History of St. Joseph's St. Neots Parish

Author: Mr Michael McLoughlin - June 2023 revised April 2026

Foreword
I am indebted for the original research by the late Mrs. R. S. S. Cox, published as:
"The Return of the Church to an East Anglian Parish".
The book was researched and compiled in gratitude for the dedicated work, long and difficult, that Father A. E. Whyatt the first priest in the parish gave to St. Neots and to Father Laurence Howlin whose thirty years of unstinted labour remains in the memory of many residents in St. Neots.
I have added detail to this account, following further research. I am grateful to the parishioners of St. Joseph's who have provided me with their recollections, to the Archivists of the Dioceses of East Anglia and Northampton, the Bedfordshire County Archivist, Kimbolton Historical Society and St. Neots Museum. Also my thanks to Penny Jarrold for her invaluable assistance in the layout.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PRIORY OF ST. NEOTS.

The first foundation of the Priory of St. Neot occurred about the year of 974. A powerful Huntingdonshire nobleman and his wife Ethelfleda, who lived in Eynesbury, founded, and endowed a Priory in Eynesbury. Previously, with the aid of the Warden of the Shrine of St. Neot, Cornwall, and with the knowledge of King Edgar, they had stolen the body of St. Neot from the Cornwall shrine.

The people of Cornwall traced their Saint to Eynesbury, and much fighting would have taken place, however King Edgar sent soldiers to Eynesbury with orders to drive the Cornish men out of the village, which they did without any bloodshed.

Earl Alfric raised a chapel over the body and converted the former palace of Earl Elfrid into a monastery. Situated on the east bank, on the north side of the town, the name was changed to Neotsbury, in honour of the Saint.
The Saxon buildings after the Norman Conquest were found to be so damaged by the Danes that they had to be rebuilt. The Danes, during their frequent raids in the years 1003 to 1010 had pillaged and harried the countryside, so for safety's sake, the body of St. Neot was removed from the monastery, and placed in the care of the monks of Croyland.

The monks at St. Neots Priory usually twelve to fifteen in number, were drawn from the Benedictines of Ely and Thorney, but after the Norman Conquest they were replaced for a time with French monks, from the Mother House founded in 1060 - the Abbey Bec-Hellouin - by Abbot Anselm.

Rohais, wife of Richard Fitz-Gilbert de Clare in 1113 gave to the monks the whole of her manor of Saint Neots, thus becoming the second foundress. The Foundation Charter was then given to the Monastery. The body of St. Neot was returned and placed in the church in 1142.

The Church of St. Mary, St. Neots was most likely erected and given to the Priory about 1179.
At the time of the Dissolution 1534, John Rawnds was the Prior, eleven monks signed the "Acknowledgement of the King's Supremacy" seven received pensions at the surrender on the 21st December 1539.
On 18th February 1542 the site of the Priory was granted by the Crown to Sir William Cromwell of Hinchingbrooke, a great favourite of the King.
Around the year 1589 the ruins of the Priory were used as a stone quarry to build the adjoining bridge over the river Ouse.

An interesting note - interred in the Priory "God's Acre" were:

The Warden of St. Neots shrine in Cornwall at the end of the tenth century.
Simon de St. Liz, 1st Earl of Huntingdon during the reign of William Rufus.
Richard Fitz William de Clare, husband of the Foundress during the reign of William Rufus.
Robert de Clare. baron of Dunmow, 5th son of Rohais in 1134.
Henry de Alnot, Lord of Turvey, who gave a great deal to the Priory, in Stephen's reign.
Stephen de Eschalers, Lord of Caxton during 1160.
Sir William Avenel, Lord of Gamlingay during 1250

After the Dissolution, Catholicism went underground in the towns and countryside of East Anglia.
As late as the nineteen-thirties signs and traces of St. Neots Priory and Croyland Abbey could still be found, as the following advertisement shows:

"**St. Neots Advertiser 25th July 1930 Lot 2**
Ancient shrine sold at Sotheby's for £4800.
12"long, 10.5"wide, 4.75" broad"

Oak, plated over with copper on which figures are chased in gold; ground enamelled with blue. In the ridge above the top are three oval crystals set transparently. It is thought to belong in the past to Croyland Abbey and is believed to be Saxon - giving the murder of the Abbot and the monks by the Danes AD 870- and the burial of the martyred Abbot Theodore by his successor Gadric (some part of Theodore might have been preserved in this shrine).
This shrine was in the possession of the Pullyens family at one time. The hatchment of Robert Pullyens 1683 was in the chancel of St. Neots church until the fabric was restored in 1847/8.

THE TINY CHAPEL AT KIMBOLTON.

Kimbolton, a village a few miles outside St. Neots, was once a Saxon settlement, about the year 1200 it became a planned medieval market town with its church and castle.
Queen Katherine of Aragon died in the green drawing room of its castle in January 1536, abandoned by her husband, Henry VIII, she died in a very depleted household, with few attendants around her.

It is difficult to trace any remaining Catholics from her household after her death, or others left in the area, probably around Buckden and Kimbolton some did remain to continue their lives, because Father Collins in his "Riding Missions" research finds that on 19th June 1768 Bishop Thomas Talbot confirmed nine Catholics at Great Staughton, Hunts. He also says on the 16th June 1757, a son, Thomas, was born to Ursula Devy and her husband Thomas Bloodsworth in Kimbolton, Hunts.

This son became Father Thomas Bloodsworth, he was educated at Sedgley Park and Valladolid, ordained in 1781 he spent his missionary life in Derby where he died in 1815.
Father Alban Butler, in a letter he wrote on the 17th of February 1763 mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Hughes of Staughton. Father Collins also mentions that at the confirmation on the 19th June 1768 at Staughton, and one at Benefield in Northamptonshire on the 20th June 1768, the Pastor is given as "R.D. Barnwel." He feels that it seems reasonable that Father Barnewall was living either in Benefield or Great Staughton at that time.

However, on the 29th June 1823, Dr. Milner D.D. Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District, writes to the Rev. William Foley (whom he ordained on the 25th February 1820):

> *Dear Sir,*
> *If, in your intended journey, you should pass through Northampton, I wish you to call on Mr. Danegani, Jeweller in Gold Street, to inquire of him what number of Catholics there is in the town, and whether Dr. Fletcher continues to go thither to attend the sick. Other Catholics there, are Mr. Owen Brennan, bootmaker John Brady.*
> *If you go into Cambridgeshire, be pleased to make the same inquiries. respecting the county town and its neighbourhood, of Richard Huddleson Esq; of Sawston Hall about six miles south of Cambridge. Dr. Michael can inform you of what relates to Stamford, as can the Rev. Mr. Hayes of Kingscliff should you see either of them.*
> *I believe but I am not certain that a Mr. Clark, a Catholic resides at Buckden. A Mr. Mc… an Irish farmer lives at Peterborough'.*
> *I do not intend to set off on my long journey eastwards till about Saturday week: In the meantime, if you should have any information to give me you will direct it hither. It will be sufficient to read to the parties concerned what I have written concerning them. Tomorrow to propose going to Worcester and Hereford.*
> *If Mr. Weedall rides his horse to London once, he will not do it a second time. My complements to him and Mr. Walsh. I shall have some accounts to settle with you after your return.*
> *That God may enlighten you, direct you, and strengthen you, as He did His Apostles of old, is the earnest prayer of*
> *"Dear Sir, your faithful Servt in xt Jesus" (Servant in Christ Jesus)*
> *J.M.*
> *Wolverhampton*

In a census taken for the diocese of Northampton the 30th August 1851 it states that the county of Huntingdonshire has no catholic churches, no Catholic chapels, no priests and no Catholics at Mass.
In 1862 Father James Duffy came to Ramsey to care for the Irish drovers there and build a church. In 1872 he started a move to Huntingdon- at that time he could have been the only priest serving in Huntingdonshire. In 1873 Father Patrick Duffy succeeded Father James Duffy, and completed the move to Huntingdon, but still served Ramsey.
Sixty-four years after Bishop Milner wrote his letter of 29th June 1823, in January 1887 a Mr. Carter of Kimbolton was corresponding with an obvious friend, Father John Morris, a Jesuit, about the room in his house which he wished to change into an Oratory (a small private chapel) It must be envisaged that there were enough Catholics in the area to form a congregation. Up to this point in time, the Catholics whenever possible, had met in the room over the archway of the "White House" situated in the High Street, Kimbolton, opposite St. Andrews Church.



The "Carter Family" were direct descendants of the Venerable William Carter, who was martyred for the Faith on 11th January 1536.

Mr. Joseph Fabian Carter was born in Brampton, Hunts. He was born four years after the creation of the eight vicariates in 1840 when Dr. Wareing, Vicar Apostolic, was transferred from the former Eastern District to the diocese of Northampton. Mr. Carter became Land Agent's clerk to the Kimbolton Estates owned by the Montagues.
In 1878 he purchased a property No.17 and 19 High Street, Kimbolton, where he lived with his wife Frances, and their growing family. During the year 1887, he proceeded with the plan to transform a back room of No.17 into a Chapel. Father John Morris S.J. was approached and gave his assistance.

Letters to Mr. Carter pertaining to the chapel: - Stonyhurst College, Blackburn.
January 22nd 1887

Dear Mr. Carter,

I have left Menevia, and my home is now Stonyhurst College. Your kind letter has just been forwarded to me, and I will do what I can to meet your pious wishes. Everybody is asking for relics and almost everybody is disappointed, for unfortunately they are very rare, but I will give you a little morsel of the hat of Blessed Thomas More, and of the cord with which Blessed Edmund Campion was bound.
If you could send me a reliquary I would have them properly put in for you and sealed, so that the Bishop would allow them to be exposed.
You will remember that they are a gift to you personally, and not to your Oratory, so that you can do with them what you please.
All next week my address will be St. Mary's Convent, York, and I shall return to Stonyhurst on the 3rd of February.
You are right in saying that the news seemed too good to be true. It came upon us unexpectedly! at least this did, that any should be raised to the Altars at once and by a sudden leap. God be thanked for it. The Decree for the Venerable is not signed yet and will not be till the outstanding 44 cases have been re-heard and decided. Please to pray hard that Fr. Henry Garnett may be admitted with the rest.

With kind regards,
I remain, dear Mr. Carter,
Yours very faithfully in J.C. (Jesus Christ)
John Morris. S.J. (Society of Jesuits)

On 18th May 1888, Father Duffy at Huntingdon was writing to the Bishop of Northampton

> ***"I will undertake to go to Kimbolton to say Mass for Mr. Carter for £1 and expenses. I consider £1 and expenses very just and satisfactory."***

From Mr. Carter to the Bishop:

My Lord Bishop,
Kimbolton,
St. Neots
27th May 1888.

At length I am able to reply to your Lordship's letter of the 21st inst. in which it is stated that you can arrange for a priest to go to Kimbolton now and then for an offering of £1 and expenses and that your Lordship would lend most requisites for Mass.
This room in my house, Altars also there remains, beyond what we can provide the requisites for Mass noted in the enclosed List written out by Father Duffy which he wished me to send on to your Lordship.
I will hold myself responsible to your Lordship that all things lent shall be reverently and safely kept.
Your Lordships Blessing is a great consolation to us and we look upon it as a sign of God's favour in our poor beginning.
I am, my Lord Bishop,
Your humble servant
Joseph F. Carter

On the 6th of June 1888 the Bishop of Northampton writes to Mr. Carter:

Dear Mr. Carter,
I enclose a list of things which are now ready for Kimbolton.
The two under cloths for the altar can easily be made: they should be of linen and should be about 3 feet long by the width of the table on which the altar stone is to be placed.
Candlesticks and wax candles can be procured or custom will do on a back stand.
I shall take the first opportunity of sending the things to Kimbolton to be called for, and shall write and say when sent.
I wish you to keep a small account book of receipts for Kimbolton being served and of payments: should the receipts to any visit exceed the payments agreed upon, viz £1 and expenses, then retain difference for next visit.
I forgot to say the server need not have cassock or cotta.
With a blessing,
Yours Sincerely in J.C.
+ Arthur Riddell,
Bishop of Northampton.

From Mr. Carter to the Bishop of Northampton:

Kimbolton
St. Neots
My Lord Bishop,
7th June 1888

The List of things which your Lordship has ready for Kimbolton is before me. I observe an Altar Stone in the list and therefore I beg leave to enclose herewith Postal Order £1 being the Fee due on Consecration of the Altar Stone.
All things required and not included in the List have been or will be at once provided- including Linen Under Cloths for the Altar, Candlesticks, and Wax Candles, Crucifix, Altar Cards, Missal (Ratisbon 1887) containing the New Mass of the English Martyrs, Book Stand and Cushion etc.
This arrangement is very acceptable to Miss. Martyn and myself, upon whom will jointly fall the responsibility of the Offering until it is necessary that some other mode of providing it arises- but as long as it pleases Almighty God in His Goodness to leave me health and employment the present arrangement as to Offering Ls will stand good.
We should like Father Duffy to come once during Each of the Eight Indulgences though perhaps it will be as well to begin with once every two months.
I went over to Huntingdon yesterday and had an interview with Father Duffy at his house to talk over with him certain arrangements for the Chapel. If your Lordship will kindly allow the parcel to be put on the Midland Rail addressed to me at Kimbolton it would be delivered at my own door. (by the van)
Your Lordship's direction that I should keep a small account book of Receipts for Kimbolton being served, and of payments, has my careful attention and I have opened a small Cash Book of Receipts and payments this day. The sum that I am to hand over to the priest who takes the duty here is £1 and Expenses Each visit. This shall be done.
I wish I could say how grateful we all are for your Lordship's fatherly care.
Right Revd.
I remain,
Your Lordship's
Very humble servant in xt (Christ) Joseph F. Carter.
The Lord Bishop of Northampton.
Bishops House.

Sent to Kimbolton in a case on loan on from the Bishop of Northampton, 16th June 1888.

1 amice	1 alb
1 girdle	1 white vestment
1 red vestment	1 altar cloth
1 altar stone	1 confessional stole
1 corporal	1 mundatory
1 palla	

In 1888 the chapel was served from Huntingdon, and the few catholics who had met, whenever possible, in a room over the archway of the White house, were able to hear Mass rather frequently in the "Carter Chapel". By 1920 the priest from Rushden was saying mass in the Chapel, but after November 1946 when Father Whyatt, (St. Neots first parish priest) arrived, the chapel was served from St. Neots.

Joseph Fabian Carter died on the 11th August 1921, and his daughter Margaret, became the estate Agent and moved into Park Lodge. The Bishop gave his permission and the chapel was moved to Park Lodge, where Margaret and her oldest sister, Monica, took responsibility and care of the chapel.

In 1946 Miss. Monica Carter died, and Miss. Margaret Carter was again living in No.19 High Street, Kimbolton. When Mrs. Danes, an old lady living in the cottage in the garden of No.17, died, the cottage remained vacant.
Miss. Carter received permission from the Bishop of Northampton (by this time the Right Rev. Thomas L. Parker) for the cottage to become the tiny chapel. It was consecrated by the Bishop in 1949, and continued to serve the district for yet another forty years.

Bishop Parker was often an enthusiastic visitor to the chapel, and said Mass there whenever he could. Miss. Margaret Carter died in 1976.

Painted to order, by Mr. Lynch, at Westminster, in 1898.

THE MARTYRDOM AT TYBURN (A.D. 1584)
OF THE VENERABLE WILLIAM CARTER,
(AGED 36)
Printer and Bookseller,
A Londoner, of Tower Hill.

"Our martyr was apprenticed in 1562 when fourteen years old, by his parents, John and Agnes Carter to John Cawood (a sincere Catholic) the Queen's Printer, at the sign of the Holy Ghost in St. Paul's Churchyard for ten years." Afterwards Our Martyr became servant and amanuensis to Dr. Nicholas Harpsfield (a prisoner for the Faith) in the Tower, and on the death of Dr. Harpsfield he married and set up for himself in a shop on Tower Hill, devoting his life to the dissemination of Catholic literature. Amongst other good books he printed and issued under the greatest difficulties, a new edition, 1000 copies of Dr. Gregory Martin's "Treatise of Schism"; and after suffering fines, imprisonment and torture on the rack, in the Tower, finally on the morning of January 11th 1584, Our Martyr passed bravely through the last ordeal and bore the hacking and the mangling without faltering in his high purpose, his happy soul then went forth to receive from its Lord and King, the Glorious Palm, the reward which passes all knowledge and understanding.



(Kimbolton Chapel)

1988 saw the centenary of the opening of the Catholic Chapel in Kimbolton. The event was celebrated with a special Mass said by Father Howlin.
The local paper "West Cambs. Town Crier" on the 20th February 1988 includes in its article on Kimbolton, the chapel:- "Let's enter the village through the old door of the French Restaurant, La Cote D'or owned by charming Mr. and Mrs. Barry and Marie-Helene Beever. A good place to start."

It is probably the oldest part of the village, which goes back to the original planned medieval village of 1200. Mr. Beever is now a local character," he told the Town Crier,
"This restaurant was part of Carter's Cottage, owned by Catholic Miss. Carter, whose ancestor was a saint. We have a ghost upstairs who walks during the early hours of the morning. I have heard something walking about. Miss. Carter told us he was a monk.

A spiritualist who once visited the restaurant, also said there is a strong presence in the building - a spirit enters through the front door and goes upstairs.
Mr. Beever then took us to a Roman Catholic chapel, a tiny hideaway building which is little known even in Kimbolton, and is part of what was Carter's Cottages, (on the High Street opposite the New Sun Inn).
He said, in it is a plaque to the said saint and ancestor of Miss. Carter, the Venerable William Carter who was put to death on the rack in the sixteenth century for his Faith.

Four years previously, on the 1st April 1984, the "Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough Life" magazine says in its article on Kimbolton,

> *"Kimbolton is an out station of St. Neots. There is a tiny chapel here in an upper room where a congregation of twenty would cause an overflow down the exterior wooden stairway. The property was given to the parish by a Miss. Carter, a descendant of one of the English Martyrs, William Carter, a book seller who suffered at Tyburn in January 1584 for printing Catholic books and pamphlets. He had several warnings about not going to Divine Service as provided by Act of Parliament and was confined to the parish of St. Olave in London, being especially forbidden to harbour `massing priests'.*

His house was raided by the notorious torturer, Topcliffe, in 1582, and chalices, vestments and Catholic books were discovered. He was racked in vain to make him disclose the name of the owner but all that could be wrung from him was the name of “Jesus.”

The Carter family wished the Chapel to be a memorial to the Venerable William Carter, and for just over a hundred years it was.

Many Catholics, including the Lovat Scouts regiment of the First World War, the RAF airmen from Kimbolton aerodrome, and the American Flying Fortress crews who followed the RAF during the Second World War, the Italian POW's, and pupils from Kimbolton School, would find a place for prayer and peace, in this quiet hideaway.
The American padre donated statues to the Chapel on the cessation of hostilities. The Italian POW's made the Stations of the Cross which still hang in the Chapel today.
During its century, the chapel gave to the Faith, a Notre Dame nun, and three priests. Joseph Fabian Carter's daughter Lucy who professed her vows in Glasgow, a grandson Wilfred, ordained in Bruges, and Wilfred's brother Anthony, a Josephite priest ordained in Westminster Cathedral, and a great grandson, a Jesuit priest in Australia.
But on the retirement of Father Howlin in September 1989, the future of the Chapel was in jeopardy, and it was closed.
The last Mass was said on the 26th October 1989, and its loyal congregation dispersed. (See Fr. Dennis below)



Entrance to Courtyard through the middle door leading to the building below



The building now an Airbnb. The entrance to the chapel on the first floor was by an external rickety wooden staircase to the right of the building.

The Kimbolton Local History Society published an article “Kimbolton’s Catholic Chapel” in their Journal No 28 of November 2024. The following is an extract recounting Kate Cranwell’s (a St. Joseph’s parishioner) experience of attending Mass in the chapel. “Members of the congregation came from not just Kimbolton itself, but also from several other villages in the area. I know one family came from Little Staughton, a mother and two children, another family came from Great Staughton, a mum, dad and three children. Then there were a handful from Kimbolton School, including the Brophy family. The kneelers were red felt cushions to protect your knees and the stations of the cross around the walls, were made from plaster of Paris and painted in primary colours. The small sacristy acted as a confessional with a screen to provide anonymity although of course, Father Howlin knew everyone's voice. After Mass some parishioners would stay and have a cup of tea with Miss. Carter, who had put the tea on in her sitting room well before Mass started. She boiled a large and heavy kettle on an old-fashioned fire with ovens on each side. The tea happily stewed from early morning and was ready when mass was over. I lived in Hail Weston and Father Howlin used to collect my mother Lidi Aubrey, and my sister and me for Mass at Kimbolton on Sundays. We went to Kimbolton because my mother was offered a lift with Father Howlin and in the early days she did not own her own car. In exchange, Father Howlin was given half a dozen eggs that our chickens had laid.”

ALL ROADS LEAD BACK.

Centuries came and went, Catholics were not plentiful in Huntingdonshire, everywhere in the county Cromwell's Puritan influence became very strong and remained so. Chapels, Puritan, Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist abound even today often in small villages overshadowing, at times, the Established church, but In 1792 the shop on the north side of the Market Square (now trading as "Four Seasons” In 2023 an Estate Agent) was bought by Samuel Fairey, a weaver, and a trustee of the Particular Baptist Church.
The Fairey family kept the shop, trading as drapers and milliners until 1873, many of the Fairey’s were also trustees of the Chapel.

In 1873 Chas Fairey's widow sold the shop to John Beagarie, who in turn sold the property to Tom Armstrong in 1897. He opened the shop in name of "Bon Marche".
The end of the First World War came in January 1919, the St. Francis Magazine (the diocesan magazine for Northampton) states that there are less than one hundred Catholics in Huntingdonshire.
Tom Armstrong in 1918/19 sold the property to Miss. Forbes, a Catholic from Scotland, and Miss. Egan an Irish Catholic.

They called their millinery establishment "Marie and Frances". They, in turn, retired in the late nineteen thirties and sold to an Irishman who parted with the property, which was then leased to Mrs. Foot, trading as "Avril."
In 1918 Father Heptonstall from Huntingdon founded his mission to St. Neots, and began it by saying Mass in the "upper room", above Marie and Frances.

In the photo below (late 1918 or early 1919) the shop can just be made out by looking at the building to the right of the column. The shop (as at 2023) is Number 11 an estate agent.



(Photo courtesy of St. Neots Museum.)

Priory Lane, at the back of the shop, was the site of the east end of the Priory church yard, burials have often been found in, and around here, together with remains and stones of the Priory - so it was very fitting that the Mass was first said again in the flat above the shop built on Priory land. The known Catholics in the town, at that time, who heard that first Mass were just a handful: -

The Neal family, the father a well-known man in town, an ex-soldier, having a shoemaker and menders shop in Cambridge Street, his wife, daughters Gertrude, Mabel, Margaret, J, Sheila, and son Charles.
Mr. and Mrs. Whiddett with their three daughters, Lily, Vera and Eilleen and son, Raymond who was killed while serving in the forces during the Second World War.

Amy Lucy Meade, a member of the Franks family, whose aunt was married to the Rev. Meade, Vicar of St. Mary's, St. Neots 1873 to 1902. Her family owned much property in the town, including the shop in the High Street, now "Brittains" furniture shop, (closed in 2023) Cressener Terrace, and Cressener House, bought from Miss. Meade by the U.D.C. (Urban District Council) for use as its offices in 1938.

On 12th November 1918 Father Heptonstall acquired a site in Eaton Ford for £365, a plan of which he sent to the Diocese of Northampton Finance Committee. The site on St. Neots Road was a three-acre field with 145 feet frontage and at the time became known as the Catholic field.



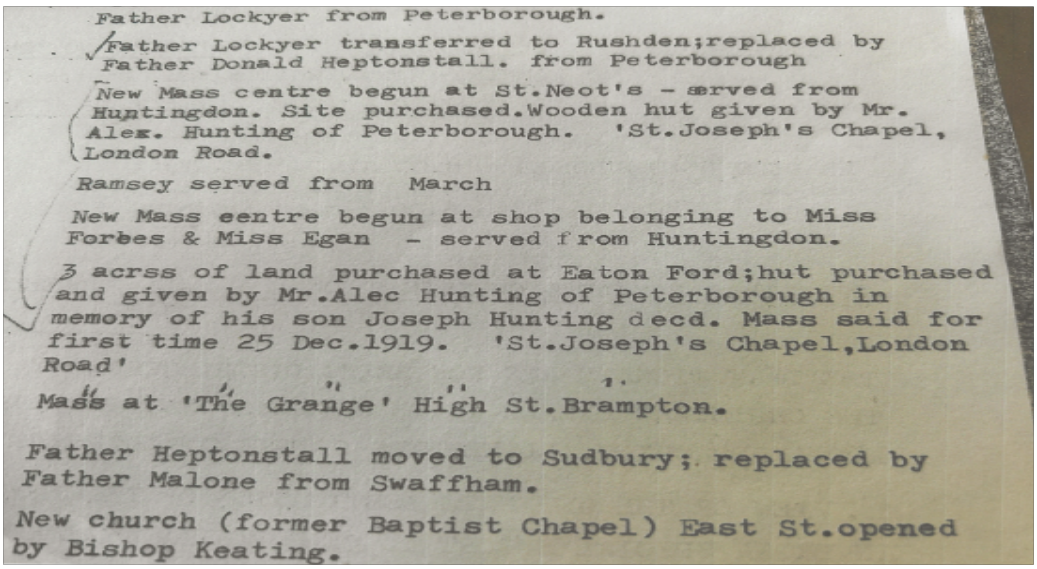
The above ordnance survey map (courtesy Bedfordshire archives) from 1902 amended by the county surveyor in 1922 shows the site of the hut as item 45. Part of the 3-acre field was rented out to a Mr. Brittain for grazing. In my research of church records the road is recorded as London Road. However local records have no mention of a London Road in the area. (Although the road is going away from St. Neots and does lead to London) Today, (2023) the area is occupied by an Anglian Water pumping station and bungalows.

Just a year later on the 11th November 1919, Father Heptonstall again contacted the Finance Committee, this time requesting a loan of £200 with which to purchase a World War One army hut and furnish it as a church. It was granted with interest at 4% per annum.



(Photo courtesy rcdea.org.uk archives.)

The loan's interest was assured by rent from part of the rented site to a Mr. Brittain for grazing which had been handed over to the Diocesan trustees.
Mr. Alec Hunting of Peterborough had been very generous with his gift towards the purchase, and so the first Catholic Church -although a temporary one was created in the parish of St. Neots.



Father Lockyer from Peterborough.

Father Lockyer transferred to Rushden;replaced by Father Donald Heptonstall. from Peterborough

New Mass centre begun at St.Neot's - served from Huntingdon. Site purchased.Wooden hut given by Mr. Alex. Hunting of Peterborough. 'St.Joseph's Chapel, London Road.

Ramsey served from March

New Mass centre begun at shop belonging to Miss Forbes & Miss Egan - served from Huntingdon.

3 acrss of land purchased at Eaton Ford;hut purchased and given by Mr.Alec Hunting of Peterborough in memory of his son Joseph Hunting decd. Mass said for first time 25 Dec.1919. 'St.Joseph's Chapel,London Road'

Mass at 'The Grange' High St.Brampton.

Father Heptonstall moved to Sudbury; replaced by Father Malone from Swaffham.

New church (former Baptist Chapel) East St.opened by Bishop Keating.

(Courtesy rcdn archives)

Mass was still served from Huntingdon, the congregation (so I have been told) fluctuated, but remained small, Catholics being very much in the minority surrounded by Nonconformists, now sincere Wesleyans, Congregationalists and Methodists who did rather resent the arrival of the hut and its congregation. The field just beyond Cross Hall Road where the first Catholic Church since the Reformation was sited, is still known as the Catholic Field. (Although it is only so by the eldest residents of St. Neots.)

In 1930 the 1914/18 army hut was dismantled, taken down and given to Woburn Sands, it was re-erected on a site at the corner of Theydon Avenue. Here I heard Mass in my youth. It, at that time, was the nearest Catholic Church to my home. The priest, Father Banham, lived in Wood Street, and said Mass at Bletchley also.

HOW HISTORY CAN REPEAT ITS STORY.
In the early 1870's twenty or so members of the Particular Baptist Chapel in New Street had a dispute with their pastor, among them a Mr. R. Fairey of the family who at one time owned the millinery shop in the Market Square. Mr. R. Fairey gave the ground in East Street, on which to build another chapel, to the opposing faction in 1873. The chapel was built by William Jackson who lived in New Street, at a cost of £900. The Foundation Stone was laid by Mr. H. Varley on the 28th June 1873. The new chapel seated 300, and the Rev. J. Wyard (previously co-pastor with the Rev. G. Murrell at the New Street Baptist Chapel) became its first pastor.

Six months after the opening the Rev. C.H. Spurgeon (A well-known Baptist preacher) visited the chapel. The crowd was so great - estimated 800 people - the meeting had to be transferred to the Wesleyan Chapel in Huntingdon Street. The chapel was demolished in1964 and the site is now occupied by the Co-Op funeral home.



(Wesleyan Chapel, photo courtesy St. Neots museum)

Alas, however by 1930 the congregation was so small, they could not finance the chapel- and so, by 1931 a small group of Catholics were hearing Mass in the late Baptist Chapel in East Street!

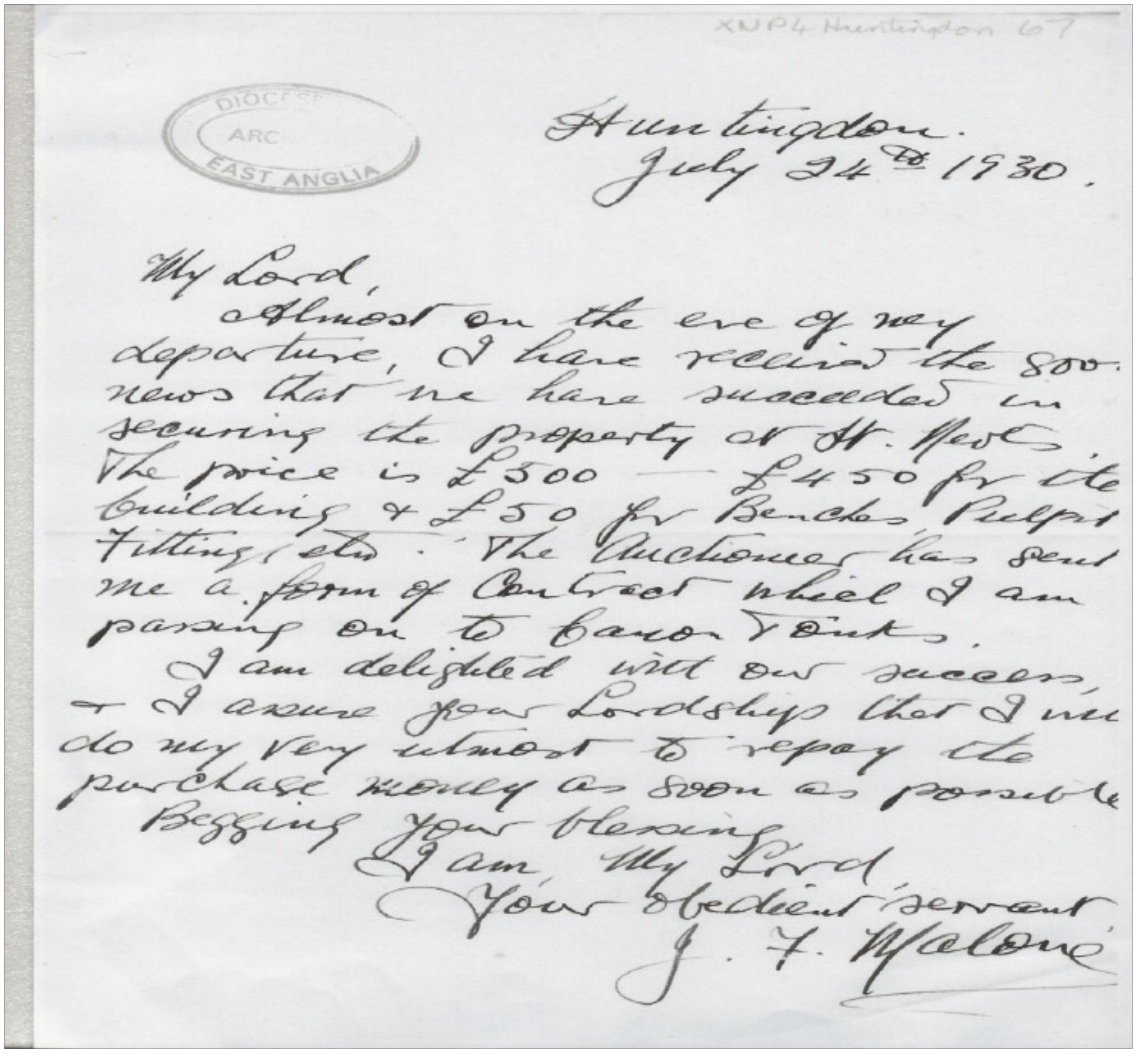
This advertisement appeared on Friday 13th June 1930 in the local paper.

"St. Neots Advertiser, Hunts and Beds News."
S.V. Ekins. F.A.I. (In present hands 28 years) Offices, New Street. St Neots
East Street, St Neots,
For Sale by Private Treaty
All that Substantially Built Brick and Slated Freehold Property formerly used and known as "East Street Baptist Chapel" comprising Main Hall 53ft by 32ft and Lofty School Room, Vestry, Ante-room and other offices, with Main and Side Entrances. Frontage 50ft and Depth 85ft or thereabouts.
For further particulars, and to view, apply to S.V. Ekins, St Neots.

When the chapel was put up for sale only two buyers came forward; a Cinema Company and the Catholic Diocese of Northampton. Great antagonism and open hostility was shown by the chapels, Plymouth Brethren, and many residents, to the Catholic Diocese. Meetings and demonstrations were held, in fact feelings ran quite high in the "Oliver Cromwell" county of Huntingdonshire.

Finally, it was purchased by Mr. F. W. Bellamy, a local builder, for an anonymous client.

Sometime after the Second World War had ended, Mr. Bellamy who lived in Rycroft Avenue, related the story to me. He was a very respected councillor on the Urban District Council, and if I remember correctly, a Chapel member. He felt that the cinema was the greater evil, and so negotiated for an anonymous client, "The Catholic Diocese of Northampton".


XNP4 Huntingdon 67

DIOCESE ARC EAST ANGLIA

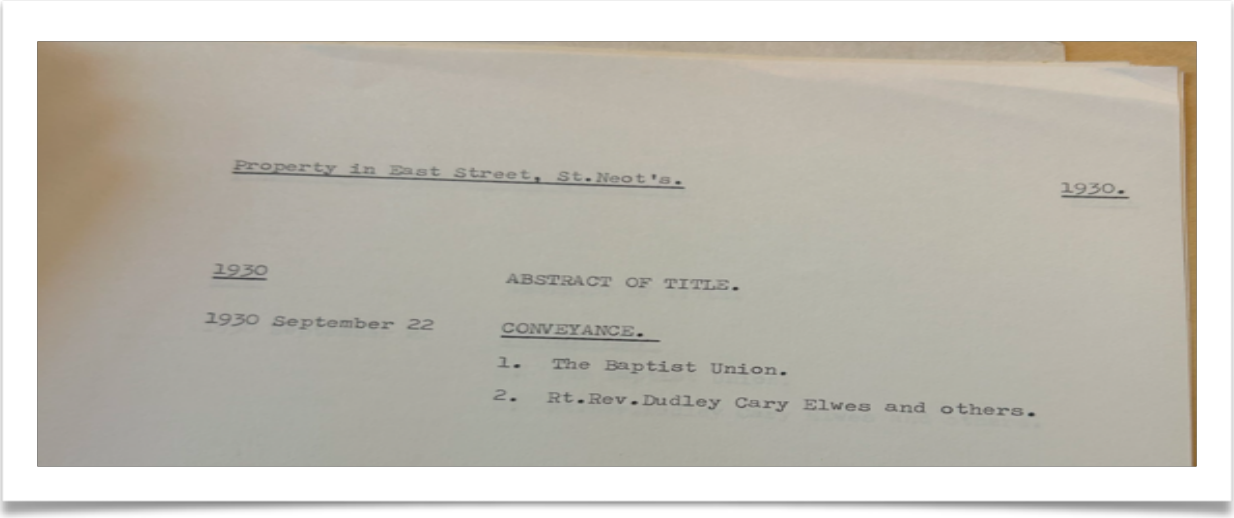
Huntingdon.
July 24th 1930.

My Lord,

almost on the eve of my departure, I have received the good news that we have succeeded in securing the property of St. Neots. The price is £500 — £450 for the building & £50 for Benches, Pulpit, Fittings, etc. The Auctioneer has sent me a form of Contract which I am passing on to Canon Dinks.

I am delighted with our success, & I assure your Lordship that I will do my very utmost to repay the purchase money as soon as possible.

Begging your blessing,
I am, My Lord,
Your obedient servant
J. F. Malone



Property in East Street, St.Neot's. 1930.

1930 ABSTRACT OF TITLE.

1930 September 22 CONVEYANCE.

1. The Baptist Union.
2. Rt.Rev.Dudley Cary Elwes and others.

(Above two articles courtesy rcdn archives)

The archives in the Bishop's House in Northampton have a letter from Rev. Father Filmer of the Guild of Ransom. It is dated 28th October 1930:-

> "My Lord Bishop,
> We shall have more money than usual to distribute from the Church Extension Fund this year, and I am wondering whether it would meet with your Lordship's approval, if besides the usual grant to your diocese, we paid for the necessary alterations to the Chapel that has been acquired at St. Neots."

The Bishop's approval expressing his grateful thanks was sent, and £850 arrived.

The work of renovating and converting the building was carried out by the local workmen and craftsmen. The archivist and surveyor was Mr. A. S. G. Butler, F.R.B.A. Westminster.

During the alterations, Mr. Ashley, the local stonemason was brought in to carve the stonework, he also carved the stone cross over the porch. A lady from Huntingdon painted the angels each side of the tabernacle, the children were very fond of these. Later on Father Atkinson redesigned the altar, and covered them with red material, they remain underneath this undamaged.

Mass was served from Huntingdon often by Father Hardwick, each Sunday and Holyday. Mass was at 9:30a.m. except on the first Sunday of each month, this mass (at which no-one could receive the Blessed Sacrament, classified as a High Mass) was said at 10a.m.

Confessions were heard after Mass except on the "first Sunday." Congregations were still quite small, mostly St. Neots residents, maybe a few visitors.

The opening ceremony on the 22nd of April 1931 was a solemn and splendid one.
Sadly Father Malone, who served St. Neots from Huntingdon was ill and not present on this important occasion. The priests from the parishes around were all there-

Very Rev.: Canon Garnett,
Rev. Father Banham (Woburn Sands),
Father Dalby,
Father Gray,
Father Lockyer (Huntingdon),
Father Nutt, (Rushden),
Father Scott,
and Father Stokes.
Canon Marshall,
Father Cassen,
Father Emery,
Father Ketterer,
Father McGregor,
Father Purcell,
Father Smith.

His Lordship the Bishop (Bishop Elwes) presided and was assisted by the Very Rev. Canons Tonks and Youens-Bedford.
The Rev. J.H. Filmer, Master of the Guild of Ransom, was the celebrant of the Solemn High Mass, Father Heptonstall acting as Deacon, and Father Clare as Sub-deacon.
The M.C's were Fathers Ketterer and Rudderham. Mr. Clarence Mills was the organist, and the Cambridge Choir provided the chorus.



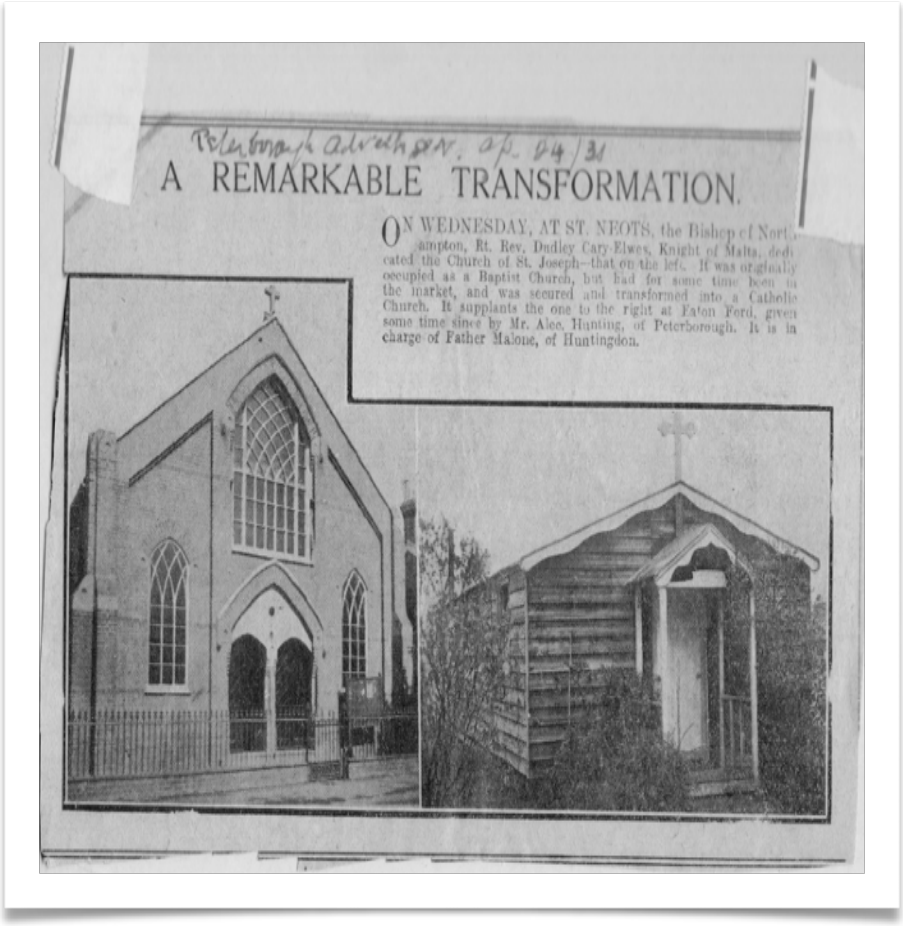








(above 5 photos courtesy rcdea.org.uk archives)

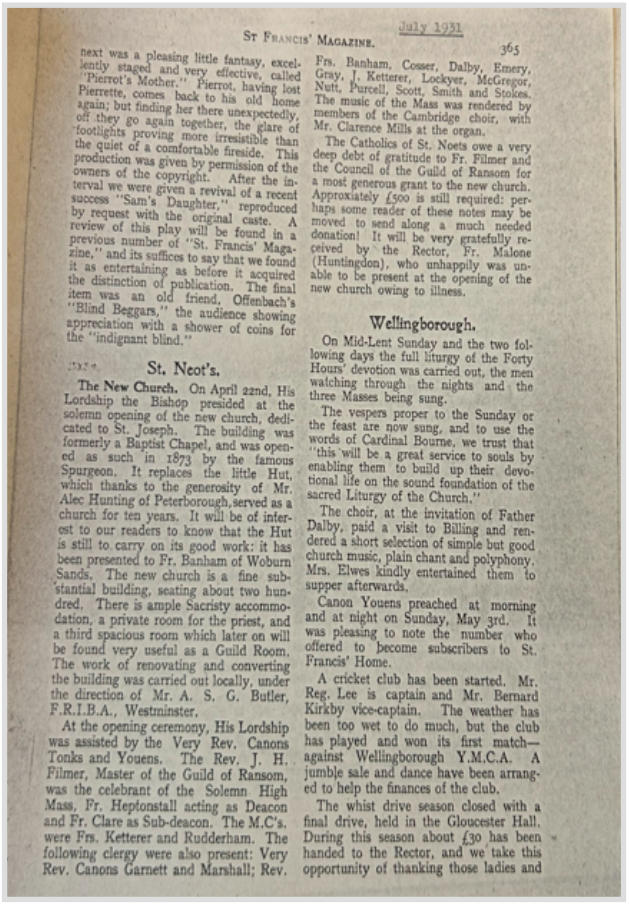


Peterborough advertiser, 4/7/31

A REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION.

ON WEDNESDAY, AT ST. NEOTS, the Bishop of Northampton, Rt. Rev. Dudley Cary-Elwes, Knight of Malta, dedicated the Church of St. Joseph—that on the left. It was originally occupied as a Baptist Church, but had for some time been in the market, and was secured and transformed into a Catholic Church. It supplants the one to the right at Eaton Ford, given some time since by Mr. Alec. Hunting, of Peterborough. It is in charge of Father Malone, of Huntingdon.

(3 items courtesy rcdn archives)



ST FRANCIS' MAGAZINE. July 1931 365

next was a pleasing little fantasy, excellently staged and very effective, called "Pierrot's Mother." Pierrot, having lost Pierrette, comes back to his old home again; but finding her there unexpectedly, off they go again together, the glare of footlights proving more irresistible than the quiet of a comfortable fireside. This production was given by permission of the owners of the copyright. After the interval we were given a revival of a recent success "Sam's Daughter," reproduced by request with the original caste. A review of this play will be found in a previous number of "St. Francis' Magazine," and its suffices to say that we found it as entertaining as before it acquired the distinction of publication. The final item was an old friend, Offenbach's "Blind Beggars," the audience showing appreciation with a shower of coins for the "indignant blind."

St. Neot's.

The New Church. On April 22nd, His Lordship the Bishop presided at the solemn opening of the new church, dedicated to St. Joseph. The building was formerly a Baptist Chapel, and was opened as such in 1873 by the famous Spurgeon. It replaces the little Hut, which thanks to the generosity of Mr. Alec Hunting of Peterborough, served as a church for ten years. It will be of interest to our readers to know that the Hut is still to carry on its good work: it has been presented to Fr. Banham of Woburn Sands. The new church is a fine substantial building, seating about two hundred. There is ample Sacristy accommodation, a private room for the priest, and a third spacious room which later on will be found very useful as a Guild Room. The work of renovating and converting the building was carried out locally, under the direction of Mr. A. S. G. Butler, F.R.I.B.A., Westminster.

At the opening ceremony, His Lordship was assisted by the Very Rev. Canons Tonks and Youens. The Rev. J. H. Filmer, Master of the Guild of Ransom, was the celebrant of the Solemn High Mass, Fr. Heptonstall acting as Deacon and Fr. Clare as Sub-deacon. The M.C's. were Frs. Ketterer and Rudderham. The following clergy were also present: Very Rev. Canons Garnett and Marshall; Rev. Frs. Banham, Cosser, Dalby, Emery, Gray, J. Ketterer, Lockyer, McGregor, Nutt, Purcell, Scott, Smith and Stokes. The music of the Mass was rendered by members of the Cambridge choir, with Mr. Clarence Mills at the organ.

The Catholics of St. Neots owe a very deep debt of gratitude to Fr. Filmer and the Council of the Guild of Ransom for a most generous grant to the new church. Approxiately £500 is still required: perhaps some reader of these notes may be moved to send along a much needed donation! It will be very gratefully received by the Rector, Fr. Malone (Huntingdon), who unhappily was unable to be present at the opening of the new church owing to illness.

Wellingborough.

On Mid-Lent Sunday and the two following days the full liturgy of the Forty Hours' devotion was carried out, the men watching through the nights and the three Masses being sung.

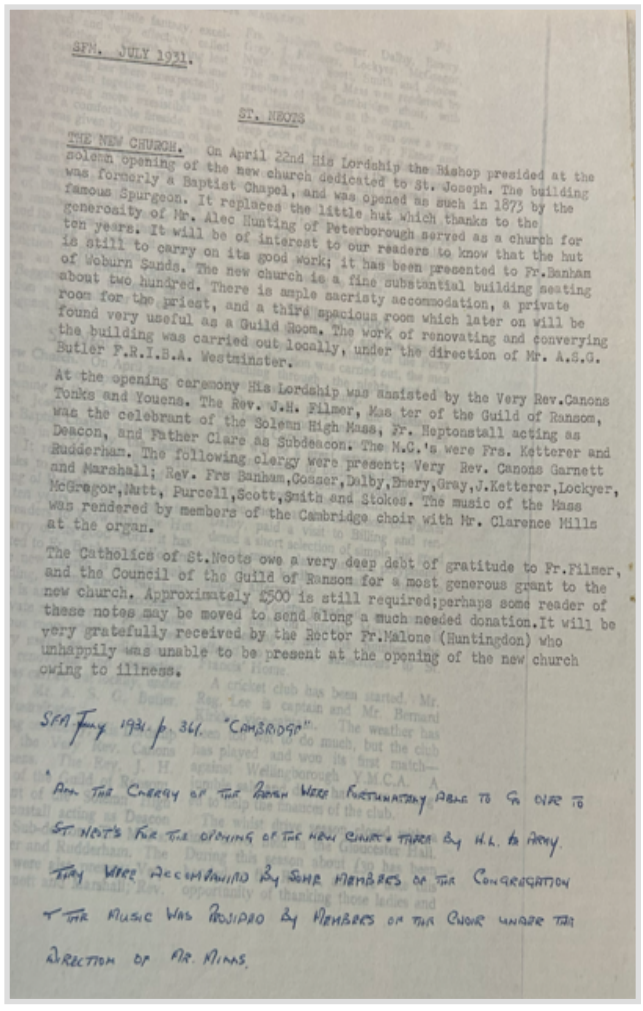
The vespers proper to the Sunday or the feast are now sung, and to use the words of Cardinal Bourne, we trust that "this will be a great service to souls by enabling them to build up their devotional life on the sound foundation of the sacred Liturgy of the Church."

The choir, at the invitation of Father Dalby, paid a visit to Billing and rendered a short selection of simple but good church music, plain chant and polyphony. Mrs. Elwes kindly entertained them to supper afterwards.

Canon Youens preached at morning and at night on Sunday, May 3rd. It was pleasing to note the number who offered to become subscribers to St. Francis' Home.

A cricket club has been started. Mr. Reg. Lee is captain and Mr. Bernard Kirkby vice-captain. The weather has been too wet to do much, but the club has played and won its first match—against Wellingborough Y.M.C.A. A jumble sale and dance have been arranged to help the finances of the club.

The whist drive season closed with a final drive, held in the Gloucester Hall. During this season about £30 has been handed to the Rector, and we take this opportunity of thanking those ladies and



SFM. JULY 1931.

ST. NEOTS

THE NEW CHURCH. On April 22nd His Lordship the Bishop presided at the solemn opening of the new church dedicated to St. Joseph. The building was formerly a Baptist Chapel, and was opened as such in 1873 by the famous Spurgeon. It replaces the little hut which thanks to the generosity of Mr. Alec Hunting of Peterborough served as a church for ten years. It will be of interest to our readers to know that the hut is still to carry on its good work; it has been presented to Fr.Banham of Woburn Sands. The new church is a fine substantial building seating about two hundred. There is ample sacristy accommodation, a private room for the priest, and a third spacious room which later on will be found very useful as a Guild Room. The work of renovating and converying the building was carried out locally, under the direction of Mr. A.S.G. Butler F.R.I.B.A. Westminster.

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SFA July 1931. p. 361. "CAMBRIDGE"

And the Clergy of the Parish were fortunately able to go over to St Neot's for the opening of the new church. There by H.L. to Mass. They were accompanied by some members of the Congregation & the Music was provided by Members of the Choir under the direction of Mr. Mills.

Extract from the Saint Francis magazine dated 5 July 1931. (the extract with written addendum)

number of converts to the Faith and the consequent natural increase in the congregation which is verified today. But, for the most, any marked change, which may have been constant or not according to the circumstances, has been brought about by an accession of population during the two wars. During the first war there must have been a number of Belgian refugees in the neighbourhood, as the Register shows that children of this nationality were baptised here at that time.

In 1918 Huntingdon established its "daughter-mission" at St. Neot's. In order to open a Mass-centre at this place it was necessary to obtain the bishop's permission for Huntingdon to relinquish the care of Ramsey, and this was granted in May of that year. On the first Sunday of August, Mass was offered in the show-room of Miss Forbes' and Miss Egan's shop, and eight people attended. Mass continued to be offered there each Sunday for eighteen months until a site of 3 acres was purchased at Eaton Ford, lying south of the river bridge, and an army hut was bought, in each case at the expense of Mr. Alec Hunting, of Peterborough, in memory of his son, Joseph Hunting, formerly known to Fr. Heptonstall, the priest at Huntingdon. The hut was put up, colour-washed inside and furnished (as the gift of Mr. George Joseph, a convert) and Mass was celebrated in it on Christmas Day, 1919.

The subsequent story of the mission at St. Neot's, which moved to East Street in the time of Fr. Malone, must be one of its own telling, since it is now a member apart with its own priest, who took up residence in quarters behind the present church on December 16th, 1948. Until this date St. Neot's continued to be served from Huntingdon.

It was probably between the wars that a bungalow, St. Michael's Lodge, was built on a site just west of the presbytery at Huntingdon. Mrs. Fanny Kirk Gregory, the owner and occupier of it for many years, left this as a legacy to the mission after her decease.

There are in the presbytery a number of water-colours of river and mountain scenes by the same donor, whose talent may also be seen in the text illustrations of a Life of St. Philip, edited by Fr. Kerr of the Oratory, of which there is a copy in the presbytery. The presbytery, as built in 1878, consisted of a double-fronted house of four rooms, with a small wing at the back having a kitchen and scullery below and a small bedroom above. It was not until 1936 that any alteration was made to allow for the inclusion of a bath room. Towards the end of that year a room was built over the scullery, and what had previously been a bedroom was converted into a passage and a bathroom. At that time also an Ideal boiler and hot-water system were installed in the church. From 1938 onwards much was done to simplify the furnishing of the sanctuary, with very pleasing effect. A domed tabernacle of steel and brass was presented by Mrs. Walter Fenwick of Stukeley Hall, who also gave the gilt throne for Exposition. Tabernacle veils and altar-frontals of the four colours were purchased, and a new white cope was presented by the Blessed Sacrament Guild. Considerable repairs had to be done at this time to the passage joining the church and presbytery, where dry-rot had done much damage.

In November, 1940, it was reported that a Sister of Charity and a lay teacher with a group of sixteen Catholic children from St. Peter's Italian School, Clerkenwell Road, London, had been billeted at Leighton, eleven miles from Huntingdon, with no chance of getting into Mass. They were only allowed the use of the village school on alternate days. Billets were found for them in Huntingdon and, in spite of opposition, they were transferred. A school was started at St. Michael's Lodge, and continued for four and a half years, with, at one time, 40 children attending. The local children were able to get a good grounding in the Faith. Sister Patricia also looked after the church, and she became well known and much respected in the town. In another way also Huntingdon was favoured. The new English oak benches, now being made by Messrs. Allen of Brampton, will be the gift of the many American Catholic servicemen who attended Mass here during the war and left money for this purpose.

On March 4th, 1941, Huntingdon was transferred from the Kings Lynn to the Cambridge Deanery. During the 1939-1945 war Mass was offered in very many places of the county, notably at Great Gransden, Gravely, Kimbolton, Staughton, Oldhurst, Diddington, Brampton, Alconbury, Abbots Ripton, Buckworth. Since the war the Huntingdon mission has resolved itself territorially into a fan which spreads north and west; St. Neot's has been cut off, and Ramsey has returned, the churches of both places being newly decorated and furnished, in the case of St. Neot's, with suitable pictures from Stukeley Hall; new floodlighting has been installed in the church at Huntingdon and much digging and felling has been done outside with the effect of brightening the exterior.

At the end of the war, on January 27th, 1945, Mrs. Bertha Temple-Layton, having returned to this district a few years previously, died at the age of 86. She wished to be associated with her husband in his benefactions and left money towards the endowment of the church which he had built. On March 7th of the present year many of the congregation at Ramsey were bereaved by the death of Mr. Edward Kelly, who was born at Mereside in the years when the Faith first began to return to the county.

R. C. ATKINSON.

ST.NEOTS, Beds.

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1919 coloured-washed inside and furnished (as the gift of Mr. George Joseph, a convert) and Mass was celebrated in it on Christmas Day 1919. (Northampton Diocesan Magazine. Autumn 1950).

1920 C.D. ST.NEOTS. (1918); St.Joseph's,London Road.Served from Huntingdon.

1931 ST.NEOT'S. The New Church. On April 22nd,His Lordship the Bishop presided at the solemn opening of the new church, dedicated to St.Joseph. The building was formerly a Baptist Chapel, and was oepened in 1873 by ~~by~~ch~~s~~ by the famous Spurgeon . It replaces the little hut, which thanks to the generosity of Mr. Alec Hunting of Peterborough,served as a church for ten years . It will be of interest to our readers to know that the hut is still to carry on its good work; it has been presented to Father Banham of Woburn Sands.The new church is a fine substantial building,seating about two hundred. There is ample sacristy accommodation, a private room for the priest,and a third spacious room which later on will be found very useful as a Guild Room. The work of renovating and converting the building was carried out locally,under the direction of Mr.A.S.G.Butler.F.R.I.B.A., Westminster.

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(Articles courtesy rcdn archives)



(photo courtesy rcdea.org.uk archives.)

(A modified article below from rcdea.org.uk archives.)

A former Baptist Chapel of the 1870s converted for Catholic use by A.S.G. Butler in 1931. The building is architecturally modest and typically Nonconformist in its free use of Gothic details, the interior character made more Catholic by a neo-baroque altarpiece designed by Butler. With the adjoining presbytery, a substantial mid-nineteenth century villa, it makes a positive contribution to the St. Neots Conservation Area.

The church was built as a Baptist Chapel by William Jackson of Saint Neots and C. H. Spurgeon preached at the opening on the 30 September 1873. It was acquired and converted to Catholic use in 1931 under the direction of A.S.G. Butler. The builder was F.W. Bellamy of St. Neots new windows were inserted, the roof renewed and a neo-baroque altar piece installed.

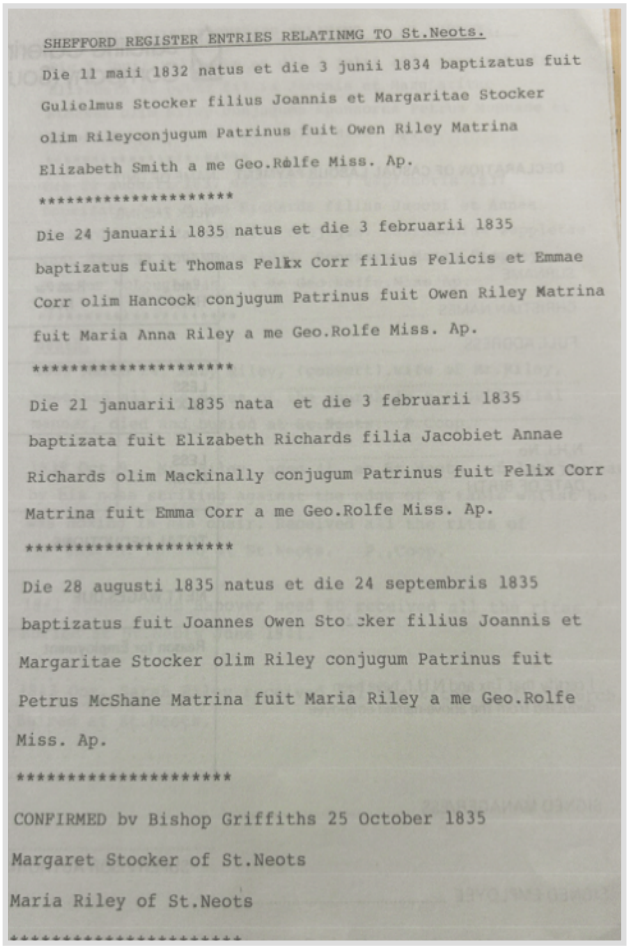
Description.

Erected as a Baptist Chapel in the 1870s, the building is characteristic of many Nonconformist places of worship in which a simple plain body is enhanced by simplified Gothic detail. The church is rectangular on plan, with walls of yellow brick laid in Flemish bond with banding and window arches of red brick, and roof coverings of natural slate. The main front to the street has paired central entrance doors under a pointed brick arch with a single window to either side with small panes and interlaced in the head. A much larger window with similar glazing pattern is set in the gable above the entrance doors. The side walls are divided into bays by simple stepped buttresses, and in each bay is a single window opening with a pointed brick arch on stone imposts.

The interior is a single space with a carpeted floor plain plastered walls and a boarded canted ceiling with the principal roof trusses exposed. The nave seating consists of modern benches. At the liturgical west end is a deep gallery supported on iron columns with a modern panelled front. The side windows are filled with tinted frosted glass of 1931. The sanctuary occupies the eastern bay and is marked only by a single step. Against the blind east wall is a neo-baroque altarpiece with marbled side pilasters. a broken pediment and a large modern painting of the nativity signed J.G (this replaces or overlays painted panels of angels and the entablature appears to have been raised to accommodate the new painting). The entablature bears the text **ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST**, (and the word was made flesh). It is flanked by statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph installed in 1931 (although the niches are later). Sanctuary furnishings also include some neo-Jacobean chairs. It should be noted that the altar sits above an area that was a “bath” where new members to the Baptist faith were baptised by total immersion.
Anti-Catholic feeling was still very strong, recently I met a man who was eighteen at the time - he told me that he and everyone he knew would cross the road, and pass the church on the opposite pavement. Catholics were not tolerated with any enthusiasm!

On my first visit in 1938, the congregation, (all St. Neots residents.) 1) Amy Lucy Meade of Cressener House
2) The Neal family, five daughters and one son, Charles who served on the altar.
3) The Fenton family, three sons Joseph, John and Timothy.
4) The Goddards- a retired couple who previously lived in Cambridge. 5) My fiancé and myself.
"A goodly congregation" observed the priest.
Father Tomlinson from 1938 to 1946 said the Mass, he came from Huntingdon each time.
The Second World War brought great changes, influx of evacuees from London's East End, many Irish workers building the power station at Little Barford, and the aerodromes in the vicinity; often service men on leave. The congregation became very large, but was still served from Huntingdon.
I came to St. Neots seldom during the war years, visiting my parents-in-law on an occasional forty-eight-hour leave, but I did manage to see the splendid chapel at Colmworth the Italian P.O.W.s had constructed from a Nissen hut.

The following Huntingdon parish priests served St. Neots from 1918 until 1946.
Fr. Donald Heptonstall 1918-1922
Fr. John Malone 1922-1936
Fr. William Hunting 1936-1938
Fr. Arthur Tomlinson 1938-1946
In 1946 St. Neots was officially recognised as a parish.



SHEFFORD REGISTER ENTRIES RELATINMG TO St.Neots.

Die 11 maii 1832 natus et die 3 junii 1834 baptizatus fuit Gulielmus Stocker filius Joannis et Margaritae Stocker olim Rileyconjugum Patrinus fuit Owen Riley Matrina Elizabeth Smith a me Geo.Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 24 januarii 1835 natus et die 3 februarii 1835 baptizatus fuit Thomas Felix Corr filius Felicis et Emmae Corr olim Hancock conjugum Patrinus fuit Owen Riley Matrina fuit Maria Anna Riley a me Geo.Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 21 januarii 1835 nata et die 3 februarii 1835 baptizata fuit Elizabeth Richards filia Jacobiet Annae Richards olim Mackinally conjugum Patrinus fuit Felix Corr Matrina fuit Emma Corr a me Geo.Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 28 augusti 1835 natus et die 24 septembris 1835 baptizatus fuit Joannes Owen Stocker filius Joannis et Margaritae Stocker olim Riley conjugum Patrinus fuit Petrus McShane Matrina fuit Maria Riley a me Geo.Rolfe Miss. Ap.

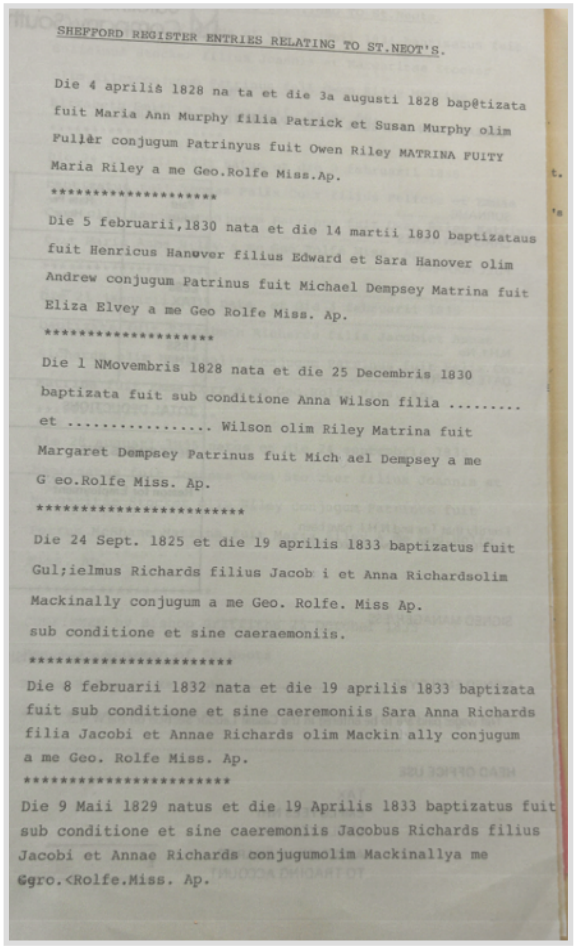
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CONFIRMED bv Bishop Griffiths 25 October 1835

Margaret Stocker of St.Neots

Maria Riley of St.Neots

****



SHEFFORD REGISTER ENTRIES RELATING TO ST.NEOT'S.

Die 4 aprilis 1828 natata et die 3a augusti 1828 baptizata fuit Maria Ann Murphy filia Patrick et Susan Murphy olim Fuller conjugum Patrinyus fuit Owen Riley MATRINA FUITY Maria Riley a me Geo.Rolfe Miss.Ap.

****

Die 5 februarii,1830 nata et die 14 martii 1830 baptizataus fuit Henricus Hanover filius Edward et Sara Hanover olim Andrew conjugum Patrinus fuit Michael Dempsey Matrina fuit Eliza Elvey a me Geo Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 1 NMovembris 1828 nata et die 25 Decembris 1830 baptizata fuit sub conditione Anna Wilson filia ..... et ..... Wilson olim Riley Matrina fuit Margaret Dempsey Patrinus fuit Mich ael Dempsey a me G eo.Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 24 Sept. 1825 et die 19 aprilis 1833 baptizatus fuit Gul;ielmus Richards filius Jacob i et Anna Richardsolim Mackinally conjugum a me Geo. Rolfe. Miss Ap. sub conditione et sine caeraemoniis.

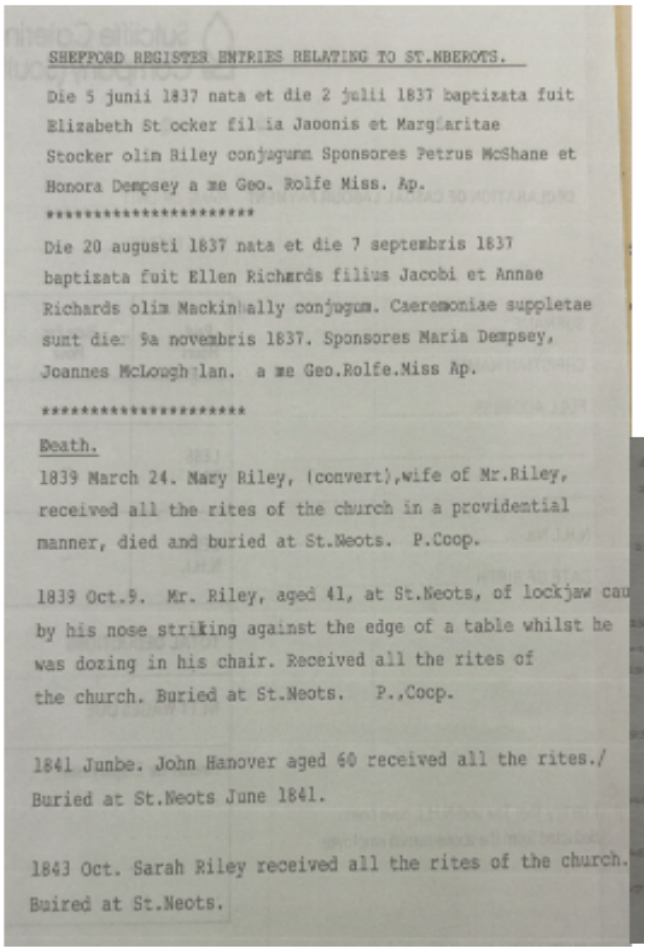
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Die 8 februarii 1832 nata et die 19 aprilis 1833 baptizata fuit sub conditione et sine caeremoniis Sara Anna Richards filia Jacobi et Annae Richards olim Mackin ally conjugum a me Geo. Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 9 Maii 1829 natus et die 19 Aprilis 1833 baptizatus fuit sub conditione et sine caeremoniis Jacobus Richards filius Jacobi et Annae Richards conjugumolim Mackinallya me Gro.<Rolfe.Miss. Ap.

The four extracts are from Shefford registers relating to St. Neots (courtesy rcdn archives).



SHEFFORD REGISTER ENTRIES RELATING TO ST.NEOTS.

Die 5 junii 1837 nata et die 2 julii 1837 baptizata fuit Elizabeth Stocker filia Jaconis et Margaritae Stocker olim Riley conjugum Sponsores Petrus McShane et Honora Dempsey a me Geo. Rolfe Miss. Ap.

****

Die 20 augusti 1837 nata et die 7 septembris 1837 baptizata fuit Ellen Richards filius Jacobi et Annae Richards olim Mackinally conjugum. Caeremoniae suppletae sunt die 9a novembris 1837. Sponsores Maria Dempsey, Joannes McLoughlan. a me Geo.Rolfe.Miss Ap.

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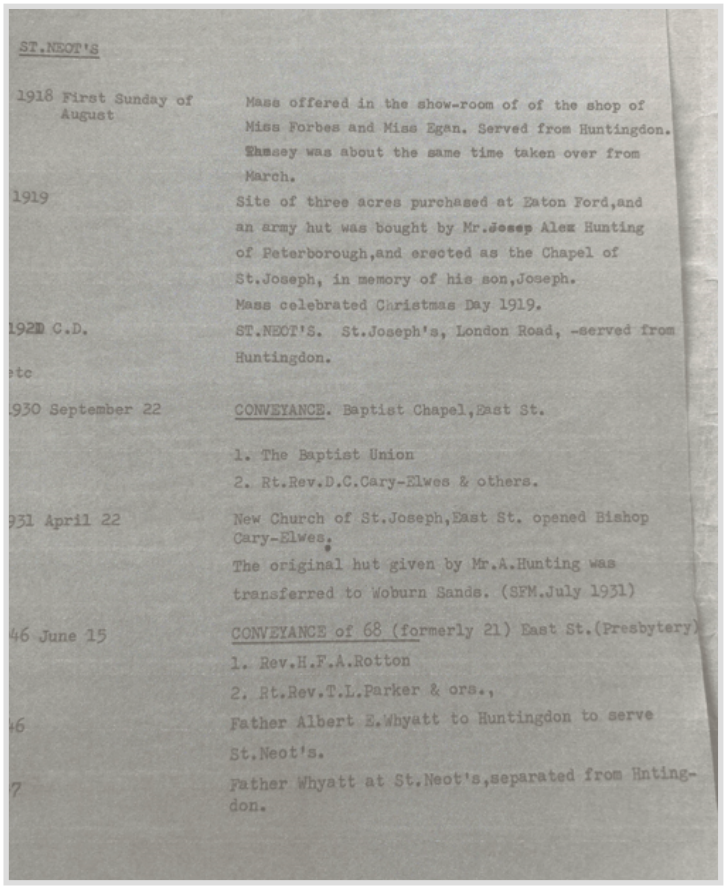
Death.

1839 March 24. Mary Riley, (convert),wife of Mr.Riley, received all the rites of the church in a providential manner, died and buried at St.Neots. P.Coop.

1839 Oct.9. Mr. Riley, aged 41, at St.Neots, of lockjaw cau by his nose striking against the edge of a table whilst he was dozing in his chair. Received all the rites of the church. Buried at St.Neots. P.,Coop.

1841 Junbe. John Hanover aged 60 received all the rites./ Buried at St.Neots June 1841.

1843 Oct. Sarah Riley received all the rites of the church. Buired at St.Neots.

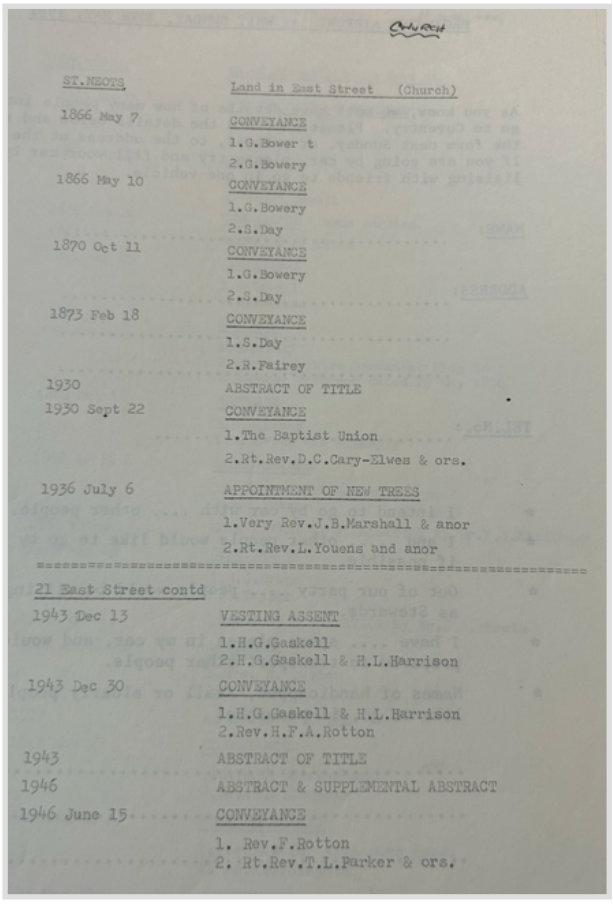


ST.NEOT'S

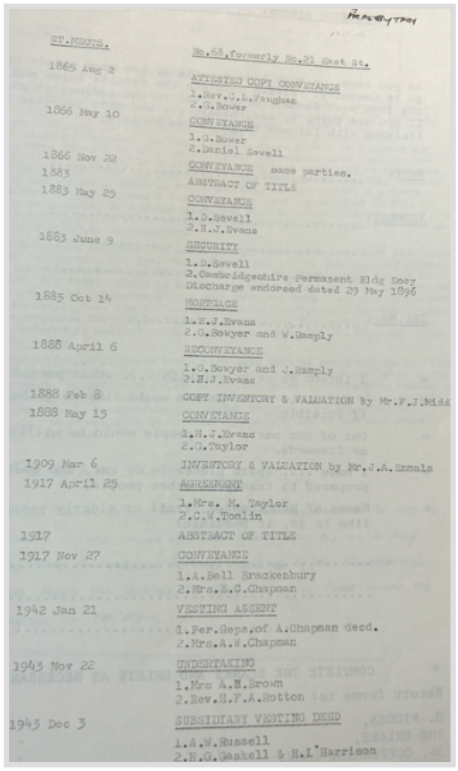
1918 First Sunday of August	Mass offered in the show-room of of the shop of Miss Forbes and Miss Egan. Served from Huntingdon. Ramsey was about the same time taken over from March.
1919	Site of three acres purchased at Eaton Ford,and an army hut was bought by Mr.Josep Alex Hunting of Peterborough,and erected as the Chapel of St.Joseph, in memory of his son,Joseph. Mass celebrated Christmas Day 1919.
192D C.D.	ST.NEOT'S. St.Joseph's, London Road, -served from Huntingdon.
etc	
930 September 22	CONVEYANCE. Baptist Chapel,East St. 1. The Baptist Union 2. Rt.Rev.D.C.Cary-Elwes & others.
931 April 22	New Church of St.Joseph,East St. opened Bishop Cary-Elwes. The original hut given by Mr.A.Hunting was transferred to Woburn Sands. (SFM.July 1931)
46 June 15	CONVEYANCE of 68 (formerly 21) East St.(Presbytery) 1. Rev.H.F.A.Rotton 2. Rt.Rev.T.L.Parker & ors.,
46	Father Albert E.Whyatt to Huntingdon to serve St.Neot's.
7	Father Whyatt at St.Neot's,separated from Hntingdon.

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOSEPH.

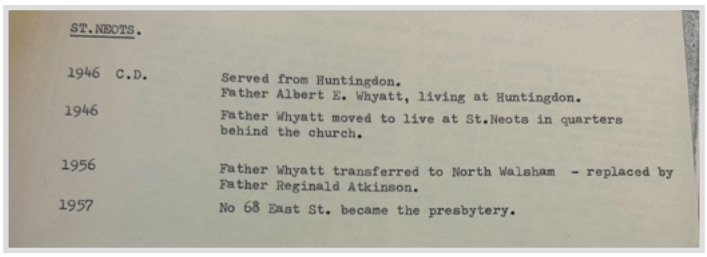
FATHER WHYATT



ST.NEOTS	Land in East Street (Church)
1866 May 7	CONVEYANCE 1.G.Bower t 2.G.Bowery
1866 May 10	CONVEYANCE 1.G.Bowery 2.S.Day
1870 Oct 11	CONVEYANCE 1.G.Bowery 2.S.Day
1873 Feb 18	CONVEYANCE 1.S.Day 2.R.Fairey
1930	ABSTRACT OF TITLE
1930 Sept 22	CONVEYANCE 1.The Baptist Union 2.Rt.Rev.D.C.Cary-Elwes & ors.
1936 July 6	APPOINTMENT OF NEW TREES 1.Very Rev.J.B.Marshall & anor 2.Rt.Rev.L.Youens and anor
21 East Street contd	
1943 Dec 13	VESTING ASSENT 1.H.G.Gaskell 2.H.G.Gaskell & H.L.Harrison
1943 Dec 30	CONVEYANCE 1.H.G.Gaskell & H.L.Harrison 2.Rev.H.F.A.Rotton
1943	ABSTRACT OF TITLE
1946	ABSTRACT & SUPPLEMENTAL ABSTRACT
1946 June 15	CONVEYANCE 1. Rev.F.Rotton 2. Rt.Rev.T.L.Parker & ors.



ST.NEOTS.	No.68,formerly No.21 East St.
1865 Aug 2	ATTESTED COPY CONVEYANCE 1.Rev.C.L.Vaughan 2.G.Bower
1866 May 10	CONVEYANCE 1.G.Bower 2.Daniel Sewell
1866 Nov 22	CONVEYANCE same parties.
1883	ABSTRACT OF TITLE
1883 May 25	CONVEYANCE 1.D.Sewell 2.H.J.Evans
1883 June 9	SECURITY 1.D.Sewell 2.Cambridgeshire Permanent Bldg Soc'y Discharge endorsed dated 29 May 1896
1885 Oct 14	MORTGAGE 1.H.J.Evans 2.G.Bowyer and W.Ramply
1888 April 6	RECONVEYANCE 1.G.Bowyer and J.Ramply 2.H.J.Evans
1888 Feb 8	COPY INVENTORY & VALUATION by Mr.F.J.Mild
1888 May 15	CONVEYANCE 1.H.J.Evans 2.C.Taylor
1909 Mar 6	INVENTORY & VALUATION by Mr.J.A.Emmals
1917 April 25	AGREEMENT 1.Mrs. M. Taylor 2.C.W.Tomlin
1917	ABSTRACT OF TITLE
1917 Nov 27	CONVEYANCE 1.A.Bell Brackenbury 2.Mrs.E.C.Chapman
1942 Jan 21	VESTING ASSENT 1.Per.Reps.of A.Chapman decd. 2.Mrs.A.W.Chapman
1943 Nov 22	UNDERTAKING 1.Mrs A.M.Brown 2.Rev.H.F.A.Rotton
1943 Dec 3	SUBSIDIARY VESTING DEED 1.A.W.Russell 2.H.G.Gaskell & H.L.Harrison



ST.NEOTS.	
1946 C.D.	Served from Huntingdon. Father Albert E. Whyatt, living at Huntingdon.
1946	Father Whyatt moved to live at St.Neots in quarters behind the church.
1956	Father Whyatt transferred to North Walsham - replaced by Father Reginald Atkinson.
1957	No 68 East St. became the presbytery.

(extracts courtesy rcdn archives)

The church was dedicated to St. Joseph. I can find no record of this in the local press, however the coming of the first priest in the parish, Father Whyatt was reported. The attitude of the population towards the Catholics was no longer hostile. The war had indeed bought great changes, tolerance and indifference had become fashionable.
My husband and I first met Father Whyatt in Saint Etheldreda, Ely, during 1946, but after my husband became a partner in a St. Neots accountancy practice during 1947 we found that Father Whyatt had been installed as first parish priest in St. Joseph's, St. Neots. He arrived here in November 1946. He was a great cricket fan and played for St. Neots.
The "presbytery" was a small room, "the anteroom" of the advert! next to the sacristy at the back of the church - here Father received his visitors. He, himself sat on his bed, the visitor on a stool, there was very, very little room. Fortunately, Father, was an ex RAF padre, very used to lack of comforts. Miss. Meade and her companion Miss. Gilmoto prepared his meals (food was still on coupons) which he ate in Miss. Meade's home. He brought into the parish with him his very own tired old car! His very own "Jalopy" tied together with string! So we often saw Father's and Mr. Clyde's heads under the bonnet, coaching and carefully persuading the reluctant engine back to health for just one more time.

On his arrival in the parish, Father Whyatt writes to the Guild of Lady of Ransom:-

> *"As you will see from the above address, St. Neots at last has a resident priest... The Diocese, by the way, has acquired the house opposite the church here, but we cannot get the people out, so I am living in the little room just off the Sacristy and having my meals out with one of the parishioners. I have to use the sacristy to wash and shave in!!! It's a bit rough but I do not mind it, we shall get the house one day, please God.*
> *In fact the diocese brought 21 (but now 68) East St. on 15 June 1946 with a sitting tenant.*
> *The people are very delighted that at last their prayers are answered and they have a resident priest. This Christmas we had sung midnight Mass, the first in St. Neots since the Reformation!! and quite possibly the first sung Mass since the High Mass when the church was opened.*
> *Well so much for the news of the parish. At last St. Neots is on the map and there is, thank God, not so much anti-catholicism as when the church was opened."*

The congregation became rather depleted after the war but increased again with the advent of the London overspill and the coming of industry. The Greater London Council subsidised the building of houses in Huntingdon, St. Ives and St. Neots, in which to house their bombed-out, also homeless, together with demobilised servicemen, their families and others. Italian, with some German, P.O.W.s remained in England, the Italians in particular formed quite a large community in the vicinity.

In 1948 an engineer in the electricity supply industry, Mr. Louis Mountfort, arrived in St. Neots to work at Little Barford Power Station. He was to become an outstanding personality in the town, also very well known in the parish.
An article in The East Anglian Guild magazine Winter 1948-1949 edition refers to the parishioners being very happy to see how fresh the church looked after a coat of distemper.

A very progressive and energetic man having knowledge and experience, he started classes in one of Priory Lane's old buildings, for young people already at work, or just leaving school.

These classes, in which Father Whyatt took great interest and some involvement, grew into St. Neots Technical Institute which opened in 1955 in a purpose-built building in Almond Road. Louis became the first "Head". Among his other attributes Louis was a talented organist, and so, was persuaded to become the "emergency" organist at St. Joseph's. In 1954 when the choir was formed by Mr. Dudley Ward, he became the permanent -unpaid organist.
The Government assisted in swelling the numbers by converting Gaynes Hall (Perry) into a Borstal. Mr. Rix, ex-navy Catholic who had newly entered the prison service, had the task of escorting the Borstal coach load of boys to Mass. He was a very patient, able man.

To be sure those lively boys, with their somewhat bizarre humour could create quite a diversion at times! One incident - freeing a green -large -grass snake from their own block of pews at the side into the tightly packed pews across the aisle.

Among his other duties at Gaynes Hall, Father Whyatt gave lessons to the inmates, teaching English.
Mass was now said by Father Whyatt every day, Benediction every Sunday evening, and at three o'clock every Thursday, (market day) afternoon. Every Holyday and Feast Day kept. Confessions heard on Saturday morning, afternoon and evening. Father taught in the catechism classes, he had a surplus of servers, boys and men, among them, Mr. Yardley an ex RAF man, who had much in common with the ex RAF chaplain, Father Whyatt.
Quite a few momentous events occurred during Father Whyatt's years as priest in his parish. He was known as a very jolly fellow."

1) Hilary Dale, who lived in Eltisley (her father a retired headmaster at Gransden school, her mother a teacher) entered the Order of the Holy Ghost Sisters. Hilary was the first woman in the parish to become a nun since the Reformation. Hilary in the novitiate with two pupils from the Holy Ghost Convent.



Hilary in the novitiate with two pupils from the Holy Ghost Convent School

2) Mr. Goddard, already a knight of St. Columba, and my husband who had joined the society after leaving the services, helped to organise the Corpus Christi processions, together with Father and Louis Mountfort. In later years these processions were transferred to Buckden Towers and took place in the spacious grounds there.

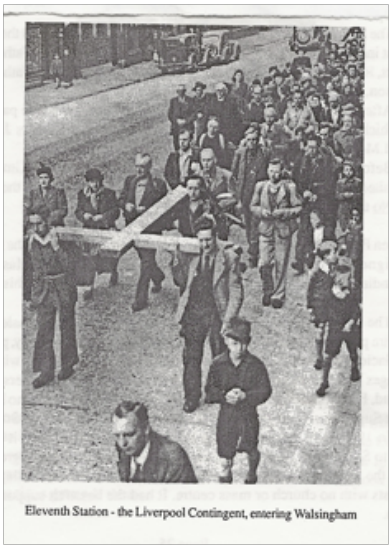
3) Several Legion of Mary, and Children of Mary members had arrived in the parish, sadly only two members of the catholic Nurses Guild, a sister from Paxton Park Maternity Home and myself. When the Home was closed, and Sister transferred, the Guild came to an end. The St. Vincent de Paul society had two or three members who, with the help of volunteers, did a lot of quiet and unsung work in the parish.

4) One event was reported fully, with "banner headline" in both The Hunts Post and the St. Neots Advertiser.
The St. Neots Advertiser reports:-
"Americans from U.S.A.F. Alconbury, were among the 43 candidates confirmed by the Right Rev. Bishop G.R.T.L. Parker of Northampton at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, St. Neots on Sunday.
The Sponsors were Mr. and Mrs. R.S.S. Cox of St. Neots, and the clergy present included, the Bishop's secretary Father J. Refitt D.F.C, Father A.E. Whyatt, Rev. W. Gaertner, chaplain to the U.S.A.F. Alconbury, Father R.C. Atkinson, Huntingdon and Father S. Doupe, St. Ives.
After the confirmation the Bishop met parishioners at the parochial tea, which had been arranged by Mrs C. Neal, assisted by Mrs. J. Clyde, Mrs. M. Mooney, Mrs. Marrion and Mrs. Madden.
Before the service, the Bishop had celebrated Mass at Kimbolton, and visited Gaynes Hall where he met the Governor and talked to the boys".
No the reporters were not Catholics!

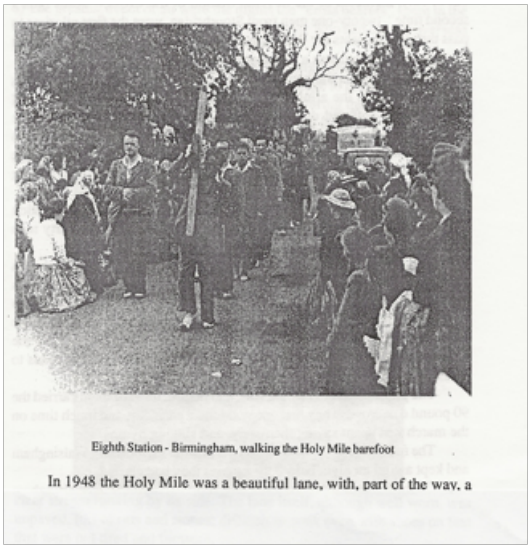
5) When Father was ill, or on very short and infrequent holidays, the famous Monsignor Gilbey would arrive from Cambridge to say Mass. One outstanding Sunday he arrived in a red sports car driven by his young niece.
The church was always full and overflowing for the Missions, the Hell Fire preaching Redemptorist Fathers, men of great personality, pleasant and placid when not in the pulpit. The Sacred Heart Fathers with their messages of peace

and comfort, but most of all the Mill Hill Fathers-Father Holland, Father Gallaghan, Father Dwyer, and Father Heenan who became Father Superior of the L.C.M.S. (London Catholic Missionary Society)
In 1947 the C.M.S. had a "travelling chapel". Although it did not come to St. Neots, it travelled all over East Anglia. We heard a great deal about the "trailer chapel" and the car which hauled it to the villages and outposts with no church or mass centre. It had the heartfelt support of the parish.
Canon Hunting was another frequent visitor when Father Whyatt was admitted to Huntingdon Hospital (now a Residential care home in 2023) for an operation (re. his gastric ulcer).

6) The greatest event of all were the nights the "cross bearers" spent in the church room. This memory remained with those who had served overseas for a long, long time.
In 1948 Catholic Servicemen who had fought in the various theatres of the Second World War, reunited for a pilgrimage to pray for the souls of the comrades and friends who had been killed during the conflict.
The "Pilgrimage of Prayer and Penance for the Peace of the World" was composed of fourteen contingents from various parts of the country, each group represented a "Station of the Cross."
Eleventh Station - the Liverpool Contingent, entering Walsingham.



Eleventh Station - the Liverpool Contingent, entering Walsingham



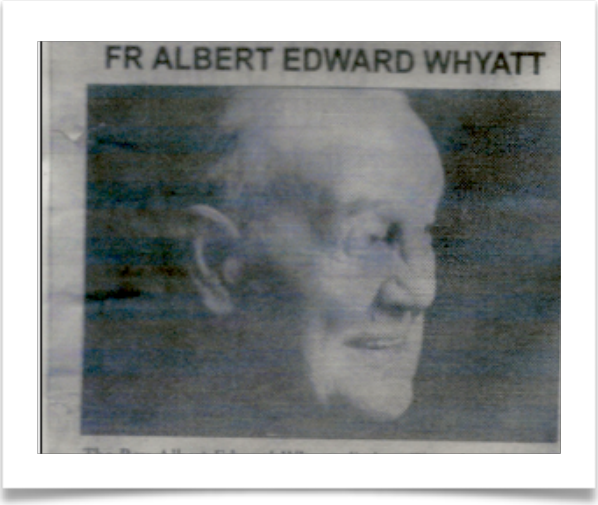
Eighth Station - Birmingham, walking the Holy Mile barefoot

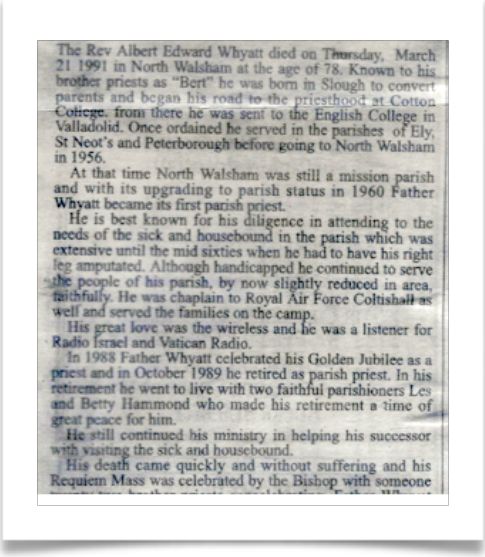
In 1948 the Holy Mile was a beautiful lane, with, part of the way, a

Two of these groups spent a night in St. Joseph's. On Friday evening, 9th of July, members of the Seventh Station of the Cross,- "Jesus falls a second time", twenty-one men from Stourbridge, were the first pilgrims to pass through St. Neots for Walsingham since the Reformation.
The Friday evening they arrived was a momentous occasion.
Eighth Station - Birmingham, walking the Holy Mile barefoot.
For some of us the war was still a close memory. Only three years had elapsed since the armistice, and again, many of us had parents and relations who suffered during the First World War. The sight of those footsore, weary men, some still in uniform, carrying the cross was overwhelming. The contingent spent the night in the room above the sacristy, and in the early morning went on their way to the next resting place - Cambridge.
Saturday evening the 10th of July, saw the arrival of the Eighth Station "The women of Jerusalem mourn for our Lord" - a group of thirty men from Birmingham.
Sunday morning saw them marching to St. Ives, with a local man joining them and helping to carry the cross through St. Neots. This contingent passed through Huntingdon on Sunday to join a group from Newcastle-under-Lyme at Ely. This group walking two hundred and more miles had spent Saturday night at St. Michael's Huntingdon - after Ely the two contingents parted company to make their ways by different roads to Walsingham - the traditional destination of pilgrims in England.
The pilgrims walked all the way, and in turn, three of them carried the 90-pound oak cross. They had one good meal each day, and much time on the march was spent saying the rosary, and singing hymns.
The fourteen contingents met on the hillside surrounding Walsingham and kept a vigil all night before the crosses they had carried.
On the following day, carrying the crosses they went into Walsingham to be joined by members of the Union of Catholic Mothers.
The fourteen contingents were met by Cardinal Griffin when they arrived, and led by him to the Slipper Chapel. The majority of the men walked the Holy Mile barefoot.
In 1948 the Holy Mile was a beautiful lane, with, part of the way, a clear stream running by its side. The lane itself, although well worn, was unpaved, full of ruts and stones; difficult to walk even with shoes on feet that were not tired and footsore.
"Feet will ache and blister".
The crosses were set up by the Slipper Chapel when the servicemen left, to become Walsingham's "Stations of the Cross."

Just before Father Whyatt's arrival, No.68 (formerly number 21) East Street, almost opposite the church, was put on the market. (purchase price unknown.) The house was large with a big garden, it faced East Street, on one side walled with Shady Hand Walk (now just Shady Walk 2023) running alongside, and backed by a playing field owned by the Urban District Council. Unfortunately it had a "sitting tenant" Mrs. Journet, a London evacuee, who had established her school of dancing there during the war years. The Diocese of Northampton purchased it, so when Mrs. Journet retired and moved into Mr. Freeman's flat over his jeweller's shop 23 High Street, (in 2023 a gent's hairdresser) Father Whyatt had his presbytery. He could now live in rather more comfortable circumstances than before.

In 1954 Father Whyatt left St. Neots for Peterborough, and in 1956 he became the first parish priest in North Walsham. Father Whyatt died in North Walsham on the 21st March 1991.





The Rev Albert Edward Whyatt died on Thursday, March 21 1991 in North Walsham at the age of 78. Known to his brother priests as "Bert" he was born in Slough to convert parents and began his road to the priesthood at Cotton College, from there he was sent to the English College in Valladolid. Once ordained he served in the parishes of Ely, St Neot's and Peterborough before going to North Walsham in 1956.

At that time North Walsham was still a mission parish and with its upgrading to parish status in 1960 Father Whyatt became its first parish priest.

He is best known for his diligence in attending to the needs of the sick and housebound in the parish which was extensive until the mid sixties when he had to have his right leg amputated. Although handicapped he continued to serve the people of his parish, by now slightly reduced in area, faithfully. He was chaplain to Royal Air Force Coltishall as well and served the families on the camp.

His great love was the wireless and he was a listener for Radio Israel and Vatican Radio.

In 1988 Father Whyatt celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest and in October 1989 he retired as parish priest. In his retirement he went to live with two faithful parishioners Les and Betty Hammond who made his retirement a time of great peace for him.

He still continued his ministry in helping his successor with visiting the sick and housebound.

His death came quickly and without suffering and his Requiem Mass was celebrated by the Bishop with someone

(obituary Fr. Whyatt)

Rex Comba in notes to Fr. Pat Cleary says that during mass the gas boiler was so old, men of the parish kept watch over it, turning it off quickly if it threatened to blow! During the bad floods of March 1947, a sailor on his way to the train station was given a piggyback ride to save him spoiling his uniform. Another anecdote was that for penance children were given a suggestion that they could clean the wooden floor which they gladly did.

THE CONTINUING YEARS.

In 1954, Father Atkinson, already a sick man was transferred to St. Neots from Huntingdon. His sister accompanied him as housekeeper. He delegated as much of the parish work as possible because of his illness. With him came his two large dogs, mongrel types! One chiefly sheepdog, the other largely Airedale. He could sometimes be seen with them walking through the fields of Cancroft, Lidi and Rex Aubrey's farm in Hail Weston.

Mr. Dudley Ward, a retired choir master from St. Joseph and the Holy Child Bedford, came to live in the house he had purchased here; Halldene, in Eynesbury. He had been a choir master at several London churches, also one in Kempston, before coming to Bedford: with the aid of Mr. Mountfort, our organist, he formed an excellent choir. Wilhelmina Brightman (nee Zwetsloot) was the soloist.

Catechism was taught by Mrs. Marie Durham, a teacher from Cedar House School (in 2023 now a Lidl supermarket) and myself, later on by Miss. Anne Pinfold, a second teacher from Cedar House School. Our classes were fairly large. We made a rota of parishioners to clean the church, "do" the flowers, even roping in the Borstal boys to scrub and polish. Previously the work had been undertaken by two very zealous ladies who preferred to remain unknown. During Father Atkinson's illness and stay in Addenbrookes, a priest often arrived from Huntingdon. A financial committee was formed to help his housekeeper sister to cope, five men headed by a local business man, John Hoefkins, a director of "Sunny Smiles" Eaton Socon. The others were, Ron Brightman, Louis Mountfort, R.S.S. Cox, and a very helpful man, Jack O'Connor from Eynesbury.

Father Atkinson's health did not improve, and he was transferred to the Boy's Home, Shefford, as a resident priest in 1957, his sister had died a short time previously. The choir, sadly, was disbanded about 1959, after Mr. Dudley Ward had suffered a heart attack and left Halldene for Little Paxton.

Some very capable and competent ladies of the parish organised a Christmas Bazaar in November 1956. It was one of the parish's great successes, all the townspeople flocked to it, and it has been held during November each year since 1956.

For a short time, about six months after Father Atkinson's departure, an American Jesuit, Father Gamm took care of the parish. (previously a chaplain to Alcatraz prison) He was a very energetic, active man, asked for and obtained loans from the laity for the improvement and upkeep of the parish. He became very popular among the towns people, and greatly enjoyed his stay here.

He encouraged and helped Rosa Maria Trolley, a teacher to become a postulant in a teaching order. During his stay at St. Joseph's, Anne Marie Aubrey made her first communion at the Gaynes Hall Borstal. The laity, by then, were hearing Mass in the chapel at Gaynes Hall.

Pictured below Franciszka & George Jeff with Fr. Gamm on their wedding day. 18/1/1958



(photo courtesy of Franciszka Jeff)



It should be mentioned that during the second world war there was at Diddington (Off the A1 north bound from St. Neots) a memorial pictured above outside the CofE parish church.
I have found no reference to any contact with St. Joseph's or St. Michael's Huntingdon. After the war the Americans left and in 1946 the site was taken over as a Polish resettlement camp. Fr. Borynski was the polish priest acting as chaplain to the camp and teaching in the school. Franciszka Jeff (nee Klech) remembers cycling with her mother on a Sunday from Little Barford to attend Mass.

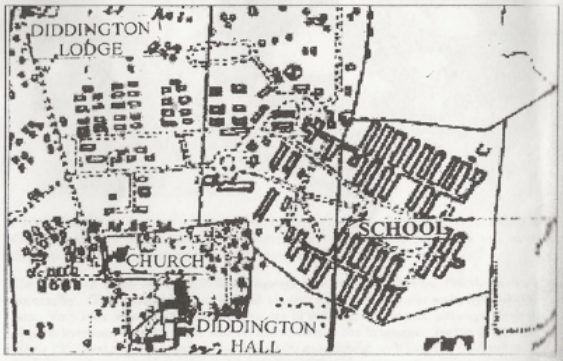

POLISH RESETTLEMENT CAMP
1946 - 1954

Diddington Camp
Between 1947 - 1949
the camp was used as
a Displaced person &
Maternity Hospital for
Polish families.
In Spring 1949 a RC
School for Polish children
and ran till 1953
There was a RC Church
under Father Borynski
who also taught at the
school.

Diddington "Frederic Chopin" school Huntingdonshire

Diddington camp, built on land requisitioned by the war office at the start of the Second World War served as an American hospital treating wounded solders coming in from European battle fields. The camp known as No. 49 American Army Station Hospital, was built on the estate of Diddington Park that belonged to the Thornhill family. When the Americans left in 1945 the hospital was taken over by the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC) and renamed Polish hospital No.6. This hospital treated not only Polish wounded soldiers but also sick Polish civilians. A very large maternity unit was also established in the camp and records show that some one thousand and seventy babies were born in the camp's maternity unit.

In 1949 part of the camp, comprising a collection of corrugated metal Nissen huts, was taken over by the Committee for the Education of Poles and turned into a co-educational Polish Secondary Modern Boarding school named "Frederic Chopin", with a roll of more than three hundred pupils. The school had a preponderance of boys, which naturally influenced its character but both boys and girls left the school with skills that enabled them to get on in life. Diddington was not only a school as most of the teachers, administration and domestic staff and their families also lived in the camp, so in many ways it reflected life in other camps.



Camp layout

Janina Bartoszewicz was one of the girls that attended the school and these are memories. She came to the UK with her parents on the 15th of August 1948 on board Winchester Castle. The family were sent to Wheaton Aston camp in Staffordshire later moved to Seighford camp also in Staffordshire.

Some of Janina's school friends From left at the back:

Tadzia Brojak, Janina Bartoszewicz (Zakrzewska), Teresa Orzel, Danuta Tokarska, Wanda Abrańska. Celina Lacka, Agata Litwin, Zosia Kowalska, Hania Lichwa.



Janina, now of secondary school age was sent to the newly formed Polish educational boarding school in Diddington. She recalls that life in Diddingt School was pleasant enough and she had many friends. However, school life was of discipline, managed by the Headmaster who had a big walking stick and there we rumours that he would use it on anyone breaking the school rules.

Classrooms and dormitories were all located in the long corrugated metal Nissen hu (beczki), which were not ideal for use either as classrooms or dormitories especially the winter when the only heating was a coke burning cast iron stove in the middle of t hut. The huts also looked quite drab from the outside. Once inside, both the classroom and dormitories we more cheerful. A numb of girls were allocated each dormitory. The gir were paired in twos, b tween each pair of be was a bedside table to b shared with the partne Each girl had a sma


Janina Bartoszewska Marysia Bujak Tadzia Borojak Krystyna Orzel

metal wardrobe on the other side of the bed for her personal belongings. Every dormitory 'beczka' had a house mother making sure that lights were turned off on time and beds and all areas kept tidy. Once a week the girls took turns in keeping the dormitories and shower blocks clean and shiny. The uniform, which had to be worn daily, was a simple navy pinafore dress with a white blouse, and for special occasions a pleated skirt with jacket. Hair had to be neatly braided, no fancy hairdos were allowed.

When walking as a class to places like the cafeteria, another classroom or sometimes to the cinema, which was a very special treat, the girls always walked in pairs, one after another. Going to church on Sundays and taking part in all religious ceremonies such as Corpus Christi Processions was a must.

A Corpus Christi Procession.



Although all facilities such as the dining room, sports hall, and library were shared with the boys, classes were segregated and the only time girls and boys met was at meal times in the canteen, but girls and boys were at opposite ends.

The course of study included Polish language and literature, Maths, Polish history and geography. There were also vocational classes in cooking, crafts and physical education. Very little was taught about the history of other countries and, although there were English language classes, there was no immersion in the language. Janina left Dudley ton in 1952 and acquired fluency in English by associating with English students in Stafford. The school gave her a basic knowledge of Polish culture, discipline, appreciation

of camaraderie and left her with many happy memories that are lasting a lifetime. went on to train and work as a secretary before emigrating to Canada (1957) where met Staszek Zakrzewski. They married in 1958 and have two sons and three grandchildren.



Craft Show: Exhibition of student crafts. The craft teacher Mrs. Tutaj is on the far right



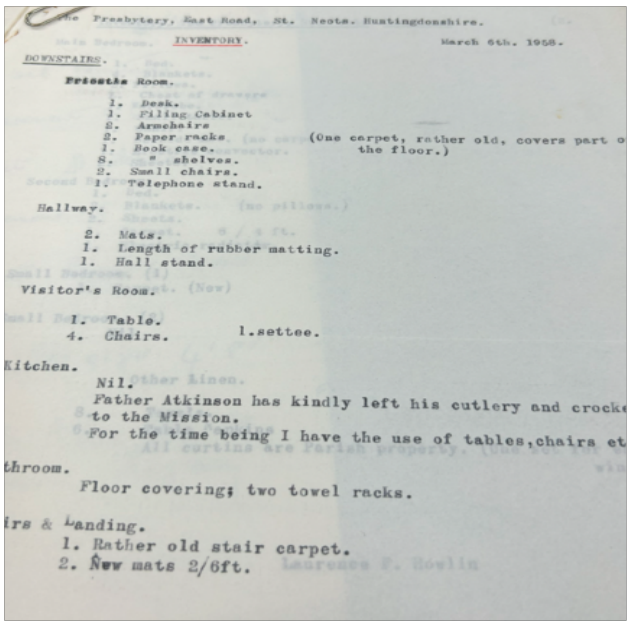
Sports Day with visitors and staff seated and students standing behind them

(The above courtesy of Franciszka Jeff)

THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

THE ARRIVAL OF FATHER HOWLIN

On the 28th of February 1958 Father Howlin arrived in the parish of St. Neots. Little did he realise then that his duties here would last for thirty years, until September 1989. A dedicated priest with a great interest in the county and town.



The Presbytery, East Road, St. Neots. Huntingdonshire.

INVENTORY. March 6th. 1958.

DOWNSTAIRS.

Priests Room.

1. Desk.
1. Filing Cabinet
2. Armchairs
2. Paper racks (One carpet, rather old, covers part o
1. Book case. the floor.)
8. " shelves.
2. Small chairs.
1. Telephone stand.

Hallway.

2. Mats.
1. Length of rubber matting.
1. Hall stand.

Visitor's Room.

1. Table.
4. Chairs. 1.settee.

Kitchen.

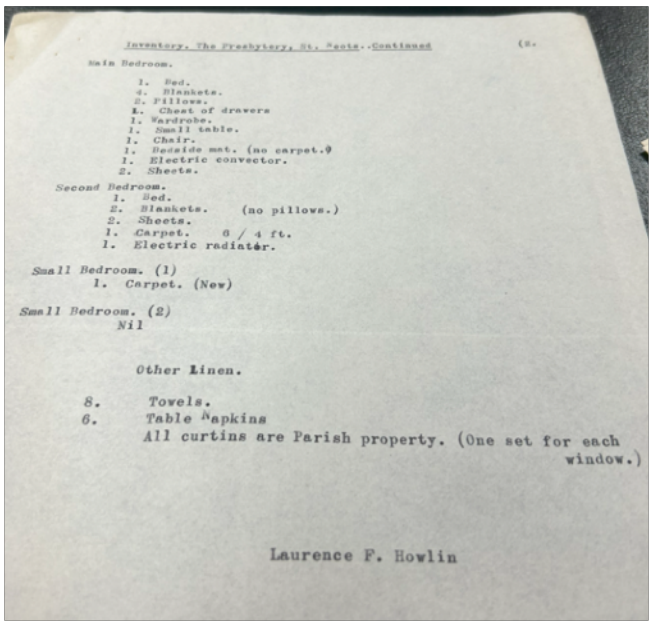
Nil.
Father Atkinson has kindly left his cutlery and crock to the Mission.
For the time being I have the use of tables,chairs et

throom.

Floor covering; two towel racks.

irs & Landing.

1. Rather old stair carpet.
2. New mats 2/6ft.



Inventory, The Presbytery, St. Neots..Continued (2.

Main Bedroom.

1. Bed.
4. Blankets.
2. Pillows.
1. Chest of drawers
1. Wardrobe.
1. Small table.
1. Chair.
1. Bedside mat. (no carpet.)
1. Electric convector.
2. Sheets.

Second Bedroom.

1. Bed.
2. Blankets. (no pillows.)
2. Sheets.
1. Carpet. 8 / 4 ft.
1. Electric radiator.

Small Bedroom. (1)

1. Carpet. (New)

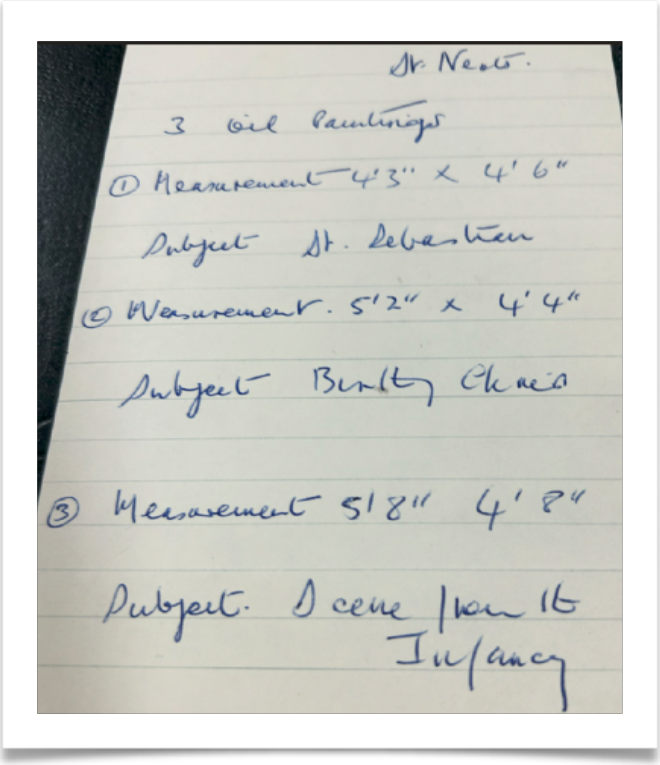
Small Bedroom. (2)

Nil

Other Linen.

8. Towels.
6. Table Napkins
All curtins are Parish property. (One set for each window.)

Laurence F. Howlin


St. Neots.

3 Oil Paintings

① Measurement 4'3" x 4'6"

Subject St. Sebastian

② Measurement. 5'2" x 4'4"

Subject Burial Christ

③ Measurement 5'8" 4'8"

Subject. Scene from the Infancy

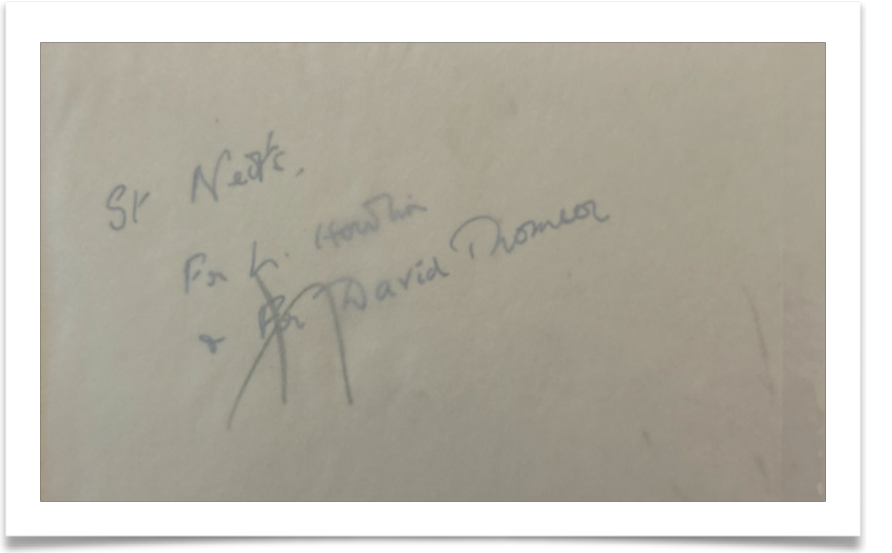
The above three images show the Inventory: The Presbytery March 6, 1958. (courtesy rcdn archives)


Confirmation of 1963 - Bishop Grant, Father Howlin, Father Grace

Confirmation of 1963 (in fact 1966) - Bishop Grant, Father Howlin, Father Grace.
(this photo in original book)

Bishop C. Grant, Fr. Howlin wearing a cotta and Fr. Grace on 27th Feb 1966.
(it should be noted that the picture in the original book on page 32 has the wrong year).





Reverse of above Confirmation picture



Pictured here are Zofia & Boleslaw Klech with Fr. Howlin on their 50th wedding anniversary outside St. Joseph's in June 1982.

(courtesy of Franciszka Jeff)

The outstanding event during Father Howlin's ministration was the purchase of the property adjacent to the church, which came on the market after Mrs. Fisher's death. This property was large, grounds extensive, the house, well built, many spacious rooms, a typical Victorian gentlemen's residence. The frontage faced East Street, and the back Avenue Road, with entrances back and front.

Father Howlin's great dream was to build a round church in the garden of the new acquisition, maybe even a small school, and turn St. Joseph's into a Church Hall. To this end every spare penny was paid into a "School and Building" account. Father did his own housekeeping and practised every economy to add to the accumulation of pennies.
Alas Father's great dream did not materialise.

When the auction date of this extensive property was announced all excitement reigned. All went well, the Bishop's financial advisers bid, and with the Bishop's blessing purchased the property.

Mrs. Fisher died in January 1970, by November 1970, Father was in occupation, living in a new presbytery with rooms set aside for meetings, confirmation classes, etc.
The previous property first purchased from Mr. Newman around 1930 was sold to a building firm for £13,000 who demolished it and built houses on the site.

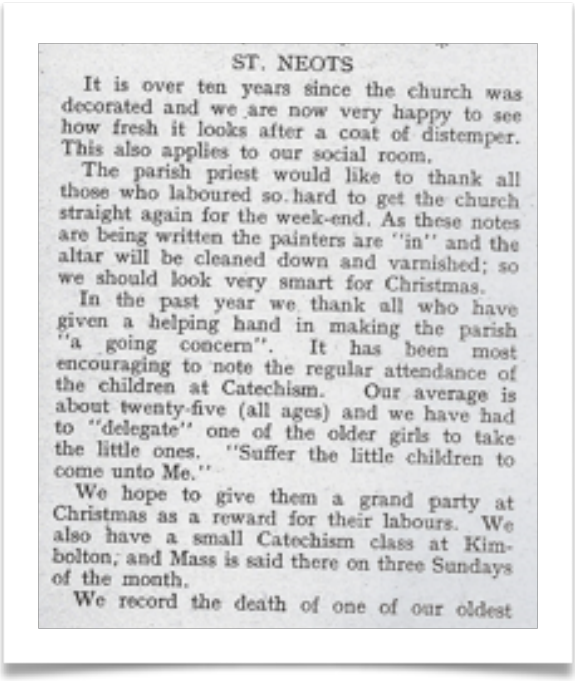
In the years from 1919 when Mass was said in the room above the shop, to 1970, the parish had grown more than anyone could imagine. The Catholics now owned their Church, a Presbytery, and land on which it could make further development, in fact a flourishing, if not a rich parish - we did not have any wealthy Catholics in the area.



A First Communion - Corpus Christi
- taken at the back of the "new" Presbytery

THE PARISH

To keep St. Joseph's in good repair, and the alterations required, caused Father Howlin many a headache. A new roof, windows replaced, a new confessional built on the outside of the sanctuary, rewired the church, a new gallery with the chamber organ moved there to accommodate the increasing population were but a few of the accomplished tasks. The altar was renovated, the black varnish removed from the pews leaving them in their natural oak and cork tiles laid in the sanctuary. In 1960 two new alcoves were cut out of the walls for the statues and new stations of the cross a gift from a parishioner in a previous parish which replaced the wooden ones. Many willing hands were available in the parish to undertake minor repairs and painting, men like Mr. Brennan, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. O'Brien, and many others would volunteer to give up their leisure hours to undertake the work involved, but structural work, etc. requires architects and professionals.



ST. NEOTS

It is over ten years since the church was decorated and we are now very happy to see how fresh it looks after a coat of distemper. This also applies to our social room.

The parish priest would like to thank all those who laboured so hard to get the church straight again for the week-end. As these notes are being written the painters are "in" and the altar will be cleaned down and varnished; so we should look very smart for Christmas.

In the past year we thank all who have given a helping hand in making the parish "a going concern". It has been most encouraging to note the regular attendance of the children at Catechism. Our average is about twenty-five (all ages) and we have had to "delegate" one of the older girls to take the little ones. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

We hope to give them a grand party at Christmas as a reward for their labours. We also have a small Catechism class at Kimbolton, and Mass is said there on three Sundays of the month.

We record the death of one of our oldest parishioners, Mrs. M. Fenton. R.I.P. She was a great help in taking the children for Catechism year after year on a Sunday afternoon when St. Neots was without a priest of its own.

* * * *

(Extract from East Anglian Guild Magazine Winter 1945-1949)

So Father Howlin introduced "Cathos", an envelope collection system, by which a tax paying member of the church promises and gives annually a stated sum. The tax paid by the donor on the amount given can be claimed back by the diocese from the Inland Revenue to increase the funds. This was the forerunner of the present Gift Aid scheme. Meetings were held, and a formal dinner given in the large hall at Longsands School for the inauguration of this scheme - to the amazement of all, the hall was filled to overflowing.

By this time Father had recruited the nuns from St. Mary's Catholic School, Cambridge, to take the catechism classes, which had grown quite large. We formed a rota to fetch and return the Sisters to Cambridge.

Father was saying four masses each Sunday, 8 a.m., 11 a.m., and 5:30 p.m. at St. Joseph's, with another at 9:30 a.m. in Kimbolton, Benediction every Sunday at 3:30 p.m. after the catechism classes, before the Sisters returned to Cambridge. Daily Mass, morning and evening mass on holy days, Stations of the Cross in Lent, the rosary in May, Holy hours, Forty hours, and the Vigils were kept. Whilst Fr. Howlin was parish priest two girls became nuns Elizabeth Willley who was a teacher at Longsands and Rosa Maria Trolley a convert baptised by Fr. Howlin in 1961 joined the Carmelites at Wisbech later that year.

The training of the servers, and confirmation classes, were given by Father during the weekday evenings in the presbytery - added to this all the normal everyday work of the parish, Father had a very full schedule!
Mr. Roy Smith organised a pilgrimage to Walsingham annually, a popular event. Now Gaynes Hall had been converted into a prison "Littlehey". Father said Mass and paid visits to the prisoners each week. He also gave R.E. classes before morning assembly at Longsands and Ernulf schools each week.

In 1966 Buckden, (to the North of St. Neots) which was a junior seminary for the Claretian Missionary Fathers became a parish with the closing of the seminary thus reducing the size of the St. Neots parish.
Father's holiday was always taken in September after the children returned to school and term had commenced.
We always viewed with some trepidation the relief priest! Usually Jesuits, often very interesting personalities, quite outspoken, greatly travelled men:- notably Father Da Costa, brother-in-law to the Brazilian ambassador in London. Father Da Costa was charming, very likeable, he took the town by storm, and entertained everyone, even in Ely, invited the Anglican Bishop of Ely to tea in St. Neots at the presbytery.

It was on Father Howlin's 1968 holiday that Father Da Costa, in his spare time painted the presbytery kitchen walls a royal purple "to surprise Father Howlin". It did!
Father Gallio from Malta arrived several times, and another French priest, a Jesuit based in South Africa had lots of experiences to relate.

The missions came too, and many missionary priests and nuns made appeals for prayers, money and vocations to their order. The Kimbolton Catholics would arrive under their own steam for each mission, but the holiday relief priests would be given lifts by volunteers to say Mass in Kimbolton each Sunday.

When one of the nuns who taught catechism, Sister Etienne died, Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Logan took over the catechism classes. They also formed a nucleus of a youth club. A young mother tried to form a "Mums and Tots" group. Owing to fierce competition from several other groups in the town they did not grow quickly.

The large presbytery garden was a great asset to these activities; for some time the Corpus Christi processions were held there, until all the churches around united to hold these events in the grounds of Buckden Towers.

East Street, on each national occasion, held its "street party" in the Catholic garden, in the autumn, the people in East Street would have the apples from the garden. Several of the "East Streeters" remember those times, with pleasure.



This photo taken some time after Vatican II shows the altar positioned for Mass facing the people the large candle sticks (see note re-the Painting below) altar rail and alcove for the statue of St. Joseph. (photo courtesy Anne Keating)

In 1976 St. Neots (with all of Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk & Peterborough) was transferred from the diocese of Northampton and Bishop Grant to the newly formed diocese of East Anglia and its new bishop, Alan Clark.

After Vatican II Father Howlin held discussion meetings on a Wednesday evening for the parishioners in the Church room, at which Mr. Cox was asked to read the encyclical "New Pentecost" at Mass. He did so. No one realised at that time how far reaching the effect of that encyclical would be.



Corpus Christi Procession Fr. Howlin wearing a cotta in front Mr. Brennan and Mr. Keating behind next to priest in presbytery garden.



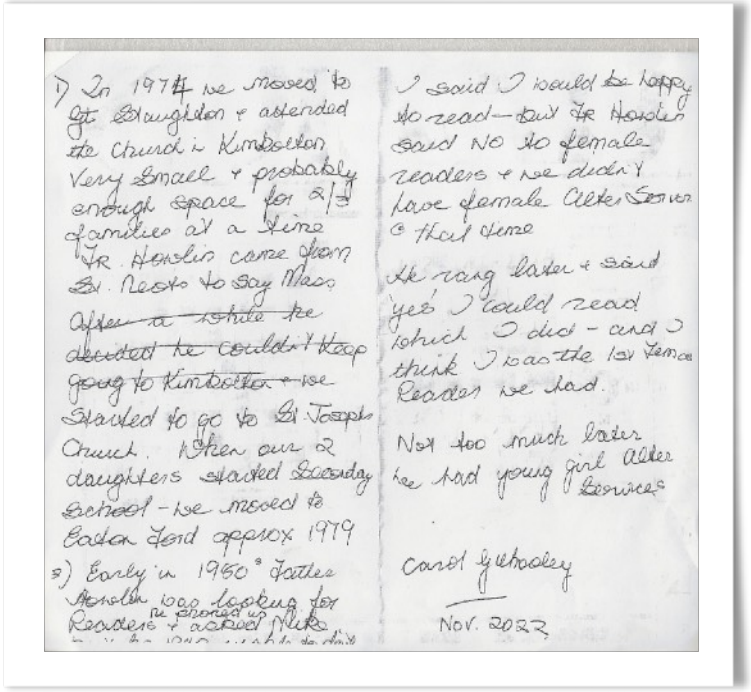
(courtesy Anne Keating)
Parishioners gather for visit to Wembley for Pope's visit 29-05-1982



The Brennan Christmas Wedding (According to the Parish Register the wedding was 28/10/1959)

In my research Fr. Howlin came across as not only intellectual but deeply religious. He was always giving assistance to the poor of the town such that if he was given food, he would pass it on as their need was greater than his. He was prone to giving mini sermons throughout the mass. On occasions he would digress from his theme in the mini sermon to another theme entirely. One parishioner remembers an oft used phrase "Prodi Nodi won't see Godi."

He was at first reluctant with the Vatican Council changes (as were many) but as Carol Gilhooley recalls in a letter written in November 2002.



1) In 1974 we moved to Gt Edwardston + attended the Church in Kimbolton Very small + probably enough space for 2 / 3 families at a time Fr Howlin came from St. Neots to say Mass After a while he decided he couldn't keep going to Kimbolton + we started to go to St Joseph Church. When our 2 daughters started Sunday School - we moved to Easton Ford approx 1979

2) Early in 1980's Father Howlin was looking for Readers + asked Mike he phoned up

I said I would be happy to read — but Fr Howlin said NO to female readers + we didn't have female Altar Servers in Church Here

He rang later + said 'yes' I could read which I did - and I think I was the 1st Female Reader we had.

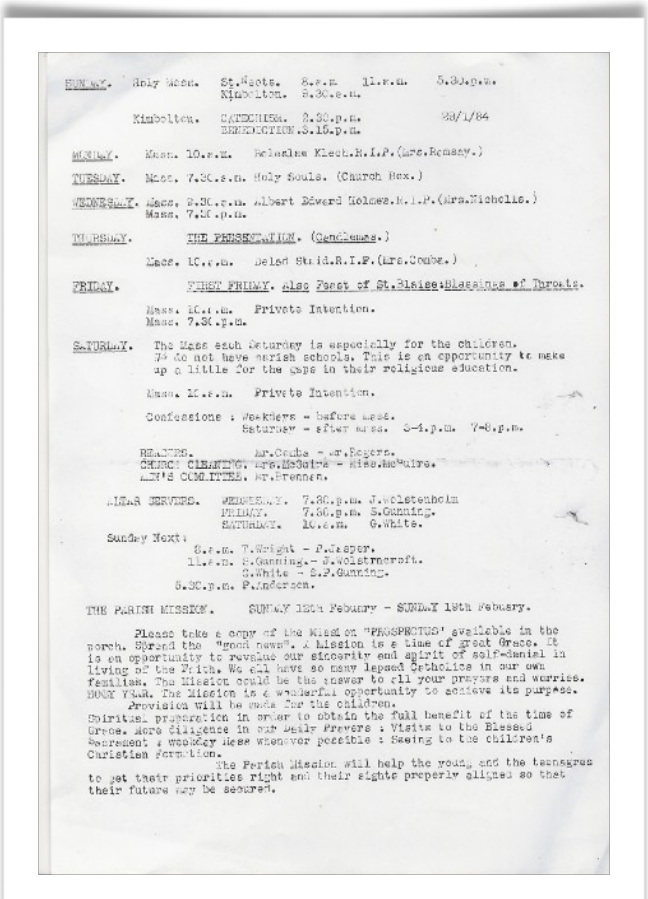
Not too much later we had young girl Altar Servers

Carol Gilhooley

NOV. 2002

(In response to Fr. Pat Cleary asking Rex Comba for some notes on the history of the parish) Fr. Howlin phoned to ask if her husband Mike would read. Carol indicated that she would read but Fr. Howlin said no to female readers. However, he rang back later and accepted Carol's offer to read and thus became the first female reader. At the time there were no young girl altar servers but again Fr. Howlin soon had young girl altar servers.
I have discovered that Fr. Howlin would also undertake exorcism of evil spirits and would allow "gentlemen of the road" to sleep overnight in the shed having had a "doorstop" size sandwich and hot drink.

The following is Fr. Howlin's weekly newsletter. In the days before photocopiers it was typed onto a stencil and then attached to a gestetner machine. Which was then loaded with ink and hand turned producing a copy on each revolution.



SUNDAY. Holy Mass. St.Neots. 8.a.m. 11.a.m. 5.30.p.m.
Kimbolton. 8.30.a.m.

Kimbolton. CATECHISM. 2.30.p.m. 29/1/84
BENEDICTION.3.15.p.m.

MONDAY. Mass. 10.a.m. Belinda Mech.R.I.P.(Mrs.Ramsay.)

TUESDAY. Mass. 7.30.a.m. Holy Souls. (Church Rex.)

WEDNESDAY. Mass. 9.30.a.m. Albert Edward Holmes.R.I.P.(Mrs.Nicholls.)
Mass. 7.30.p.m.

THURSDAY. THE PRESENTATION. (Candlemas.)

Mass. 10.a.m. Belad Stuid.R.I.P.(Mrs.Combe.)

FRIDAY. FIRST FRIDAY. Also Feast of St.Blaise:Blessings of Throats.

Mass. 10.a.m. Private Intention.
Mass. 7.30.p.m.

SATURDAY. The Mass each Saturday is especially for the children.
We do not have parish schools. This is an opportunity to make up a little for the gaps in their religious education.

Mass. 10.a.m. Private Intention.

Confessions : Weekdays - before Mass.
Saturday - after mass. 3-4.p.m. 7-8.p.m.

READERS. Mr.Combe - Mr.Rogers.
CHURCH CLEANING. Mrs.McGuire - Miss.McGuire.
ALM'S COM.TTEE. Mr.Brennan.

ALTAR SERVERS. WEDNESDAY. 7.30.p.m. J.Wolstenholm
FRIDAY. 7.30.p.m. S.Canning.
SATURDAY. 10.a.m. G.White.

Sunday Next:
8.a.m. T.Wright - F.Jasper.
11.a.m. S.Canning - J.Wolstencroft.
G.White - S.J.Canning.
5.30.p.m. P.Anderson.

THE PARISH MISSION. SUNDAY 19th February - SUNDAY 1st February.

Please take a copy of the Missn on "PROSPECTUS" available in the porch. Spread the "good news". A Mission is a time of great Grace. It is an opportunity to revalue our sincerity and spirit of self-denial in living of the Faith. We all have so many lapsed Catholics in our own families. The Mission could be the answer to all your prayers and worries. HOLY YEAR. The Mission is a wonderful opportunity to achieve its purpose.
Provision will be made for the children.
Spiritual preparation in order to obtain the full benefit of the time of Grace. More diligence in our Daily Prayers : Visits to the Blessed Sacrament : Weekday Mass whenever possible : Seeing to the children's Christian formation.
The Parish Mission will help the young and the teenagers to get their priorities right and their sights properly aligned so that their future may be secured.

THE END OF AN ERA.

Father Howlin retired from his parish of St. Neots in September 1989. He had been a familiar figure in the town for thirty years and was well known for his kindness and the help he gave to the tramps, alcoholics and ex-prisoners. He was a great favourite of the children in the town and villages, and a comfort to the elderly.
Although Fr. Howlin retired to Ireland giving the impression he was Irish he was born in North Wales. He died in Wexford, Ireland on the 5th December 1991, very peacefully sitting beside the fireside in the cottage he had received as a legacy from his aunt.

I would like to thank Lidi Aubrey, Margaret Osborne, Mrs. Crisp, Leslie Forscutt, Mrs. Brennan, Mrs. Bellamy, Jennifer Mountfort, and Mrs. Joan Clyde, who have given me many facts and photos.
My thanks go out also to my daughter and son-in-law, and my grandson Peter, who together with Ann Spooner, have taken a great interest and given help in the production of this booklet.

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Tel: (01494) 882674

A NEW BEGINNING.

In Sept 1988 Fr. Dennis Finbow arrived, from Peterborough, and was dismayed at what he found. (It is a sign of the times that priests were beginning to be referred to by their Christian name rather than surname.)
A parishioner remarked that “our new parish priest exploded into the sleepy town of St. Neots, and immediately ran a red light waking up the police force and the town.”

Fr. Dennis was full of energy and set about modernising the church and house. A parishioner relates that Fr. Dennis stated, “we are not a “jumble sale” church”. At first, he felt that the church, house and garden could be sold and built afresh. He had in mind the vacant plot (at the time) behind the Co-Op in Eaton Ford only to find that the area was covered by a preservation order which included the trees in the garden.

Fr. Dennis was not one to let the grass grow under his feet and he soon started to make plans for the reordering of the church and house.

It was not long, before with his personality, he worked out the strengths of his new parishioners.
Fr. Dennis soon realised that the Mass centre in Kimbolton was not attracting many parishioners so closed it down and started an evening mass in St. Neots with a larger number attending.

However, it was not until May 1991 that the re-ordering of the interior of the church was completed,
The work saw the old pews and two aisles, gallery, gas fires and external (non-heated) confessional removed.
The pews were made in Peterborough by one of Fr. Dennis’s many contacts. The new gallery extended further into the church necessitating the existing timber floor resting on brick pillars to become a solid concrete floor. A new sound system was installed along with an electric two-level keyboard organ purchased from Huddersfield and replaced the old hand pump wind organ. Gas fired central heating was installed with a separate boiler for the upper room. An altar rail was installed but it was not long before it was removed. The small brick wall at the front of the church which had lost its iron railings during the second world war was also demolished.
The presbytery was renovated with it becoming the church house. Apart from complete re-decoration, central heating was installed, with two boilers, one for living quarters upstairs and the other downstairs, which had the parish office, meeting room and chapel, which would be available for the parish. The total cost was in the region of £160,000.

In the garden there was a statue of Our Lady, a statue of St. Francis of Assisi with fountain and in the centre of the garden was a water feature with fountain. Also a statue of the risen Lord was affixed to the front wall of the presbytery. Due to the challenge of keeping the water pump filters clean they were stopped. Eventually the centre piece was drained and filled with gravel. During the Claretian era it was demolished to ground level with a concrete ring still visible in the lawn.



Our Lady's Statue St. Joseph's 1997



The Water Feature St. Joseph's 2007



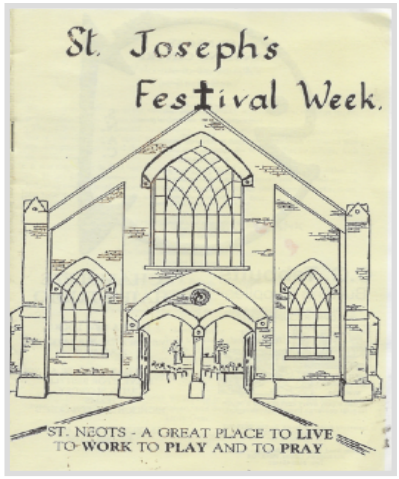
St. Francis Statue in Garden



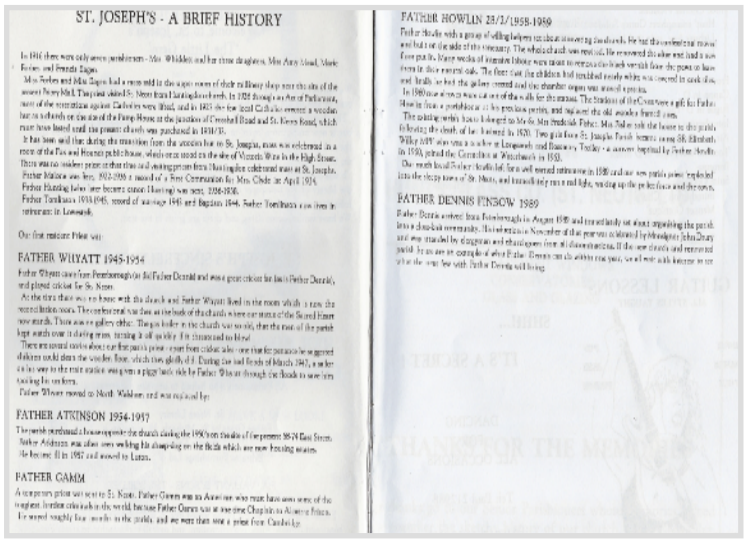
The Risen Christ on Front Wall of Presbytery.

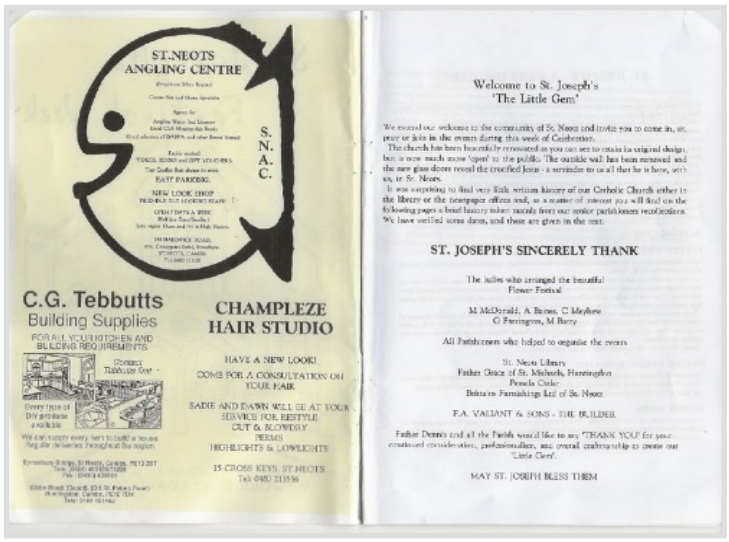
Fr. Dennis then had a Festival Week to celebrate the renovation.

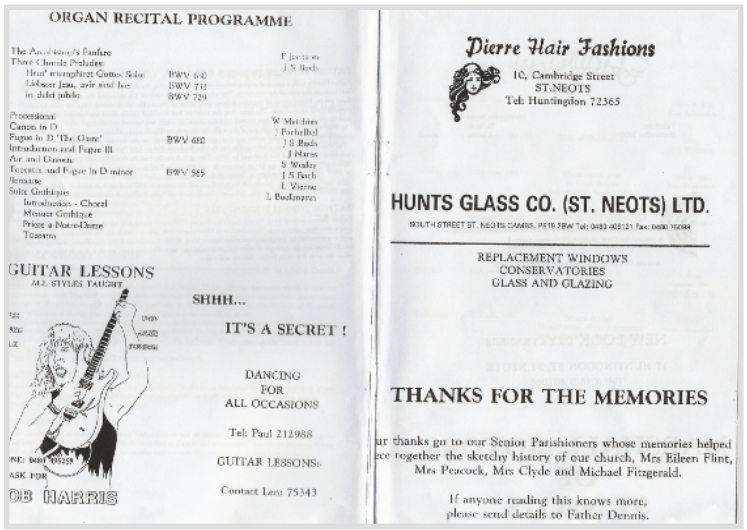
The programme is recorded here.

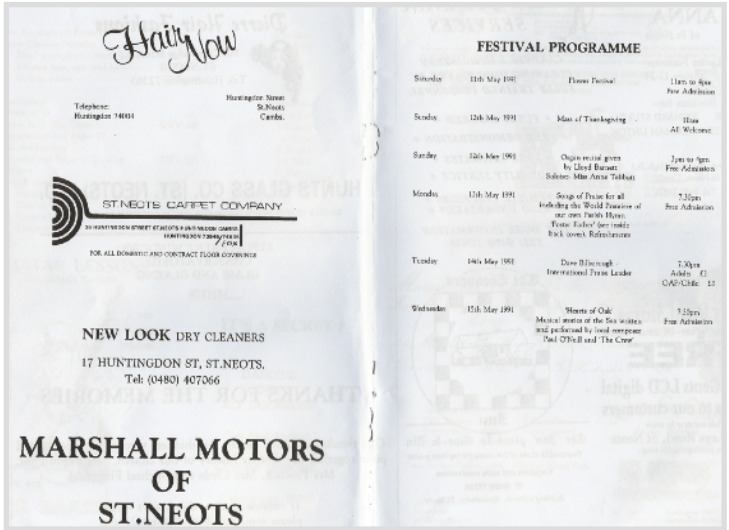




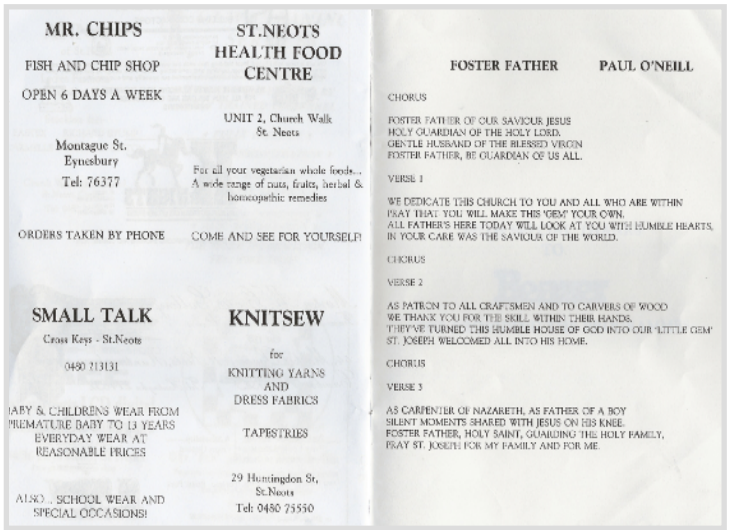












Kids from Nowhere was a musical which raised money for Cochabamba and performed in St. Joseph's with the altar removed as was Hearts of Oak written and produced by local composer Paul O'Neil and "The Crew". Paul also wrote the hymns Foster Father and Litle Gem. "Kids from Nowhere* (a reference to the Cochabamba orphans) was performed in St. Mary's St. Neots and the Corn Exchange Ipswich to raise money for the Cochabamba project.
Fr. Dennis took the music group to London to see Les Miserable.

He was a firm believer in the power of the press for raising the profile of the church as the following press cuttings illustrate.



To advertise: Tel. 0480 407555 Fax 215246

LITTLE GEM CELEBRATES

FLOWERS, music and prayers of thanksgiving will be on the programme to celebrate a church's £150,000 re-building programme.

The festival of events has been planned by Fr Dennis at St Joseph's Catholic Church in East Street, St Neots from May 11-18 and the doors will be thrown open for all to drop in and enjoy themselves.

Starting the activities will be a flower festival on May 11 with displays showing various aspects of life in St Neots which will be followed on May 12 by a Mass of Thanksgiving and an afternoon organ recital by Lloyd Barnett.

ROUSING

From Monday to Wednesday it's music all the way with an evening of songs of praise, a rousing performance by Praise Leader Dave Bilborough and the grand finale of a musical by local composer, Paul O'Neill of Eynesbury, called Music of the Sea.

Fr Dennis said: "Everyone is invited. We want local people to come along and visit St Joseph's — the Little Gem."

Get your wellies on

THERE's a welcome in the countryside from farmers eager to throw open their gates to the public.

As part of their Welcome to the Countryside theme farmers throughout East Anglia are taking part in open days in a bid to show visitors they are sharers as well as carers, tackling a dual role of food producers and custodians of the countryside.

NFU regional director John Biles said: "The region's farmers want the public to share the enjoyment these bring and to show them that the work of providing the nation's food and protecting the environment is in capable and caring hands."

On Sunday May 19 Bassmead Manor Farm at Staploe will be open along with Hill Farm at Papworth.



WEEKLY NEWS, Thursday, March 21, 1991 3

HUNGRY FOR GOD

'S standing room only t a St Neots Catholic hurch which has oubled its congregation 18 months.

Now more than 600 eople attend St Joseph's atholic Church every eek.

The surge in popularity as coincided with the rrival of a new priest the ev Dennis Finbow.

Because of the problems standing, the church in st Street, is undergoing a ajor refit.

Father Dennis said the ork will cost about 60,000 to complete.

"If you come to the 11 am ass a lot of people have to and and children have to t on the floor," he said.

"At present the church ats about 200 people but y enlarging the balcony, a rther 80 seats will be dded.

"Our church is growing ry fast and so we have d to tackle this work gently," he said.

The church was originally ilt as a Baptist chapel but s been a Catholic church r many years.

by NICK COURT

Other work will include providing a centre aisle which will mean redesigning the whole layout of the church, providing a new organ and eventually fitting some stained glass windows.

The work has been paid for out of fund-raising and savings.

Scandalous

When it is complete Father Dennis has no intention of keeping the church closed throughout the week.

"I think it is scandalous to keep the church locked up. We will encourage it to be used by the community — not necessarily catholic groups," he said.

He found it difficult to explain the massive increase in numbers coming to the church.

"We have a lot of young families — it is a large and friendly church.

"There is a great hunger for God," he said. "More people are looking about them and are thinking about the things which really matter," he said.

The building work is in the process of being carried out but services are still being held.

"It should be completed by the end of April and I would like people to come and have a look when nished," he said.

Father Dennis — building work at St Joseph's should be finished next month. 14769117A



Church's new look

■ Open house: Fr Dennis, parish priest at St Joseph's Catholic Church in St Neots stands at the altar of his East Street Church which has undergone a £160,000 refurbishment programme.

Fr Dennis, who calls St Joseph's the "little gem" has been celebrating the new look in a week of music, flowers and a Mass of Thanksgiving.

He said: "This church is everyone's church, not just the Roman Catholics of St Neots and all are welcome."

CITIZEN, Thursday, May 16, 1991 3



EEKLY NEWS, Thursday, May 9, 1991

olic Church of St Joseph

Festival week as church celebrates refurbishment

ST JOSEPH's Catholic Church in East Road, St Neots, a former Baptist church, has recently been completely refurbished and updated by the local Catholic church at a cost of approximately £150,000.

To celebrate the completion of the rebuilding, a week of activities will begin at the church on Saturday May 11.

The local Catholic community purchased the church many years ago and left the building largely as it was. Over the years decay set in and major re-building work became well overdue.

The Rev Dennis Finbow arrived in St Neots just over 18 months ago and was given the task of restoring the church to its former glory.

"I must say that when I first saw the church I really wondered what I had let myself in for", said Father Dennis.

"I clearly had two options — to refurbish and rebuild or to demolish and build again. I very soon opted for the former. It's all too easy to demolish, much more of a challenge to restore.

"Obviously the building is Victorian so from the onset I was determined to do everything in sympathy with the age of the building.

"The result is absolutely stunning, it has rightly been described as the little gem", said Father Dennis, "and it really is."

The public will have an opportunity to view the improvements themselves on Saturday May 11 a week of activities begins to celebrate the completion of the re-building work.

To begin the week the church will be open on Saturday for a flower festival from 11 am to 4 pm. There will be no admission and no collection plate.

"We don't want people to pay to come and look at the "little gem" — they are all very welcome."

Included in the events is an organ recital on Sunday May 12, between 3 and 4 pm. The church has also installed a magnificent organ. Admission again is free.

On Monday May 13 all are invited to a united Songs of Praise at 7 pm.

On Tuesday, May 14 the

adults; £1 for OAPs and children.

The final event on Wednesday May 15 at 7.30 pm is a musical by local composer Paul O'Neil, entitled "Music of the Sea". Admission again is free.

Father Dennis came to St Neots from Peterborough where he was the priest of a large church which he transformed from being a church just for Catholics to being a church for everyone.

"I have very strong feelings about churches just being used on Sundays," he said. "Many churches have become like grandma's front parlour — highly polished and full of flowers — but no-one must enter.

"The church is for everyone, it is not an exclusive club or secret society. At St Joseph's you will always be made welcome, without any of the pressure that so many people feel.

"I would like to think that St Joseph's — our little gem — is also yours too. I certainly plan to have various events in the church and would like schools to know that they too are welcome to use it.

St Joseph's Church can now hold almost three hundred people.

Father Dennis said that the theme of the flower festival will be "St Neots, a great place to live — to work, to play and to pray".

"All these things are true. We have a great town here and I'm a little tired of those who are constantly pointing out only the faults. I've been made very welcome here and I look forward to many happy years here.

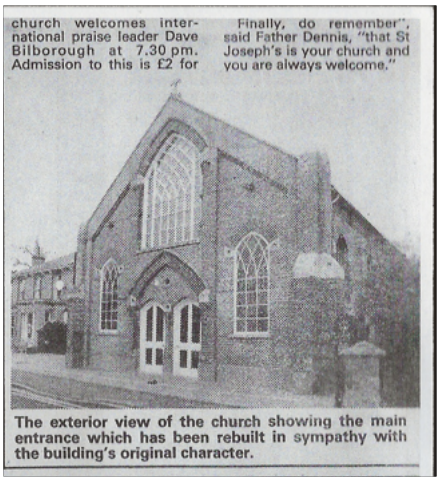
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH, East Street, St. Neots.

stival Week (To celebrate completion of major re-building)

St. Neots: A great place to LIVE – To Work – To PLAY and to PRAY

Bethany Partnership

Love and Best Wishes to Fr Dennis at St Joseph's from Joan, Peter & Family



church welcomes international praise leader Dave Bilborough at 7.30 pm. Admission to this is £2 for

Finally, do remember", said Father Dennis, "that St Joseph's is your church and you are always welcome."

The exterior view of the church showing the main entrance which has been rebuilt in sympathy with the building's original character.

St Neots Weekly News
658 THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1991 18p where purchased

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Giving church a boost

A SERIES of events are being organised to mark the completion of work on a booming Roman Catholic church.

The popular St Joseph's Church, which has doubled its St Neots congregation in the past 18 months, has been undergoing structural work to cope with the greater numbers.

The £150,000 work is now nearly complete and Father Dennis Finbow wants as many people as possible to use the church.

Never used

He wants the church to serve the whole community.

"Too many churches are like granny's front parlour — highly polished with lots of flowers but never used," he said.

So a series of events are planned during May to mark the completion of the work.

These include a visit by the internationally known praise singer Dave Silborough on May 14, a flower festival on May 11 and a performance by composer Paul O'Neil.

The work on the East Street church has included providing a sitting area upstairs and a central aisle.

Editorial (0480) 411481 - HUNTS HERALD & POST — Thursday, May 23, 1991 11



Father Dennis, with helper Marjorie MacDonald, at the flower festival

Celebrating work rebuilding church

HUNDREDS of people have turned out to celebrate the rebuilding of a St Neots church.

A week of events, including a flower festival, organ recital, songs of praise and 'music of the sea', was staged to commemorate the work on St Joseph's Catholic Church, of East Street.

Work costing £150,000 began in January to help maintain and enlarge the 100-year-old church.

On Saturday, May 11, a flower festival on the theme of 'St Neots: a great place to live, work, play and pray' was staged.

Father Dennis Finbow said: "It was wonderful. Several hundred people came in during the day.

Listen

"The organ recital was also well-attended with about 100 people turning up to listen to Lloyd Barnett."

To finish the week, there was music from local composer Paul O'Neill, who performed 'Music of the Sea'.

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CHURCH'S NEW LOOK



Father Dennis pictured outside the renovated St Joseph's Catholic Church.

A WEEK of activities helped a St Neots church eager to show off its new look following a £150,000 renovation.

St Joseph's Catholic Church has been boosted in the past 18 months with the congregation tripling.

It was standing room only for many churchgoers even though three masses were held each week by Father Dennis Finbow.

Now the altar has been moved back and a balcony put in to increase seating from 220 to 296.

St Joseph's was formerly a baptist chapel but was taken over by the Catholic church in the 1940s.

However it was not until earlier this year that work started on making it look more like a catholic church.

Every effort has been made to lighten the interior and a central aisle has been built.

A special computerised organ and a modern sound system, with a loop system for the hard of hearing have also been bought.

"We can tape the service and take the cassettes to the housebound who are unable to attend," said Father Dennis.

It is not only the main part of the church which has been transformed.

A room that was derelict at the back of the church has been transformed into a meeting area for Sunday school and other meetings.

Worship

Father Dennis's house has also been transformed so meetings can take place there.

"I want the church and the house to be used by the community and not just those who worship on a Sunday here.

"We have a mother and toddlers group who come here and the majority of them are not Catholics," he said.

Although major changes have been made to the inside of the building, Father Dennis has changed little of the Victorian exterior.

To mark the completion of the work, the activities began with a flower festival on Saturday and a mass of thanksgiving on Sunday.

New hymn written

Local composer Paul O'Neil has composed and written a hymn in honour of St Joseph.

This modern hymn will be first heard as part of a Songs of Praise at St Joseph's church, St Neots pmn Monday, 13th May at 7.30pm..

This popular St Neots church is celebrating the completion of a major rebuilding programme and is hjosting a variety of events during May. The church has recently been described as the "little gem".

You are invited to see for yourself during the ne xt few weeks.

OTS
erald & Post
GH STREET, HUNTINGDON. Tel 411481 34,516 plus 5,577 sold copies (July-Dec 1990) VFD

The above newspaper cuttings courtesy of Paul O'Neill



A CHURCH RE-BORN

THAT is just how it feels when one walks into the newly-renovated St Joseph's Church, affectionately known as the 'Little Gem' to its parishioners of St Neot's, Cambridgeshire.

This 'Little Gem' was purchased around 1931 as the first permanent site for a Catholic Church in St Neots - before that Mass was said in a wooden hut purchased by a handful of enthusiastic parishioners in 1927. It was given its first major overhaul in the late 50s spearheaded by Fr Howlin, who became Parish Priest in 1958.

Fr Howlin moved on to a well-earned retirement in 1989 & Fr Dennis Finbow was appointed Parish Priest & almost immediately set about planning an even greater 'overhaul'.

The main requirement was to increase the seating capacity, as the Sunday Masses especially the 11am, had become standing room only for anyone not in place in good time. This has been achieved primarily by extending the gallery further forward and also by reducing the amount of space occupied by the sanctuary.

Focus on St. Neots parish

In addition, the church has been given a more open aspect by replacing the imposing wooden doors with glass-panelled ones. Coupled with the removal of the outside wall which previously acted almost as a barrier, this has now made it possible for passers-by to see right into the building, right to the heart of the main altar, with its beautiful crucifix flanked by rich gold velvet curtains.

The interior has been re-painted in light, pastel shades, which help to create a feeling of space in this small church. The old dark wooden benches have been replaced by new ones in light pine and the floor has been fully carpeted, which as well as creating a cosy atmosphere, also has the practical benefit of deadening noisy footsteps! A new heating system has been installed and a very good PA system with the loop facility to aid those with impaired hearing.

In all the renovations, especial care has been taken to retain the important features of the original building design. For instance, the windows have been reframed and continue to contribute to the beautiful glow of colour inside the church when the sun streams through. The concealed lighting down both sides and the elegant Victorian-style chandeliers above the altar serve to enhance these natural effects. To celebrate all this renovation, a whole week of festival activities took place, starting with a Flower Festival on May 11, when many hundreds of visitors poured in, including local residents who had no doubt been bemused by all the comings and goings of the weeks of rebuilding. There was a glorious Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday May 12 and the week continued with organ recitals and other musical events.

Fr Dennis and the people of St Joseph's are justifiably proud of their 'Little Gem'.

This article appeared in the Diocesan newspaper (courtesy Anne Keating.)

Fr. Dennis, being the live wire that he was, soon set about organizing fund raising events.
In 1989 he knew a fellow priest from the diocese Fr. Cleary who at the time was working with the St. James' society in Bolivia and as a result started a charity to assist Sister Stephanie and her orphanage in Cochabamba.

Catherine Dobson, David McLoughlin, and Anne Keating from the parish as well as others from the diocese went out separately to help in the orphanage. David spent most of 1994 in Bolivia only coming home for his brother's wedding. His time is recorded in the following:

Street Children, Cochabamba, Bolivia 1994

"It was the evening of the epiphany. We came out of church to find one inch of snow on the ground. This didn't bode well as I had to be at Stansted Airport at four o'clock the next morning. However, after a lovely service, we had tea and coffee in the upper room where members of the parish and some friends of mine came to see me off.
I was going to Cochabamba in Bolivia to work with a charity called Amanacer which helps street children.
Father Pat Cleary had been introduced to Amanacer when he went to Bolivia as a missionary. He persuaded Father Dennis that this was a charity we ought to be supporting.
The charity was run by Sister Stephanie who kept a tight rein on everybody making sure everyone did what they were supposed to do but most of all she ensured that the children were well cared for. She was ably assisted by other nuns and local staff who ran the houses and shelters as well as a few volunteers such as myself.
Fortunately, there was no further snow and the trip to Stansted Airport went without hitch. There we met Alex, another volunteer, and her family.

I must admit I don't think I've ever been so nervous in my life as I was at that point. I knew a little bit about Bolivia from Catherine, who had been the previous year, but still it's a big undertaking to go abroad for six months to a country you don't know, to work with people who you've never met.

Alex and I were met at Cochabamba airport by one of the nuns who was driving a vehicle they referred to as the tank. It was a Land Rover that had been donated to the charity by the British Embassy and this nun felt that it was the most appropriate vehicle for a couple of English volunteers.

We were staying at different locations within the city. Alex was staying with some of the nuns in a building used as a daycare centre for the street children. I was staying in a residential building not far away where some of the boys lived.

At that time street children were almost all boys, some as young as six years old. If we found them when they were young enough, they would come into the shelter where they could have a bed for the night and they were fed. The boys were always free to leave at any point if they wished. If they stayed, they got an education and an introduction to the world of work.

The training for work was done at a place we called the complex, where I was based as an administrator. There were four workshops, woodworking, metalworking, electrical and plumbing. The older boys from around 15 years old would train and work there during the day. Then in the evening some of them would go on to night school.
As well as working at the complex, I also became the resident computer expert. The charity had just received a donation of a number of computers from a hospital in the United States. Computers being my area of expertise, I was able to help get everything set up and working as it should and to show people how to make best use of them. (It wasn't easy as the computer programme was in Spanish of which I had little knowledge.)

I think I must have made an impression as when Father Dennis came out to see us in the May, he asked if I would like to stay on for the rest of the year. As it happened my brother had arranged his wedding for when I was going to be back in the UK, so I came home for a short break before returning to Cochabamba.

I took my driving licence this time, so I was able to drive. That meant I was able to help with many of the other activities that the charity undertook, from the mundane running the older boys to night school and then back home, to helping with excursions such as to football matches where we were lucky enough to have been given free tickets for the boys. The tank was my vehicle of choice, but we usually had too many people, so I had to take an ancient Toyota Land Cruiser pickup and pile the boys on to the back. Luckily we never went faster than 20 miles an hour but still everyone quickly learns to hold on tight.

I will always remember one of the boys who joined the programme about the same time I arrived. He was 13 or 14 years old but unfortunately, he had been addicted to glue sniffing. He had given this up but was very withdrawn and wouldn't speak to anyone. However, through the work of the programme when it was time for me to leave, he was not only working at the complex but was also studying hard for exams and always asking me for permission to use one of the computers. It was a privilege to see this and exactly the reason the parish raised money for the charity and why I volunteered.

All in all, I had an absolutely fantastic year, but all good things must come to an end, and this was no exception. The boys gave me a wonderful send off and I hope I played some small part in helping them make a new start with their lives."



St. Joseph's garden June 1994 Sister Stephanie Fr. Dennis, the McLoughlin daughters and parents.



VIVA BOLIVIA: Pictured at the rear left to right: Father Dennis, Dr Nestor Villazon and the Mayor of Cochabamba, Manfred Reyes. At the front are Bushmead pupils Julian Rycroft, Samantha Connor, Natasha Barrows, Sarah Paterson, Lianne Rochford and Adam Polfrey.

Bolivians at Bushmead

THE South American country of Bolivia was highly represented in St Neots on Friday as the Mayor of Cochabamba visited Bushmead School.

The mayor went to Bushmead to help the pupils with their work on the country, which they are studying as part of the National Curriculum.

St Neots has strong links with the state of Cochabamba after a charity to help children in the country was set up in the town a number of years ago. This charity has now grown into a national project.

Named Project for Bolivia, the charity has sent several volunteers to the South American state with one volunteer, Julie Coldwell of St Neots, being in the country at the moment.

Last year, a twinning arrangement was set up between Cochabamba and St Neots and Father Dennis, priest of St Joseph's Church in the town, visited the state to attend the ceremony.

In a reciprocal measure, the British Government arranged for the mayor, Manfred Reyes, to pay a visit to East Anglia.

"We were very fortunate to have him with us for 24 hours," said Father Dennis.

Cochambamba is very well known throughout St Neots, and each year a Cochabamba Festival is held with thousands of people attending each time.

Bolivian ties strengthened

Cochabamba mayor pays official visit

THE ties that bind St Neots and a town in South America were drawn even tighter last week, when the mayor of Cochabamba paid a visit.

Senor Manfred Reyes, who was on a three-day official visit to the UK as the guest of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was pleased to have the opportunity on Friday, to give a personal 'thank you' to the people of St Neots for the help that has been given to the poor street children of Cochabamba in Bolivia.

During a full 24-hour itinery in Cambridgeshire, the mayor was accompanied by Father Dennis Finbow who had represented St Neots, when both had signed a friendship agreement in Cochabamba last year.

Several people from the town have voluntarily given their services to help St Vincent de Paul nun, Sister Stephanie, with the 'Amanacer' project that was founded by her to give help to the street children of Bolivia.

The mayor and his entourage - which included an interpreter from the British Foreign Office - arrived at Bushmead Junior School to see displays of national curriculum work done by the children on a Cochabamba theme.

Later the party arrived at Crosshall School to hear members of the choir practising a musical about the South American town.

Senor Reyes told the St Neots Citizen that it was his first visit to England: "I am pleased and happy to be here in St Neots and to feel for myself the warmth that is extended to my city.

"We now have a very strong link with St Neots," he said



VISITOR: Children from Bushmead Junior School with Snr Manfred Reyes and Father Dennis Finbow (left).

At noon, Sally Guinee the mayor of St Neots, hosted a reception for the Bolivian visitors and other dignitaries in the town's Priory Centre.

Mrs Guinee said they considered the visit to be an honour for St Neots "especially as the mayor has such a busy schedule."

Besides taking an interest in British education, Senor Reyes was given an opportunity to see water pumping at Grafham Water and the intricacies of waste disposal.

Father Dennis Finbow said it was a big day for St Neots, a real "feather in our cap."

Man dies minutes

MERCURY SERIES, Ipswich 230023

Thursday, June 16, 1994

Unique musical to help orphans in Bolivia



NEARLY 100 youngsters, pictured here, gave their all for a unique world premiere to help orphan children of Bolivia and the work to rescue them from a nightmare life on the streets.

The one-night performance of the specially-written musical, Kids From Nowhere, was the realisation of a fund-raising idea born at an Ipswich school assembly. It tells of the work of Sister Stephanie and others in helping the work is done by another former Ipswich-based priest, Father Pat Cleary.

Father Dennis, as part of his link-up work in East Anglia, was visiting Oakhill School in Ipswich — the prep school to St Joseph's College. He asked music teacher Mary Bishop-Hunt if she would stage a musical.

Mary, who also teaches music at Dale Hall primary school in Ipswich, readily agreed, said Father Dennis.

Before Christmas, a

Fr. Dennis would regularly visit the local primary schools for their religious assemblies.

He organised a lads football team and as Maggie Stephenson recalls arranged a football match against young lads in Madrid. They had no address only that the local priest would meet them at the first traffic lights coming off the motor way into Madrid. So, with faith and her husband they drove using the parish minibus in the days before sat navs. missed a turn off the motorway in France so looking at the map decided to follow a road showing their way into Spain. Maggie recalls that this was quite hair raising overlooking the edge of the road into a precipice. Coming off the motorway in Madrid there was the priest awaiting their arrival.

Then there was the Three Peaks challenge. The object was to raise money for travel to the world youth congress in Australia. It successfully raised more than the £4500 required.

Fr. Dennis in collaboration with the local constabulary and social services set up a system whereby young adults out on the street were given a bed for the night.

Another project he set up was a bereavement group.

He also introduced the UCM (Union of Catholic Mothers) to the parish.
With a meeting every month and membership (as at Feb 2024) increasing. The UCM raises money for two local charities each year. Organises an annual pilgrimage to Walsingham. They assist in the parish with various duties and currently (2024) organises English language classes for Ukrainians in the district. There is an annual UCM mass in December for current and past members.



New priest for town

A FORMER Anglican clergyman has been appointed the new assistant priest at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church in St Neots.

Father Christopher Back is one of seven former Anglican clergy recently ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Peter Smith of East Anglia. He became a Catholic in October 1994.

For 12 years, Fr Back was the vicar of Saint Mark's, Noel Park in the Tottenham/Wood Green area of North London.

The new priest said he was looking forward to working with Fr Dennis Finbow in St Neots and at Littlehey Prison.

● Assisting Father Dennis at St Mary's Church is Father Christopher Back.

St Neots Citizen 7/12/94

Joseph's



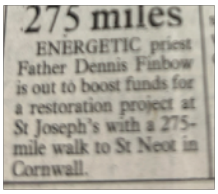
FR Dennis Finbow has sold his running shoes to an American businessman for $1000 and the cash will go to help street children at Cochabamba in Bolivia.

The battered footwear has done back-to-back marathons in London and in Boston where seven television companies interviewed Fr Dennis about his trans-Atlantic exploits.

A Californian businessman was so impressed he offered to buy the running shoes and Fr Dennis knew he had a good deal.

Note the paper refers to the CofE St. Mary's

As seen in this cutting Fr. Dennis did back-to-back marathons. The London one and then flying to Boston USA overnight to complete the Boston one. He sold his battered running shoes for $1000.

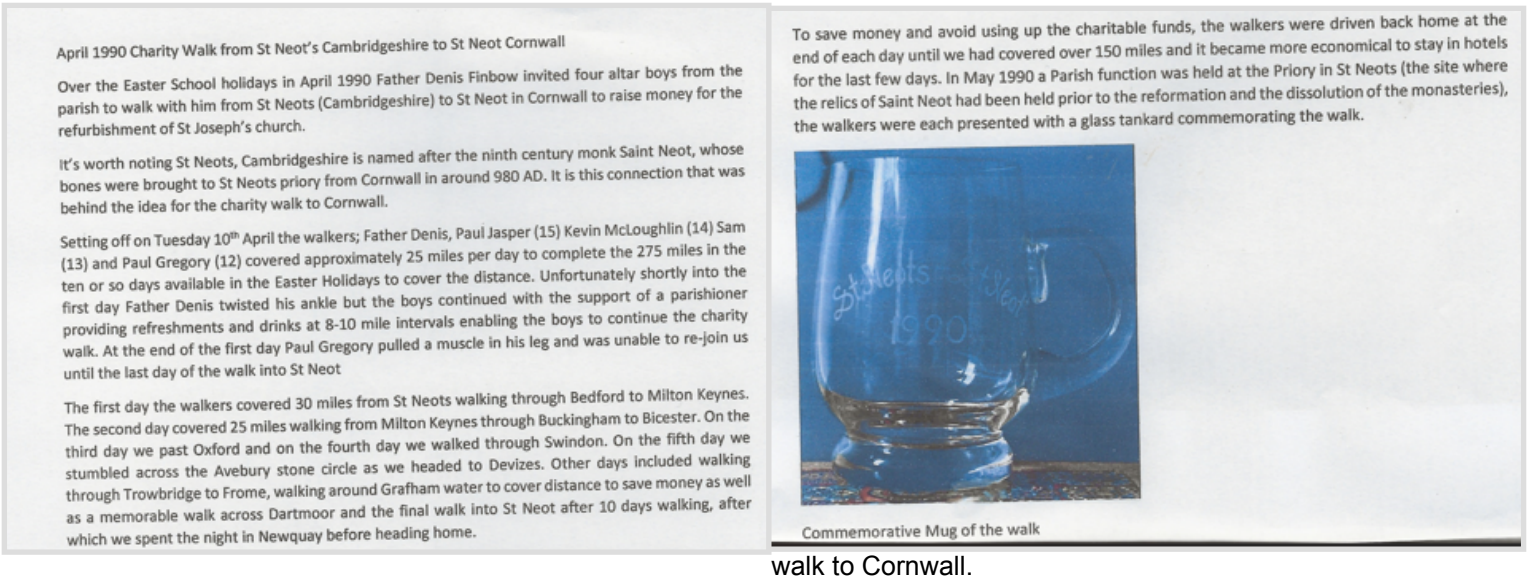


275 miles

ENERGETIC priest Father Dennis Finbow is out to boost funds for a restoration project at St Joseph's with a 275-mile walk to St Neot in Cornwall.

In April 1990, shown here, Fr. Dennis arranged a charity walk from St. Neots in Cambridgeshire to Saint Neot in Cornwall. This was during the Easter holidays. He invited four altar boys from the parish to walk with him to raise money for the refurbishment of St. Joseph's church.

It's worth noting that St. Neots Cambridgeshire is named after 19th century monk Saint Neot whose bones were brought to St. Neots Priory from Cornwall around 980 AD. It is this connection that was behind the idea for the charity walk to Cornwall.



April 1990 Charity Walk from St Neot's Cambridgeshire to St Neot Cornwall

Over the Easter School holidays in April 1990 Father Denis Finbow invited four altar boys from the parish to walk with him from St Neots (Cambridgeshire) to St Neot in Cornwall to raise money for the refurbishment of St Joseph's church.

It's worth noting St Neots, Cambridgeshire is named after the ninth century monk Saint Neot, whose bones were brought to St Neots priory from Cornwall in around 980 AD. It is this connection that was behind the idea for the charity walk to Cornwall.

Setting off on Tuesday 10th April the walkers; Father Denis, Paul Jasper (15) Kevin McLoughlin (14) Sam (13) and Paul Gregory (12) covered approximately 25 miles per day to complete the 275 miles in the ten or so days available in the Easter Holidays to cover the distance. Unfortunately shortly into the first day Father Denis twisted his ankle but the boys continued with the support of a parishioner providing refreshments and drinks at 8-10 mile intervals enabling the boys to continue the charity walk. At the end of the first day Paul Gregory pulled a muscle in his leg and was unable to re-join us until the last day of the walk into St Neot

The first day the walkers covered 30 miles from St Neots walking through Bedford to Milton Keynes. The second day covered 25 miles walking from Milton Keynes through Buckingham to Bicester. On the third day we past Oxford and on the fourth day we walked through Swindon. On the fifth day we stumbled across the Avebury stone circle as we headed to Devizes. Other days included walking through Trowbridge to Frome, walking around Grafham water to cover distance to save money as well as a memorable walk across Dartmoor and the final walk into St Neot after 10 days walking, after which we spent the night in Newquay before heading home.

To save money and avoid using up the charitable funds, the walkers were driven back home at the end of each day until we had covered over 150 miles and it became more economical to stay in hotels for the last few days. In May 1990 a Parish function was held at the Priory in St Neots (the site where the relics of Saint Neot had been held prior to the reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries), the walkers were each presented with a glass tankard commemorating the walk.

Commemorative Mug of the walk

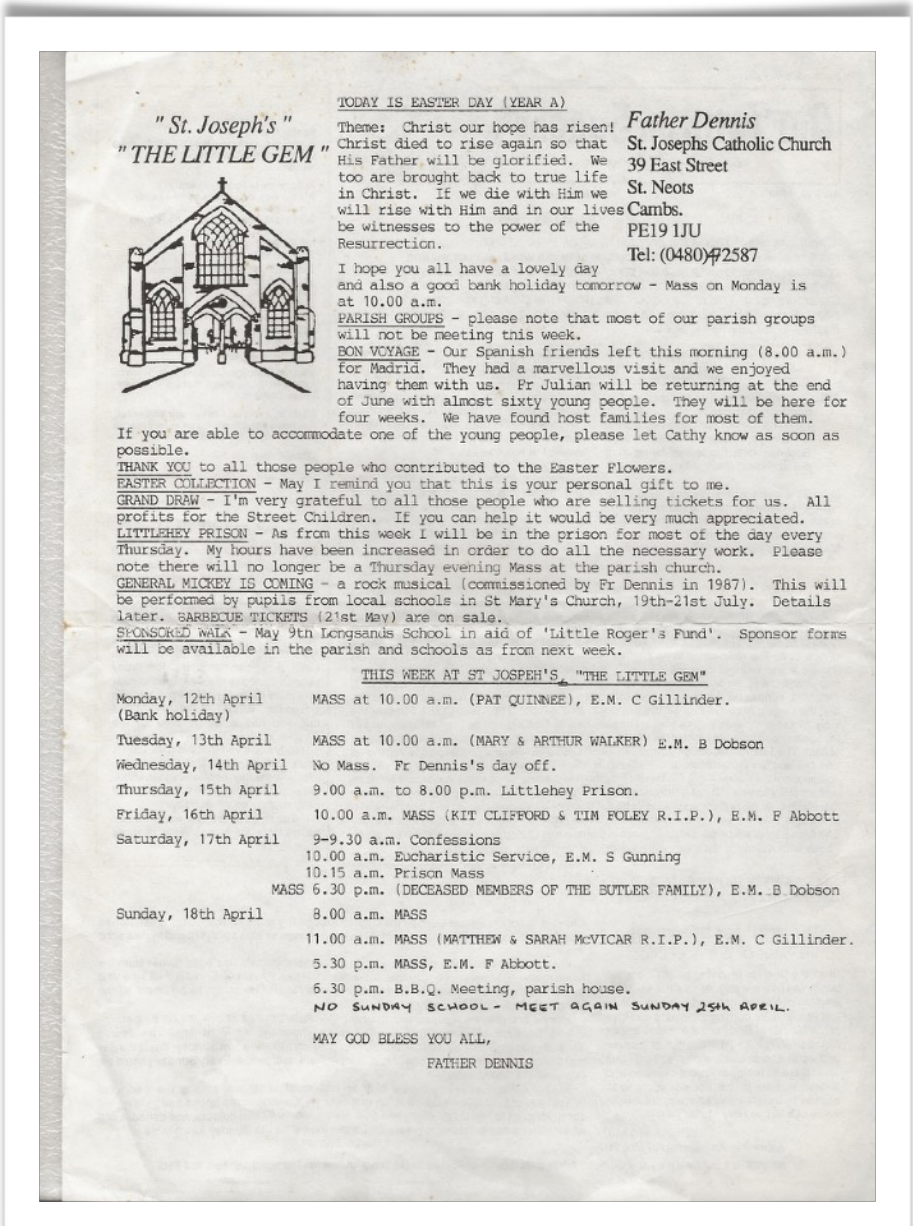
walk to Cornwall.

Kevin McLoughlin recalls the St. Neots to St. Neot walk Cornwall.

Whilst in Peterborough Fr. Dennis had arranged a musical based on the life of Don Bosco called General Mickey. Michael Macrone was an orphan who caused Don Bosco many problems. In 1993 it was performed in Norwich, Corn Excange Ipswich and St. Mary's St. Neots.

Fr. Dennis said Mass in Littlehey prison every Saturday and was appointed a deputy governor. He then invited parishioners to accompany him for Mass and afterwards to have a social chat with the prisoners over a cup of tea. Mary McLoughlin who befriended one prisoner was persuaded not to give him a cigarette as they were currency in the prison. She was shocked when Fr. Dennis told her that he had murdered his mother. The parishioners would sign in, then be escorted by Fr. Dennis who had a bunch of keys through various corridors opening and closing the gates as he went to the chapel passing prisoners getting clean laundry. One Easter a cake was taken in and Mary McLoughlin ever resourceful had a knife in her handbag and produced it to cut the cake. Evelyn McGuire was horrified and made Mary put it away just before the prisoners came into the room. On another visit Michael McLoughlin was the only visitor and Fr. Dennis gave him a tour around the prison. He admits to being uncomfortable especially when in the recreational area with prisoners all around.

As deputy governor he was able to arrange for a prisoner on day release to come to St. Neots and work in the garden. Fr. Dennis was forever making the news. One Sunday he ate a daffodil during his sermon to emphasise a point. On another occasion at the funeral of Madge Carberry he put a pile of hymn books askew on her coffin as how she looked after them and as the cortege was leaving the church, it was a horse drawn hearse, and still in his vestments, to the surprise of the coachman, he jumped up alongside him for the journey to the cemetery.
Below is one of Fr. Dennis's newsletters. It would be typed up on Thursday or even Friday morning before it was taken to Ernulf school for copying such was his charisma.



"St. Joseph's"
"THE LITTLE GEM"

TODAY IS EASTER DAY (YEAR A)

Theme: Christ our hope has risen! Christ died to rise again so that His Father will be glorified. We too are brought back to true life in Christ. If we die with Him we will rise with Him and in our lives be witnesses to the power of the Resurrection.

Father Dennis
St. Josephs Catholic Church
39 East Street
St. Neots
Cambs.
PE19 1JU
Tel: (0480)72587

I hope you all have a lovely day and also a good bank holiday tomorrow - Mass on Monday is at 10.00 a.m.

PARISH GROUPS - please note that most of our parish groups will not be meeting this week.

BON VOYAGE - Our Spanish friends left this morning (8.00 a.m.) for Madrid. They had a marvellous visit and we enjoyed having them with us. Fr Julian will be returning at the end of June with almost sixty young people. They will be here for four weeks. We have found host families for most of them. If you are able to accommodate one of the young people, please let Cathy know as soon as possible.

THANK YOU to all those people who contributed to the Easter Flowers.

EASTER COLLECTION - May I remind you that this is your personal gift to me.

GRAND DRAW - I'm very grateful to all those people who are selling tickets for us. All profits for the Street Children. If you can help it would be very much appreciated.

LITTLEHEY PRISON - As from this week I will be in the prison for most of the day every Thursday. My hours have been increased in order to do all the necessary work. Please note there will no longer be a Thursday evening Mass at the parish church.

GENERAL MICKEY IS COMING - a rock musical (commissioned by Fr Dennis in 1987). This will be performed by pupils from local schools in St Mary's Church, 19th-21st July. Details later. BARBECUE TICKETS (21st May) are on sale.

SPONSORED WALK - May 9th Longsands School in aid of 'Little Roger's Fund'. Sponsor forms will be available in the parish and schools as from next week.

THIS WEEK AT ST JOSPEH'S, "THE LITTLE GEM"

Monday, 12th April (Bank holiday)	MASS at 10.00 a.m. (PAT QUINNEE), E.M. C Gillinder.
Tuesday, 13th April	MASS at 10.00 a.m. (MARY & ARTHUR WALKER) E.M. B Dobson
Wednesday, 14th April	No Mass. Fr Dennis's day off.
Thursday, 15th April	9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Littlehey Prison.
Friday, 16th April	10.00 a.m. MASS (KIT CLIFFORD & TIM FOLEY R.I.P.), E.M. F Abbott
Saturday, 17th April	9-9.30 a.m. Confessions 10.00 a.m. Eucharistic Service, E.M. S Gunning 10.15 a.m. Prison Mass MASS 6.30 p.m. (DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE BUTLER FAMILY), E.M. B Dobson
Sunday, 18th April	8.00 a.m. MASS 11.00 a.m. MASS (MATTHEW & SARAH McVICAR R.I.P.), E.M. C Gillinder. 5.30 p.m. MASS, E.M. F Abbott. 6.30 p.m. B.B.Q. Meeting, parish house.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL - MEET AGAIN SUNDAY 25th APRIL.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL,

FATHER DENNIS

In February 2001 the parishioners were shocked and dismayed to learn that Fr. Dennis had left the parish.

The bishop asked Fr. Tony (Anthony) Shryane to become priest in charge as well as continuing as parish priest in Ely.

The following is a list of parish priests who have served the parish since its formation in 1946.

- Fr. Albert Whyatt 1946-1954
- Fr. Reginald Atkinson 1954-1957
- Fr. Joseph Gamm (an American Jesuit) 1957-1958 (priest in charge)
- Fr. Lawrence Howlin 1958-1989
- Fr. Dennis Finbow 1989-2001 Fr. Cristopher Beck assistant priest 1996-1997
- Fr. Anthony Shryane (priest in charge) 2001
- Fr. Bruce Burbridge (priest in charge) 2001-2002
- Fr. Pat (Patrick) Cleary 2002-2010
- Claretian Missionary Fathers 2010-2021
- Fr. Jim (James) Kennedy (CMF)
- Fr. Chris (Christopher) Newman (CMF)/Fr Martin Fletcher
- Fr. Antony Arockiam (CMF)
- Fr. Krysztof Stawicki (CMF)
- Fr. Padraig Hawkins 2021 (Sept to Nov)
- Then served by the Claretians from Buckden (Fr. Krzysztof Stawicki priest in charge)
- Fr. Antony Arockiam 2022 (Jan to Sept)
- Fr. Tibor Borovský 2022-present

The arrival of Fr. Bruce Burbridge was greeted with relief in that the parish now had a priest whose sole mission was to serve St. Joseph's. Fr. Bruce was quite shy but once speaking to you became very interested. He was intellectual but still able to converse with the parishioners and in 2002 there was a sadness when he left to go back to the Oscott seminary as a lecturer.

His replacement Fr. Pat Cleary soon settled into the parish. He gave the following resume of his career.
I know many of you at St. Joseph's as this was my base during my time in both Bolivia and the USA. Fr. Dennis always made me most welcome. He put himself out for me many a time, collecting me from the airport and making sure I had a vehicle if I needed one. I would like to thank him for his kindness.
I would also like to thank Fr. Bruce Burbridge for all he has done at St. Joseph's during his time here. We wish him well as he goes on to pastures new.

"As Noel Coward once said, 'we haven't got time to talk about both of us, so let's talk just about me'!"
Those of you that don't know me, I was born and raised in Ipswich (yes, you have another Ipswich Town FC nut on your hands!) I attended St. Mary's secondary modern school until in 1964, with great relief on the part of the school and me, I left! At the tender age of 15, I started working in an Ipswich shop. I stayed with that firm for 7 years, the last two of which I was manager at the branch in Portobello Rd, Notting Hill. Fr. Dennis was manager of the branch in Islington.

In 1971 I went to Osterley, a Jesuit run college for late vocations. In 1973 I began my seminary training in All Hallows College Dublin and was ordained in Dec. '78. In 1991, after time spent in parishes in Cambridge, Ipswich, Norwich and Thetford. I went to work with the of Society of St. James in Bolivia and it was here that Fr. Dennis and I met the extraordinary nun whose name is so familiar to you, Sr. Stephanie.
In 1994 I was transferred to Boston headquarters of the Society and remained there until I went to Lowestoft as Parish Priest in 1999. And now I'm in St. Neots and will do my best to serve you as your parish priest.
One thing I like to do is to visit people in their homes. If would you like me to visit you please fill in one of the forms and I will do my best to call at time that fits in with your schedule. It will take time to visit everyone so please be patient.

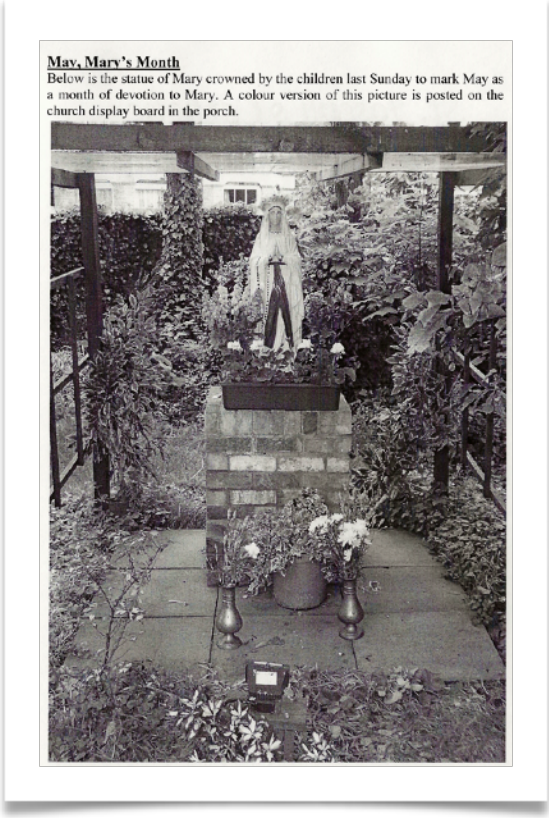
Fr. Pat had the knack of letting the parish groups operate without any apparent intervention but keeping everything on an even keel. He has been described as being like an orchestral conductor.

Fortunately, all his newsletters survived allowing an insight into parish life during his time as parish priest.

2002: New hymn books were purchased for £815, Mass for sick became an annual event, Confirmation by Fr. Tony Shryane, Confessional reorganised, Both Ciborium replated, Kneelers donated, Mrs. B. Dobson's mother made one with material donated by prisoners from Littlehey, and two made by the UCM, New fire extinguishers cost £1520 UCM collected warm clothes for St. Teresa Day Centre Peterborough, Parish meeting and social/meal Priory Centre, New crib.

2003 Break into sacristy keys stolen, Mini mission, Pyx found in house inscribed Fr. O'Dwyer 1904, Break into garden shed lawnmower taken, Parish meeting, Warm clothes appeal, Parish social, Ramp and handrail fitted for easier access to rear side church door, Longsands year 7 visits.

2004 Lenten house masses, Parish meeting, Parish pride day, Mass for sick, Security cameras now record, Church interior painted in Barley White emulsion but not ceiling, New Altar curtains, Parish bazaar, Advent house masses, Warm clothes appeal. The picture below was in the parish newsletter May 16th 2004.



May, Mary's Month
Below is the statue of Mary crowned by the children last Sunday to mark May as a month of devotion to Mary. A colour version of this picture is posted on the church display board in the porch.

2005: Hinged step to lectern, Lenten house masses, Sacristy door kicked open presbytery also burgled, hidden cameras added, Parish pride day, Minibus broken into, strawberry tea for senior & disabled parishioners, Annual bazaar & dance, conservatory wall moved by quarter inch as if hit by vehicle, Warm clothes appeal, Parish meeting, SVP Christmas hamper appeal.



(Altar before the newly commissioned painting)

December 2005 the altar painting is by the well-known catholic artist James Gillick. The installation by James, his father and a cousin took a week. (His mother, Victoria, was a well-known East Anglian anti-abortionist campaigner). The painting was donated by a benefactor. For insurance purposes the artist recommended £15,000. James was asked in 2023 for an updated valuation and a technical description of the painting. He said he would now charge In excess of £75,000!

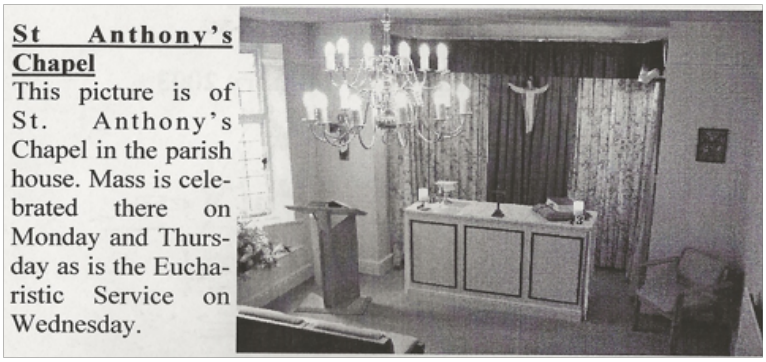
The lettering is not paint but gold leaf as is that on the columns.

The canvas isn't special, though it is a very high grade 16oz cotton duck. That it is oil primed and painted by hand Is what makes it unusual. The technical description is as follows: 16oz Cotton Duck substrate stretched on a pinewood fixed strainer. Oil primed with pure PbO, Painted in hand ground oil paint using seven colours plus Black and White including the colours Flake White, Yellow Ochre Pale, Cadmium Red, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber, French Ultramarine, Aliziariam, Crimson and Ivory Black It is varnished with a hand made, thin, gum dammar varnish.

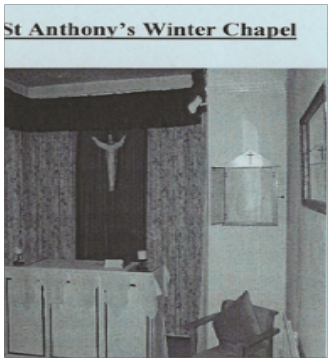


The painting was created for the space. When James came to measure the area there were 2 large candlesticks either side of the tabernacle which he assumed were going to remain. However, once the painting was installed it was decided not to replace them. Hence there is little detail at the bottom of the picture. The people portrayed are all local to the painter. The two boys atop the tabernacle are nephews and the baby Jesus is his own child. Our Lady was a student at university his father is one of the shepherds. The two boys are holding nails and a crown of thorns signifying the death of Jesus. To the top left of the picture in a source of light the curtain is being shown by his father as opening the world to the New Testament from the Old Testament. Then you have Mary in a source of light with a red heart-shaped cloth a tradition in mediaeval paintings giving her a cloth of honour. Mary is offering Jesus to the shepherds and so to the world.

2006 Parishioner Paul O'Neill launched his charity CD, Sister Stephanie died (Cochabamba), Parish meeting, Mass for sick (Fr. Pat ill), Parish pride day, House rewiring and plumbing work to remove lead piping cost £10,000, appeal raised £5,963, Confirmation by Bishop, Strawberry tea for senior & disabled parishioners, St. Anthony's chapel redecorated, Hot water system for upper room installed, New toilet system with hot water installed in the church, Intruder to house stole keys & minibus keys, Advent house masses, Warm clothes appeal, Parish meeting SVP Christmas hamper appeal, Longsands year 7 visits.


St Anthony's Chapel

This picture is of St. Anthony's Chapel in the parish house. Mass is celebrated there on Monday and Thursday as is the Eucharistic Service on Wednesday.



2007 £7000 donation from P. Rowley used to upgrade computer system, Catechetical aids and CCTV upgrade, Parish meeting, Parish Finance, Parish pride day, Annual mass for sick, First mass in St. James CofE church at Croxton since reformation, Fund for 2008 world youth day in Australia, Strawberry Tea for senior and disabled parishioners, Upgrade church electrics, Youth stole from candle boxes whilst Fr. Pat watering flower baskets, Christmas fayre, Parish garden tidy up. Church closed except Sunday in September for damp proof work. Propotec Ltd. removed plaster up to four feet inserted chemicals, replaced plaster and when dried out told under no circumstances to use other than emulsion paint otherwise the single brick wall would not be able to breathe,
Appeal for warm clothes for homeless, Mass at Croxton again, Church locked after Christmas until 28th.

2008 Fr. Pat back from Bolivia where he gave Fr. Bibby $2000, 3 Masses at Croxton in the year, Gates closed after Easter to prevent right of way being established from East Street to Avenue Road & church locked for two days, Keys taken from hall table new lock for front door, Anonymous £1000 donation, Bishop visitation, 3 peaks challenge for World youth day, Altar moved forward, Parish pride day and BBQ, Mass for sick, Strawberry tea for senior & disabled parishioners, Warm clothes appeal, Christmas fayre, Croxton carol service, New crib, In his newsletter of Dec 28th, 2008, he wrote:

> The following arrived in my e-mail box recently and thought it was interesting enough to publish here. It reminded me of the "Deck of Cards" so popular at some time during my childhood.
> From 1558 until 1829, Catholics in England were not permitted to practise their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics.
> The Partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
> Two Turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.
> Three French hands stood for faith, hope, and love.
> The four calling birds were the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
> The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law. The five first five books of the Old Testament.
> The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
> Seven Swans a swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit - Prophesy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.
> The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
> Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control.
> The 10 Lords are leaping were the ten Commandments.
> Eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
> The twelve drummers drumming symbolised the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

2009 Christian Unity Week of Prayer held at St. Joe's, Lenten house masses, Parish meeting, Finance statement Income £99,894 Expenditure £73,355, Parish gates closed after last Easter mass, Parish pride day, Altar carpet removed, Mass at Croxton, Spanish students arrive, Mass and strawberry tea for senior and disabled parishioners, Help needed to spread Ten tonnes of gravel in car park, Parish barbeque, Warm clothing appeal, Parish meeting, SVP Christmas hamper appeal, Carol service Croxton church, Gates closed after last Christmas Mass.

2010 It was announced by Bishop Evans that he had asked the Claretian Missionary Fathers at St. Hugh of Lincoln Buckden to join with St. Joseph's parish due to a shortage of priests in the diocese. This meant that the largest urban area in Cambridgeshire after the cities of Cambridge and Peterborough was left without a resident priest.
Lenten house masses, Parish meeting, Help needed to remove mound of earth by skip, Parish pride day, Strawberry tea and mass for the senior and disabled parishioners, Ground floor ceilings replaced following collapse of dining room ceiling. The ceilings were lathe & plaster. New gates fitted to Avenue road entrance, Leaving party for Fr. Pat in Priory centre, Fr. Pat's last newsletter 28th August. No newsletters remain until Fr. Tibor comes.
For a time parishioners accompanied Fr. Pat to Littlehey and then go through an airlock. Fr. Pat recalls one Saturday, at the time when communion was under both kinds, a prisoner was first up and drank all the contents of the chalice. The next week Fr. Pat referred to it and after Mass the prisoner confessed that he was an alcoholic.

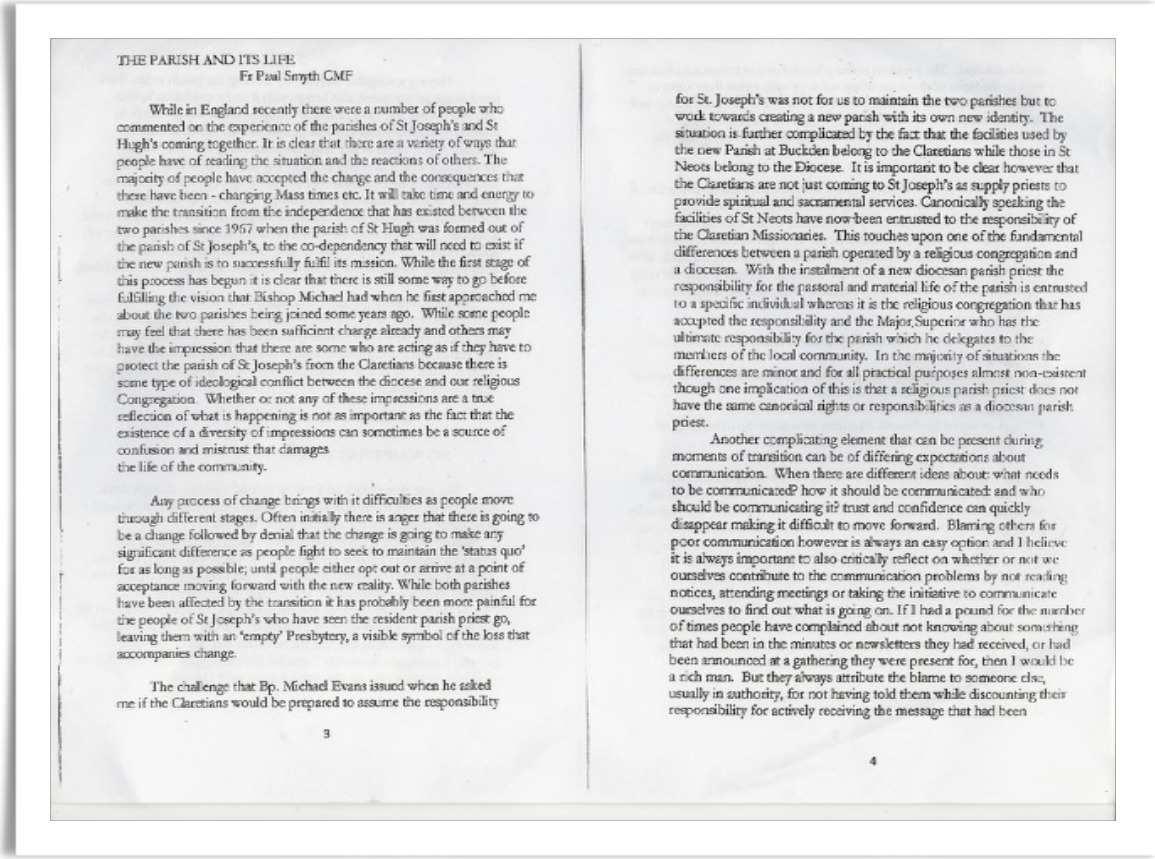
During his time in St. Neots Fr. Pat arranged for the appropriate hymns for each Sunday to be recorded on disc.
For the first year Fr. Jim Kennedy stayed over a couple of nights a week, but this stopped in 2011 when he was replaced as parish priest by Fr. Chris Newman. Whilst the Claretians looked after the spiritual needs of the parish, the social aspect of the parish went into decline. The parish house was looked after by Patrick O'Shea who became a tenant and sacristan as well.



During their ministry, our first parishioner to be ordained a priest was Simon Davies on July 6th 2019 In Norwich cathedral.

The church had a fire alarm fitted and was redecorated. Unfortunately Gloss paint was used which meant that the church single brick walls cannot breathe and subsequently the plaster has begun to spall.

The article below concerning Parish and its Life written by Fr. Paul Smyth when he was Superior of the Claretians.



THE PARISH AND ITS LIFE
Fr Paul Smyth CMF

While in England recently there were a number of people who commented on the experience of the parishes of St Joseph's and St Hugh's coming together. It is clear that there are a variety of ways that people have of reading the situation and the reactions of others. The majority of people have accepted the change and the consequences that there have been - changing Mass times etc. It will take time and energy to make the transition from the independence that has existed between the two parishes since 1967 when the parish of St Hugh was formed out of the parish of St Joseph's, to the co-dependency that will need to exist if the new parish is to successfully fulfil its mission. While the first stage of this process has begun it is clear that there is still some way to go before fulfilling the vision that Bishop Michael had when he first approached me about the two parishes being joined some years ago. While some people may feel that there has been sufficient change already and others may have the impression that there are some who are acting as if they have to protect the parish of St Joseph's from the Claretians because there is some type of ideological conflict between the diocese and our religious Congregation. Whether or not any of these impressions are a true reflection of what is happening is not as important as the fact that the existence of a diversity of impressions can sometimes be a source of confusion and mistrust that damages the life of the community.

Any process of change brings with it difficulties as people move through different stages. Often initially there is anger that there is going to be a change followed by denial that the change is going to make any significant difference as people fight to seek to maintain the 'status quo' for as long as possible; until people either opt out or arrive at a point of acceptance moving forward with the new reality. While both parishes have been affected by the transition it has probably been more painful for the people of St Joseph's who have seen the resident parish priest go, leaving them with an 'empty' Presbytery, a visible symbol of the loss that accompanies change.

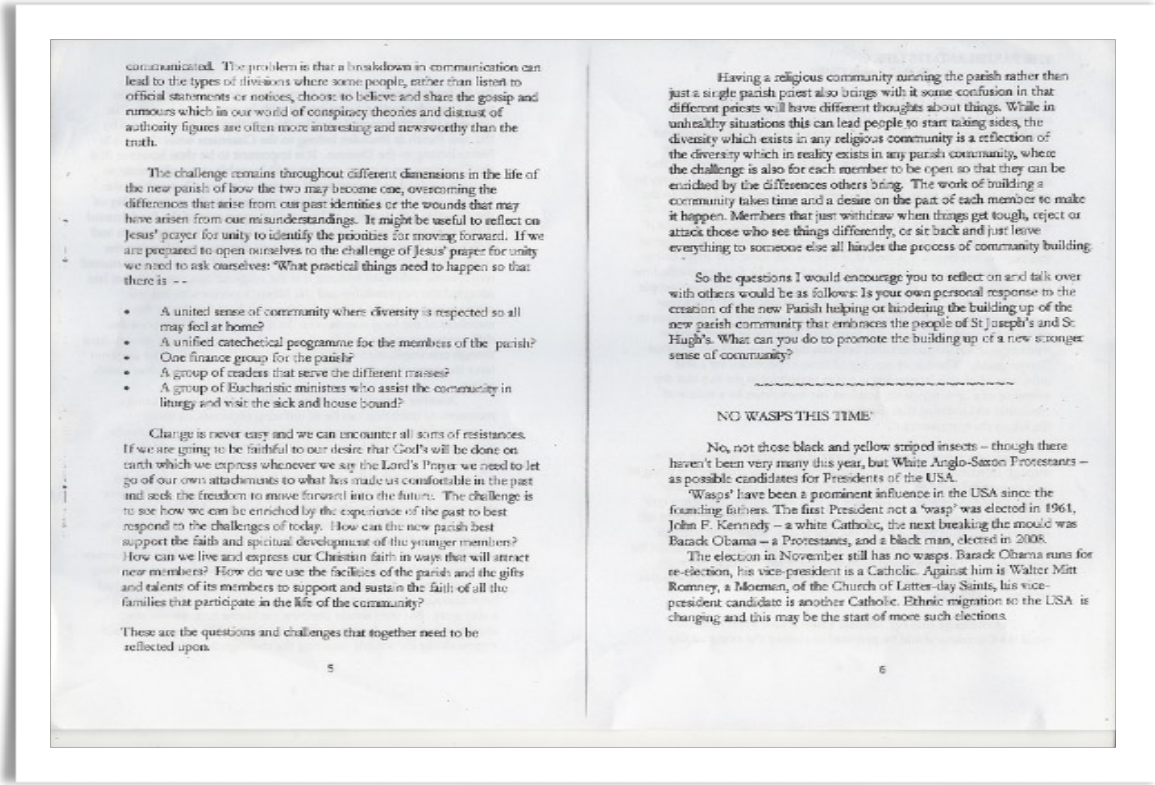
The challenge that Bp. Michael Evans issued when he asked me if the Claretians would be prepared to assume the responsibility

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for St. Joseph's was not for us to maintain the two parishes but to work towards creating a new parish with its own new identity. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the facilities used by the new Parish at Buckden belong to the Claretians while those in St Neots belong to the Diocese. It is important to be clear however that the Claretians are not just coming to St Joseph's as supply priests to provide spiritual and sacramental services. Canonically speaking the facilities of St Neots have now been entrusted to the responsibility of the Claretian Missionaries. This touches upon one of the fundamental differences between a parish operated by a religious congregation and a diocesan. With the instalment of a new diocesan parish priest the responsibility for the pastoral and material life of the parish is entrusted to a specific individual whereas it is the religious congregation that has accepted the responsibility and the Major Superior who has the ultimate responsibility for the parish which he delegates to the members of the local community. In the majority of situations the differences are minor and for all practical purposes almost non-existent though one implication of this is that a religious parish priest does not have the same canonical rights or responsibilities as a diocesan parish priest.

Another complicating element that can be present during moments of transition can be of differing expectations about communication. When there are different ideas about what needs to be communicated? how it should be communicated: and who should be communicating it? trust and confidence can quickly disappear making it difficult to move forward. Blaming others for poor communication however is always an easy option and I believe it is always important to also critically reflect on whether or not we ourselves contribute to the communication problems by not reading notices, attending meetings or taking the initiative to communicate ourselves to find out what is going on. If I had a pound for the number of times people have complained about not knowing about something that had been in the minutes or newsletters they had received, or had been announced at a gathering they were present for, then I would be a rich man. But they always attribute the blame to someone else, usually in authority, for not having told them while discounting their responsibility for actively receiving the message that had been

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communicated. The problem is that a breakdown in communication can lead to the types of divisions where some people, rather than listen to official statements or notices, choose to believe and share the gossip and rumours which in our world of conspiracy theories and distrust of authority figures are often more interesting and newsworthy than the truth.

The challenge remains throughout different dimensions in the life of the new parish of how the two may become one, overcoming the differences that arise from our past identities or the wounds that may have arisen from our misunderstandings. It might be useful to reflect on Jesus' prayer for unity to identify the priorities for moving forward. If we are prepared to open ourselves to the challenge of Jesus' prayer for unity we need to ask ourselves: "What practical things need to happen so that there is - -

- A united sense of community where diversity is respected so all may feel at home?
- A unified catechetical programme for the members of the parish?
- One finance group for the parish?
- A group of readers that serve the different masses?
- A group of Eucharistic ministers who assist the community in liturgy and visit the sick and house bound?

Change is never easy and we can encounter all sorts of resistances. If we are going to be faithful to our desire that God's will be done on earth which we express whenever we say the Lord's Prayer we need to let go of our own attachments to what has made us comfortable in the past and seek the freedom to move forward into the future. The challenge is to see how we can be enriched by the experience of the past to best respond to the challenges of today. How can the new parish best support the faith and spiritual development of the younger members? How can we live and express our Christian faith in ways that will attract new members? How do we use the facilities of the parish and the gifts and talents of its members to support and sustain the faith of all the families that participate in the life of the community?

These are the questions and challenges that together need to be reflected upon.

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Having a religious community running the parish rather than just a single parish priest also brings with it some confusion in that different priests will have different thoughts about things. While in unhealthy situations this can lead people to start taking sides, the diversity which exists in any religious community is a reflection of the diversity which in reality exists in any parish community, where the challenge is also for each member to be open so that they can be enriched by the differences others bring. The work of building a community takes time and a desire on the part of each member to make it happen. Members that just withdraw when things get tough, reject or attack those who see things differently, or sit back and just leave everything to someone else all hinder the process of community building.

So the questions I would encourage you to reflect on and talk over with others would be as follows: Is your own personal response to the creation of the new Parish helping or hindering the building up of the new parish community that embraces the people of St Joseph's and St Hugh's. What can you do to promote the building up of a new stronger sense of community?

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2022. Fr. Padraig suffered a severe bout of covid and in November tended his resignation as parish priest to the bishop. Collection of chocolates for prisoners.
For the remainder of the year the Claretians provided cover.
Fr. Antony Arockiam was appointed parish priest. The SVP conference folded due to infirmity and age of the majority of members. During his tenure the Grotto covering the statue of Our Lady in the garden was rebuilt with a pitched roof and the original Perspex roof formed the sides making it more like a house.



September 2022 Fr. Tibor Borovský, a Slovakian priest, was appointed parish priest. He came to England in 2010 as chaplain of the Slovak Catholic Mission to England. At the time. Bishop Hopes was an auxiliary Bishop in the Westminster diocese. where he came to know Fr. Tibor. Bishop Hopes was subsequently appointed Bishop of East Anglia. Wanting to have a resident priest in St. Neots he asked Fr. Tibor to become parish priest.
Fr. Tibor is very energetic and proactive in getting the parish functioning. Imagine the parishioners surprise when in his first two months he announced a parish barbeque to be held in November. The weather was kind with Fr. Tibor providing Slovakian food ably assisted by fellow country citizens. He still (using his day off from parish duties) looks after the Slovakian mission going back to London after Sunday mass and returning on Monday night resulting in no Monday mass. The rest of the week he devotes to the parish. Sunday evening mass moved to Saturday evening at 5:30pm and Sunday 11:00am mass moved to 10:00am. The first year was spent quietly discerning the strengths and weaknesses of the parish. Then involving the parishioners to join the various committees needed to assist in the smooth running of the parish. All the work carried out on the maintenance of the fabric is now recorded for future reference. Visit from St. Nicholas. Christmas nativity play, children required. Collection of chocolates for prisoners. Joint CofE/RC carol service at Coxton. Candle sale to support English lessons for Ukrainians. (candles made from recycled church candles).

2023 Work Fr. Arockiam started turning the Howlin centre into a garage completed. Signs erected in the garden indicating the private nature of the carpark. Improved sound system with new microphones. Asked Paul O'Neill and Richard Tubridy to put on to a computer programme all the discs that Fr. Pat had made of hymns appropriate for each Sunday. Various locks replaced. Outside sink and water supply fitted. Improvements to church and house toilets Safety eyes fitted on buildings to secure ladders when cleaning the gutters. LED lights replacing existing outside garage, back of house and car park area. Annual Gift Aid appeal. Storage racks fitted in church for hymn books etc. UCM meetings continue as does English lessons for Ukrainians in upper room on Mondays with transport provided (courtesy of UCM) to Buckden on Tuesdays. Crowning of Our Lady's Statue. Garden parties. Church sound system improved. First Holy communions. Reports on Diocesan Council of Laity meeting and Parish Finance which showed a deficit for 2022. On going tree cutting and garden maintenance with request for helpers for the latter. Parish library catalogued. Parish Pastoral council formed. Requests for volunteers in various roles. Altar servers parent's meeting. Hosted Deanery meeting with lunch for 19 priests in Upper room. Counters meeting due to local bank closures. Visit from St. Nicholas. Twice weekly evening Advent masses. Pastoral council meeting. Pastoral council communications box in porch. Church decorated for Christmas with crib and flowers. Annual CofE/RC carol service at Croxton followed by refreshments.

2024 Pastoral notice board fitted to back wall of church. Remedial work on pews and radiators in church and house. Annual Gift Aid appeal. Water repellent applied to both long external walls. Industrial heater to dry out wall near gallery door. Plumbed washing machine in presbytery bathroom with associated electrics. Two candle shelves fitted in sacristy. Annual tree maintenance. Replaced all pointing up to window level with lime cement and replaced 146 deteriorated bricks together with 7 windowsills repaired cost £8,500. 2 New portable microphones with associated brackets fitted in sacristy. First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes begin. UCM meetings throughout the year and annual pilgrimage to Walsingham. Pastoral Council and Finance/Fabric committees meet during year. First Holy Communion barbeque. Bishop Peter administers Confirmation. New parish website commissioned and launched. New altar servers meeting. Holy Communion ministers reaffirmed and blest Training for Readers. Garden tidy up. Parish Harvest festival. Parish Pilgrimage to Rome. Visit of St. Nicholas. Twice weekly evening Advent masses. Croxton carol service postponed due to road closure. Altar Remembrance Sunday Poppies prepared by the Parish UCM.



2025 Coffee & Tea in Presbytery after Sunday 10:00am mass. Pastoral Council and Finance/Fabric committees meet during the year. UCM have monthly meetings except August. Kneelers removed due to moth damage. Church doors repaired and painted. Tree maintenance carried out. Free English lessons for those wishing to improve their English. Pastoral Council open meeting. Dona machine installed for contactless donation. Lenten courses. Parish Youth Classes making Easter cards. Fr. Pat Cleary visited parish to explain the Nativity painting. Annual Gift Aid appeal. Financial statement showing Investment in maintaining parish property exceeded income by £11,153. Due to repairs requested by the Diocesan surveyor. Parish 100 club new year. Good Friday walk with witness in Market Square. Chalice re-plated. May Crowning of Our Lady.



Children's rosary in garden prior to 10:00am mass.



10 children making First Communion, celebrate with Barbeque in garden.



UCM pilgrimage to Walsingham.



Garden party with Slovak Dancers in costume & Slovak food.



Blessing of donated chalice. HCPT group cake sale. Electric testing in church. Funeral team formed to assist at funerals. Handrail fitted to Altar steps. Bible classes after Sunday10:00 am mass. Upper room available for parishioner events. Crockery & kitchenware available for parishioners events, Presbytery toilet renovated. Catechist's blessing.



Parish pilgrimage to Rome.



During first week in November last year's deceased parishioners remembered.

Blessing of Parish musicians. Blessing & Enrolment of New Altar Servers. Blessing of Advent wreaths. Parish Youth Retreat. Parishioners invited to host Posada Event 2025. Free English lessons cancelled. Grateful thanks to all who assisted with this programme. Visit of St. Nicholas. Carol service with children performing the nativity. New parish computer & copier with colour printing, folding & stitching.