-in-charge, then rector of St Michael's, Lewes. Bishop Reeves retired to Shoreham-by-Sea, and died there on December 23rd, 1980, his ashes being interred in the graveyard of St Mary's. Several memorial services were held, including one at St Paul's Cathedral, London, for this brave and holy bishop.

## **Post-war Development - Rationing and Reservation Fr Spencer W. Wilson 1942-1982**

Although a little more optimism was apparent as to the eventual outcome of the war, it still posed problems for the parish owing to the absence of parishioners in the forces, occasional air raids, the continued blackouts and the rationing of food. Another minor irritation was a ban on bell ringing, since the latter might be construed as a warning of imminent enemy invasion. Until a new vicar of Haydock was appointed, the assistant curate, Fr Eric Wild, cared for the parish, although he was shortly to leave Haydock to become a Royal Navy Chaplain. In fact, Fr Wild left the parish less than 48 hours after the induction of the new vicar, Fr Spencer W. Wilson. Fr Wilson, a native of Suffolk, had been assistant curate of Ormskirk with charge of Lathom Park Chapel, and subsequently assistant curate of Walton on the Hill, Liverpool, with charge of St Aidan's mission church, before coming to Haydock. He was inducted on September 5th, 1942, and continued the practices and teaching so long established at St James'. However, he also began preparations for the post war development of the parish with changes in the basic pattern of Sunday worship as an important priority. In May, 1943, Fr Gill of the Industrial Christian Fellowship conducted a liturgical mission at St James', leading up to the establishment of the 9.15 am Parish Eucharist on Sundays as the principal service of the week. This service, which was carefully described by the vicar in the magazine, and discussed at length during the mission, was started on Sunday, May 30th, 1943, and soon proved the most notable feature of communicant life at St James'. After only one year, the number of communions made rose from 4696 to 7155, an increase of 2459 during the first year. In 1945, the number of weekly

communions was 156, rising to 179 in 1947. By 1952, the average number of weekly communions was 234. In 1943 also, Fr Wilson began preparation for the perpetual reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in St James'. Permission for perpetual reservation had been granted to Fr Stanton in 1926 by the Bishop of Liverpool, and the Sacrament was reserved for the sick in the vestry safe. Reservation in an aumbry (a wall safe) was permitted in 1930, but the aumbry was not installed, probably due to the extensive building programme. Having confirmed this permission with Dr David, Bishop of Liverpool, Fr Wilson and the churchwardens with the agreement of the council, applied for a faculty to install an aumbry in the north wall niche of the Lady Chapel sanctuary, this method of reservation seeming more reverent than the former practice. After the faculty was granted in November, 1943, the aumbry was dedicated in February 1944, Thus the parish received the great privilege and blessing of the Holy Sacrament continuously reserved in the church, which certainly adds to the atmosphere in a church. Sadly, this event caused yet another protest from the daughter parish of St Mark, this time by its vicar, the Rev S.Billingham. When reservation began at St James', Mr Billingham wrote to the Record, an extreme evangelical paper which has now ceased publication. In his letter, he attacked Dr David for allowing reservation at St James', presumably not knowing that permission to reserve the Sacrament had been granted many years earlier in 1926. Dr David saw Fr Wilson and gave full support for the project. Subsequently, Mr Billingham criticised reservation in his parish magazine without mentioning Haydock in particular. Some excerpts from his article were published in the St Helens Reporter with a footnote stating that reservation had been adopted recently at St James'. However, despite these several attempts to create difficulties, there was no reaction from St James' parishioners. The busy year 1943 also saw the start of the youth clubs and the revival of the scout group and the King's Messengers. Two bishops officiated at St James' in 1945, the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Dr Harmay, administering Confirmation in May, and the new Bishop of Liverpool, Dr Clifford Martin, making his first public visit to the parish church in June, when he preached at the Sung Eucharist. In 1946, Confirmation was administered by the Bishop of Lebombo, and in the same year, the church celebrated its 80th Dedication Festival, one of the preachers being the previous vicar, Fr Reeves. One of Fr Wilson's main post war aims was to evangelise the parish, a good start having been made with the 1943 mission. However, in 1947, preparations for a parochial convention were begun, the first of a series to be led by members of the Community of the Resurrection from Mirfield. Fr Dominic Whitnall conducted the 1947 convention with great success, its chief objective being to prepare the parish for a fixture mission. In the same year, the Bishop of Liverpool solved the problem of too many dedication dates for St James' by permitting the church dedication festival to be changed from December to October.

St James' has several important dedication dates such as that of the original church (December), of the new church (June), and of the restored church (October). The latter was chosen as the official dedication festival. Discussions on the provision of a war memorial came to fruition in 1948, when the chosen memorial of riddel posts and a sanctuary lamp for the high altar, both designed by the Warham Guild, was unveiled by Colonel G.B. Atherton, and dedicated by the vicar on November 7th. In the same year, the sacrament of Holy Unction was, with the bishop's permission, introduced at St James', the holy oils being blessed by the Bishop of Warrington. The Badminton and Social club was formed in 1948, followed by the Men's Guild in 1950. The parish was very active in 1949 preparing for the mission, but found time to remember and pray for its former vicar, Fr Reeves, when he was consecrated Bishop of Johannesburg on June 12th. The parish was thoroughly surveyed before the November mission and yielded much useful information which was given in advance to the missionaries. The latter, including Fr Lounds, Fr Mack, Brother Giles and students from Mirfield, helped by Sister Kathleen Hope and Sister Catherine from the community of St Peter, Horbury, were commissioned by the Bishop of Liverpool before beginning the two week mission from 5th to 19th November, including a shorter children's mission. Attendance at the mission was excellent with 270 people renewing their baptismal vows and 1687 communions being made during the fortnight. On the final Sunday of the mission, a solemn Eucharist of thanksgiving was celebrated by the Bishop of Warrington. The High Mass was the first at St James' since the days of its first vicar, Fr Greenwell, but is now the norm. Despite hectic activities at St James', time was found to resume parish pilgrimages after the war, visiting Mirfield in 1948, York in 1949, and Kelham and Southwell in 1950. In 1950, a fine oak altar with stone panels was given to St James', by the rector and church council of St Mary's, Woodbridge, Suffolk. The altar, at which Fr Wilson celebrated his first Eucharist in 1936, replaced the old altar in the Lady Chapel, and was re-hallowed by the Bishop of Warrington in May. Later in the year a chalice and paten were purchased as a very deserving memorial to Fr Ireland, vicar of Haydock from 1896 to 1925. The festival year of 1951 was used by parishioners to raise £1,951 for the work of the church, and after a variety of money raising efforts over £2,000 was realised. The procession of witness in 1951 was held for the first time on Whit Sunday and this day became established as 'walking day' for the parish. On May 12th, 1951, the Bishop of Liverpool administered Confirmation at St James', the first Diocesan to do so for some 25 years. Mr Alan Greenough, organist and choirmaster at St James' since 1921, retired in 1951 because of ill health, having held the post for almost 30 years. 1951 also saw radical alterations in the status of the church schools, when after long deliberations, the infants school became Controlled, and the Junior School acquired Aided status.



## Post-war Development - Rood and Restoration Fr Spencer W. Wilson 1942-1982



*The Hanging Rood*

The major event of 1952 was the dedication of the great hanging rood on September 2nd by the vicar. The rood, designed by Edward Hines of the Warham Guild, with figures carved by Jethro Harris in Oxford, consists of almost life size statues of Our Lord on the cross, with Our Lady and St John at the foot. The whole is in gilded and coloured wood and is a splendid addition to the church furnishings. It is a memorial to Percy and Alice Watson who were benefactors of St James'.

On the first Sunday after the Epiphany, 1952, the now traditional Epiphany gift procession was introduced. Up to 1956, the procession was held immediately after Evensong, but from 1957, it took place before the Parish Eucharist. All offerings are devoted to medical missions. A parochial convention was held at St James' from September 28th to October 5th, conducted by Fr D.C. Evans from Mirfield, and proved very successful in consolidating the work of the 1949 mission. In 1953, the church was further beautified when the new font cover was dedicated on June 14th. The elegant design, incorporating carving from the earlier Oberammergau cover, was the work of Mr Colin Shewring of the Warham Guild.

On March 10th, 1955, Fr Stanton died and his body was brought from Fleetwood for burial at St James' on March 14th, the Bishop of Blackburn presiding. Later in the month, the Bishop of Johannesburg visited his former parish church to administer Confirmation, and in October, the Bishop of Warrington performed a similar function, making 1955 an unusual year of two Confirmations at St James'. Church repairs, although never completely forgotten, needed attention again in

1955, when it was decided to repair the Lady Chapel and subsequently to redecorate it. The repairs continued well into 1956. The latter year started well with an excellently kept Lent, 2157 communions being made during the penitential season. The 90th dedication festival was celebrated on October 7th, 1956, the Bishop of Liverpool preaching at the Parish Eucharist. On the octave Sunday, October 14th, several gifts to the church were dedicated, including the new bishop's chair, which was bought as a memorial to Fr Stanton. The old canopied bishop's chair, carved with the initials J.C.L. (J.C.Ryle - first Bishop of Liverpool), was subsequently moved to the back of the church. The twin banners of Our Lady and St James were dedicated and used in the procession before the 1956 midnight Mass of Christmas. Church repairs, as usual, needed much attention and money during 1957. A new bell inscribed 'Worship God' and the date '1957' was dedicated by the vicar on March 31st. In April, it was realised that at least £5,000 was needed to complete the church repairs and redecoration, and as the money came in, the work continued. In March, 1958, a parochial convention was conducted by Fr Donald Patey of the Community of the Resurrection. This was followed in April by the Wells Organisation's canvass of the parish, aimed at educating parishioners in the Christian stewardship of money and time. The five week campaign included a loyalty supper, when 490 people ate together in the Secondary Modern School. Episcopal visitors during 1958 included the assistant Bishop of Korea, who preached at the Sung Eucharist on February 2nd, the Bishop of Wangaratta, who celebrated the Sung Eucharist on Trinity Sunday, and the Bishop of Johannesburg, who preached at the Sung Eucharist on the octave Sunday of the patronal festival. The second stage of church repairs was completed in 1959 with work on the Lady Chapel, north arcade walls and the porch. The stained glass windows in the Lady Chapel were restored and replaced with modern surrounds. Confirmation was administered by the Bishop of Liverpool in February, and on April 13th, the Bishop

of Middleton conducted a quiet day for clergymen in St James' church. Other notable events in 1959 included the 50th anniversary of the Lyme Street school and the beginning of negotiations to provide a new vicarage next to the church.

On Trinity Sunday, June 12th, 1960, a most notable event took place when the assistant curate, Mr D.Cooling, was ordained priest in



*After the ordination at St James on Trinity Sunday, 1960. The clergy are L to R Fr Wilson (vicar), Fr Cooling, newly ordained priest (assistant curate) and the Bishop of Johannesburg (The Rt Revd Ambrose Reeves)*

St James' by the Bishop of Johannesburg. A parish church Ordination was unusual, this being the only such event held in St James'. Five clergy assisted the bishop during the service, in which the liturgical use of incense was revived at St James' after a break of many years. Some repairs and redecoration were completed in 1960, but many had to be postponed because of the increased costs. However, the original font, given in 1866 by Mrs Sherlock, wife of the patron of the living, was moved from the back of the Lady Chapel to its present position opposite the west door of the main church.

At the 94th dedication festival, the preacher was Fr Norman Lewis, assistant curate 1949-1951. In 1961, repairs to the church continued, but it was realised that at least a further £4,000 was needed to complete them. In September, the vicar celebrated the silver jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood, and he marked the occasion by visiting the Holy Land and Rome. Unfortunately, 1962 marked the beginning of a long period without an assistant curate, placing additional work on the vicar. The new vicarage, costing £8,000 was completed and occupied in April 1962, part of the cost being met by the sale of the old vicarage in Clipsey Lane. Later in the year, preparations began for the family mission planned for 1963. In November, 1962, the Women's Guild (formed 1937) celebrated its silver jubilee, continuing as a flourishing body which does much to help church life in the parish. The highlight of 1963 was the family mission held in March. The missionaries, led by Fr Hoey of Mirfield, were commissioned by the Bishop of Liverpool before beginning an intensive programme of services, visits and talks. The tableaux staged in church and the torch light procession were very impressive, and 2248 communions were made during the mission. Later in the year, the Bishop of Warrington walked in the procession of witness on Whitsunday, the first bishop to take part in this annual event. The parish experienced some difficulties in 1964 due to the vicar's serious and prolonged illness, necessitating Fr Wilson's absence from all duties for several months. Local clergy were generous with help, and the Bishop of Warrington visited St James' on several occasions, celebrating the Sung Eucharist on the Patronal Festival.

**Post-war Development -  
Parish Centenary  
Fr Spencer W. Wilson  
1942-1982**

The year 1965 will always be remembered most thankfully for the completion of the church repairs, a task which had taken some forty years to achieve by the generosity of parishioners led by three successive vicars. Some members of St James' congregation have seen all the various stages of these repairs, and know the sacrifices which have been made to make the interior of St James' so very beautiful, and its exterior safe and weatherproof. The parish centenary year of 1966 was of course, most eventful, the celebrations beginning with a gala held on King George V playing fields on June 11th. The redecorated church and certain gifts were dedicated by the vicar on June 19th. The redecoration of the complete church was done by Campbell, Smith and Company, experts in this type of work. Thus the church was ready for the main centenary celebrations.

The main ceremonies were held later in the year, beginning on October 2nd, the official date of the dedication festival, when the new Bishop of Liverpool, Dr Blanch, who had been enthroned in April, presided and preached at the Solemn Eucharist. During this impressive service, the bishop was met at the door, then in procession visited the Lady Chapel, the font, the rood and the high altar before taking his place in the Bishop's Chair. After the Mass, the bishop and his family were guests at the parish breakfast before they attended a civic reception given by the chairman and members of the Haydock Urban District Council.

At Festal Evensong on the same day, the preacher was Fr Hind, assistant curate 1954-57. The celebrations continued on the following Wednesday, October 5th, when Bishop Reeves, vicar of St James' 1937-42, preached at Festal Evensong before a large assemblage of local clergy, civic dignitaries and parishioners. After the service a reception was held in the Lyme Street School, giving opportunities for reunions with former Haydock clergy, including Fr Brain, curate 1943-1944, Fr Hind, curate 1954-1957, Fr Pickard, curate 1957-1958, and of course, Bishop Reeves.

On October 9th, the octave Sunday, the Bishop of Warrington celebrated the Sung Eucharist, after which he consecrated the graveyard extension. At Festal Evensong that night, Fr Foyster, curate 1929-33, preached a moving sermon on his great affection for St James'. The next evening, Monday, October 10th, a centenary party was held at Lyme Street school, the toast 'St James' parish' being proposed by Fr Foyster. In November, the junior school staged a centenary conceit with a varied musical programme and a fancy dress competition. The proceeds were given to help the missionary work of the church.



***After the dedication of the statue of St James during the centenary celebrations on December 11th 1966. Dr Ellison, Bishop of Chester and the vicar Fr Wilson with the church wardens***

The final events of the centenary celebrations were held on Sunday, December 11th, the true centenary of the dedication, when Dr Ellison, Bishop of Chester, presided and preached at the Sung Eucharist held in the Lady Chapel, an apt setting since this was the church which the then Bishop of Chester, Dr Jacobson, had consecrated on December 11th, 1866, one hundred years before, almost to the hour. The recently decorated Lady Chapel looked splendid for the dignified service, which together with the bishop's sermon, proved a most moving experience.

The bishop also dedicated a new statue of our patron, St James the Great, carved and coloured in Italy. After the service, the bishop joined

parishioners for breakfast in the Lyme Street school. The centenary had been well and truly celebrated. In 1967, Fr Wilson celebrated his silver jubilee as vicar of Haydock, a most eventful 25 years. To mark the occasion, Fr Wilson presented a new clergy stall for the Lady Chapel, which was dedicated by the Bishop of Liverpool at evensong on September 5th. A reception was held afterwards in Lyme Street School, when grateful parishioners presented gifts to their vicar in appreciation of his devoted work in the previous 25 years.

## **Post-war Development -**

## **The Work Continuing Fr Spencer W. Wilson 1942-1982**

In May 1969, it was decided to make an all out effort to pay off the outstanding debts of £1,000 incurred in the decoration and repair of the church, and the extension of the graveyard, the target date being the end of 1970. On the 103rd dedication festival in October, the celebrant and preacher was Bishop W.S.Baker, assistant Bishop of Liverpool, paying his first visit to St James'. The following month on Sunday, November 30th the time of the Parish Eucharist was changed from 9.15 am to 10 am after a vote by members of the congregation. A survey of the parish revealed a population of 6800 in about 2100 houses. On the 104th dedication festival on October 6th, the new Bishop of Warrington, John Bickersteth, paid his first visit to St James'. At the end of 1970, the first edition of the history of St James' was published.

Fr Wilson's appointment as an honorary canon of Liverpool Cathedral was announced in February 1971, a richly deserved honour. The collation and installation of Fr Wilson took place on March 27th, when many parishioners went to support him at the Cathedral. Various gifts to Fr Wilson on the occasion included a purple cincture. In June, Haydock ceased to be a colliery town with the closure of its last mine, Wood Pit. Fr. Foyster, assistant curate, 1929-1933, who like so many former Haydock clergy, loved St James' so very much, died on October 10th, 1971.

The office of mace bearer was introduced at St James' in January 1972, for the better ordering of our comings and goings. Senior members of the Altar Servers Guild act as mace bearer, carrying a carved wooded mace, the figure of which was probably brought from Oberammergau by Arthur Evans in the nineteenth century. In the same month, provision was made for the burial of cremated remains in the graveyard.

February brought the announcement that Fr Eric Wild, assistant curate 1940-42, had been appointed Suffragan Bishop of Reading. His consecration took place in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, on July 13th. In May, during a united service in St James', the preacher was Archimandrite Barnabas of the Russian Orthodox Church, Abbot of St Elias Monastery, Willand, Devon. The congregation included Fr Grey of English Martyrs R.C. church, the Rev A.E.Breeze of Haydock Methodist church, and Bishop Bickersteth of Warrington, who gave the blessing.

Canon Wilson completed 30 years service as vicar of St James' in September, and it was announced that Haydock U.D.C. proposed to name a street on Grange Valley estate as 'Canon Wilson Close', adding another street to those already named after former clergy of St James'.

The Bishop of Liverpool administered Confirmation on February 25th 1973, and Canon Wilson noted that during the vicariate, 720 candidates had so far been confirmed. Repairs to the Parish Room began in February, 1974, and the complete restoration of it was completed in 1976, a new replacement stone tablet commemorating the foundation of the Haydock National Schools having been fixed to the wall outside in 1975. Canon Wilson was taken ill whilst on holiday in July 1974, and did not resume full duties until late in October. Local clergy gave help to the parish during this period. With the issue of the December 1975 parish magazine, this most useful publication achieved 50 years of monthly publication.

Confirmation was administered on February 15th, 1976, by the new Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard, on his first visit to St James'. He was assisted by the new Bishop of Warrington, Michael Henshall, making the service unique at St James' since two bishops officiated at the same service. On Monday, 20th September, 1976, Canon Wilson celebrated the 40th anniversary of his Ordination. Forty years earlier, he celebrated his first Eucharist at the altar in Woodbridge parish church, which is now our Lady Chapel altar. In August 1977, when a new register of baptisms was started, it was revealed that the former register, begun in June, 1928, contained details of 1561 baptisms at St James'.

The closure of Haydock cottage hospital was announced in December, 1977, and finally closed at the end of May, 1978. A new gold frontal for the Lady Chapel altar, given by Mrs Stanton in memory of her husband, Fr Stanton, was dedicated in 1978. The Bishop of Ibadan (Nigeria) visited the parish in July the same year. This year also marked the beginning of much appreciated help given at St James', by retired priest, Fr J.R.Howarth, now resident in North Ashton. Fr Howarth was later appointed assistant priest (part time) by the bishop. Fr Howarth and several clergy from Kirkby did much to help Canon Wilson maintain the very high standard and regularity of the services at St James'. March 1980 marked the centenary of the opening of the infant school. Fr Warne, assistant curate 1937-40 died on April 20th 1980.

## **Post-war Development - Healing and the Guild of St Raphael**

## Fr Spencer W. Wilson 1942-1982

From Ascension Day, 15th May, to Whitsunday, May 25th, Fr Gabriel Sanford and

Fr Eric Fisher conducted 'Celebration 1980' at St James', with many services, including a service of healing, one of the main aims of the event being the renewal of communicant life. It was during this celebration that one of the parishioners, Mrs Alice Jones, was visited by Fr Fisher and experienced a miraculous healing. Alice had for some years been crippled alter an accident to her back, followed by a series of unsuccessful operations. The agent of healing was Padre Pio, an Italian Capuchin Friar who died in 1978. Padre Pio appeared to Alice at the time of her healing, and her cure has been attested by the Vatican by whom she is regarded as part of the 'case' for the eventual canonisation of this remarkable Friar, who both during his life and since, has apparently been the instrument of many healings and other miracles. Bishop



*Window in the Children's corner showing Tobias and the angel (St Raphael)*

Ambrose Reeves died on December 23rd, 1980, as mentioned earlier, and a requiem Mass was celebrated at St James' on December 30th. During 1980, 10,306 communions were made at St James', reflecting the hard work necessary for one priest despite help from other clergy.

In 1981, a branch of the Guild of St Raphael was formed at St James', to pray for the sick in mind and body. The formation of this guild was one of the fruits of the 1980 'celebration'. The annual united service, initiated ten years earlier, was held in English Martyrs church on June 10th. The year 1982 was eventful. The vicar had an accident late in January and was out of action for some weeks. Again Fr Howarth and other clergy filled the gap admirably.

On March 4th, a thanksgiving service was held to mark the completion of extensions to St James' Infants School. At the end of March, the retirement of Eric Wild as Bishop of reading was announced. He was assistant curate at St James' with Fr Reeves from 1940 to 1942, which provides the unusual combination of two priests serving at one time in the parish who both became bishops.



*St Joseph window in the Lady chapel*

On Sunday, August 22nd Canon Wilson announced his decision to retire as vicar of Haydock sometime between the Dedication Festival and Christmas. He said that the work of running the parish had become, 'such that I cannot go on doing it in the way it needs to be done and the way I wish to do it. After 40 years, the privilege and responsibility must pass to other hands'. However, before his retirement, Canon Wilson celebrated the 40th anniversary of his induction to the parish of St James', Haydock, which had taken place on September 5th, 1942.

On September 5th, 1982, this event was celebrated when at a 3 p.m. Evensong, the Lord Archbishop of York, Dr Stuart Blanch preached during this great service. It was St James' at its best. During refreshments after Evensong, Canon Wilson was presented with a watch by his grateful congregation. His last officiating Sunday was November 7th, and during this month, his parishioners took leave of him with many gestures of appreciation until he ceased to be vicar at the end of November, 1982. It is difficult to list the notable events of the forty years Canon Wilson worked in Haydock, and most have been briefly described in this history.

However, the faithful, caring and stable pastorate of Canon Wilson at St James' will always be remembered for his teachings both from the pulpit and his magazine

articles, his work for the institution of the Parish Eucharist, provision for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the planned giving campaigns, the series of parochial missions and conventions, the completion of the major church repairs, the centenary celebrations and finally, the events surrounding his dignified retirement from the parish. It is fitting that Canon Wilson remains a Canon emeritus of Liverpool Cathedral, an honour richly deserved and applauded. Canon Wilson retired to the college of St Barnabas at Lingfield in Surrey, where he is still active, and has officiated occasionally at local churches.

Until the appointment of a new vicar, the parish was run by the priest-in-charge, Fr Howarth, who again did sterling work to maintain an active church life at St James', much encouraged by an appreciative congregation. At Christmas, the Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard celebrated and preached at the midnight Mass, a most moving and heart-warming experience for grateful parishioners, still without a vicar. However, in May 1983, it was announced that the Rev Doctor T.P.E.Nener, assistant curate at St Elphin's Warrington, was to be the new vicar of Haydock. Confirmation was administered by the Bishop of Liverpool in June, and in July, Fr Howarth presided at the Patronal Festival for the last time as priest-in-charge. A very grateful congregation thanked Fr Howarth for his devoted help spread over many years at St James', but particularly for his efforts during the Interregnum. They presented him with a cheque and a new biretta.

## **Building on Firm Foundations - The Pilgrimage Begins Fr Paul Nener 1983-1995**

The Rev Doctor T.P.E.Nener (Fr Paul) was inducted to the parish of St James' on Friday, 26th August, 1983. Fr Paul qualified in medicine at Liverpool Medical School in 1966, and after training in surgery, spent three years in a mission hospital in South Africa. After theological studies at Mirfield, he was ordained and appointed to the assistant curacy at St Elphin's, Warrington before coming to Haydock. It became happily obvious from the beginning that Fr Paul was to continue the splendid tradition at St James' with emphasis on prayer, the sacraments and building up the church on its already good foundations. He wished to make the congregation a happy mixture of all age groups and his initial efforts bore fruit when more young people joined the congregation and the organisations. Having written a letter of introduction in the August parish magazine, Fr Paul began to get

to know his congregation, and by October, when he preached at the Dedication Festival High Mass celebrated by Fr Howarth, he had met most of them. A few minor changes were made to times of service, and the Daily Offices were resumed including the ringing of the Angelus, leading to a well kept Christmas of 1983. In 1984, the now well established Holy Week rites were introduced at St James'. On Maundy Thursday, after the Commemoration of the Lord's Supper, a watch was kept until midnight at the Altar of Repose in the Lady Chapel. The 'three hours' devotion on Good Friday ended with the Veneration of the Cross and the Liturgy of the Passion, whilst the Paschal Liturgy was also celebrated during the evening of Holy Saturday. The changes met with approval and 1,015 acts of communion were made during Holy Week. The Holy Week rites have become established devotional highlights of each year. During August, the parish made its first pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. Several members of the congregation had been going regularly to Walsingham for many years, and found great joy and spiritual benefit in joining the first organised pilgrimage. This is now an annual event. In September 1984, the time of the Sunday school was changed to coincide with the Parish Mass thus allowing the children to take part in the service after the Offertory. On the feast of SS Simon and Jude in October, Fr Howarth ceased his regular help at St James' after celebrating, and preaching at, the Parish Mass. Fr Paul and the congregation thanked him again, with good wishes and a cheque, for his ministrations over the years. The loss of this help was partly alleviated by the introduction of lay ministers of the Sacrament, which means that there is congregational ministry in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Lent in 1985 was well kept and both the Bishop and Archdeacon of Liverpool took part in the Holy Week services. The now restored parish room was first used for a party after the liturgy on Holy Saturday. The procession of witness on June 9th took on a special ecumenical aspect when, after discussions with their clergy, Methodists and Roman Catholics joined St James' for the first time to make this act of Christian witness. In August, the Rite A form of Eucharist was introduced at said celebrations, and from All Saints tide in November, Rite A was used for sung celebrations.

Canon Wilson visited his former parish in autumn and celebrated the Parish Mass on September 22nd, the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. In November, the Bishop of Warrington visited the parish, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Liverpool, presiding at a pontifical High Mass on November 24th. He was most satisfied with the visitation at St James', and made some suggestions for the further evangelisation of the parish. In the same month, the exterior of the church was painted, revealing that some repairs and re-glazing were necessary.

On December 12th, the high altar candlesticks and the chiming grandmother clock in the Lady Chapel were stolen during the night. Eventually, a new high altar set of cross and candlesticks was purchased, carved by Neil Wyn Jones and decorated by James Callaghan. The surviving old high altar cross was replaced on its original base and subsequently placed on the new organ case at the west end of the church. During 1985, there was much discussion on the replacement of the church organ, now 176 years old, and an organ fund was started. In December, the church council decided to buy a 60 year old Harrison and Harrison pipe organ at a cost of £24,000, and to have it installed at the west end of the church on a gallery costing a further £5,000. Much effort was needed to raise the money and the congregation responded with enthusiasm, nearly £20,000 being raised in just over a year. In 1984 and 1985, the church was further adorned and equipped by generous gifts from parishioners, including hymn books, sanctuary stools and a votive lamp for the Lady Chapel.

# **Building on Firm Foundations - The Organ and the Chapel Fr Paul Nener 1983-1995**

The Guild of St Raphael held a day of healing in June 1986, when Bishop Flagg, the assistant bishop in the diocese, presided at a healing Eucharist. The Guild remains strong and a focus of prayer for the parish, and is the largest branch in the Church of England. In September, during a quite magnificent flower and music festival, the new organ was blessed by Bishop Baker, presiding at a Solemn High Mass on Thursday, September 11th. The setting was Mozart's Coronation Mass, sung by the Oriel Singers, making the celebration a triumph of devotion and beauty. The floodlit organ is a splendid addition to the church with its carved and gilded angels and the old high altar cross on its gallery. Some of the old organ pipes remain as a display in the high chancel. The new organ was used for a recital by the Liverpool Cathedral organist, Mr Ian Tracey, on September 13th, and the following day, after Harvest Evensong, the celebrations finished with a hot pot supper. In October. November 1986, the establishment and first meeting of the new Mothers' Union branch at St James' took place. A well kept Lent of 1987 included further ecumenical developments in the parish when, after discussions, the Roman Catholics, the Methodists and the Anglicans of St James' agreed to share part of Holy Week. On Palm Sunday, palms were blessed in the Gray Hall at English Martyrs R.C. church and distributed to the combined congregation before each group went to its own church. Some Roman Catholics attended Solemn Evensong at St James' on Easter Day. The Roman Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans now regularly begin and end Holy Week together. Bishop Martineau, the retired Bishop of Blackburn administered Confirmation at St James' in April 1987. On All Souls Day, 1987, the Oriel Singers returned to St James' to sing the Fauré Requiem. Late in 1987, a new and more simple Daily Office book was introduced at St James', resulting in improved attendance at these services. The book was compiled by Fr Guiver of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and Fr Paul. At this time also, several lovely gifts were presented to the church, some in memory of relatives, including a new gospel book for the Parish Mass, a new set of gold mass vestments, a stained glass window of St Joseph and a carved and coloured statue of Our Lady. Whilst clearing the former organ chamber, an old altar cross was found, which was restored and converted to a processional cross in memory of Clara Abbott, a former devoted parishioner. An eventful 1987 ended with the decision to convert the former organ chamber into two rooms, the upper intended for choir use was

eventually named the Stanton Room, and the lower was converted to the chapel of St Alban, to be used primarily for the Daily Offices. Initial discussions were also held on the possible rewiring and re-lighting of the church, and on the reordering of the high chancel with the removal of the choir to join the organ at the west end. The latter change began with the move of the choir to pews at the west end of the church after Easter, 1988. In 1988, work on the Stanton Room and St Alban's Chapel continued by members of Community Industry, who commented on the lovely atmosphere of St James'. Gifts for St Alban's Chapel included the altar, a hanging lamp, stools, an altar book and a statue of St Alban. Mrs Stanton's legacy helped to furnish the Stanton Room, named in memory of her husband, vicar of St James' from 1925 to 1937. On Ascension Day, May 12th, 1988, Bishop Baker blessed the Stanton Room and St Alban's Chapel during the Solemn High Mass. Both are beautiful and useful additions to the church, whilst St Alban's Chapel will perpetuate the original dedication of the first parish church, and the old mission chapel of St Alban, built in 1877, which stood at the west end of Haydock. Fr Guiver, C.R., joint author with Fr Paul of the new Daily Office book, visited St James' in July, preaching at the Parish Mass and, afterwards, discussing the use of the new book with parishioners over lunch. Two Sunday school banners were given to the church for use in the procession of witness, and at the end of 1988, the Women's Guild celebrated the 50th anniversary of its formation. At the same time, the belfry was found to be in need of structural repairs, and as a result, the church bell could not be used. The belfry was later rebuilt in brick. In 1988, Fr Paul completed five years as Vicar of Haydock, and he and his parishioners had much for which to be thankful, since acts of communion and offerings had risen, the congregation and organisations continued to have a lively mixture of most age groups, and the Daily Offices had been offered corporately day by day.

Building on Firm Foundations -  
Reordering and International Contacts  
Fr Paul Nener  
1983-1995  
article posted 4 August 2012

The year 1989 began with a further improvement in relations with the daughter parish church of St Mark, when the new vicar of St Mark's preached at St James' on the Sunday after Epiphany, and Fr Paul preached at St Mark's soon afterwards. On March 11th, 1989, Haydock was transferred from Prescot deanery to the new deanery of Winwick. As usual St James' had a well kept Lent and the Bishop of Warrington took part in the 'three hours' service on Good Friday. Fr Norman Lewis, assistant curate at St James' from 1949 to 1951, preached at the Parish Mass on

April 23rd. Later in the year, Mr Fred Bradshaw retired after 33 splendid years as cub leader at St James'. During 1989, the final decisions were made concerning the reordering of the high chancel and the rewiring and re-lighting of the church, at an estimated cost of £13,500. It was decided to move the existing high altar and riddel posts forward rather than to provide an extra altar. The final work on these projects meant the closure of the main church for a fortnight, and on these Sundays (28th January and 4th February, 1991) the congregation went by coach to St Mark's to share the Eucharist together on the first Sunday, and on the following Sunday they celebrated the Eucharist in the church school. On Sunday, 11th February, 1990 at 6.30 p.m., the re-lighted and reordered parish church of St James' was first used for a Solemn Eucharist of thanksgiving, celebrated by Fr Paul with a sermon by the Area Dean of Winwick, Robert Britton. The lovely service was enhanced by music provided again by the Oriel Singers who sang Dvorak's Mass in D major. There was general agreement that the reordered high chancel made the church even more spacious and beautiful, and sincere thanks are due to all who helped finance the work. Discussions began in 1990 on the possible amalgamation of the infant and junior school into one Church of England Aided Primary School in order to promote efficiency and to make the best use of available resources. At the 124th Dedication Festival on October 14th, the recently consecrated Bishop of Lancaster, Bishop Jack Nicholls presided and preached at the Solemn High Mass. Late in 1990, Fr Paul was elected as one of the live clerical representatives on the General Synod of the Church of England. Miss Mabel Mather announced her retirement after more than fifty years as a sacristan at St James', during which time amongst countless duties, she provided many magnificent vestments for the altars and clergy at her beloved church. The celebrant and preacher at the 1990 Midnight Mass of Christmas was Bishop Graham Chadwick, one of the new assistant bishops in the diocese. In January 1991, a sound system was installed in St James' to help the deaf specifically and to improve communication generally during services. The system was financed by legacies from the former members of the congregation. The Decade of Evangelism which began on Epiphany Sunday, 1991, was heralded at St James' by a High Mass when the preacher was the Archdeacon of Liverpool. A day conference on patterns of Sunday worship was also held in January as part of St James' response to the Decade of Evangelism, resulting in several constructive suggestions for the development of worship in the parish, and to provide a parish hall. A 'New Fund' was started to be used primarily for the eventual provision of a parish hall. Later in the year, more details were published noting its intended use as our contribution to the building of a new infants section onto the Lyme Street School, and using the vacated infant school, after some alterations, as a parish hall. The latter idea seemed preferable to extending the parish room, which would be refurbished and used for church affairs only. The estimated total cost to the parish

of the scheme was £120,000. One of the suggestions from the day conference was put into practice on Sunday, July 7th, when the first monthly Family Eucharist was celebrated, intended for all the congregation but adapted to suit families with children. In August, news came of the death of Bishop Eric Wild, curate at St James' from 1940 to 1942. In January 1992, the devotional service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was introduced at St James' at the request of several members of the congregation. On Pentecost Sunday, June 7th, the Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard, solemnly blessed and dedicated the crucifix memorial in the churchyard, erected in memory of all who died in coal mine accidents in Haydock, and especially the Wood Pit disaster of 1878. After a service in St James' conducted by Fr Nener, Fr Kennedy of English Martyrs and Mr Pine of Haydock Methodist church, with a sermon by the bishop, the large congregation of civic leaders, mining officials and parishioners, accompanied by the Haydock Brass Band and the Parkside Colliery male voice choir, gathered around the mass grave of some of the 1878 victims for the dignified ceremony which took place exactly 114 years to the day after the Wood Pit disaster. Later in 1992, the parish hosted two Romanian Orthodox seminarians, giving the opportunity for many to learn about, and experience something of, the life and worship of the Eastern Church. It was a very happy month of celebration and ecumenical growth culminating in a splendid flower festival. The principal act of worship was a Solemn High Mass for the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, celebrated in the presence of the Mayor of St Helens, a regular worshipper at St James'. The parish also acted as host to Romanian Orthodox guests in 1994. In 1993, the pulpit was redecorated and partially gilded from donations by a parish family. Other gifts from parish families included a set of prickets for the lighting of votive candles and a Celtic cross. These together with two icons purchased in the Ukraine by Fr Paul, form a focus of prayer in the south aisle of St James'. Here this brief history must end as Fr Paul completes eleven quite remarkable years as vicar of Haydock. These have been quite momentous years for such important projects such as the new organ, the Stanton Room and St Alban's Chapel, the re-lighting and reordering of the church, and he has worked continually to improve the spiritual welfare of his congregation, resulting in increased acts of Communion (some 17,000-18,000 annually) and improved attendance at the Daily Offices. Ahead are some important projects such as the question of the schools and the provision of a parish hall. As in the past, there will be a splendid response from the people of St James'. On 14th August, 1994, Fr Paul announced his acceptance of the benefice of St John the Baptist, Tuebrook, (Liverpool). As this important announcement coincides with the publication of this history, there is little time to evaluate his work at St James'. However, in addition to the many successful projects described earlier, his work on several diocesan committees and his membership of the General Synod of the Church of England,

mention must be made of his outstanding enthusiasm, kindness and devotion to his church and parishioners which have made St James' such a happy and lively congregation. He will be remembered with great respect and affection. Although we sincerely regret his departure, we wish him similar success and joy at Tuebrook. Fr Nener celebrated a farewell Mass on Sunday 8th January 1995. The congregation was very large, and as usual on the 'Epiphany Sunday' there was a wonderful sense of worship, prayer and fellowship. At the end of the Mass the churchwardens, Ellen Crompton and Billy Haydock, made a presentation on behalf of the people. This was a splendid chiming wall clock, and a generous cheque. The farewell continued with a buffet luncheon in the Parish school. On February 10th, Fr Paul was instituted by the bishop of Liverpool as vicar of St John the Baptist, Tuebrook. About 600 people were present at the service, and this included about 200 from St James'. Within a few weeks of the institution Fr Paul was offered a Canonry by the Bishop which he accepted. He has been heard to say that he assumes that it is in recognition of the fact that he was willing to leave Haydock!

The Pilgrimage Goes On  
Fr Rodney Middleton  
1995 to the present  
article posted 4 August 2012

During the Interregnum the church was well served, since in 1994 Fr Geoffrey Hardman had been licensed as non Stipendiary Assistant curate to the Parish. In March 1995 it was announced that the Rev Rodney Middleton was to be the new vicar. Fr Middleton is a Liverpool priest, ordained in the diocese and serving his title at St Mary the Virgin, Walton. From Walton Fr Rodney had been called to establish a new parish in Southport, St Francis, Kew. He had served in Kew for over 8 years as priest-in-charge, and latterly as vicar, of this exciting new district. As we wish Fr Paul well in his new charge, so we extend to Fr Rodney our prayers and best wishes for his years ahead at St James' Fr Rodney's Institution, Induction and Installation took place on Tuesday 18th July 1995, in the presence of the Bishop of Liverpool and the Archdeacon of Liverpool, as well as a large congregation of parishioners, Southport people, friends and family.

Haydock - a Parish Chronicle  
Fr Rodney Middleton  
1995 to the present  
article posted 4 August 2012

c1500BC

Stone spindle wheel of this period (later Stone Age) found at Haydock, and is preserved in Warrington Museum.

1086

Winwick parish mentioned in Domesday Book.

1168

Orm de Haydock, first recorded lord of the manor of Haydock, owed money to the King.

1330

The Haydock Chantry of the Holy Trinity founded in Winwick church by Sir Gilbert de Haydock. This chantry later became known as the Legh Chapel.

1358

Sir Gilbert de Haydock and Sir Gilbert de Southworth built or rebuilt the tower, spire, nave, chancel and south aisle of Winwick church.

1387

The Bishop of Lichfield granted licences to Sir Gilbert de Haydock to hold divine service in the oratories of his manor houses at Haydock and Bradley.

1414

Joanna, last of the main Haydock line married Sir Peter Legh of Lyme and the Haydock estates went to that family.

1628

Fr Edmund Arrowsmith (born at Piele Hall, Haydock in 1585) hanged drawn and quartered at Lancaster. His hand is preserved in the Roman Catholic church of St Oswald, Ashton in Makerfield. Fr Arrowsmith was beatified in 1929 and acclaimed a saint in 1970.

1808

Thomas Legh Claughton bom at Haydock Lodge. He became Bishop of Rochester in 1867, and in 1877, he was made first Bishop of St Albans. His brother, Piers Calverley Claughton, was born at Haydock Lodge in 1814. He was made Bishop of St Helena in 1859, and subsequently, Bishop of Colombo.

1837

Haydock National School built, the main room being used for church services.

1846

Wesleyan Methodist school opened.

1866

St James' Church consecrated (present Lady chapel). Fr. Alan Greenwell first vicar.

1868

Pig's head incident at St James'.

1869

Fr Greenwell succeeded by Fr Henry Sherlock as vicar of Haydock.

1877

St Alban's Mission church opened on the site of the present St Mark's church.

1878

First vicarage built in Clipsley Lane.

1879

Roman Catholic church of the English Martyrs opened. Infant school in Church road built.

1884

Fr A.H. Keamey succeeds Fr Sherlock as vicar of Haydock.

1889

Fr A.M. Lewis succeeds Fr Keamey as vicar of Haydock. Foundation stone of main church laid.

1891

Main church opened but not consecrated.

1892

Fr C.E. Bowden succeeds Fr Lewis as vicar of Haydock. Main church consecrated by Bishop Ryle.

1896

Fr Ireland succeeds Fr Bowden as vicar of Haydock. Troubles with protestants resumed immediately.

1907

Foundation stone of St Mark's laid.

1909

Lyme Street Schools opened.

1910

Parish divided.

1925

Fr Ireland retires after being vicar of Haydock for 29 years. Succeeded by Fr Sydney Gladstone Stanton.

1929

Diocesan architect reports on the grave state of St James' Church.

1930

Appeal for funds to restore St James'. Spire demolished during restoration.

1931

Restored church re-hallowed by Dr David, Bishop of Liverpool.

1937

Fr Stanton is made vicar of Fleetwood, and succeeded by Fr Richard Ambrose Reeves from Geneva (S.C.M.).

1942

Fr Spencer W. Wilson succeeds Fr Reeves as vicar of Haydock.

1943

Parish Eucharist established as principal service at St James'.

1944

Perpetual reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in an aumbry instituted at St James'.

1949

Fr Reeves consecrated Bishop of Johannesburg.

1960

First ordination of a priest held at St James' church.

1962

New vicarage built adjoining parish church.

1965

Church repairs finally completed, and whole church redecorated.

1966

Centenary celebrations of St James', attended by four bishops.

1967

Fr Wilson celebrates his Silver Jubilee as vicar of Haydock.

1971

Fr Wilson made an honorary Canon of Liverpool Cathedral.

1972

Fr Eric Wild, curate at St James' from 1940-1942 made Bishop of Reading.

1980

Centenary of the opening of the infant school. Bishop Ambrose Reeves, vicar of Haydock from 1937-1942 died on December 23rd.

1982

Canon Wilson celebrated the 40th anniversary of his induction to St James' parish on September 5th when the Lord Archbishop of York preached at Evensong. Canon Wilson retired from the parish at the end of November after more than 40 years as vicar of Haydock.

1983

Fr T.P.E Nener inducted to the parish of St James' on August 26th.

1986

The new organ blessed by Bishop Baker during a flower and music festival.

1988

The Chapel of St Alban and Stanton Room blessed by Bishop Baker.

1990

The re-lighted and re-ordered church opened with a Solemn Eucharist of Thanksgiving.

1992

The Bishop of Liverpool dedicated the memorial to victims of Haydock mining disasters on June 7th. Flower Festival held 12th-15th August.

1993

Redecoration of pulpit and installation of votive candle stands, icons and Celtic cross.

1995

In January Fr Nener relinquishes the benefice of St James' to move to a new vocation at St John the Baptist, Tuebrook.

On July 18th Fr Rodney Middleton was instituted to the benefice of St James' by the Rt Revd David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool.