



*Holy Trinity Roman Catholic
Chapel 1834*

HOLY TRINITY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL

(Built 1834)

now

THE GUILDHALL Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield



The Guildhall 2008

by:

Janet Jordan

A Member of Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group

September 2008

Acknowledgments to:-

Father Gerry Breen,
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield

Mick Clarke,
Whitehouse Common Road

Keith Jordan

Dr Judith Champ
Director of Studies, PhD., (Archives and Church History), St Mary's College, Oscott

Mike Jordan
Jordan Financial Management, The Guildhall, Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield

Foreword

Here we are, in 2008, and those of us who use the main Lichfield Road leading out of Sutton Coldfield know that it is an absolute hive of activity. This is partly due to the recent expansion of Sutton Coldfield College. The extra students and staff have created a constant movement of traffic and people throughout the streets of the town all day long. Opposite the college campus, the Fire and Police Stations compete to manoeuvre their vehicles into the main road and pedestrians have to jostle for a place on the pavement.



Fig 1 Lichfield Road (2008)

Back in 1908, it was still a busy place. The railway had brought great prosperity to the town and High Street was abuzz with new shops and businesses. Reaching out as far as Four Oaks, the whole area north of Sutton had been developed with high class housing and the increased population travelled into the town by whatever means they could - horse drawn carriage, pony and trap or, perhaps, a bicycle. One had to look both ways before crossing the street!

Conversely, prior to the railway and during the first half of the 1800s, peace and quiet reigned and passers by were only worried about the dust and mud thrown up from the occasional cart or wagon as it rumbled past them on the old cobbled streets. Pedestrians then **expected** to share the road with the traffic!

You would imagine, therefore, that an event of any sort in the town would have made an impact on them. It is a puzzle, therefore, why the Open Day of a formerly banned Roman Catholic Chapel was not recorded by any of the local historians of the day. Perhaps to them it wasn't newsworthy.

Certainly, in the early 1800s, some factions of the community still regarded Roman Catholicism with distain.

Fortunately, things have improved and, nowadays, followers of different religions in Sutton live in harmony.



*Fig 1 Lichfield Road (approx 1855)
(Chapel marked with a 'hatchet')*

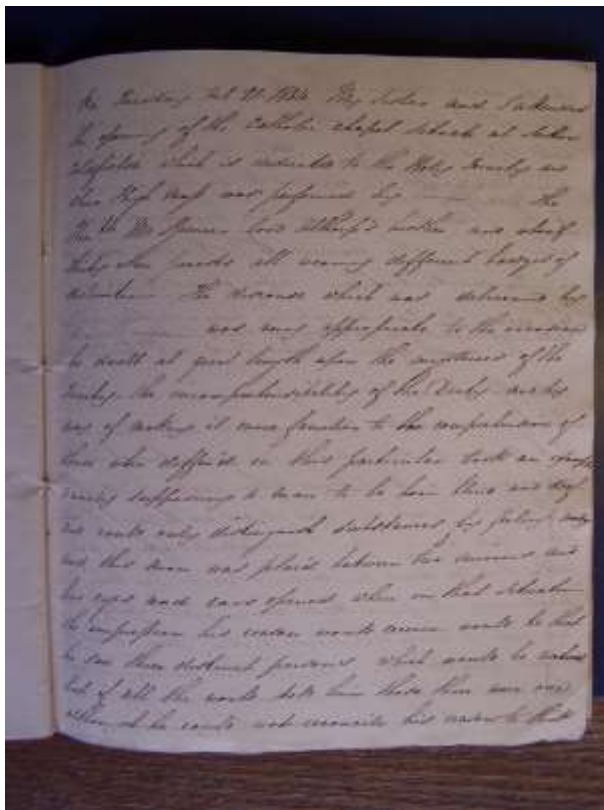
With a bit of delving, facts relating to this particular occasion and to the life of the building have gradually come to light. They show how a rather quaint little chapel survived through its early parochial years to evolve eventually into a rather picturesque establishment for a thriving financial services business in one of Sutton's most ancient of streets. To tell the story, we need to go back nearly 175 years.

Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel

Open Day: 21 October 1834

The auspicious day was Tuesday, October 21st 1834. Visitors came from far and wide to witness Bishop Walsh opening the new Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel, which had been built on land between Bishop Vesey School and Moat House. Rev. Dr. Weedall, the respected President of Oscott College, came to preach on the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the Rev. Mr Pope sang the High Mass. The grand sum of £42.16s was collected (*worth over £2,000 today*) proving what a successful day it had been!¹

Among the lower ranks who attended were teenagers, Harriet Littlehales and her sister, who travelled from Erdington. Neither were Catholics, but Harriet had a very religious turn of mind and waxed lyrical on the sermon. This is her account² of the occasion:



“My Sister and I attended the opening of the Catholic Chapel situate at Sutton Coldfield which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity and whose High Mass was performed by (Bishop Walsh). The Honorable Mr Spencer, Lord Althorp’s brother and about thirty other friends (came) all wearing different badges of distinction. The discourse which was delivered by (Rev. Dr. Weedall) was very appropriate to the occasion.

He dwelt at great length upon the mysteries of the Trinity, the incomprehensibility of the Deity and by way of making it more familiar

Fig 3(A) Harriet Littlehales Account 1834

to the comprehension of those who differed in this particular took an example namely supposing a man to be born blind and deaf and could only distinguish substances by feeling only and this man was placed between two mirrors and his eyes and ears opened when in that situation the impression his reason would receive would be that he saw three distinct persons which would be natural but if all the world told him those three were one although he could not reconcile his reason to think so he would exclaim this thing which is revealed although it is inimical to any comprehension I will believe it is so. When God ceases to be incomprehensible he ceases to be God.

So far I should pronounce his discourse admirably good – the concluding (?) part was remarks on Transubstantiation- referr'd us to the 6 Chap John 53 verse. Then Jesus said unto them Verily verily I say unto you Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you. I use the words of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

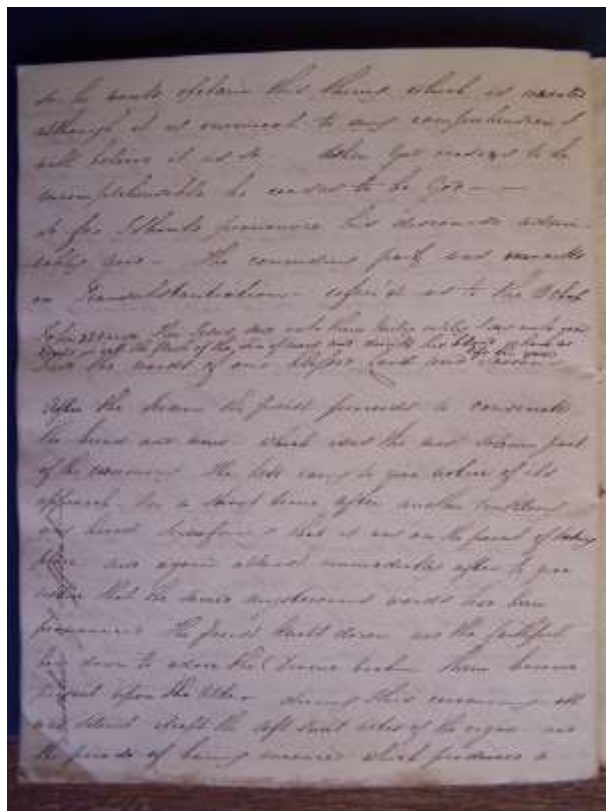


Fig 3(B) Harriet Littlehailes Account 1834

After the Sermon the priest proceeded to consecrate the bread and wine which was the most solemn part of the ceremony. The bell rang to give notice of its approach. In a short time after another tinkling was heard signifying that it was on the point of taking place and again almost immediately after to give notice that the sacred mysterious words had been pronounced. The priest knelt down and the faithful bowed down to adore the Divine Victim then become present upon the Altar. During this ceremony all was silent except the soft sweet notes of the organ – and the parade of burning incense which produced a sensation of suffocation.”

Harriet, who married into the Brough Family of Leek, was an avid writer who saved most of her paperwork and, with this account, she kept a Mass leaflet³ explaining the ceremony, which had been printed for the benefit of non-Catholics who attended. She, at least, recognized the importance of the occasion.

A. M. D. G.

Chapel of the Holy Trinity, SUTTON-COLDFIELD.

OPENED OCTOBER 21st, 1834.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—Amen.

O Lord, open thou our lips.

Ans. And our mouth shall declare thy praise.

LET US ADORE.

MANNERS.

Let us adore the Lord of Glory.

Ans. Let us adore the God of our salvation.

The King of Heaven, &c.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Ans. We will adore the Lord of Glory: we will worship the God of our Salvation.

SACRIFICE is a supreme act of Religion, due only to God. It is offered to the Almighty by his creatures, to acknowledge his sovereign dominion over them, and their entire dependance on Him; to thank Him for the numberless favours, which He has conferred upon them; to beg the pardon of their offences against Him; and, finally, to implore a continuance of his merciful protection.

From the beginning of the world, sacrifice has been offered to God by his people, for the religious intentions just mentioned. But all the sacrifices, whether of the law of nature, or of the law of Moses, were but "needy elements," as the Apostle calls them: they were only figures of the Great Sacrifice of the *New Law*, which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has offered for us upon Mount Calvary. By this one sacrifice on the Cross, God has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Heb. c. 10, v. 14.

This great Sacrifice of the New Law is still continued amongst us, agreeably to the merciful ordinance of our Saviour at his last Supper. By the consecration of the bread and wine, our dear Redeemer becomes really present upon the altar; and hence the same Jesus is here offered up to God in an unbloody manner, who was once offered a bloody sacrifice to his Father upon the Cross. The sacrifice upon the altar, and the sacrifice upon the Cross are one and the same: in both, the High Priest is the same, and the victim is the same, Jesus Christ, blessed for evermore!

This is the great sacrifice of Christians; this is the clean-offering made to God amongst the Gentiles, from the rising to the setting of the sun, as the prophet Malachy foretold (ch. i.). Now, the dignity and value of this sacrifice depend upon the real presence of our Lord; and, consequently, the consecration,* by which our Blessed Redeemer becomes present upon the altar, is the principal part of the sacrifice. But, if the mere act of consecration were performed, without any accompanying prayers, it would appear naked and uninteresting, and would be concluded before the faithful would have had time to recollect themselves into sentiments of devotion. The Church, therefore, has judiciously clothed this essential part of the sacrifice with suitable ceremonies. All these ceremonies are directed to it, as to their centre; and from it they all derive their meaning and usefulness. Those, which precede the consecration, are a preparation for it, consisting of prayers expressive of the repentance, humility, adoration, and other virtuous dispositions, with which we should assist at the holy sacrifice; consisting, also, of instructions, by which the dispositions just mentioned are strengthened in the soul. The ceremonies, which follow the consecration, are an offering of our Divine Victim to the Almighty, and a partaking of the same, in the Holy Communion, for the food and nourishment of our souls, with an appropriate thanksgiving. This will appear from the outline of the ceremonies of the Christian sacrifice, or the *Mass*, as it is generally called, which will now be given.

* The time, when this takes place, will be mentioned afterwards.

Fig 4 Mass Leaflet kept by Harriet Littlehales, 1834

Prior to 1834

16th Century

For some Suttonians, however, the opening of this Chapel met with some disquiet, as there was still quite a strong feeling against the so called 'Popish' practices carried on by Roman Catholics. Most of the local population attended the Parish Church, which had been the place of worship for the town ever since the Fourteenth Century. They discounted the fact that in its early days their Parish Church was Roman Catholic. However, at the time of Henry VIII's reign, everyone was forced to accept the King as head of the church and the final severance from Rome took place in the time of Elizabeth I. By June 1559, she had ordered that the Mass should cease, that Catholic altars must be removed and Common Prayer Book Services should be held in every parish.⁴ From then on, the Roman Catholic faith was suppressed. To support it was certainly risky and one could incur great financial penalties or even loss of life.⁵



Fig 5 Holy Trinity Parish Church (circa 1900)

17th Century

In spite of this, its followers strived hard to keep their faith alive. Priests were trained abroad, primarily in Douai, France, and, upon their return to England, were secretly housed by wealthy families, who provided places in their homes for them to conduct Mass and administer the Sacraments. To achieve this, 'priest holes' were cleverly constructed under floorboards, behind false walls or inside chimney breasts, into which the unfortunate priest would have to conceal himself during dangerous times. Local examples of such houses are at Harvington Hall and Baddesley Clinton.

It is thought that Sutton Coldfield, too, played some part in this subterfuge! In the grounds of New Hall, there is a small building which has been boarded up for as long as anyone can remember and is reputed to have been used as a chapel at some time. It was there in the time of the Sacheverell family, who have long been reputed to be recusants (i.e. those who refuse to attend Anglican services – Latin *recusare*, 'to refuse'). Records suggest that in 1677 they were harbouring Father George Gray, a Jesuit priest. He was probably not the last one, as it is known that there was still a missionary there in 1740.¹



Fig 6 The 'Chapel' at New Hall (1992)

Records of Roman Catholics are naturally hard to find. However, some appear in parish registers, for instance on the occasion of a marriage which, to be valid between 1754 and 1837, had to be in the Church of England (even if they were also married according to Catholic rites). Burial might also be in an Anglican parish churchyard, as there were no other burial grounds in the area.⁶

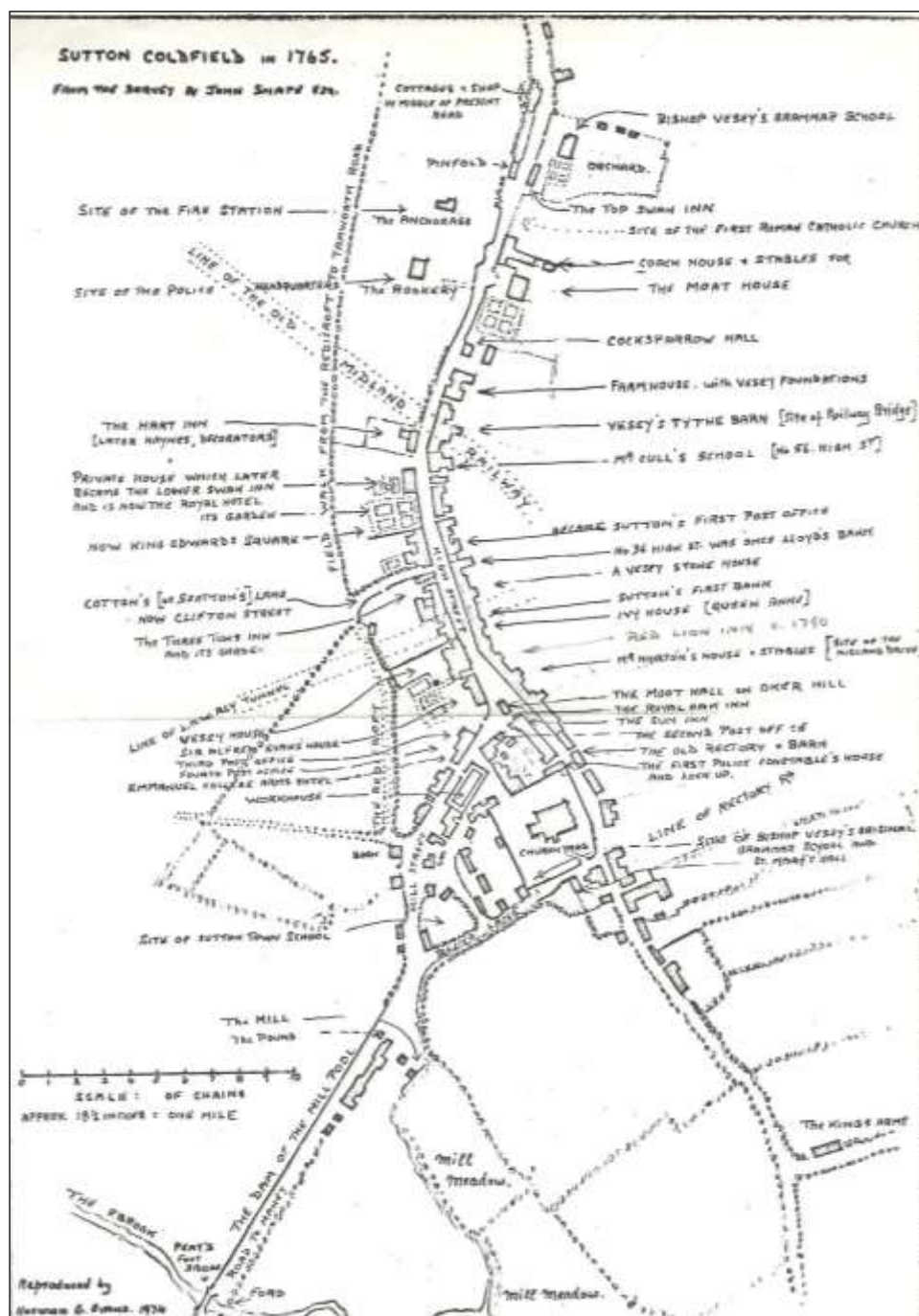


Fig 7 Map of Sutton Coldfield in 1765 showing the future Site of the First Roman Catholic Church between The 'Top' Swan Inn and Moat House

18th Century

At various times, Church of England clergy were required to supply lists of recusants in their parishes and Sutton's Rector reported in 1772 that there were "three Roman Catholic families" although they had "no priest or place of worship".⁷

Gradually a general degree of tolerance began to emerge towards the practice of other faiths. Warwickshire was then known to have become one of the most Catholic counties in England. In 1778 and 1791, two Catholic Relief Acts were passed, lifting most of the penalties on recusants.

Taking full advantage of this, Oscott College was founded as a training centre for priests in 1794. Men were flocking there, so it is not surprising that Sutton Coldfield, as the nearest town, was set up as a parish 'mission', this being the term applied to geographical parishes prior to the 1850s.⁶



Fig 8 Oscott College 1998

19th Century

By 1804 the first priests were being ordained and they began offering Mass in local homes. By the 1820s, Mass was being offered weekly in a house in the Kenelm Road Area.⁴

The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 gave Catholics the right to vote, providing the impetus they needed to surge ahead towards the re-establishment of the hierarchy. Numbers of the faithful were steadily increasing, due to immigration, particularly from Ireland, but also from Europe. The numbers were also increased by conversion⁶ and, throughout the country, sites were being sought for the building of new churches. Sutton was no exception, although, in fact, by waiting until 1834, it was slower than many others.

Nonetheless, its time came and it is interesting to note how the new chapel came to be located in Lichfield Road. A publication called 'The Catholic Magazine' issued in December 1834,⁸ gave the background story:-

"This is the place, which has seen the last triumph of the Catholic religion, by the cross being once more erected with honour. The chapel is in a simple Gothic style, and stands on a piece of ground purchased from the trustees of a Society of General Baptists of the new connexion.....A small meeting-house, for the accommodation (sic) of this society, had been built from money raised by a mortgage; under the condition, that, if the place should remain vacant for three years, it might be lawful for the trustees to pay the mortgage by the sale of the place. It is now several years since this meeting-house, the only place of religious worship in the town, excepting the church (i.e. Holy Trinity Parish Church), has been closed; for the soil here seems peculiarly unfitted for the growth of sectarianism.....not even this one congregation of Dissenters could keep their ground..... The trustees, finding themselves answerable for the above mentioned mortgage, offered the whole for sale; and it was purchased with the intention of simply altering and slightly enlarging the old building, and so waiting for some more favourable opportunity of erecting a larger and more elegant chapel. But, on examination, the old meeting-house was found to be not at all calculated for the proposed change, and other encouragements having arisen, the projectors determined upon building altogether a new chapel; and, by the blessing of Providence, their undertaking has been brought to a happy termination."

The Magazine also described the new building

"The chapel is 60 feet long in the interior, and 24 broad, and behind is a sacristy equal in length to the breadth of the chapel and 12 feet broad, which can, at any time, be added to it, by simply removing the partition wall, thus

making the place altogether 73 feet long. The altar is of stone, with a tabernacle of the same, representing the front of a Gothic cathedral, and extending the whole length of the altar. The carving of both is much admired. A small but efficient organ has been procured, and it is hoped that a decent choir will, ere long, be formed. The house attached is commodious and roomy, and has been built at the same time with the chapel."

It is a pity that more details of the outside were not given at that time, although it is possible to get a good idea from a sketch that also came with the magazine. The style **was** very simple, although barely able to be described as Gothic Revival. It has been suggested that the architect was Augustus Welby Pugin, but this is unlikely in view of the early date and the fact that his connection with nearby Oscott College did not take place until 1840. Many Catholic churches of that time were plainly built, perhaps keeping a low profile in those early resurgent days.



Fig 9 Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel 1834

The building was set in an L-shape, the chapel forming the long side and the presbytery the foot. A small garden between the two completed the square. In front, a small brick wall surmounted by decorative iron railings created a pleasing barrier from the roadway.

Outside, the structure was very fine, particularly the red brickwork surrounding the beautifully pointed leaded light windows, which appear only to have occupied the front and south side of the building. On the northern side the window arches were bricked up, perhaps to give the church some privacy from its near neighbours, The 'Top' Swan Inn and Bishop Vesey School. Its heavy wooden front door was surrounded with attractive plaster work, two gargoyles perched either side. Above that, a medium sized niche provided the setting for a statue. Two slender turrets with crosses straddled the front elevation, itself topped by a much larger cross.



*Fig 10
The Gargoyles*

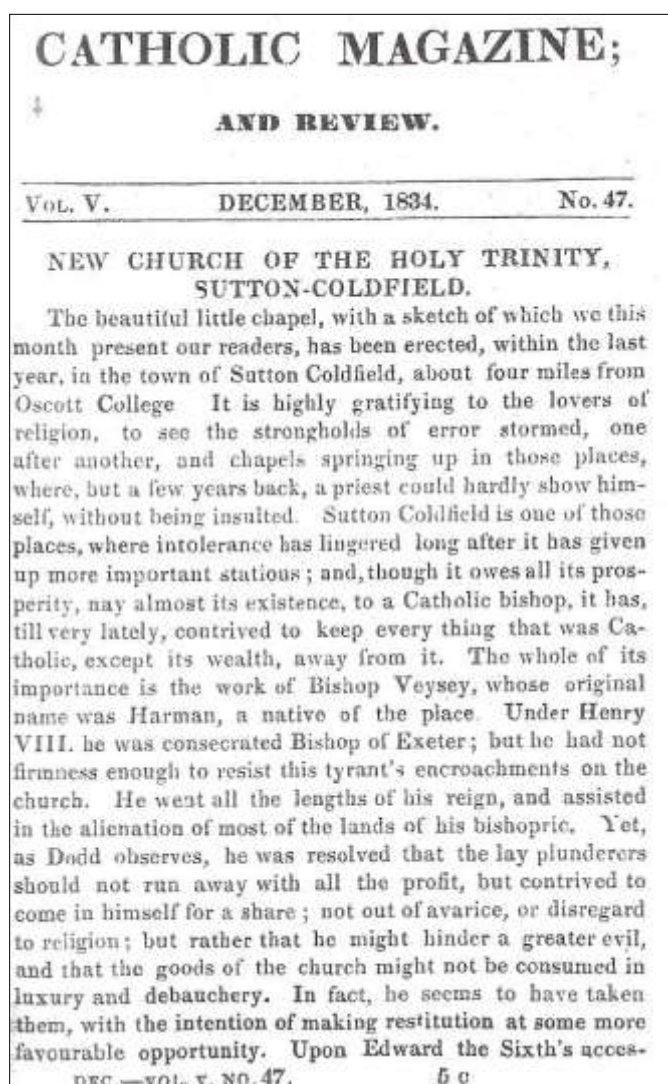


In front of the presbytery, a short flight of steps led down to rooms in the basement. The symmetrical aspect of this section of the building, with its sash windows and plain doorway was undoubtedly of Georgian design.

Another piece in The Catholic Magazine⁸ gave this interesting slant on Bishop Vesey's involvement with the Catholic Church:-

"The beautiful little chapel, with a sketch of which we this month present our readers, has been erected, within the last year, in the town of Sutton Coldfield, about four miles from Oscott College. It is highly gratifying to the lovers of religion, to see the strongholds of error stormed, one after another, and chapels springing up in those places, where, but a few years back, a priest could hardly show himself, without being insulted. Sutton Coldfield is one of those places, where intolerance has lingered long after it has given up more important stations; and, though it owes all its prosperity, nay almost its existence, to a Catholic bishop, it has, till very lately, contrived to keep every thing that was Catholic, except its wealth, away from it. The whole of its importance is the work of Bishop Veysey, whose original name was Harman, a native of the place.

Under Henry VIII, he was consecrated Bishop of Exeter; but he had not firmness enough to resist this tyrant's encroachments on the church. He went all the lengths of his reign, and assisted in the alienation of most of the lands of his bishopric. Yet, as Dodd observes, he was resolved that the lay plunderers should not run away with all the profit, but contrived to come in himself for a share; not out of avarice, or disregard to religion; but rather that he might hinder a greater evil, and that the goods of the church might not be consumed in luxury and debauchery. In fact, he seems to have taken them, with the intention of making restitution at some more favourable opportunity. Upon Edward the Sixth's accession, he obtained leave to resign his see, not being willing to proceed further in the innovations of religion;



and he was succeeded, as bishop, by Miles Coverdale. At this time, he retired to Sutton, where he had a country seat; and there remained, till the change of affairs, under Mary, placed him again in his see of Exeter. But age obliged him to relinquish it, soon after he had seen religion re-established. He now retired again to Sutton, and devoted his time and riches to the improvement of his native town. He built it almost from the ground, and made it into a market and corporation. He built, besides, two large stone bridges, and a stately manor-house, still known as Moor-place, as well as a handsome free-school, which he plentifully endowed.

Fig 11 The Catholic Magazine' issued in December 1834

In a word, all or nearly all, the wealth of the corporation of Sutton, and it is by no means inconsiderable, is derived from this Catholic Bishop. He is said to have been more than a hundred at his death; and his body lies on the north side of the chancel in Sutton church, where is his monument, with his full

length statue in his pontifical habit. This monument has lately been cleaned, and the inscription regilded; but we do not know what interpretation the magnates have given to the last line, 'Ora pro anima sua;' (pray for his soul) as there can be little doubt that they hold most of his wealth on this condition."

The Editor of the magazine, taking advantage of his position, took issue with some of the local factions who opposed the building and wrote:-

*"It has been a matter of comment, indeed, that only six Catholics reside in the small town of Suttonobviously intended to represent six as the number for which the chapel is erected, the circulators concealing the fact that several others live, if not in the town, in the immediate vicinity."** (*28 participated in the last communion)

And, having the last word, he also reported that:-

"In 1834, there were 537 Catholic chapels in England, nine Catholic colleges, and, in Birmingham, it had been proposed to erect a Catholic cathedral."



Fig 12 Roman Catholic Chapels in Warwickshire, 1840

Post 1834



1834

The first parish priest was Father John Moore from Oscott College, who had supplied the funds to run the former parish mission and a charity day-school. He also took on the mantle of school teacher, taking his lessons in the basement of the presbytery. It is said that the children took much coaxing to induce them to descend into the depths!⁹

Fig 13 Canon John Moore

1840

His brother, Father James Moore (a young man of 24), succeeded him in 1840.¹

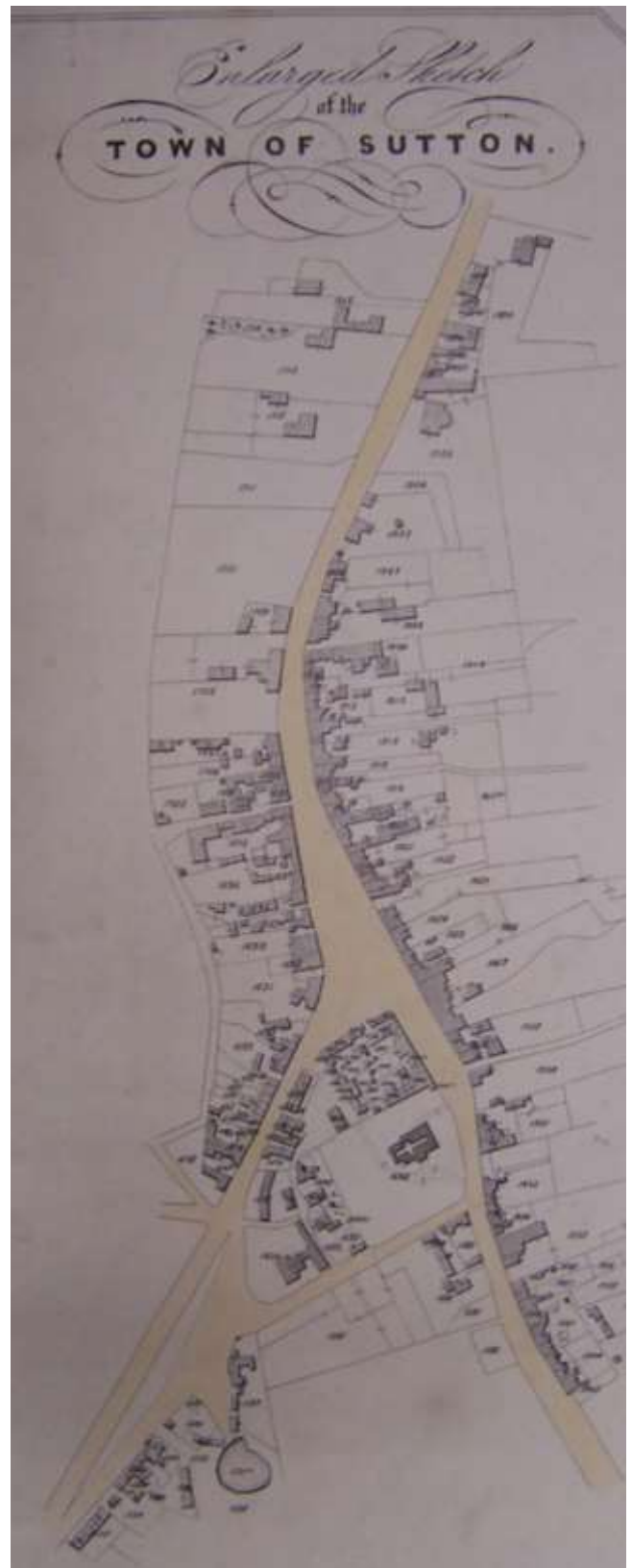
1850

On 19th June 1850, a terrible fire broke out in the Sacristy, extending to the house, and partially to the Chapel. Two bedrooms of the house and the whole of the Sacristy, with its vestments, etc., were utterly destroyed. Father Moore, then writing from St Mary's College, Oscott, pleaded for funds from the Catholic public, as the parishioners were too poor to replace the items themselves.¹

*Fig 14 1857 Valuation Map
Showing Holy Trinity Roman Catholic
Chapel*

Those early years seem to have been fraught with financial difficulties. Letters passing between the Bishop and Father Moore in the 1850s are now too confusing to interpret with accuracy, but they mention large sums of money having to be repaid by the Mission.¹⁰ Various benefactors saved the day. Mr Buggins, the Misses Dixon, the Misses Grundy, Miss Horton and even the Parish Priests contributed funds at one time or another.

On the 19th October 1850, Bishop Ullathorne's letter to Father James Moore¹¹ states that in consideration of the Misses Dixon contributing upwards of £1000 to erect the chapel and presbytery, and having provided for the Mission after their death, two Masses each month in perpetuity at the Mission would be said for them and their friends. Likewise, one Mass per month would be said for Miss Horton's brother, Richard, she having given £200 towards the debt upon the school of St Nicholas and adjacent houses, now borne by the Sutton Coldfield Mission, thus freeing them from an annual payment of £10.



In later years, following further donations by the Dixons and Grundys, a *Tabella Onerum Missarum* was drawn up to record what masses were to be said for them. These were commonly known as “Masses of Obligation”.¹²

10-2-1890

6.7.11



Tabella Onerum Missarum.

Missæ de obligatione celebrandæ in Ecclesia

Sædipino Trinitatis apud *Sutton Coldfield*

<i>Pro animabus Johanne et Julia Dixon duabus singulis</i>	
<i>mensibus celebranda</i>	24
<i>Pro animabus Sara et Eliza Grundy singulis</i>	
<i>mensibus celebranda</i>	12
<i>Pro anima predicta Sara Grundy per annum</i>	10
<i>Pro anima predicta Eliza Grundy per annum</i>	10
	72

Missæ predictæ tanquam de obligatione celebrandæ in Missione de
Sutton Coldfield
prescribuntur.

Dat° Birminghamie die 18^{te} Maii 1888

J. B.

ex mandato Ill^{us} et R^{ati} D^{omin}i mei Ep^{iscop}i.

L. P.

Fig 15 *Tabella Onerum Missarum*
(‘Masses of Obligation’) for the Misses Dixon and the Misses Grundy

1850 was also the year in which the Catholic hierarchy was re-established and it may be that the dreadful fire at the Chapel meant the postponement of the normal Episcopal Visitation from the Bishop.

1855

That actually took place on 30 May 1855. Its function was to furnish the Bishop with details relating to the running of the parish. A note of the statistics,¹³ recorded at the time, gave parish numbers at about 280 souls. There were 98 Easter Communicants, with 16 Baptisms and 4 Conversions since Lent earlier that year. Masses of Obligation were said, 2 for Miss Dixon and 1 for Dr. Horton. There were four organisations: Sacred Heart of Jesus (14 members); Immaculate Heart of Mary (50 members); Scapular (*possibly, The Brown Scapular*) - numbers unrecorded; and Confraternity for the Conversion of England (23 members). Benediction was said every Sunday and/or on Holidays of Obligation.

It was stated that the parish had no debts and income came from the Offertory and Seat Rent (£26). Annual Contributions from the people amounted to £50. By now, 12 boys and 12 girls were being taught by a mistress in the Priest's House in Sutton, although over 50 children of the parish were going to school at St. Nicholas, the new Mission in Boldmere. Holy Communion was administered to the laity at 8.00 am on Sunday. Mass took place at 10.30 am, preceded by Acts of Faith and prayer, and there was a Sermon after the Gospel.

*Sutton (Staffordshire) -
Statistics obtained at the Episcopal
Visitation - May 30th 1855. -*

1. Souls 280 souls - 98 Easter Communicants.
Baptisms 16. Conversions 4 since Lent 1855.
2. 3 Masses - 2 for Miss Dixon & 1 for Dr. Horton.
3. 14 Sacred Heart of Jesus. 50 Immaculate Heart of Mary.
(3) Scapular - 14 in total, for Conversion of England.
4. Benediction every Sunday & on Holidays, &c.
5. Chapel, from Rectory & ground at St. Nicholas's.
MS. The spinning house (at present) belonging to Miss Dixon is to come to the Mission at the death of Miss Dixon -
6. No debts.
7. Income - £
(1) Offertory & seat rent 26-0-0
(2) Annual contribution from the people 50-0-0
(3)

Fig 16 Statistics recorded for the Bishop's Visitation 1855

For those also attending Catechism, at about 12.00 noon, it must have seemed a long day, especially if they returned at 3.00 pm, when English Psalms were read, hymns were sung and Benediction followed. During the week, Mass was said every morning except Mondays, with Confessions on Saturday at 6.00 pm. Stations of the Cross were said every Friday in Lent.

There was reference to an iron safe being inside the Tabernacle and that the “Altar Stone was old slate, without reliquary”. This suggests, firstly, that the altar stone was actually made of slate. Secondly, the altar had no receptacle to house relics normally placed there when the church was consecrated.

The note also confirmed that the parish owned the Chapel, House and School, and ground at St. Nicholas’ (*Boldmere*), together with a house adjoining the Sutton Coldfield site, then belonging to Miss Dixon, which was to come to the Mission at her death. What happened to that is unclear, but Sarah Holbeche, one of the local gentry who lived at 58 High Street, wrote in her diary¹⁴ on 26 February 1866 that “Miss Dixon’s house next to R.C. Chapel began to be taken down”. No doubt a plot of land was more useful to the Mission!

1870

As the years went by, the parish expanded rapidly and, on the 10th November 1870, one of its great benefactors, Father John Harkness, who was Parish Priest from 1857 to 1882, bought over half-an-acre of land further up the Lichfield Road on the opposite side for £494/10s, intending it for a new school, church, burial ground, etc.,



such as a presbytery. In 1872, a new school, St Joseph’s Elementary, was erected, no doubt to the delight of the schoolchildren. Money was being expended in other ways, too. Sarah Holbeche tells us that on August 9th 1869, there was a “New Bell Tower on Romish Chapel. Tang Tong all day!”¹⁴ Obviously, she was not an admirer!

Fortunately, others found the chapel more appealing and the following account¹⁵ by a Sunday morning visitor found its way into the local newspaper in 1878:-

“Entering the chapel doors, and passing through a small corridor, the partitions of which are stuck all over with the memorial cards of deceased members of the congregation, the visitor finds himself in a quadrangular room, with a gallery (containing the organ and choristers) at one end of it, and lighted by three or four lancet windows on one side. There is a central aisle, on either

Fig 17 Father Harkness

side of which are neat benches with Gothic ends. When he has placed his modest contribution of silver or copper in a rustic-looking little basket, in the care of a rustic but good-looking janitor at the door, and has passed to his seat, the said visitor, on looking about him, sees that the wall opposite to the windows is decorated with pictures of price, and with images; that the ceiling – a plaster one with Gothic ribs – is in the form of a flat pointed arch, and that nearly the whole of that end of the chapel which faces him is taken up by the principal altar, and a small shrine on the left hand, enclosed with purple curtains, on which stands an image of the Virgin and Child. The building is decorated with much taste, the prevailing colours of the altar end of the chapel being gold and blue.”

* * * * *

“The singing at this place of worship – for a place of worship it undoubtedly is: I never saw greater reverence and devoutness than I saw there – is good, but thin. By this I mean not that the performers do not do their best, but that there are not enough of them. I could not see the singers from where I sat, but it seemed to me that during most of the service only one lady and gentleman were singing; and, though these vocalists supported the tenor and soprano parts in a highly creditable manner, I longed for a bass voice, and the inimitable treble of boys. The organ seems to be an ancient instrument which was capable of producing good music say twenty years ago; and to my ear it sounded much out of tune, so that I could not help sympathizing with the performer, whoever he might be, feeling sure that while the instrument demanded a good deal of industry to make it play at all, it never could interpret his ideal.

In this chapel one has the domestic side of the Catholic religion. The chapel is not large enough to be impressive; there is none of the mystery which hangs about an ornate ceremonial when it is seen from a great distance, through long vistas of pillared arches. Here the altar is but a little way from the farthest worshipper, so that you can hear even the whisper of the officiating priest. While to me the ceremonial seemed cumbrous and material – a sort of going back to the old times of symbol and image, I could not help feeling that here a number of humble souls were met together to worship the Almighty, and that – although they bowed with something akin to superstition before the types and shadows which the Romish church unduly glorifies, forgetting that they are but types and shadows, one day to fade and pass away before the true Effulgence – it was on the whole better that they should do that than not. It was better that some of the humble worshippers I saw there should thus recognise that there was something higher and nobler than the dull round of their agricultural



Fig 18 Page from
‘Wandering Among the Aisles’

life, than that they should spend their Sundays in boozing or in placid vacuity; it was better that they should come and see the decorations and the splendour of the altar, than that they should be always bored and tired by the level tenour of their uninteresting lives, never seeing anything of the imaginative glories of art, or hearing the refining harmonies of music.”

On Sunday afternoon, our visitor went again:-

“I was almost the first there, and the chapel was impressively quiet. One or two people were devoutly on their knees. The place was lighted by a number of gas brackets of the most ordinary character, fitted with the usual ornamental glass globes, which I thought looked very odd and unecclesiastical. After a while the door of the sacristy opened, and the aged priest I had seen in the morning emerged from it, and after kneeling to the altar he came slowly down the aisle. He had a fine face, with an aspect of content upon it, as though no doubt or darkness ever troubled him, and the white hair escaping from beneath his biretta gave him a most venerable appearance. He spoke in a kind and fatherly way to several of his flock, and then fixing his eye with some keenness on me, he approached and asked if I lived in that neighbourhood? Doubtless this was with a view of rendering me any ghostly assistance I might need had this been the case. Receiving a respectful reply in the negative, he pressed his enquiries no further, and soon retreated by the door from which he had entered, reappearing shortly after,



Fig 19 Interior of Holy Trinity Chapel (date unknown, possibly late 1800s)

attired in an alb and attended by his acolytes, to begin the evening service. These commenced by the priest sitting down on the right-hand side of the altar, near the wall, and where the light of the gas lamp fell conveniently upon his book, and announcing in a clear voice the "Devotions for Sundays and Holy-days," which he at once began to read with the congregation verse by verse alternately, after the manner of the reading of the psalms in the Church of England Service. They consisted of the Benedicite or canticle of the Three Children, several "Psalms of Adoration Praise and Thanksgiving," among which were the 94th, the 90th and the 150th, and concluding with the Benedictus, commencing "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people.

Then moving to the other side of the chapel, and kneeling before the shrine of the Virgin, he began the repetition of the "Rosary of the Blessed Virgin." This and also most of the remainder of the service was conducted in English, and in it the people took an intelligent part. The reading of the priest and also the responses of the congregation were very rapid – in the 'Hail Marys' the words ran into each other in a way that savoured of irreverent gabble – a necessary consequence perhaps of the words of which that ascription is composed, being repeated an inordinate number of times. The 'Rosary' consists of a number of 'Meditations' and 'Prayers' based on the chief events of the life of the mother of Jesus, and to her the supplications and devout worship of the kneeling congregation was directed.

After the Rosary, the service was concluded by the 'Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, in which the tabernacle on the altar was unlocked by the priest (who was now clothed in a gorgeous vesture); and a consecrated wafer being taken therefrom, was placed on a metal stand and elevated in the sight of all. The censer being brought, clouds of incense arose, while solemn music was sung, and prayers were offered."

1880

The priest he described was Fr Harkness. This generous man hoped that, in time, his successor would build a new church on the land which had been purchased in 1870. Strangely, an unexpected bonus presented itself prior to his death. On March 1st, 1880, the Misses Grundy, made over to the Mission a house, then called *Iona*, adjoining the aforesaid land, together with £1,300 in cash and yet more land valued over £1,500.¹ The house is now the Presbytery of the present Holy Trinity RC Church.

This money may also have paid for some further building to the old presbytery which is thought to have taken place about this time. Later plans (drawn up in 1934) show an annexe to the basement and ground floor for use as storerooms and, possibly, refreshment rooms needed for the growing parish.

1883

Fr Harkness died in 1882 and for the next year a priest was supplied from Erdington. In 1883, the Very Reverend Canon James Rigby took over. During his term, on November 11th, 1894, the Bishop of Birmingham's Visitation took place and it is interesting to compare Canon Rigby's notes with those of Father James Moore at the 1855 Visitation.¹⁶

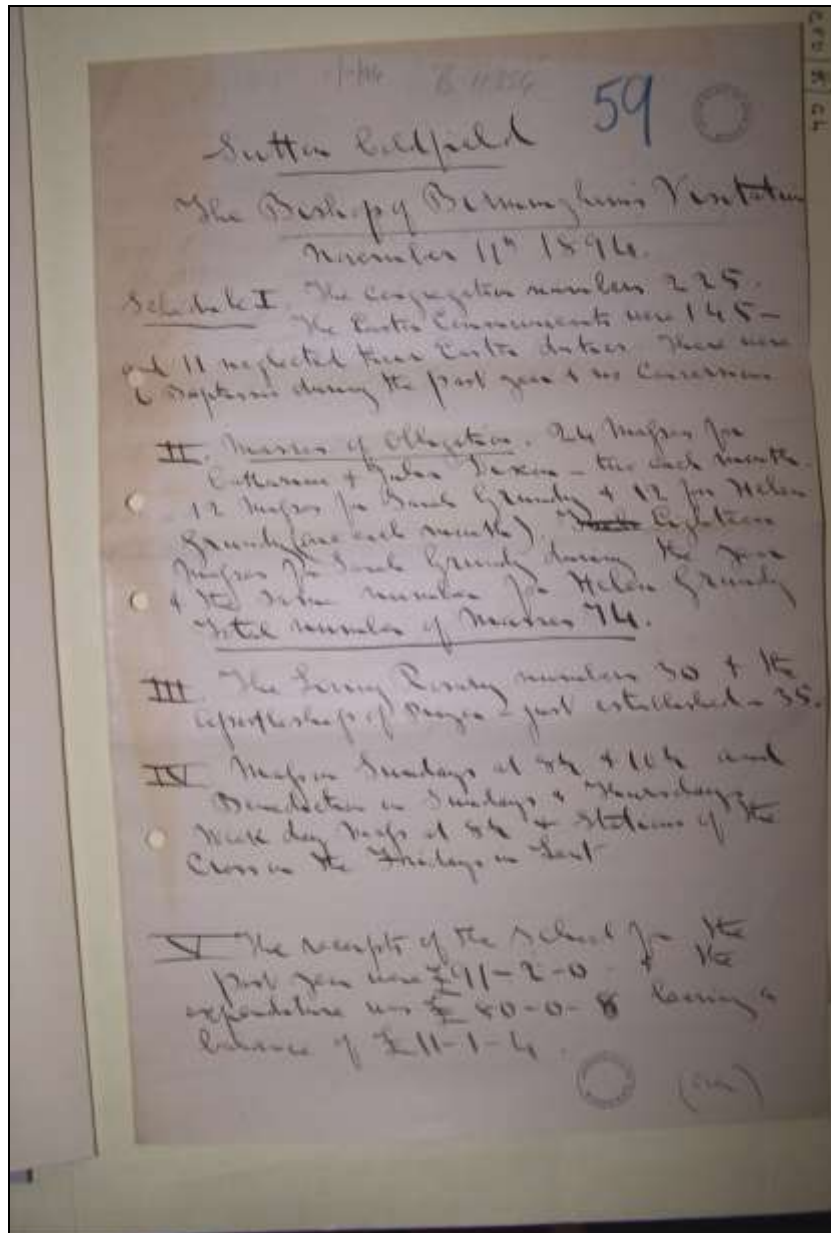


Fig 20 Canon Rigby's Notes for the Bishop of Birmingham's Visitation on 11th November 1894

He numbered his congregation at 225, of whom 145 went to Easter Communion and 11 neglected their Easter duties. There had been 6 Baptisms during the previous year

and no conversions. He listed the Masses of Obligation, in total 74. There were two groups, *The Living Rosary* (numbering 30) and the *Apostleship of Prayer* - just established (35). Mass on Sundays was at 8.30 and 10.30, Benediction on Sundays and Thursdays, Week day Mass at 8.30, and Stations of the Cross on the Fridays in Lent.

The finances were now on a much surer footing. What swelled the coffers was an endowment (probably from Fr Harkness, who is known to have given money to the Mission¹⁷) of about £122, which, with seat rent of £28 and the offertory at £52, settled all the bills. These comprised fire insurance, rates and taxes, housekeeper's wages and fuel, church cleaning, wine and candle wax, heating the church, organ repairs and painting of the house. The Mission also paid for a School Excursion and Children's Clothes (possibly for the Destitute Children's Home). The School Accounts were also in the black.

It is surprising to see that although the fortunes of the parish seemed to be getting better, the attendance numbers had decreased. One wonders if the new electric lighting, which was installed in 1901, improved matters?¹⁸

Sadly, Canon Rigby died suddenly in 1911 and was mourned throughout the whole of Sutton. Everyone recognized him for the good man he was and such genuine grief showed just how tolerant Suttonians had become towards one another's faith. A Rigby Memorial Fund was set up, incorporating the funds from his estate and this, in time, contributed towards the cost of the eventual new church and conversion of the Chapel into a social centre. Both Fr Harkness and Canon Rigby were later honoured with brass tablets in the new Chapel.¹



Fig 21 Canon Rigby

1911

One of these tablets became a bone of contention for the next incumbent, poor Father Hugh McCarten, who seems to have spent a most unhappy time in Sutton.

What bothered him was Canon Rigby's Memorial, which, he says, was "a fourth rate specimen of Victorian Gothic".¹⁹ He was disappointed that the Church Committee had allowed a firm other than the well respected *Hardmans* to do the job, despite his recommendation.

He obviously felt there was some bad feeling towards him from the congregation, as witnessed by the following comments in his letters to Canon Glancy at the time.

"This indeed is a most peculiar congregation for 'Cliqueism. I have had terrible work with the School and it is only lately that I have succeeded in bringing order out of chaos. The studied insolence of the Head Teacher

required me to take proceedings which involved threatenings of law suits, not only from himself but from two of my own managers.”²⁰

After Easter, 1912, he must have hit a real ‘low’. He wrote that he

“had a ‘damper’ on Holy Saturday. There were four grown up members of the congregation serving on the altar and with their assistance I carried out the full function – there wasn’t a man, woman or child present from first to last in the body of the Church and there are (till tomorrow) well over 100 (out of 380) who haven’t made their Easter!!!”²¹

And shortly afterwards

“I do not think it will astonish you much if I tell you that I wrote to the Archbishop ... begging to be removed from this Mission ... in my mind since Oct last ... in four months I shall be 70 and as I see no prospect of things getting better I think it best for me to clear out.”²²

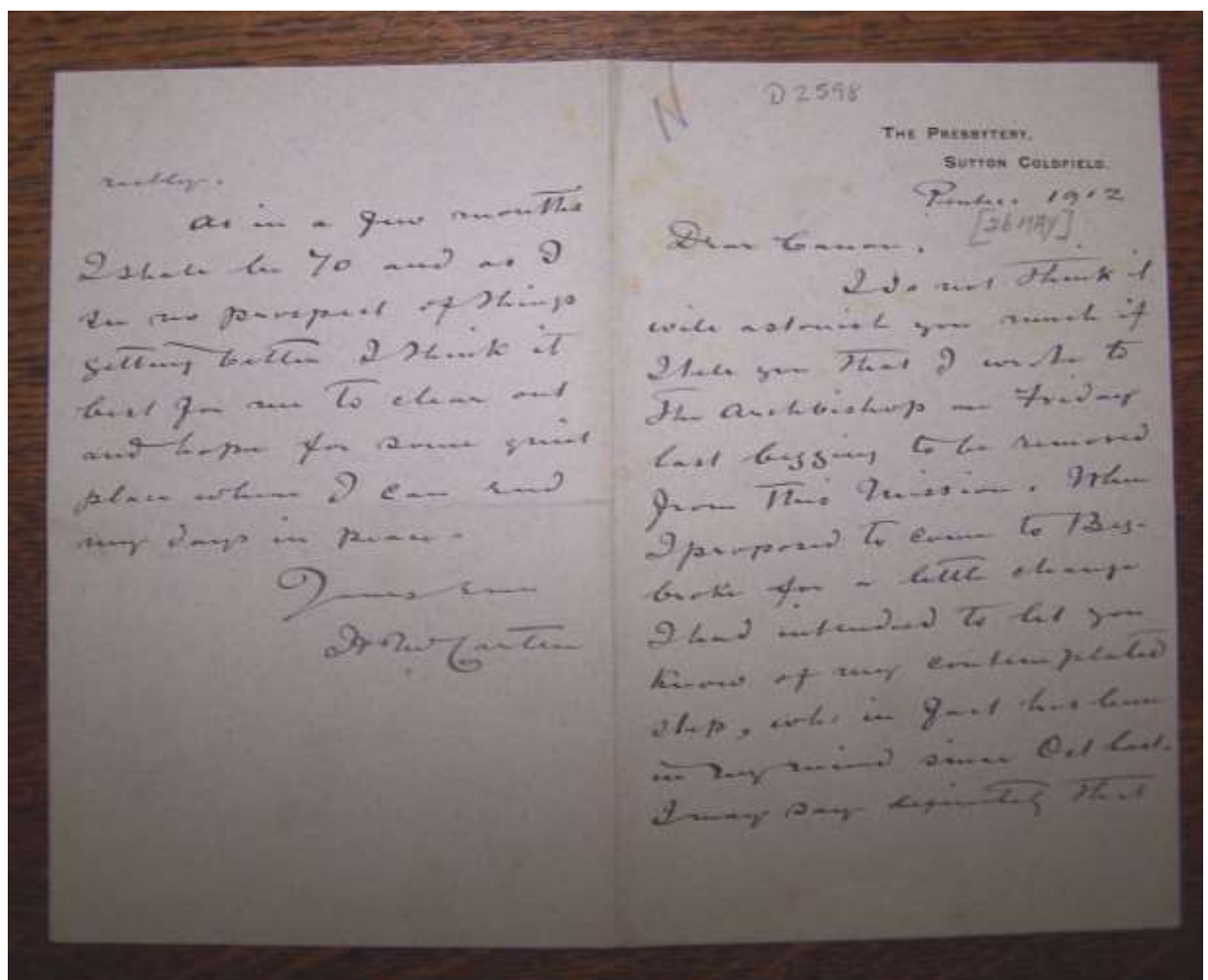


Fig 22 Father Hugh McCarten's correspondence

By July, he had been moved to Great Haywood, from whence he wrote

“The congregation at Sutton I could have licked into shape but that fiend at the School was ‘impossible’ to me. Lillis is about the best man the Archbishop could have chosen to deal with him.”²³

This was probably not the Mission’s finest hour! ‘Lillis’ was Fr Joseph M. Lillis who must have settled in somewhat better, lasting until 1922.

His successor was, Fr Thomas E Bird who served until 1930. It was during his term, in 1924, that the building attained its ninetieth year. Two important events took place. The re-decoration of the interior of the Chapel was completed and a Mission, the first for 37 years, was given by the Redemptorist Fathers from Erdington.

Efforts began to be made to bring a new church in sight for the Centenary Year²⁴ and it fell to Reverend Francis de Capitain, who was Parish Priest from 1930, to bring it all together. On 27th September 1934,¹ the goal was reached and a new centenary church was opened on the land purchased by Fr Harkness. From then on, the new Holy Trinity Church in Lichfield Road became the parish church for the Roman Catholics of Sutton Coldfield.

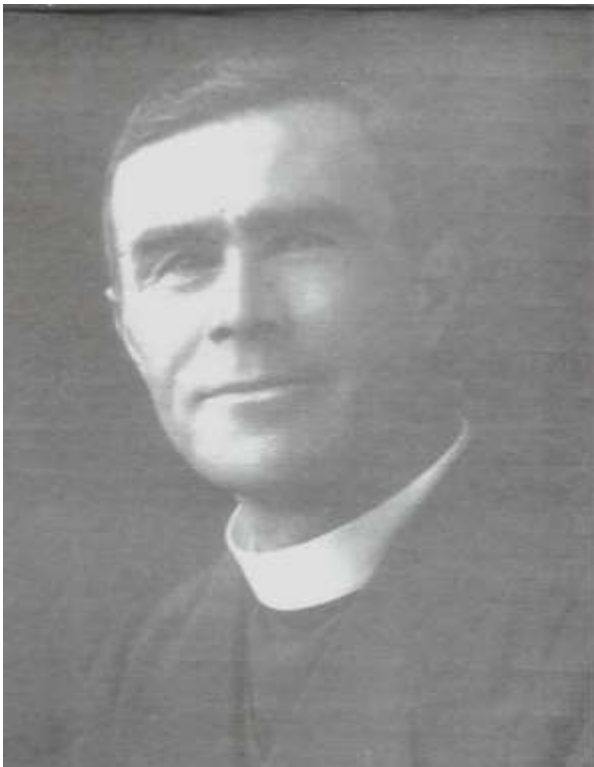


Fig 23 Rev Francis de Capitain



*Fig 24
The new Holy Trinity
Roman Catholic
Parish Church (in March 2003)*

It is said that several items from the chapel found their way into the new church. Of particular interest is a wooden replica of a plaster cast statue of the Madonna and Child which stood beside the old altar, the original having been taken to the Newman Chapel, Maryvale. The undated photograph showing the sanctuary of the old chapel confirms its authenticity.¹



Fig 25 Wooden replica of Madonna and Child originally in the Chapel (see Fig 19 above) and now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church



The other items thought to have originated from the chapel were:

- Three medieval-style statues, now adorning the choir gallery fascia;
- Some candlesticks, perhaps those beside the Madonna and Child;
- A Missal Stand, commissioned for Father Rigby in 1895, having been discovered in the new church by Father Breen, the present Parish Priest
- The Baptismal Font, another discovery of Father Breen's, which has been reconstructed and placed in the Narthex.



Fig 26(A)



Fig 26(B)



Fig 26 (C)



Fig 26 (D)

*Medieval-style statues
now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church*



Fig 27(A) Candlesticks now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church



Fig 27(B) Baptismal Font now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church

The Guildhall

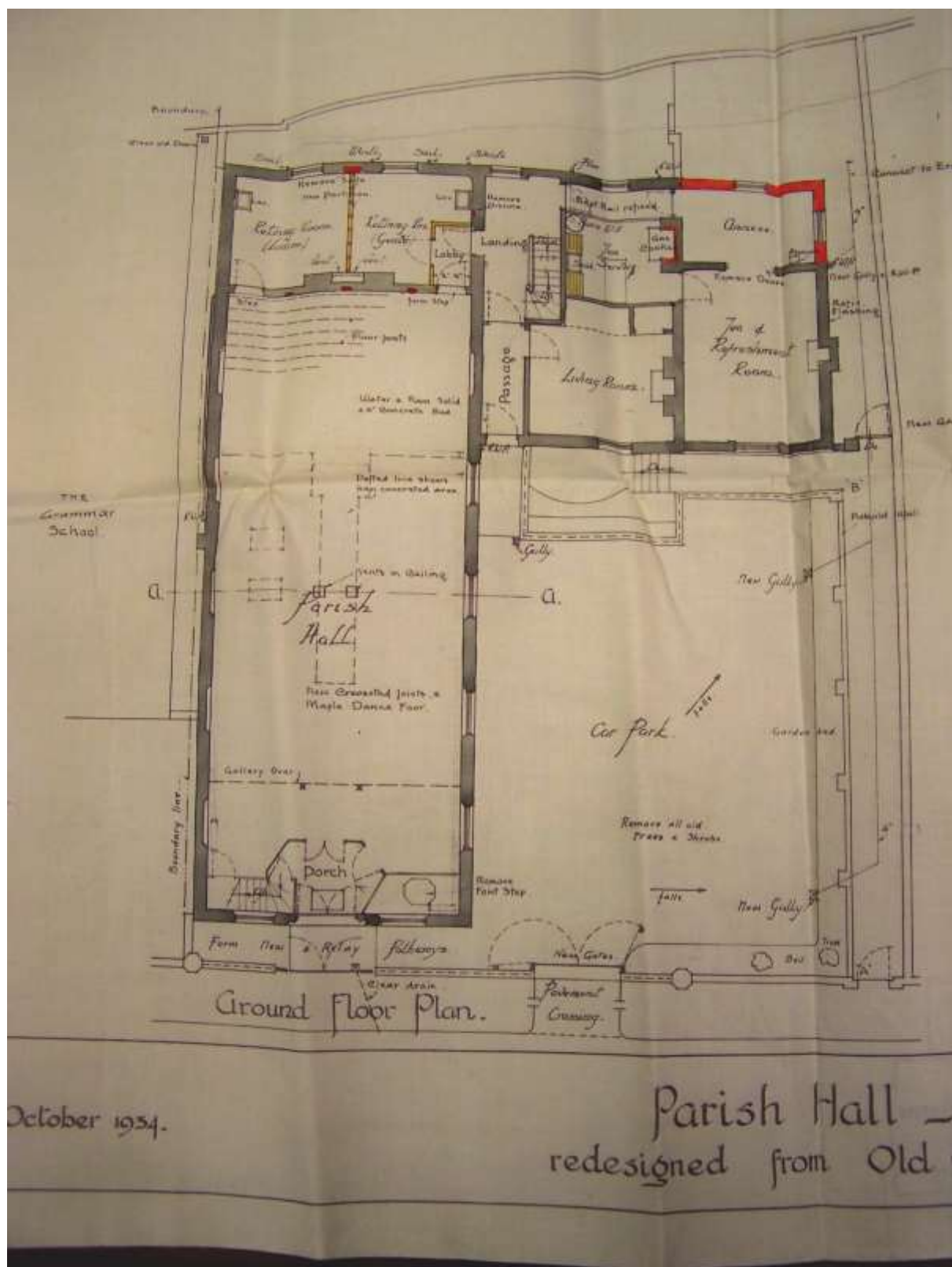
1934

Father de Capitain had also submitted a planning application to convert the chapel into a Parish Hall and Caretaker's House, to be known as the Guildhall. A postcard²⁵ of those times shows how it looked when all the church trappings had been removed.



Fig 28 Holy Trinity Chapel (The Guildhall), circa 1934

The following planning application²⁶ shows details of the original structure of the church and presbytery, and the annexe, together with the proposed alterations. One can see that the chapel was entered through a wooden door into a small porch. Here, a further door on the left hand side gave access to a flight of steps rising to a gallery. The Baptismal Font was situated just to the right of the porch.



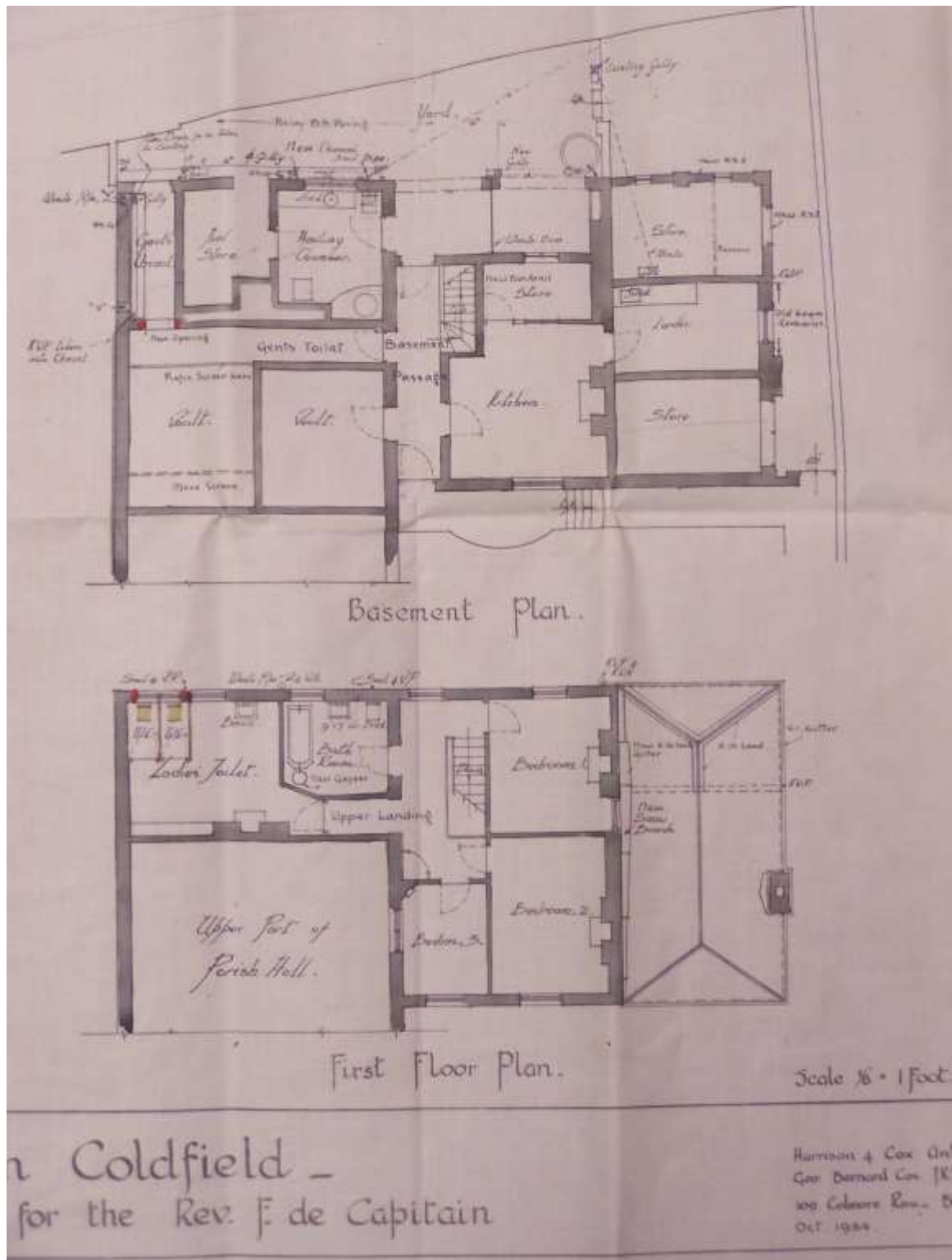


Fig 30 Section of Plan accompanying Planning Application No. 6696

07-25-1934

To the Health and Building Committee of the Borough of Boston, California.

I hereby deposit plans for the erection of certain buildings in
Lehigh Road by Don Francisco de Caplanes
 at The Presbytery Lehigh Rd. in accordance with the
 following description:-

1. Purpose for which the buildings are intended to be used.	<u>Parish Hall & Convent House</u>
2. Width or front to back of building.	
3. Distance of nearest line of building from street.	
4. Level of lowest floor with reference to street.	<u>Minor</u>
5. Materials for walls.	<u>concrete & masonry</u>
6. Materials for roofs.	<u>Building</u>
7. Thickness of exterior and party walls.	
8. Number of stories.	
9. Height of eaves on each floor.	<u>Existing</u>
10. Area of site.	
11. Source of Water Supply.	<u>Existing</u>
12. Size and location of Drains.	<u>Existing</u>
13. Description of soil (House or Commercial).	

I further hold myself responsible for the work being carried out according to the bye-laws and plans deposited herewith, and for the proper notices sent in during the course of erection.

(Signed) Francisco de Caplanes
 Date of deposit 17th March 1934
Architect

(When whole Design, Agent, Architect, or Builder.) (P.T.O.)

Fig 33
 Planning Application No. 6696
 Dated Oct 25 1934

The following alterations and additions were proposed:-

- A new Maple Dance Floor.
- The Piscina to be removed from the Sacristy (This would have been a small niche in the wall used for washing the priest's hands and the chalice and paten at Mass. It usually had a drain which went straight into the earth.)
- Altar steps to be removed and the doors to the Sacristy, either side of the altar, to be lengthened to meet the new lower floor.
- Cornice and Ribs to be removed from the ceiling.
- Niches on altar and aperture for the tabernacle to be filled in.
- Conversion of the Sacristy into 2 Retiring Rooms for Ladies and Gents, with one toilet apiece

The vast majority of these were carried into effect. The former presbytery and annexe were also improved as far as the caretaker's accommodation and tea and refreshment facilities were concerned. The plans also show that the rear of the building was three storeys high and one can imagine that in its heyday it was a very thriving centre.

It was probably at this stage that the exterior was altered to reflect the change of identity from church to parish hall. Both turrets were truncated to sit at roof level, bereft of the crosses which formerly adorned them, and the larger cross was also removed from the apex of the front elevation. It is also thought that two iron rings were fixed to the front wall to support a flag pole although little is known about this. A car park replaced the former garden and access was provided through new gates.



Fig 34 An aerial view of the mid-1950s, showing the 'flagpole'

The Hall was to prove a very popular social venue. Mick Clark of Whitehouse Common remembers it well. He had just started school at the old St Joseph's and the children's Christmas parties were held in the Hall. In later years, he joined the Teenagers Youth Club which was run by Mr Frost and Mr O'Neil for the Roman Catholic children. Football and Cricket were provided, but he also learned to dance, under the professional guidance of Miss Rawlins. Once he had mastered the steps, he was allowed to go to the Saturday Night Dances. To begin with, the Guildhall was the premier dance hall in Sutton, but *The Orange Grove* at the Crystal Palace eventually replaced it, having acquired a licence to sell alcohol.

1939-1945

During the War years, it seems that everyone danced. When the Yanks (Americans) came over, so did the jitterbug and the jive – a good test for the new Maple Dance Floor! Mick remembers the Yanks well; they were the ones with the money, who lured away his girlfriends!

Post War Years

In 1948, plots of land belonging to the neighbouring Moat House were put up for sale and a plan was produced for this purpose. From this, it can be seen that the Guildhall was now surrounded by some of the more recognizable features of 2008: the two railway lines running beneath the High Street; the Technical School and the extensions to the Grammar School; the houses known as Wellington Place and those in Boswell Road. The Magistrates Court and the Police Station were to come later.

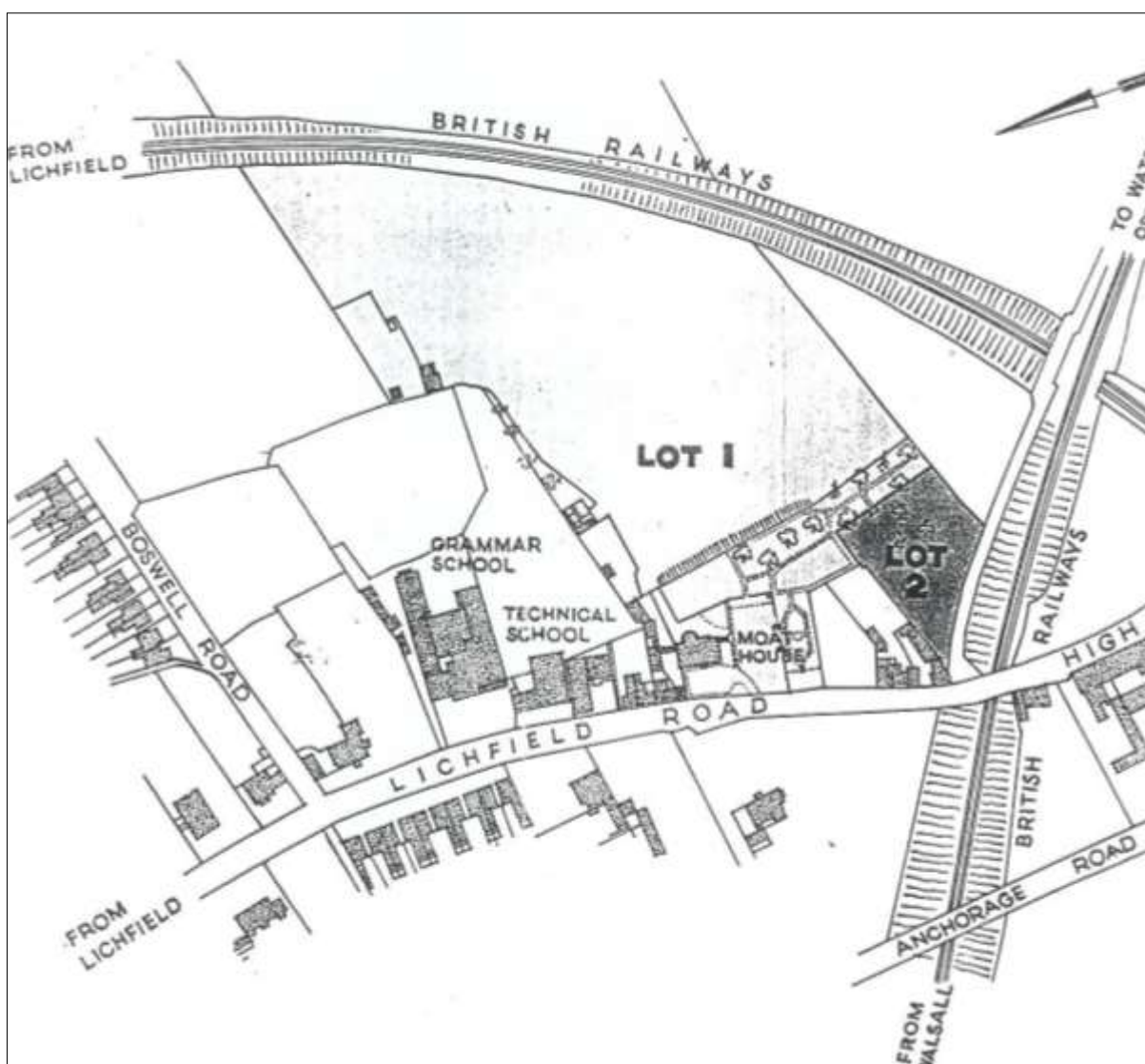


Fig 35 Moat House Sales Catalogue 1948

These were the years before the advent of television and the Hall became useful for many other activities. There were film shows, school concerts and plays, and, for many years, the Brownies, Cubs, Guides and Scouts used it as a meeting place.

By 1973, a Guildhall Management Committee²⁷ had been set up, representing a Badminton and a Youth Club, and it dealt with all other Guildhall activities.

The Sutton Coldfield Catholic Badminton Club did very well, being open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings, with a Junior Club for 11 to 17s on Saturday afternoons from 4.00 pm. In fact, there was a waiting list for new members. The senior club had two mens' and two mixed teams in the Birmingham League and one in the Sutton League. The junior club had a team entered in the North Birmingham School league, being unique, as it was the only private club in the Midlands, and proud to say it had three juniors playing for the County.

The Nova Youth Club met on Fridays and Sundays, 7 pm to 10 pm, for social evenings and for table tennis, snooker, badminton, records, chess, darts and occasional discos. Their badminton night was on Monday, from 7.30 pm to 10 pm. They took part in many competitions, events and activities organised by themselves, other clubs and the youth service.

26th August 1976 – A Grade II Listed Building

The Guildhall Management Committee had recently had to oversee major alterations to the car park, repairs and minor alterations to the gents' toilet, and repairs to the Hall floor. By now, the building was nearly 140 years old and was showing signs of wear and tear. It must have set the alarm bells ringing when, on 26th August 1976, it was designated a Grade II Listed Building.²⁸ Perhaps they wondered how long the parish could continue to maintain it, in view of the restrictions now imposed by the Planning Authority.

1987

They managed until June 1987, when the official owners, the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, decided to put it up for sale, at offers of £60,000 plus.²⁹

A prospective purchaser had been waiting in the wings for decades. Not surprisingly, the Governors of Bishop Vesey School had long coveted the building for expansion of the school. Unfortunately, it was in a very poor state of repair.

Locke & England Commercial & Industrial

145-151 New Union Street Coventry CV1 2RP
Telephone (0203) 26011

Chartered Surveyors
Auctioneers
Estate Agents & Valuers
Established 1834

30 JUN 1987

On instructions from the Trustees of the
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham

FOR SALE FREEHOLD

THE FORMER GUILDHALL

LICHFIELD ROAD

SUTTON COLDFIELD



Suitable for Conversion and refurbishment
Having a net internal floor area of 4700 sq.ft. or thereabouts

An imposing Grade II Listed building constructed in 1834 comprising the Main Hall, being the former Church, with an extension to the rear of the site of partly two and partly three storey construction. Private forecourt parking for nine vehicles.

Prominent location opposite the Magistrates Courts and Fire Station
and adjacent to a College of Further Education.

FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY WITH VACANT POSSESSION ON COMPLETION

Head Office, Leamington Spa
Telephone (01926) 27888 (10 lines)

Stafford upon Avon
Telephone (01828) 238253

Coventry
Telephone (0203) 26011

Kemworth
Telephone (0426) 52418

Warwick
Telephone (080) 493147

Wellesbourne
Telephone (0789) 841136

Also at Evesham
Telephone (0285) 42285

Chipping Compton
Telephone (0299) 45086

Locke & England for themselves and for the vendors or lessors of the property, whose agents they are, give notice that, if the particulars are printed in a general outline only for the guidance of intending purchasers or lessees, and do not constitute, nor contain, or purport to be, an offer of contract. Such descriptions, drawings, references to vendors and lessees, permissions to use and occupation, and other details are given without responsibility and any intending purchaser or lessee should not rely on them as statements or representations of fact but inspect the premises and the contract and ask all queries before completion of the purchase or lease. The employment of Locke & England has no authority to make or give any representation or warranty whatsoever in relation to this property.

Fig 36 'For Sale' - Agents' Particulars 1987

The Local Planning Authority, i.e. Birmingham Development Department, was insisting that it be restored to its former glory, as part of its Grade II listing. The Governors were advised that it would cost £140,000 to do this, which they found to be too exorbitant.³⁰

The City of Birmingham Development Department had indicated a preference for a form of community related use, to include offices, rather than a commercial use such as retail. They were also prepared to consider a form of residential use.

A company called Tyfold Ltd eventually bought it, submitting a Planning Application in October 1987 for the refurbishment of the Hall and proposing the following alterations :⁻³¹⁺³²

- Flight of steps and choir balcony to be taken out.
- Mezzanine Floor to be inserted, allowing for balustrades and light wells around the windows.
- Insertion of a Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Spiral Stair and Glazed Arched Conservatory to Draught Lobby
- Hall and Rooms to be converted to Office Space
- Insertion of Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams
- Exterior to be maintained

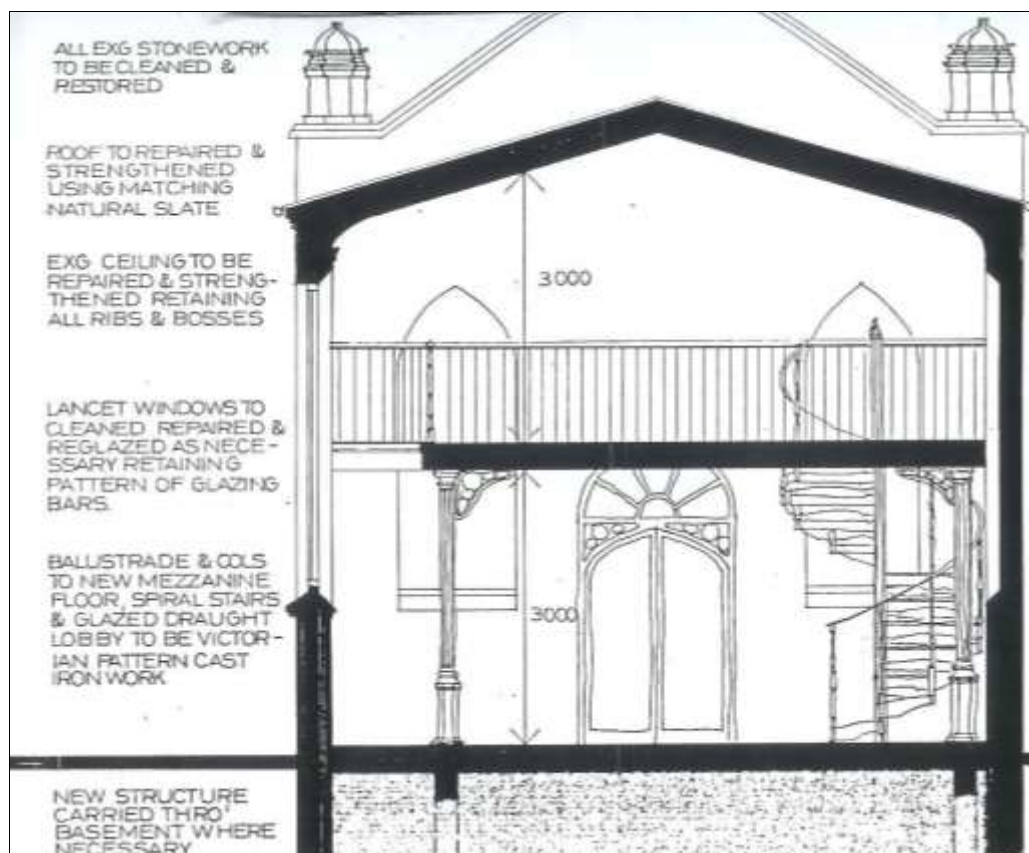


Fig 37 Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall

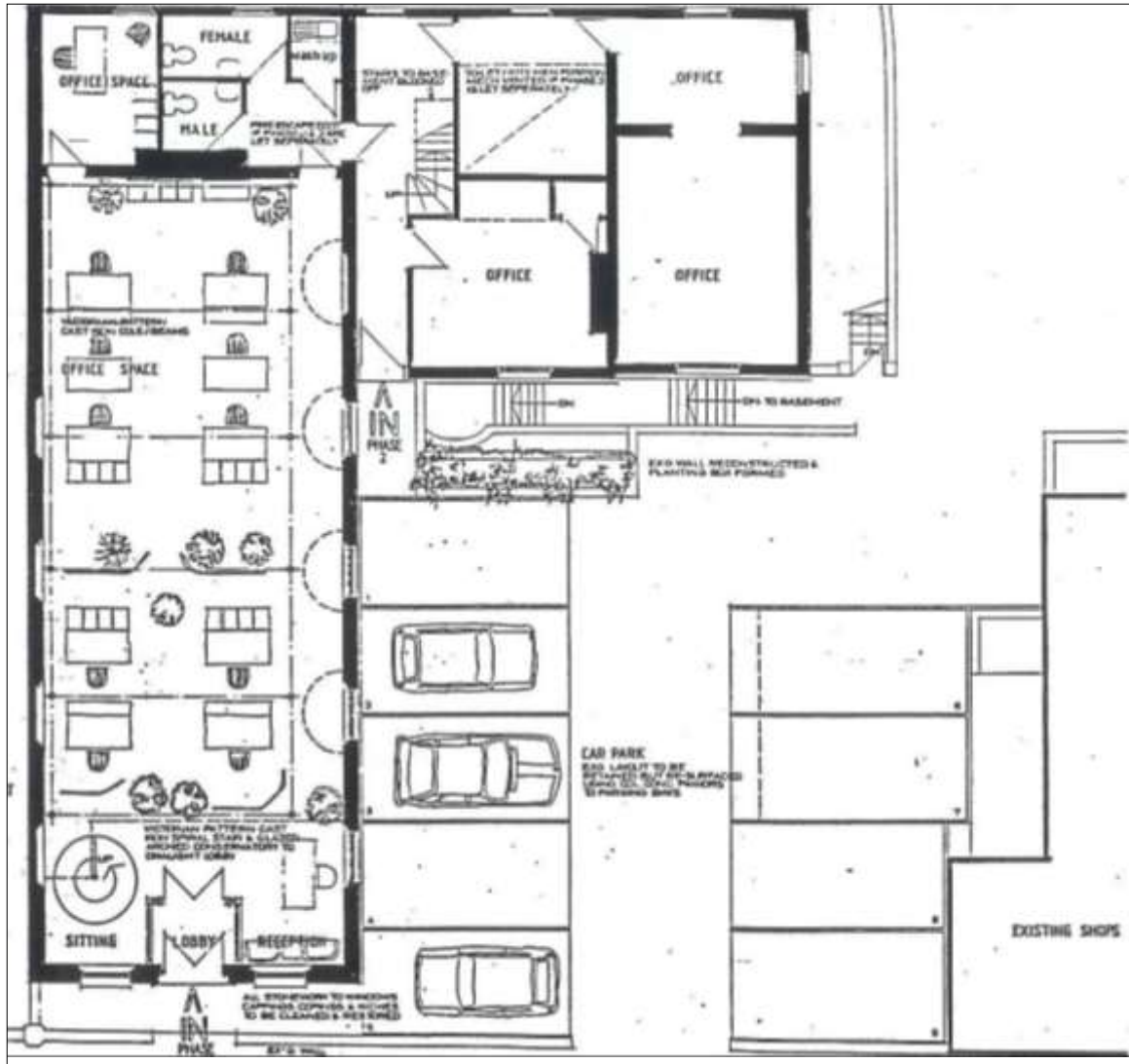
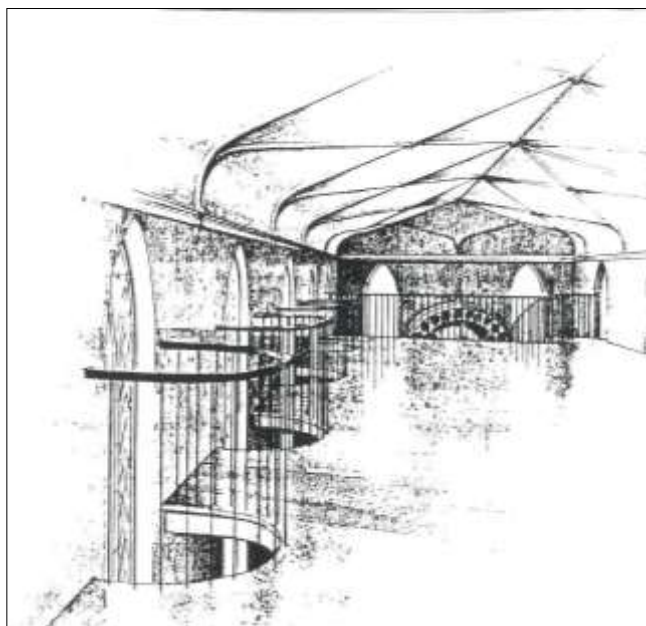


Fig 38 Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall



When these works were completed, they transformed and modernized the interior. Fortunately, the cornices and roof ribs had not been removed as proposed in 1934 and the whole improvement was very attractively done.

Fig 39 Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall

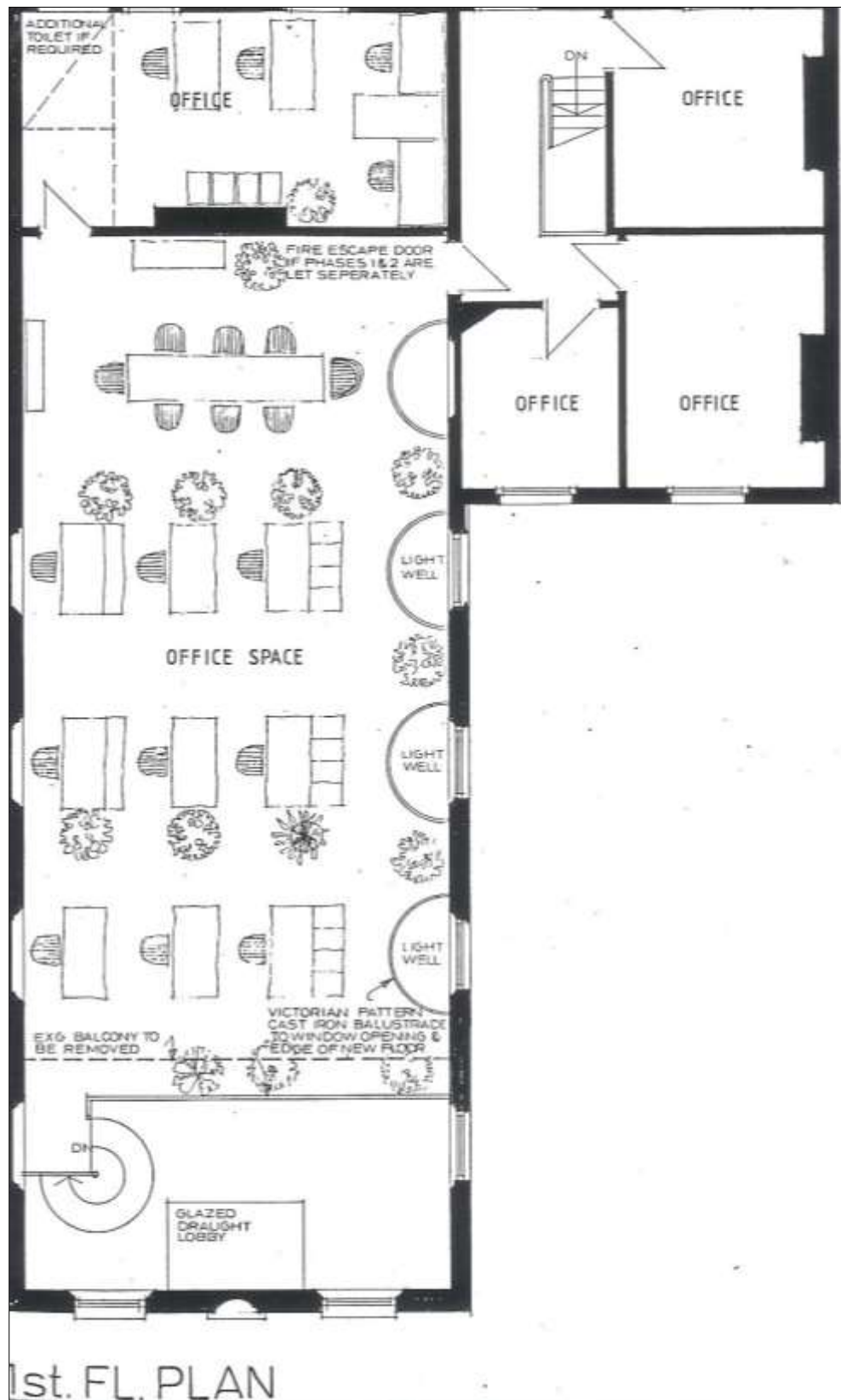


Fig 40 Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall

The small extension (annexe) that was put up in the late 1800s was also taken down, perhaps because it did not meet Grade II Listed Building requirements. However, this created a vehicular access to the rear of the building.



Fig 41 Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall

1990

Shortly afterwards, two more planning applications³³⁺³⁴ were made, as a result of which, in 1989 a new front wall was constructed and, in 1990, the old presbytery was converted into a restaurant. It is said that, sadly, many original fireplaces in the old house were taken out at this time. The *Bashundoora Balti Restaurant* have been occupying this part of the building for some years, the entrance of which is at the back.

2008

Subsequently, the interior has seen further changes and the present owners, *Jordan Financial Management*, have kindly allowed the following photographic record to be made of them. From this, it will be apparent that a lot of careful consideration has gone into ensuring that this old building is sympathetically treated. It still retains its old charm, attractive in its simplicity, and one can understand why it plays a major part in Sutton Coldfield's Conservation Area as a Grade II Listed Building.



Fig 42 Glazed Arched Conservatory to Draught Lobby with Front Door detail, 2008



Fig 43 Front Door detail



Fig 44 Front Door detail



Fig 45 Front Door detail



Fig 46 Window detail, 2008



Fig 47 Window detail



Fig 48 Window detail



Fig 49 Windows detail



Fig 50 Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams, 2008



Fig 51 Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams



Fig 52 Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams



Fig 53 Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Spiral Stair, Balcony and Mezzanine Floor, 2008



Fig 54 Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Spiral Stair, Balcony and Mezzanine Floor



Fig 55 Victorian Pattern Balcony and Mezzanine Floor



Fig 56 Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses



Fig 59 Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses



Fig 60 Roof showing cornice, roof ribs, tie beam and bosses



Fig 57 Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses



Fig 58 Roof showing roof ribs and bosses



Fig 61 Roof showing cornice, roof ribs, tie beam and bosses



Fig 62 Mezzanine Floor with balustrades and light wells around the windows on the southern side



Fig 64 Mezzanine Floor with bricked up window arch on the northern side



Fig 63 Mezzanine Floor showing roof detail

The Future

With the Twenty First Century now well under way, it looks entirely possible that the building will reach its second centenary in 2034. One wonders if its survival is down to a 'Guardian Angel', who stands proudly in the niche over the front door. But, who is she? An emblem on her forehead seems to depict the 'all-seeing eye', her left hand holds a cross against her breast and her right hand is now missing a possible pilgrim's staff.



Fig 65 Statue in the Niche of the Front Wall of the Guildhall

Dr Judith Champ of Oscott College (Director of Studies: Archives and Church History) has put forward an interesting suggestion as to her identity. She says that this sort of female figure, holding the Cross and possibly with that emblem, has often been used as a personification of the Church.

It draws together much of the traditional imagery used to talk about the Church, showing Christ's Cross, the omnipotence of God and the idea of Mother Church. Dr Champ thinks it may be more continental than English in usage and points to a pair of statues on the outside of Strasbourg Cathedral, one of which is very similar – this statue represents the Church or the New Covenant. Its pair depicts a downcast, blindfolded woman, representing the Jewish Synagogue or the Old Covenant (in medieval times, Jews rather than the Romans were blamed for the death of Jesus Christ). These figures were commonly known as '*Ecclesia*' and '*Synagoga*'.

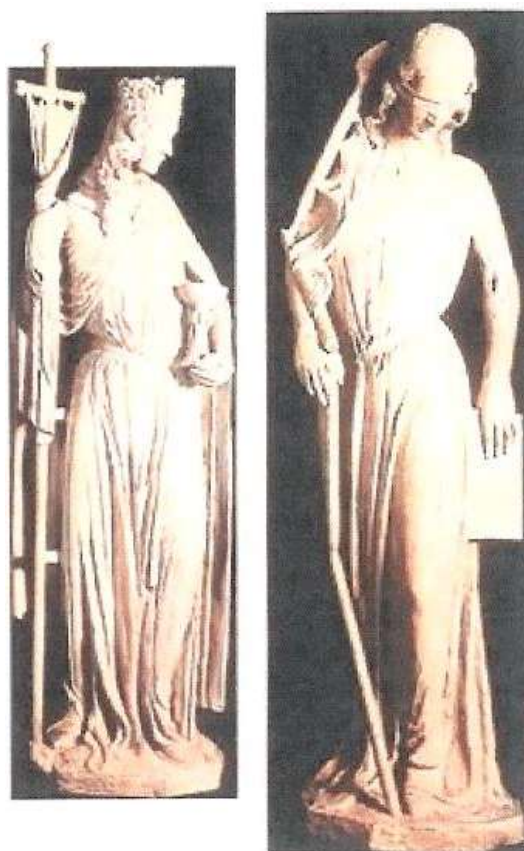


Fig 66 Statues on the outside of Strasbourg Cathedral

So, is our lady in the niche '*Ecclesia*'? Unless further information comes to light, she will remain as one of the unsolved mysteries of the building. It would be useful to know, for example, who built it, who has the parish records and what causes the present 'noises' in the building?

There may be an answer to the last query - for those of a superstitious nature. An old property deed has come to light, dated 18th April 1893,³⁵ which sets out the purpose of the site. It could be used for a church or chapel, for a school or residence for a priest or persons who are teaching, or as a cemetery or burying ground. No record of burials has ever been found, but maybe the sounds that are heard are coming from a former inmate who was deprived of his resting place when the new car park was built!

Other queries might be solved if and when the rest of the old deeds are found. Until that day, the story of this fascinating building will have to remain unfinished.

Sources for Text:

1. *Centenary Church of The Holy Trinity, Sutton Coldfield, opened September 27, 1934*, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives (MON49, PT49/T3) and Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library (SH17.15)
2. *Correspondence & Miscellaneous papers of Harriet Littlehales 1830-1848 (Diary of Harriet Littlehales)*, Stafford Record Office (D538/C/3/22)
3. *Correspondence & Miscellaneous papers of Harriet Littlehales 1830-1848 (Mass leaflet)*, Stafford Record Office (D538/C/3/22)
4. CRISP, D, *The Eucharist in Sutton Coldfield*, 1983, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives (P49/T6) and Archives of Father G Breen, Parish Priest, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Lichfield Road
5. JORDAN, Janet M.: *The Roman Catholic Church in Walmley*, pub. Fr. John Berry, Holy Cross & St. Francis RC Church, 1993 Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library (SH17.14)
6. *www.Family Records Centre Factsheet. Catholic Records* - Internet
7. RILAND BEDFORD, Rev. W.K., *History of Sutton Coldfield*, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library (SH 97SUT).
8. *The Catholic Magazine (Vol V, December, 1834. No. 47)* Archives of Father Breen
9. *Birmingham Provincial Directory 1914* (pp 105,106) Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
10. *Letter (Canon Jas Moore) to Rev. John Harkness* (ref. B03773); 3.2.1858 and *Letter Rev. Jas. Moore to Canon Estcourt* (ref. B038826); 9.1.1859 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
11. *Letter (Bishop Ullathorne to Rev. James Moore)* (ref: B02016); 19.10.1850 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
12. *Tabella Oneram Missarum for Sutton Coldfield* (ref: B07011); 18 May 1880 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
13. *Miscellaneous Papers 1855-1984, Statistics obtained 1855* (Ref: P49/T8) Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
14. JORDAN, Janet, *Sarah Holbeche Diary* 1869 (Ref: BCOL Q942496081 HOL) Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library:
15. McEVOY, Bernard, *Wandering Among The Aisles*, 1878 (reprinted from the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington News) Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library (SH11)
16. *Schedule of mission statistics and accounts for Holy Trinity, Sutton Coldfield:* signed by Rev. Jas. Rigby (ref: B11354); 11 November 1894 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
17. *Receipts for sums of money given 1866-1871* (ref: D2568 and see D2567) Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
18. *Letter from Rev Jas Rigby to Rev MF Glancey* (ref D314) 31 March 1901
19. *Letter from H McCarten to Canon Glancey* (Ref: D2443) 2 Jan 1912 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
20. *Letter from H McCarten to Canon Glancey* (Ref: D2248) 20 March 1911 Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives

21. *Letter from H McCarten to Canon Glancey* (Ref: D2565) 11 April 1912
Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
22. *Letter from H McCarten to Canon Glancey* (Ref: D2598) 26 May 1912
Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
23. *Letter from H McCarten to Canon Glancey* (Ref: D2659) 7 July 1912
Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
24. *Birmingham Catholic Directory 1925*, (pp149) Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
25. *Postcard, approx 1934*, Archives of Father G Breen
26. *Planning Application 6696* Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library:
27. *Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Parish Directory and Report 1973*.
Archives of Father G Breen
28. www.imagesofengland.org.uk
29. *Newspaper Cuttings – Buildings – Vol 2 1984-88 (p. 49) Evening Mail*
30.6.87, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library (QSH 56.1)
30. OSBOURNE, Kerry, *A History of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, the Twentieth Century*, pub. approx 2001, pub. Sadler House, Sutton Coldfield (BCOL373.42496BIS) Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library:
31. *Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall*, 1987, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library(QSH 58.9.GUI)
32. *Planning Application No 70464000 – Alteration and change of use to offices*, Birmingham Planning Office
33. *Planning Application No 70464005 – Construction of a new front wall*, Birmingham Planning Office
34. *Planning Application No 70464008 – Restaurant*, Birmingham Planning Office
35. *Copy Declaration of Trust dated 18.4.1893*, Powell & Co, Solicitors

Sources for Illustrations

<i>Front Page:</i>	<i>Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel 1834</i> (see Sources for Text, 1) <i>The Guildhall 2008</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 1</i>	<i>Lichfield Road (2008)</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 2</i>	<i>Lichfield Road (approx 1855)</i> (Photo by W. Grundy, Norman Evans Collection, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library)
<i>Fig 3(A)</i>	<i>Harriet Littlehales Account 1834</i> (Sources for Text, 2)
<i>Fig 3(B)</i>	<i>Harriet Littlehales Account 1834</i> (see above)
<i>Fig 4</i>	<i>Mass Leaflet kept by Harriet Littlehales, 1834</i> (Sources for Text, 2)
<i>Fig 5</i>	<i>Holy Trinity Parish Church (circa 1900)</i> (Directories of Sutton Coldfield, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library)
<i>Fig 6</i>	<i>The 'Chapel' at New Hall (1992)</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 7</i>	<i>Map of Sutton Coldfield in 1765 showing the future Site of the First Roman Catholic Church between The 'Top' Swan Inn and Moat House</i> (Norman G Evans 1974, Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library)
<i>Fig 8</i>	<i>Oscott College 1998</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 9</i>	<i>Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel 1834</i> (Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 10</i>	<i>The Gargoyles</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 11</i>	<i>The Catholic Magazine' issued in December 1834</i> (Sources for Text, 8)
<i>Fig 12</i>	<i>Roman Catholic Chapels in Warwickshire, 1840</i> (Sketch on the wall of Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives)
<i>Fig 13</i>	<i>Canon John Moore</i> (Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 14</i>	<i>1857 Valuation Map showing Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel</i> (Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library)
<i>Fig 15</i>	<i>Tabella Onerum Missarum ('Masses of Obligation') for the Misses Dixon and the Misses Grundy</i> (Sources for Text, 12)
<i>Fig 16</i>	<i>Statistics recorded for the Bishop's Visitation 1855</i> (Sources for Text, 13)
<i>Fig 17</i>	<i>Father Harkness</i> (See Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 18</i>	<i>Page from 'Wandering Among the Aisles'</i> (Sources for Text, 15)
<i>Fig 19</i>	<i>Interior of Holy Trinity Chapel (date unknown, possibly late 1800s)</i> (Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 20</i>	<i>Canon Rigby's Notes for the Bishop of Birmingham's Visitation on 11th November 1894</i> (Sources for Text, 16)
<i>Fig 21</i>	<i>Canon Rigby</i> (Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 22</i>	<i>Father Hugh McCarten's correspondence</i> (Sources for Text, 22)
<i>Fig 23</i>	<i>Rev Francis de Capitain</i> (Sources for Text, 1)
<i>Fig 24</i>	<i>The new Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Parish Church (in March 2003)</i> (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
<i>Fig 25</i>	<i>Wooden replica of Madonna and Child originally in the Chapel (see Fig 19 above) and now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 26(A)</i>	<i>Medieval-style statue now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 26(B)</i>	<i>Medieval-style statue now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 26(C)</i>	<i>Medieval-style statue now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 26(D)</i>	<i>Medieval-style statues now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 27(A)</i>	<i>Candlesticks now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 27(B)</i>	<i>Baptismal Font now in Holy Trinity RC Parish Church (see above)</i>
<i>Fig 28</i>	<i>Holy Trinity Chapel (The Guild Hall), circa 1934</i> (Sources for Text, 25)
<i>Fig 29</i>	<i>Section of Plan accompanying Planning Application No. 6696</i> (Sources for Text, 26)
<i>Fig 30</i>	<i>Section of Plan accompanying Planning Application No. 6696</i> (see above)
<i>Fig 31</i>	<i>Section of Plan accompanying Planning Application No. 6696</i> (see above)
<i>Fig 32</i>	<i>Section of Plan accompanying Planning Application No. 6696</i> (see above)
<i>Fig 33</i>	<i>Planning Application No. 6696 Dated Oct 25 1934</i> (see above)
<i>Fig 34</i>	<i>An aerial view of the mid-1950s, showing the 'flagpole'</i> (Photo at Bishop Vesey Grammar School)

- Fig 35 *Moat House Sales Catalogue 1948* (Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library, QSH 58.9MOA)
- Fig 36 *'For Sale' - Agents' Particulars 1987* (Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library, QSH 58.9GUI)
- Fig 37 *Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall* (Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Library, QSH 58.9GUI)
- Fig 38 *Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall* (see above)
- Fig 39 *Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall* (see above)
- Fig 40 *Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall* (see above)
- Fig 41 *Part of Planning Application by Tyfold Ltd for the Refurbishment of the Guildhall* (see above)
- Fig 42 *Glazed Arched Conservatory to Draught Lobby with Front Door detail, 2008* (Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)
- Fig 43 *Front Door detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 44 *Front Door detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 45 *Front Door detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 46 *Window detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 47 *Window detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 48 *Window detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 49 *Windows detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 50 *Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 51 *Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 52 *Ground Floor showing Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Columns and Beams, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 53 *Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Spiral Stair, Balcony and Mezzanine Floor, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 54 *Victorian Pattern Cast Iron Spiral Stair, Balcony and Mezzanine Floor, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 55 *Victorian Pattern Balcony and Mezzanine Floor, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 56 *Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 57 *Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 58 *Roof showing roof ribs and bosses, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 59 *Roof showing cornice, roof ribs and bosses, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 60 *Roof showing cornice, roof ribs, tie beam and bosses, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 61 *Roof showing cornice, roof ribs, tie beam and bosses, (see above)*
- Fig 62 *Mezzanine Floor with balustrades and light wells around the windows on the southern side, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 63 *Mezzanine Floor showing roof detail, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 64 *Mezzanine Floor with bricked up window arch on the northern side, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 65 *Statue in the Niche of the Front Wall of the Guildhall, 2008* (see above)
- Fig 66 *Statues on the outside of Strasbourg Cathedral* (Internet Images: Strasbourg Cathedral, Page 16)

Index:

- Acolytes 20
Acts of Faith 16
Agents' Particulars of Sale 36
Alb 20
All-seeing eye 47
Altar 9, 32
Altar Stone 17
Althorp, Lord, brother of
Annexe 20, 28
Apostleship of Prayer 22
- Baddesley Clinton 5
Badminton Club 35
Balcony 44
Balustrades 37, 45
Baptismal font 26, 27
Baptisms 16, 21
Basement 10, 20
Bashundoora Balti Restaurant 40
Beams 37, 43
Bell Tower 17
Benedictus 20
Benediction 16, 20, 22
Bird, Father Thomas E 24
Birmingham Development Department 37
Bishop Vesey School 1, 10, 34
Bishop Veysey 10
Boldmere Mission 16
Bosses 44
Boswell Road 34
Breen, Father 26
Brough Family of Leek 2
Brownies 34
Buggins, Mr 14
Burial ground 17, 48
- Candlesticks 26, 27
Capitain, Reverend Francis de 24, 28
Car park 33, 35
Caretaker's House 28
Catechism 16
Catholic Emancipation Act 1829, 8
Catholic Magazine, The 8, 10, 11
Catholic Relief Acts, 1778 and 1791, 7
Censer 20
Centenary Year 24
Chalice 32
Champ, Dr Judith 47
Charity day school 13
Church Committee 22
Clark, Mick 33
Columns 37, 43
- Common Prayer Book Services 4
Confessions 16
Confraternity for the Conversion of England 16
Conservation Area 40
Conservatory 37, 41
Conversions 16, 22
Cornice 32, 38, 44
Coverdale, Miles 11
Cricket 33
Cross 47, 48
Crystal Palace 33
Cubs 34
- Dance floor 32
Dances, Saturday Night 33
Deeds 48
Destitute Children's Home 22
Dixon, Miss 14, 15, 16, 17
Dodd 11
Door 41
Douai, France 4
Draught Lobby 37, 41
- Easter 23
Easter Communicants 16, 21
Ecclesia 48
Edward the Sixth 11
Electric lighting 22
Elizabeth 1, 4
Emblem 47
Episcopal Visitation 16
Erdington 1, 20, 24
Europe 8
Exeter, Bishop of 11
Fire 13, 16
Fireplaces 40
Font 26
Football 33
Frost, Mr 33
- Garden 9
Gargoyles 10
Gas brackets 19
Gas lamp 20
Glancy, Canon 22
God 48
Gospel 16
Gothic 8, 9
Governors of Bishop Vesey School 35, 37
Grade II Listed Building 35, 37, 40
Gray, Father George 5

Great Haywood 24
Ground floor 20, 43
Grundy, Misses 14, 15, 20
Guardian Angel 47
Guides 34
Guildhall 28, 33, 34
Guildhall Management Committee 35

Hail Marys 20
Hardmans 22
Harkness, Father 17, 20, 22
Harman 10
Harvington Hall 5
Henry VIII 4, 11
High Street 34
Holbeche, Sarah 17
Holidays of Obligation 16
Holy Communion 16
Holy Saturday 23
Holy Trinity Parish Church 8
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Chapel 1, 14, 24
Horton, Dr 16
Horton, Miss 14
Horton, Richard 14

Imagery 47
Immaculate Heart of Mary 16
Incense 20
Iona 20
Ireland 8
Iron rings 33
Iron safe 17

Jesuit priest 5
Jesus Christ 47
Jewish Synagogue 47
Jews 47
Jitterbug 33
Jive 33
Jordan Financial Management 40

Kenelm Road 8

Lent, Fridays in 16, 22
Lichfield Road 8, 17, 24
Light wells 37, 45
Lillis, Father Joseph M. 24
Littlehales, Harriet 1
Living Rosary, The 22

Madonna and Child 25
Magistrates Court 34
Map of Sutton Coldfield 1765, 6

Map, Valuation, 1857, 14
Mary (Queen of Scots) 11
Mass 1, 16, 22
Mass Leaflet 1834, 3
Masses of Obligation 15, 16, 22
McCarten, Father Hugh 22
Medieval-style statues 26
Memorial cards 17
Mezzanine Floor 37, 44, 45
Missal Stand 26
Mission 7, 14, 22
Mission, Boldmere 16
Moat House 1, 6, 34
Moore, Father James 13, 14, 21
Moore, Father John 13
Moor-place 11
Mother Church 48
Mystery of the Holy Trinity 1

Narthex 26
New Hall 5
Newman Chapel, Maryvale 25
Niche 10, 47
Noises 48
Nova Youth Club 35

O'Neil, Mr 33
Old Covenant 47
Ora pro anima sua 12
Orange Grove, The 33
Oscott College 7, 9, 10, 13, 47

Parish Hall 28
Parish mission 13
Paten 32
Personification of the Church 47
Pilgrim's staff 47
Piscina 32
Planning application 28
Police Station 34
Pope, Rev. Mr. 1
Popish practices 4
Porch 28
Presbytery 10, 14, 17, 28, 40
Presbytery of Holy Trinity RC Church 20
President of Oscott College 1
Priest holes 5
Psalms 16
Pugin, Augustus Welby 9

Railway lines 34
Rawlins, Miss 33
Recusants 5, 7
Redemptorist Fathers 24
Re-establishment of hierarchy 8, 16

Reliquary 17
 Restaurant 40
 Rigby Memorial Fund 22
 Rigby, Canon 21, 22, 26
 Rigby's, Canon, Notes for Visitation 21
 Right to vote 8
 Roman Catholic Chapels in Warwickshire
 1840, 12
 Roman Catholic faith suppressed 4
 Roman Catholics 4, 6, 7
 Rome 4
 Romish Chapel 17
 Romish Church 18
 Roof 44
 Roof ribs 32, 38, 44
 Rosary 20,

Sacheverell family 5
 Sacred Heart of Jesus 16
 Sacristy 13, 19, 32
 Sanctuary 25
 Scapular 16
 School Accounts 22
 School of St Nicholas 14, 16
 Scouts 34
 Seat Rent 16
 Sermon 16
 Society of General Baptists of the new
 connexion 8
 Spencer, The Honorable Mr. 1
 Spiral stair 37, 44
 St Joseph's Elementary school 17, 33
 St Mary's College, Oscott 13
 St Nicholas, Boldmere 17
 Stations of the Cross 16, 22
 Statistics 16
 Statue 25, 47
 Strasbourg Cathedral 47
 Sutton 11
 Sutton Coldfield 1, 5, 7, 10
 Sutton Coldfield Mission 14
Synagoga 48

Tabella Onerum Missarum 15
 Tabernacle 9, 17, 20, 32
 Technical School 34
 Teenagers Youth Club 33
 Tie beam 44
 Top Swan Inn, The 6

Transubstantiation 2
 Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of
 Birmingham 35
 Turrets 10, 33
 Tyfold Ltd 37

Ullathorne, Bishop 14

Virgin and Child 18
 Visitation of 1855, 21

Wafer 20
 Wall 40
 Walsh, Bishop 1
 War years 33
 Warwickshire 7
 Weedall, Rev. Dr. 1
 Wellington Place 34
 Whitehouse Common 33
 Window 42
 Window arch 46

Yanks 33
 Youth Club 35