

ST. SEBASTIAN'S PARISH HISTORY

A History of St Sebastian's Parish and Church

Lockerby Road Fairfield Liverpool

By Mary Borg, a parishioner

Published to mark the 75th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone in 1913.



Foreword

Few of today's parishioners at St. Sebastian's can have personally witnessed the foundation of their church seventy-five years ago; not unless they have a periscope in their prams. But there will be many from the intervening years who will remember with pride and thanksgiving some of the priests and fellow parishioners who helped to build up the parish and whose names may well be recorded in this commemorative booklet. The history of St. Sebastian's, from the building of the church in 1913 to the present day, has been impressive. Clearly it has been much influenced by the events and havoc caused by two World Wars and by the social changes which have followed. But it is more than a mere record of building, demolition, and devastation, and then rebuilding. For essentially the history of a parish is the record of people. Its most important aspects are best found in the Registers of the Sacraments which have been received. The 75th anniversary is an occasion on which to record the commitment and devotion of priests and people. These qualities are easily recognised in the service of the parish church and school, but we must not forget the living of our faith in the homes and families of the parishioners. There we will find a splendid record of partnership in the care of the spiritual and material needs of people. As the church moves towards the year 2000 A.D., there is no shortage of challenges to be faced. But this record of faithful achievement sets a standard and provides an example which must prove an inspiration to those to whom now is entrusted this heritage of our Catholic faith. May God bless the priest and parishioners of St. Sebastian's on this happy and important occasion.

DEREK WORLOCK Archbishop of Liverpool

Introduction

I wish to thank those who have worked so hard researching and producing this handbook of parish history. It relates to the growth and development of the parish and area of St. Sebastian's, Fairfield, making an interesting human story. The area has changed from a pleasant green suburb of Liverpool to become part of the modern urban sprawl, with all the economic, social, and environmental problems. An outstanding feature is that, for all the change, people have basically not changed. I find a caring and still deeply Christian community here in Fairfield with a real sense of independence, concerned about their church and schools for their children. In spite of economic difficulties people are still generous, always ready to give as were the earlier parishioners who built the fine church and schools. History also shows the genuine affection and co-operation which has always existed between priests and people. That has not changed. Since I was appointed here in 1982 I have received nothing but kindness and cooperation from you all, generous when called on whatever the cause. While it is good to look back on our history with nostalgia, it is important that we look forward with hope, sustained by faith and charity, with a deep love of God and his Church expressed in the caring community of St. Sebastian's for the people of Fairfield.

FR. PAT KELLY Parish Priest



Archbishop Derek Worlock with Bishop Kelly of Salford who is cousin to Father Patrick Kelly, Parish Priest.

Foundation

The Mission of St. Sebastian's was opened on July 2, 1904, by Bishop Whiteside (created Archbishop in 1911), in a room in the Convent of Adoration Reparatrice, Edge Lane. On September 11 1904 Bishop Whiteside opened a chapel in the Convent which served as a Mission Church for the district of Fairfield. At that time, the parish population was 1,269; the parish boundaries were given as: London North Western Railway, Botanic Road, Holt Road, Hannan Road, Molyneux Road, Shiel Road, Gardner's Drive, Stanley Station, and part of Edge Lane. Until 1918 England was regarded as a 'Mission Country' (an aftermath of the Reformation) and priests were appointed as 'Priests in Charge' of a Mission. The

first such for St. Sebastian's was Father Edmund Clark (see Pariah Priests). The opening of the church was impressive. The Foundation stone being laid by Archbishop Whiteside on Low Sunday 1913. The opening was on the Feast of St. Sebastian, January 20, 1916. The Mass was sung by Cardinal Logue, Primate of All Ireland, assisted by Archbishop Whiteside. Father Robert Lowe of Milltown Park, Dublin, preached. The band of the 8th Irish Battalion of the Liverpool King's Regiment played during the opening celebration.

At the turn of the century Fairfield was a middle-class residential area. Holly Road, where Fairfield Hall stood, and Laurel Road, had only recently come within the boundaries of the City of Liverpool. Many affluent professional and commercial families lived in the area. These included the Noblett's, of Everton toffee fame, the Norris's an old Liverpool family, both in Laurel Road. In Stanley Street were the Dukes family. Two of their sons became priests, three daughters Nuns. It was a Mr. Johnson of Fairfield, who invited and encouraged the Sisters of Adoration Reparatrice in founding their convent in Edge Lane. Sadly, the Community moved to Chester about five years ago. These families and numerous others were more than generous in their support of the parish. Industrial development in the Edge Lane area had created an early trading estate which included the Meccano factory, Crawford's Biscuits, Pexwear, the Automatic Telephone and Electric Co. (now Plessey), Hudson's Soap Works, of LivelyPolly fame, Taverners with their sweet factory, Liverpool Corporation Tram depot and works. This industrial development provided employment for thousands of workers, many of them coming to live in the area, increasing the Catholic population considerably.

Before the founding of the parish Fairfield Catholics would travel to St. Oswald's, Old Swan; Sacred Heart, Hall Lane; St. Michael's, West Derby Road; St. Francis Xavier's, Salisbury Street. The latter being popular with parents whose boys attended the Jesuit College of St. Francis Xavier in Salisbury Street.

Parish Priests

Father Edmund Clark was the first 'Priest-in-Charge', in 1904. He lived at 19 Onslow Road until 18 Lilley Road was bought for use as a presbytery. He founded the parish and had the task of persuading Catholics attending other churches and schools to come to their own church and school. He opened the school in 1909, started the Altar Society and outdoor collections, and founded the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1910. In 1918 he was appointed parish priest of Our Lady Star of the Sea, St. Annes-on-Sea. Later appointed a Canon, he died there on November 22, 1942.

Father Edward Gorman V.F. (Vicar Forane) and later Canon, was a former professor at Upholland. Appointed to the parish in 1919 he remained until his death in 1934. He is still remembered by older parishioners, who recall him as a dedicated hardworking priest, deeply interested in education. He developed all parish activities, particularly the debating team, and was responsible for the first new school which opened in 1928.

Father Joseph A. Wareing, later Canon, became parish priest in 1934. Secretary to Archbishop Whiteside for a time, he continued as such with Archbishop Keating until 1927. He was dedicated to the Liturgy and to protocol; and was a shrewd administrator. He ruled the parish firmly for 35 years, celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his ordination there. He retired to live in Preston, where he died on November 8 1978.

Father Gerald Reynolds succeeded Canon Wareing in July 1969. His first task was to replace the old presbytery with a modern building. The large Victorian house, badly shaken by the 1941 bombing, was demolished. The new presbytery was not a charge upon the parish, the costs came from funds which Canon Wareing had invested in the diocese. Father Reynolds was Chairman of Governors of Cardinal Newman Secondary School, and closely involved in reorganisation of the schools for comprehensive education. St. Sebastian's pupils now go on to Broughton Hall and Cardinal Heenan High Schools. He also directed the building of the present primary school and had the church re-ordered for the new style of liturgy.



Canon Joseph Wareing's Golden Jubilee with Bishop Harris, former Curates and Friends.



Father Gerard Reynolds, Parish Priest 1969-1982.

Father Patrick Kelly was appointed parish priest of St. Sebastian's in September 1982. He was an ideal appointment for this era when the laity are being urged to take a more active

part in the apostolic life of the Church. His appeal to younger parishioners to take an interest in the parish apostolate has not fallen on deaf ears. He is renowned for his eloquence at weddings and funerals, and his kindness to non-Catholics attending such functions. His influence has created an active corps of church workers, including Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, and parishioners who help parents and children with First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Baptism programmes. He visits regularly in the parish.

IN TWO WORLD WARS **1914-1918 World War**

The emphasis was on prayer and concern for men from the parish serving in the Armed Forces in France, Belgium, the Dardanelles, on the high seas and in the air: for those who died or were injured, and for their families. Prayers were offered regularly at Sunday Masses for men who had 'lost their lives on land and sea.' A 1915 notice read out was "A Solemn Requiem Mass will be sung by the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Gray on Thursday Next at 10am. for the repose of the souls of the following members of the Congregation ..." After the war parishioners subscribed for the marble altar rails containing memorial tablets listing ranks and names of those who died in battle. Destroyed in the 1941 blitz, they were replaced exactly as they had been.

Evacuation: 1939-45 WAR

In September 1939, 182 pupils equipped with identity cards and gas masks, and supported by teachers and helpers left St. Sebastian's for Penmaenmawr, North Wales. 'The Evacuees' as they were called, were billeted with Welsh families. Junior and Infant children attended Capeulo Council School. Over elevens attended the Central School at Penmaenmawr. Teaching was on a two-shift basis, i.e. one week: mornings, the next: afternoons. Teachers with the children were: Miss G. Roberts, headmistress, Mr. James Doran, Miss M. McArdle, Mrs. H. Greening, Miss E. Dunne, Miss M. Chambers. Regular medical and dental care was given, gas masks checked regularly. Some children were taken home by parents soon after evacuation. The school logbook for Capeulo ends on January 6, 1942.

War Damage 1939-45

On September 18, 1941, German bombers dropped a stick of six bombs over Fairfield, doubtless aiming for the nearby Edge Hill Railway Goods Yard. Just seven minutes after the closing of the Quarant Ore (forty hours) with Solemn Benediction, a bomb, the first of the six, fell through the roof of St. Sebastian's church, exploding at the Sanctuary gates. It ripped up the floor, standing it on end, smashed to atoms the marble altar rails containing the memorial tablets to men who died in the 1914-18 War. The solid marble pulpit vanished, the altar was badly damaged, but not beyond repair. The tabernacle was intact, the crucifix moved only a sixteenth of an inch; there was no damage to the mosaic of the Last Supper over the high altar. The statues did not move. By a miracle, worshippers in the church for the ending of the Forty Hours, on hearing the air raid warning wail had hastened to the school shelter.

Canon Wareing had intentionally shortened the service because of the circumstances. After seeing that all was well the Canon and Monsignor (then Father) McDonnell took refuge in the basement beneath the presbytery. They were hurriedly called out by a warning that there was an unexploded bomb in the garden in front of the presbytery. The Canon found shelter with Monsignor Tom Turner. Monsignor McDonnell with the Sisters of the Little Ones. Until Holy Week 1941 Edge Lane Convent was used for Mass. Then it too was severely damaged by bombs. Until the church was repaired in August 1942 mass was said in the parish hall. It was 1949 before the church was fully restored.

School

St. Sebastian's first school opened in 1909 when Father Clark made the rounds of the parish asking parents to take their children away from neighbouring schools and send them to the parish school. Older children did not take kindly to the idea, particularly those at St. Oswald's, where the Sisters of Mercy taught, but eventually most of them attended the parish school. The first head teacher, Miss Gertrude Roberts, lived in the parish, as did other staff members. She ruled both staff and pupils with a rod of iron. This was good for pupils but resulted in constant staff changes, and often discord between head teacher and parish priest. Nevertheless, Miss Roberts was an excellent teacher, with ideas well ahead of her time. For instance, bright pupils, even in the infant classes, were encouraged to read as many books as they liked, simply by taking books from the classroom cupboard.

In senior classes on Friday afternoons she gave elocution lessons, played classical music on gramophone records, persuaded pupils to read classical books kept in a large bookcase which she called 'the golden library'. And she encouraged senior pupils to give lectures. Unusually for those days 'Civics' were included in the curriculum. Miss Roberts organised both Civic, and Parliamentary, mock elections. That was in the 1920s. Standard VI pupils voted for a Lord Mayor and City Councillors. Standard VII pupils voted for a Prime Minister and Members of Parliament. For the Parliamentary election, a realistic hustings atmosphere was created. Posters invited pupils to VOTE for JOE SPRY -- WILL FLYNN - - TOM SMITH. This certainly gave pupils an insight into national and local government procedures.

Religious Inspectors visited annually, and great stress was placed on the need to speak clearly when answering questions. A report in the school logbook for December 6 1923 reads "three priests carried out the inspection. After comparing notes with one another I am glad to report that the children were more than articulate, they were eloquent in their exposition of Doctrine." (signed) George P. Parks Dec. 1923

The first school was a wooden building with a corrugated iron roof. Classrooms were 'galleried' i.e. with three or four steps from front to back and divided by moveable partitions. When teachers were off sick the partitions were drawn back and one teacher would take two classes, which often totalled over eighty children. There were nine classes. Two for

infants, and Standards I to VII for Seniors. On Monday mornings the parish priest came regularly with holy pictures to collect 'school money'. This varied from one old penny to a silver sixpence. The higher the contribution, the better the picture awarded. After moving into the new all-age school in 1928 pupils were invited to choose colour schemes for painting their classrooms, and a lending library was established on the first-floor landing.

Football and Netball were played. Pupils were taken to Newsham Park to play 'Rounders', and to Lister Drive baths for swimming lessons. Despite Miss Roberts' progressive ideas, St. Sebastian's pupils did not sit for Liverpool City Scholarships until 1928, while other Catholic schools had been putting pupils in for scholarships since 1906. This of course would be a decision for the parish priest and governors. The apparent delay may have been due to the fact that some parents paid for the children to attend Catholic secondary schools.

Some pupils came from Sacred Heart and St. Michael's parishes. The latter school was overcrowded. Even children as young as three and a half years were accepted. Miss Roberts was head teacher from 1909-1944. Her dominant personality may have created difficulties but she was a dedicated teacher, who made a deep impression on her pupils. St. Sebastian's parish school now is a Junior Mixed Infants and Nursery School. Built with 240 places there are 255 on roll and 60 Nursery places.

"The need for modified accommodation for the Parish School became apparent many years ago. The Lockerby Road Building opened in 1928 had served the parish well as an all-age school until the opening of St. Agnes and Cardinal Newman Secondary Schools. Its severity of design and sheer utilitarianism coupled with its lack of play, physical education, assembly, and dining facilities made it unsuitable for use as a modern primary school which was now needed to cater only for the Infant and Junior children of the parish. A site was already available, thanks to the late Canon J. Wareing who, many years ago, arranged the purchase of a piece of land in Holly Road." In 1977 Father G. Reynolds and the School Managers accepted an offer made by Diocesan Education Committee to fund the building of the first phase of a new primary school. The Infants moved into Holly Road in May 1979, the Juniors following nine months later.



Pupils of Standard VI and Standard VII Classes in the new school in 1928



Fourth Year Pupils 1987-88 at St. Sebastian's Primary School with Mr. J. Dolan, teacher

SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS

1909 - 1944 Miss. G. Roberts

1945 - 1963 Mr. P. J. Peters

1963 - 1974 Mr. J. J. Kinsella

1973 - 1983 Mr. K. J. Roache

1983 - 2020 Mr. D. Hardiman

2020 - Mrs. J. Muligan (St. Sebastian's)

2020 - Mrs. C. Bellis-Knox (St. Cuthbert's)

Music

The musical history of the parish began in 1913 when a pulpit announcement said: "We are forming a mixed choir for the new church and shall be glad if those singing in other choirs will come forward and give their services to us in our church." And come forward they did, to create what, in pre-war years became a famous choir. Madame Annie Goodwin directed the choir. So notable did the choir become that when the BBC opened their 6LV Station in Rylands Buildings at the top of St. John's Lane, the church was wired for sound and evening Benediction music was broadcast on several occasions. Madame Annie Goodwin was the attraction. She was described as a 'coloratura' singer. A Jesuit priest

once said that he preferred her voice to that of Adelina Patti. For a number of years, she was principal soloist. There have been four organists, Miss Moran, Tom Caulfield, Miss Mary Mearns who 'came with the Canon', Jim Gleeson was appointed when Miss Mearns retired in 1950. He holds the Papal Benemerenti for his services as parish organist. The choir has continued in its present form since 1976.

Contemporary History

In the Spring of 1988 St. Sebastian's parish with its 2,030 Catholics, and one priest caring for all of them, Fr. Patrick Kelly, is a well-run, well-visited parish. Father Kelly and Sister Vianney (Sisters of the Little Ones) visit parishioners regularly. Eucharistic Ministers, men, and women, take Holy Communion on Sundays to sick and housebound parishioners. One of the Ministers is a member of the Chaplaincy team in the Royal Liverpool Infirmary. Spiritually there is ample provision. Mass is offered daily except during holidays. On Saturdays there is a mid-day Mass and the First Mass of Sunday at 6.30pm. Sunday Masses at 8.30 and 10.30am. A Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, with a shrine on the Lady Altar, is well attended.

Currently, mid-April 1988, Father Gregory Grant of the Catholic Missionary Society is conducting a parish Mission which includes extensive visiting and morning and evening services. Parishioners take an active part in all services as: Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, Altar Servers (who are members of the Guild of St. Stephen), Collectors and participators. Others help with Baptisms, First Communion and Confirmation programmes.

A Junior Legion of Mary is directed by Elaine Callaghan, and its members staff the Church Repository. Regular pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our lady of Walsingham have taken place over the last twenty-five years. Mrs. Ada Browne (RIP) arranged the early ones. Mrs. Ethel Tryers succeeded her. She now lives in Wales and Mrs, Flo Hughes keeps up the tradition. Jim Gleeson, organist since the 1940s, and the choir members, through some very original events, are well on the way to raising £15,000 for a new organ. Parish Societies such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society (founded 1910), Bible study group, Liturgy group, Justice and Peace Group, Ladies Keep Fit group, Scouts, Cubs, Ladies Darts Team, all flourish.

This history would be incomplete without mention of the Ladies Circle. Established in the 1960s, Canon Wareing stipulated that membership should be open to all ladies living in the Fairfield area, Catholic and non-Catholic. Ecumenism, therefore, was evident within the parish in the early 1960s. Mrs. Ellen Roberts, who died in March 1988, within two months of her 100th birthday, was Chairman of the Ladies Circle for many years. She was ably supported by all the members, in particular Poppy Lewis, Doreen Loftus and Anne Casey. In addition to excursions to places of interest, Bingo Sequence Dancing and dinner dances, the ladies organised the Summer and Christmas Fairs. Over the years they donated several thousands of pounds to the parish funds. Their successors today are members of the Union of Catholic Mothers, with Josie Raftery as President.



Fr. Kelly with U.C.M. Members

In recent years, a small group have made altar frontals for the Sanctuary. Pat Lewis is the designer, and an embroideress. Iris Driscoll (RIP) embroideress, Margaret Doyle made the cloths. The Lewis family also presented the setting for the crib figures, in memory of Bob Lewis. The parish Co-ordinator is Tom Casey, a former National Chairman of the Family Social Apostolate, and Chairman of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council from 1971-4.

A colourful group in the parish is the Carrara family who are the only statue makers in Britain. Even the Irish come to them for statues. Their forbears came from Carrara in Italy, lived in Manchester but moved to Liverpool in 1940.

The word 'presbytery' means 'a part of the church reserved for the clergy', although the more common way of referring to it was 'the priests' house'. Once upon a time that was factual in Catholic circles. However, St. Sebastian's presbytery is almost an 'open house' where you are likely to find three meetings going on at one time. Austerity and reserve are gradually dying in the Catholic Church, and Father Kelly certainly ensures that all Church premises are fully used. This includes the Parish Club. Opened in 1965 it took a long time for the premises to become a familiar venue. Its use as a meeting place for the over-55s club helped to familiarise it to many of the more conservative parishioners. Initially it ran at a loss. Now it is self- supporting. Many parish events are held there, including First Communion Breakfasts. During the recent Mission, its main hall was a meeting place after the morning and evening services. Father Kelly is doing his best to develop it into a parish centre.

Inevitably the pattern of living in the area has changed. it is no longer middle class. Parish boundaries commence about two miles from the Town Hall and the area is regarded as 'Inner City'. On the Edge Lane site of the parish Plessey dominate the manufacturing scene, adjoining the Wavertree Technology Park. Today's bus depot was built for Liverpool's trams. Taverner Rutledge's premises now extends to Edge Lane. The Convent of Adoration has moved to Chester. The once magnificent Botanic Gardens in Edge Lane have become a sparsely planted park. Founded by William Rathbone in the Oxford Street

area, they were re-sited in Botanic Road in 1836. The old Victorian houses in Lockerby Road were replaced, initially by the Co-operative Central Milk depot, now a large shopping mart; a contractor's yard and a bakery. On the site of St. John's Anglican Hall next to the church stands a block of tastefully designed retirement flats. The old Fairfield Hall which stood somewhere between the church and Holly Road has long since gone. But there are some fine Victorian houses in the Newsham Park area, where a few new houses have been built, and Wimpey are building at the moment.

The L'Arche Community have a house in Fairfield Crescent, one of three they have in the parish. Their work is to live with, and care for, handicapped people on a one-to-one basis; they also have two shops in the parish. Another wonderful work supported by parishioners is the Mill Hill Missionary Society -- which used to be referred to as 'the Foreign Missions'. This is looked after by Mrs. Anne Rabbatt who also regularly organises jumble sales for parish funds. Within the parish boundaries are: St. John's Anglican church at the corner of Lockerby and Holly Roads, the Presbyterian church in Beech Street, a Mission Hall in Fairfield Street, and a Jewish Cemetery at the top of Deane Road. Also, about a dozen pubs, a bingo hall, and an amusement arcade.

Fund-raising

When an artist's impression of the proposed church of St. Sebastian was hung in the Convent porch parishioners were told from the pulpit. "Funds are urgently needed. The shell alone may cost between £3--£4,000. Towards this amount we have the sum of £1,400." In relation to fund-raising it be realised that £1,000 raised in the first three decades of this century would be equivalent to £25,000 today. Yet all the evidence reflects the generosity of early parishioners. For instance, in 1909 a parish bazaar raised £1,076, That tremendous effort was supported by many smaller efforts such as concerts, whist drives, snowball teas, smoking concerts for men; old newspapers, jampots, bottles were collected, lectures given. An annual ball in the Grafton Rooms, West Derby Road. Charity sermons produced collections of £35-£40. Efforts were endless, constant, and fruitful. The most fruitful was a Bazaar held St. George's Hall in the early 1930s. This produced £5,000. A staggering sum then, possibly boosted by individual donations from affluent parishioners. Every penny was needed.

In addition to the church debt, a new school was built and opened in 1928, and the parish debt was a heavy one for many years. When 'Planned Giving' was introduced in 1964, Don Gillespie, Bob Lewis and a team of volunteers worked on the scheme. Each parishioner was asked to give a fixed weekly sum to the offertory collection. Envelopes were provided for the offering. This scheme was followed by the Covenant scheme introduced in 1974. The advantage of Covenanting to give a fixed weekly sum, is that it enables any Income tax paid by parishioners donating regularly to be claimed back by the parish from the Inland Revenue. The Covenant scheme is administered by two retired teachers. Now one committee organises an annual Garden Fete, and the Parent Teachers Association organises an annual Christmas Fair. Both are popular and well supported

events in the parish calendar. The Garden Fete Committee celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. There is also a parish Tote run by volunteers.

Old-time Parish activities

A parish asset in pre-Club days was 'Church House' at no 15 Lockerby Road -- now the site of the Parish Club. initially it was used by the Catholic Young Men's Society (now CMS) for meetings, billiards, debates. For a long time Mr. John Taggart was CYMS President, and the debating group vied with St. Oswald's, Old Swan who were formidable opponents. A later CYMS President was Mr. Jim Maher (RIP). Christmas parties for children were held there -- once the ladies moved into Church House. Principal events, for the ladies anyway, were the regular whist drives; as many as 200—300 players took part in the 1920/30 era. That was before radio and television took hold.

With the expert guidance of Miss Agnes Udall, a teacher at the school for many years, the Children of Mary put on Drama shows. In 1929 Miss Ruth Dukes was the 'Leading Lady' along with 'The Misses Hawes, Melia, McNabb and Quilliam; Miss Stella Pye (piano), Mr. Clifford Brierly (Bass), Mr. John Curtin Humourist. The entertainment tradition continued in later years when Father Flynn was curate. In the late forties the parish drama group put on a play at Crane Hall for a week. Miss Anne D'Arcy was wardrobe mistress. She recalls dashing straight from work to the theatre, to make sure the costumes were just right. A popular sports venue was St. Francis Xavier's Tennis Club which occupied a site at the corner of Holly Road and Lister Road. Priests of the parish often played tennis there with parishioners.

Convents

The first Convent to open in what was to become St. Sebastian's parish, was 'Rosemont'. Towards the end of the last century the poor Servants of the Mother of God opened the Lourdes Hospital in Paul Street, in St. Brigid's parish, Liverpool. In 1900 Mgr. Nugent telegraphed Mother Magdalene Taylor, foundress of the Poor Servants, then in Rome, asking her to come to Liverpool. When she arrived, he told her he had 'a house in the country' which he wanted her to run as a convalescent home for poor patients leaving the Lourdes Hospital. That is the origin of 'Rosemont' Convent, in Laurel Road, off Edge Lane. Following the convalescent work the Sisters cared for 'girls in need', some of them unmarried mothers. But for many years it has been a home for handicapped girls. In Liverpool, the Poor Servants also have St. Gabriel's Children's Home, Knolle Park, St. Saviour's Convent, a residential home for girls, and the Lourdes Hospital.

The Sisters of Adoration Reparatrice, now at Chester, opened their Edge lane Convent in 1904. An enclosed order, with many French Sisters, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was the devotion they both practiced and encouraged. Edge Lane Convent became a spiritual Mecca for Catholics of the area. It was in the convent chapel that St. Sebastian's parish was established. It served the parish until the church opened. Mass was offered daily with Benediction each afternoon. The Sisters founded a group for women

known as 'Agregates', who were committed to a spiritual programme and regular retreats. There were also the 'Associates' who met on the third Sunday of the month. When the Convent was bombed in 1941 the Sisters moved to a convent in Huyton. Parishioners followed them there for Benediction.

The Sisters of the Little Ones came to Holly Road in 1937. In 1941 the convent was bombed and moved out to Clumber Lodge, Freshfield, where they had a babies home. Returning to Holly Road after the war their work became the care of mothers and babies. Since 1974 they have been caring for handicapped people. Now the convent is a Residential Respite and Day Care Centre for handicapped people. Bare facts cannot convey the magnitude of their work. Handicapped people often need 24-hour care and total dedication. Care and dedication, with love, are abundantly evident to anyone visiting the convent. Four of the Community work outside the convent; Sister Dorothy with the Catholic Social Services, Sister Benedict, Sister Winifred in the University Catholic Chaplaincy. Sister Vianney is a Eucharistic Minister for St. Sebastian's, visiting the sick and elderly in the parish. She supervises the altar servers, creates magnificent floral arrangements for all occasions, and lends a kindly ear to the problems of many people. Sister Assumpta assisted her for some years, until she died following a road accident in Prescott Road in 1986.

Vocations from the parish include

Canon Francis Danher

Fr. Alfred McCormack (MHM)

Fr. Joseph Dukes (SJ)

Three of Fr Dukes Sisters became Nuns, one joining the Sisters of Adoration Reparatrice, two in the Sisters of St. Dorothy

Sr. Ursula Noblett (Carmelite)

Fr. Bernard Harvey

Fr. Matthew Crilly (CP)

Sr. Anne Gregson (White Sisters)

Sr Francis Harding (La Sainte Union)

Miss Sheila Marr.

Update on Mary Borg's Parish History: since Mary Borg's parish history was published in 1988 there have obviously been a number of changes. Rather than update the text of the 1988 document, it has been decided to include it unchanged.

Foundation

There has been a decline in the industrial activity in the area, of the companies mentioned in the Edge Lane area Meccano has gone, Crawford's Biscuits factory has closed leaving only an office building, Pexwear has closed, The Automatic Telephone and Electric Co. (Plessey) became GPT and then Marconi, which closed in 2005. Hudson's Soap works is no more. The Liverpool Corporation Tram works, which became Merseyside Passenger

Transport Executive bus depot closed in the 1990s and the buildings were demolished, the site now being empty awaiting redevelopment as Liverpool Digital.

Timeline

- 1904 - St. Sebastian's mission opened, with Fr. Clark as Priest in Charge.
- 1909 - St. Sebastian's School opened.
- 1910 - St. Sebastian's Saint Vincent de Paul Society founded by Fr. Clark.
- 1913 - Foundation Stone of church laid.
- 1916 - Church opened
- 1919 - Fr. Gorman appointed Parish Priest.
- 1928 - New School building opened in Lockerby Road.
- 1934 - Fr. Wareing appointed Parish Priest.
- 1940 - Bomb dropped on St. Sebastian's
- 1949 - Church re-opens after wartime damage repaired.
- 1969 - Fr. Reynolds appointed as Parish Priest
- 1980 - New school building opened in Holly Road
- 1982 - Fr. Kelly appointed as Parish Priest
- 2004 - St. Sebastian's celebrates its centenary
- 2009 - Fr. Kelly retires after 26 years as Parish priest
- 2009 - Fr. Mark Beattie appointed as Parish Priest
- 2020 - Fr. Liam Collister appointed as Parish Priest

Other Priest who have served St. Sebastian's parish

- Fr. Hutton: 1940s
- Fr. Flynn: 1940s
- Fr. Gordon: 1950s
- Fr. Brown: 1950s – 1960s
- Fr. Sturzaker: 1950s – 1960s
- Fr. Tarrant: 1962 – 1965
- Fr. Greaves
- Fr. Seddon
- Fr. Robinson
- Fr. Moore
- Fr. Garvey
- Fr. Devlin

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information here is correct. Please let us know if there are any errors, or if you have any information or pictures which you think might be added to our web site.