

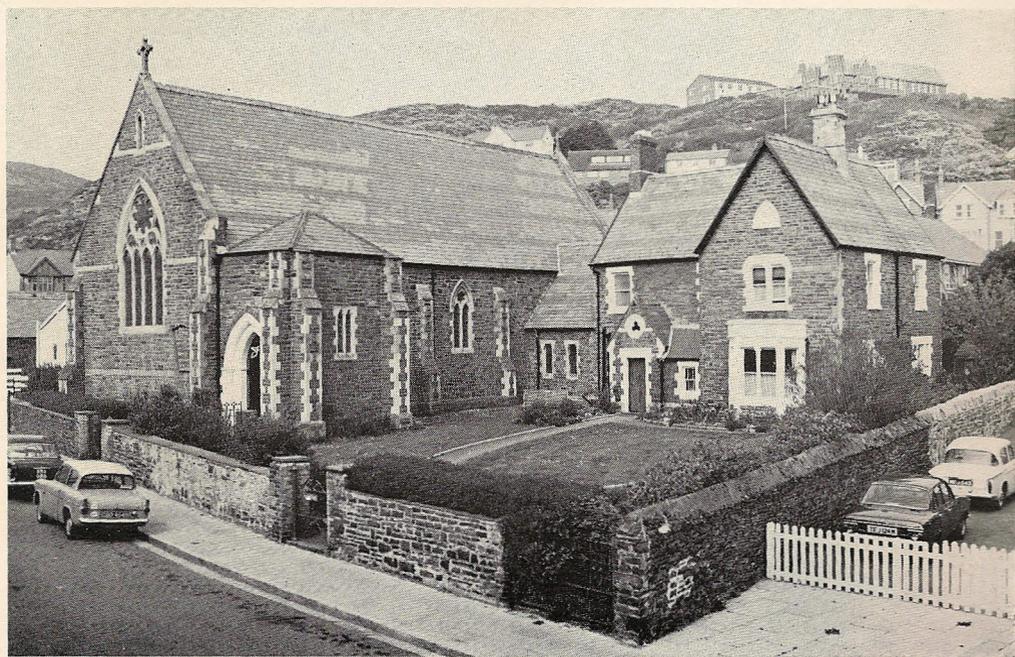
# OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS AND St. WINEFRIDE'S



CATHOLIC CHURCH ABERYSTWYTH



CENTENARY  
1874 ~ 1974



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARISH

By M. B. KIELY O.CARM., B.A.



OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS AND ST. WINEFRIDE  
ABERYSTWYTH



A BRIEF CHRONICLE  
of  
CHURCH AND PARISH

## FOREWORD

The centenary of a church is an occasion for thanksgiving, remembrance and resolve. This record of the events of the last hundred years at St. Winefride's will, I pray, inspire all who read it to thank God for the achievements of the past, to beg His favour for those who have contributed to them, and to ask Him to inspire all who now and in the future belong to St. Winefride's to emulate and even exceed what has been achieved by those who went before them.

+ Rangton

*Bishop of Menevia.*

## *Introduction*

The Catholic revival in Aberystwyth at the beginning of the 19th century can claim no direct link with the traditions of medieval Catholicism in Cardiganshire. The cultural associations of the great Abbey of Strata Florida and its widespread influence as a centre of pilgrimage were, not, of course, completely extinguished at the Suppression in 1536. Some monks, according to tradition, survived the destruction of their monastery and continued their ministrations for some time in the countryside. Although the Aberystwyth area was therefore not immediately severed from its Catholic past, State coercion, severe fines and imprisonment made Catholic practice increasingly hazardous. In Carmarthenshire, as late as 1625, Exchequer Recusant Rolls still recorded 44 individuals of the "popish persuasion", while the authorities in Cardiganshire boasted that no "papists" could be found in their County at that date.

Eighteenth century Episcopal Transcripts of Anglican visitations note the presence of "dissenters" in Cardiganshire, but make no reference to "papists". It, therefore, seems highly improbable that any considerable body of Catholics survived in Cardiganshire during the greater part of the 17th and 18th centuries.

### *Early Years of the Catholic Mission, 1845-74*

The Catholic revival towards the end of the 18th century in Wales was made possible by the gradual relaxation of the Penal Laws which allowed Catholics more freedom of movement. The process was also hastened by the progress of the Industrial Revolution which encouraged migration of labour. The first reference to Catholic activity at Aberystwyth was the offer made by an unknown benefactor of a site suitable for a church. Catholics, however, were so lacking in organisation and devoid of financial resources that the offer had to be declined.

Bishop Brown's plan to convert the "Old Playhouse" in Thespian Street into a Catholic Chapel in 1845 proved impractical. Meanwhile, Mass was occasionally celebrated at William Osborne's cottage in Cambrian Place when some Breton or other travelling missionary priest chanced to arrive from Carmarthen, Brecon or even Shrewsbury.

This unsatisfactory situation was happily transformed in 1867 when Bishop Bernard Collier, O.S.B., having recently retired from the Mauritius missionary field, arrived in Aberystwyth. He had merely come to enjoy the

amenities of a growing seaside resort, but he soon became aware of the spiritual needs not only of local Catholics, but of the increasing numbers of Catholic visitors. He therefore decided to establish a Catholic Chapel or Oratory and a Priest's Residence at Queen Square House. Bishop Brown or Newport and Menevia then provided the first resident priest, the Belgian missionary, Fr. Charles Limpens, for the newly founded mission. The new Chapel and Residence became the centre of Catholic life from 1867 to 1875 when, the new church was opened in Queen's Road. Parish Registers were now regularly kept and they reveal that 67 parishioners were baptised and 43 candidates were confirmed in the period.

### *A New Parish Church, 1874*

We reach a decisive phase in the annals of the Mission in 1872 when Fr. Williams took its further development into his capable hands. The Welsh-speaking Fr. William Williams, born in Anglesey in 1830 and originally destined for the Anglican ministry, was received into the Catholic



Catholic Church, Aberystwyth.

Church in 1850 and ordained priest at Valladolid in 1862. From the outset of his career at Aberystwyth, Fr. Williams had set his heart on building a permanent church where Catholics could share in the full cycle of their liturgy. Bishop Collier had already purchased from Sir Pryse Pryse of Gogerddan a suitable site in Queen's Road and Fr. Williams now launched an appeal for funds in the Catholic magazine "The Tablet" in September, 1873. The response from various quarters encouraged him to place a contract with Mr. James Williams who, under the supervision of Messrs. George Jones and Sons, Architects, began the actual building in March, 1874.

The new church was to consist of a Chancel, Nave and Bell Tower. An Organ Gallery and Sacristy were to be provided and the total cost was estimated at about £1,500. Fr. William's original estimate was thereby almost doubled and, in the event, the completion of the 110 ft. high Bell Tower had to be indefinitely postponed. The building of the adjoining Presbytery added a further £500 and Fr. Williams was compelled to cancel his plans for a Parish School on the site. The erection of the Organ Gallery was also omitted from the scheme. An anonymous Benefactor presented the High Altar which was designed and installed at a cost of £300 by the firm of Messrs. Boulton Bros. who are still (1974) in business at Cheltenham. Another generous Benefactor made a gift of the set of "Stations of the Cross" which were erected on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in September, 1876. They were described as the work of a talented Parisian artist, Mons. Aristide Alcan.

The new church building had risen some feet above the ground when the Ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone was performed on the 16th July, Feast of Our Lady of Carmel, 1874, by Bishop Collier. On that historic date, the citizens of Aberystwyth witnessed the unfamiliar spectacle of a procession of Secular and Regular Catholic clergy moving from Queen's Square House towards the site of the new church. Bishop Collier then proceeded with the Foundation Ceremony as prescribed in the Roman Pontifical. The mixed gathering included Protestant clergymen and leading citizens of Aberystwyth and a distinctly "ecumenical" atmosphere of Christian unity happily prevailed on the occasion.

The double Dedication chosen by Fr. Williams for the new church "Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride" was probably suggested by his association with the Manchester church of "St. Mary of the Angels" and his personal devotion to the Welsh martyr, St. Winefride. The new edifice in "Early Decorated Gothic" style was speedily completed and ready for

dedication by August, 1875. Fr. Williams had already conceived the ambitious plan of inviting no less a personage than His Eminence, Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, to perform the Solemn Opening Ceremony. By a combination of courage and perseverance he eventually succeeded in persuading the Cardinal to make the journey to Aberystwyth. Thursday, 19th August, 1875, the date chosen for the ceremony, proved to be one of those days when a bright blue sky adds enchantment to the Aberystwyth view. The famous Cardinal's arrival at the height of the holiday season created much public interest and large crowds thronged Queen's Road long before the Service was due to begin. His Eminence, magnificent in purple "Cappa Magna", presided at Solemn Pontifical Mass sung by Right Rev. Cuthbert Hedley, O.S.B., assisted by high-ranking clergy. The Special Choir included members of the Hallé and Salford Cathedral choirs and vocalists from other Manchester Parishes. The splendid Opening Ceremony not only fulfilled Fr. Williams's highest hopes, but was also a fitting climax to his great achievement in founding a new Church in a new parish.

Parish Registers of this period show that Fr. Williams received a considerable number of converts, administered 96 Baptisms and presented 65 candidates for Confirmation. Here we have clear evidence of how he gradually laid the secure foundations of his new Parish and provided for its future development. Fr. Williams's health however began to fail in the course of 1883 when a serious cardiac condition was diagnosed. His condition rapidly deteriorated and he died peacefully on Saturday morning, 22nd December, 1883. The general sympathy of the townspeople was voiced in the local Press and his funeral cortège to the Public Cemetery was the largest seen at Aberystwyth for many years.

### *A Time of Change and Instability, 1883-89*

The six-year period following the death of Fr. Williams, 1883 to 1889, was one of the most depressing in the annals of the Mission. Bewildered parishioners witnessed the arrival and departure in rapid succession of, at least, nine missionary priests and in the year 1889 alone, the names of no fewer than three priests-in-charge were recorded in Parish Registers. These included the Irish-born Fr. John Dawson, the Portuguese missionary, Fr. Henry Daine, and Fr. James O'Haire, recently returned from the African Mission. The reference to rapid change, however, does not imply that the priests concerned were restless or lacking in zeal. On the contrary, they

were all active missionaries coming up from the teeming Catholic centres of South Wales. At Aberystwyth they found only a small, fairly static group of Catholics in a mission which showed little scope for development. The Religious Census of 1887 clearly indicated that in the first 20 years of the Catholic Mission, 1867-87, the number of parishioners rarely exceeded the 40 mark. Priests stationed at Aberystwyth were naturally eager to return to a missionary field where their labours would be more rewarding and their talents more fully employed.

### *Slow Progress, 1889-1921*

The Parish, however, enjoyed a decade of comparative peace and progress when Fr. Thomas Carolan returned from the Argentine Mission to assume the administration of the Aberystwyth Mission in 1889. Parish Registers now showed a gradual increase in the Catholic population and when Bishop Francis Mostyn of Menevia visited the Parish in 1898, he congratulated local Catholics on possessing a fine church and an excellent choir, but strongly urged them to establish a Parish School. His hopes for the future of Catholic education in the town were unexpectedly realised when a group of Catholic Teaching Sisters, "Daughters of the Holy Ghost", reached Aberystwyth from their native Brittany in 1903. The educational outlook was radically changed when the Sisters of St. Padarn's eventually established a flourishing Convent School. This event of capital importance in the development of the Parish took place in the early years of Fr. Walter Baggaley's legendary career as Pastor at "Our Lady of the Angels". Fr. Baggaley, born at Whittington Hall, Staffs., in 1846, was received at the age of sixteen into the Catholic Church in London. After seminary studies in Normandy and the United States, he was ordained priest by the Bishop of Leeds in 1880. Ill-health forced him to seek a warmer climate and he lived at various intervals in Alabama, Buenos Aires and Gibraltar. He served at Barmouth shortly before the beginning of his 20 year pastorate at Aberystwyth in 1901. Fr. Baggaley's life of comparative poverty and deprivation at Aberystwyth had few consolations, apart from the loyalty of his small congregation and the esteem of the townspeople. The spiritual care of Belgian refugees during the First World War and his constant devotion to parochial duties taxed his precarious health and increased the burden of advancing years. When, in his 75th year, he retired from pastoral cares in 1921, it must have seemed to his parishioners almost the end of an era.

## *A New Phase of Parish Development, 1921-36*

The modern progressive phase in the Parish is definitely linked with the career of Mgr. Paul Hook who succeeded the ageing Fr. Baggaley in 1921. Mgr. Hook, born at Ledbury in 1872 and ordained priest in Rome in 1897, had served as Military Chaplain during the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. He then resumed his Rectorship of St. Mary's College, Holywell, until his appointment as Parish Priest at "Our Lady of the Angels".

Although he had not fully recovered from his wartime experiences, he soon undertook a vigorous programme of parochial development. Mgr. Hook celebrated in 1924 the Golden Jubilee of the foundation of "Our Lady of the Angels" and reviewed the development of the Catholic Mission in Aberystwyth since 1845. He gave special attention to the training of the Church Choir which was then located in the Lady Chapel. To facilitate regular practice, he built the new Organ Gallery which was first used at Christmas, 1925. The new Pipe Organ, encased in rosewood and mahogany, was installed by a Liverpool firm in 1926. Mgr. Hook also introduced the urgently needed new church Heating System in place of an antiquated Anthracite Stove.

Monsignor Hook gradually became a popular and influential figure in the town and was always ready to discuss the teaching of the Catholic Church on contemporary problems, but was reluctant to become involved in local religious controversies. Six strenuous years of pastoral activity had taken their toll of his health and strength and when he felt that he could no longer give of his best, he willingly made way for a more energetic successor.

Fr. Michael McGrath, M.A., D.D., succeeded Mgr. Hook at "Our Lady of the Angels" in February, 1928. Dr. McGrath, born in Kilkenny in 1882, had specialised in Celtic Studies at the National University of Ireland and became a competent Welsh scholar. He pursued seminary studies in Paris and Rome and emerging as a Doctor of Theology he was ordained at Hawkesyard in 1908. Structural defects in the Parish Church which had weathered the storms of nearly 60 years were causing concern at this time. Dr. McGrath, realising that a major scheme of restoration was necessary, began to organise a Church Fund. He proved himself a very progressive Pastor who could have achieved much for the welfare of his flock and the development of the Parish. He was, however, called to assume the Rectorship of St. Mary's College on the retirement of Fr. Lofthouse in August, 1929.

It was, therefore, left to Fr. Francis Cashman to implement Dr. McGrath's plans at Aberystwyth and undertake a heavy programme of church restoration. Fr. Cashman, born at Llandulas, Colwyn Bay, in 1901, was ordained at the English College, Rome in 1927. In spite of his limited experience of parish administration, he soon built up the Church Fund begun by his predecessor and, in record time, succeeded in thoroughly overhauling and renewing the main church roof. In 1932, he introduced Electric Lighting to replace the "Victorian" gas mantles which formerly shed only a "dim religious light".

He had to remove in 1934 the massive Rose Window in the Sanctuary which had been in danger of collapse for some years. Fr. Cashman abolished the outdated system of Bench Rents or reserved seats in church and substituted voluntary offerings to provide additional seating accommodation. Sunday Mass attendance usually averaged about 100 parishioners, but they were able, under Fr. Cashman's inspiration, to raise the considerable funds required for church maintenance. When Mgr. Hook died at a nursing home in Clifton, his many friends at "Our Lady of the Angels" gave practical expression of their grief by erecting the memorial Pulpit which was blessed by Bishop Vaughan of Menevia in October, 1933. Fr. Cashman also managed to provide a Garage and a Parish car, so necessary for the effective visitation of his mission which, at that date, was practically co-extensive with the County of Cardiganshire.

### *The Carmelite Fathers are invited to the Parish, 1936*

The arrival in Aberystwyth at the beginning of 1936 of some Fathers from the Irish Carmelite Province, led by Fr. Malachy Lynch, O.Carm., was destined to have far-reaching consequences for the further development of the Parish of "Our Lady of the Angels". This was, by no means, the first appearance of the White Friars in Wales. Carmelite Bishops had filled the Sees of Bangor, Llandaff and St. David's in medieval times. In 1346, the Order made a foundation at Denbigh where considerable remains of the Whitefriars still survive. Dutch and Irish Carmelites were actively engaged at Merthyr Tydfil from 1864 to 1879. The Carmelites, nevertheless, were not well known in the Principality in 1936 and their arrival at Aberystwyth naturally came as somewhat of a surprise for Fr. Cashman and his parishioners. To understand the circumstances leading up to this event, it is necessary to recall how Dr. McGrath relinquished the post of Parish Priest in 1929 to assume the Rectorship of St. Mary's College which had been

officially opened in 1923. In spite of Dr. McGrath's heroic efforts, adverse circumstances led to the closure of the College in 1934. Some years previously, he had unofficially contacted the Carmelites at Whitefriars Street, Dublin, when he endeavoured to interest them in a Welsh foundation. A final decision, however, was prevented by unexpected difficulties, but when Dr. McGrath succeeded Bishop Vaughan of Menevia in September, 1935, all obstacles were swept aside. Final arrangements for a Carmelite foundation at Aberystwyth were soon formally approved and with Bishop McGrath's blessing on the new venture, Fr. Cogan, the Irish Provincial, accompanied by Fr. Malachy Lynch, travelled from Wrexham to Aberystwyth on the 17th January, 1936. The Parish was then formally taken over from Fr. Cashman and Fr. Malachy was installed as Prior and Pastor.

Fr. Malachy Lynch, O.Carm., born in Ballmanus, Co. Wicklow, on 31st July, 1899, had studied at the Carmelite International College, Rome, where he was ordained on 28th June, 1925. He was summoned to the Welsh Mission from the post of "Master of Novices" at the Carmelite Friary, Kinsale, Co. Cork. Impressions of local character and landscape in that historic town remained with him for the rest of his life. At Aberystwyth, however, he found himself among a people whose language, culture and outlook were far removed from his previous experience. It was a measure of his adaptability that he came to terms so quickly with his new surroundings. On 30th January, 1936, Fr. Malachy was joined by Fr. M. B. Kiely, O.Carm., from Whiteabbey, Kildare, and Fr. P. L. Geary and other Carmelites soon followed.

Hitherto, an individual Pastor at "Our Lady of the Angels" was responsible for a very extensive Mission area where Catholics were widely dispersed and often isolated. Fr. Malachy, on the other hand, soon became the leader of a team of Carmelites who could extend pastoral care to the very boundaries of the Parish. A general survey of the Mission area was soon undertaken and a preliminary census revealed about 275 Catholics. Meanwhile, the reopening of St. Mary's College, in accordance with Bishop McGrath's express wish, was Fr. Malachy's chief preoccupation. The college, derelict for over two years, had become the haunt of gypsies and other "gentlemen of the road". The whole establishment had to be thoroughly restored and refurnished and a Teaching Staff had to be assembled in time for the reopening ceremony which took place in September, 1936. The Carmelites had also taken charge of the Parish with a strong recommendation from Dr. McGrath that special attention should be given to the pastoral needs of Lampeter. Fr. Malachy now judged that Lampeter was ripe for

development and he was already engaged in fund-raising to provide a suitable church. Since the reopening of St. Mary's College, however, Fr. Malachy was fully occupied as Prior and Principal. It, therefore, became increasingly difficult for him to give his Aberystwyth parishioners the personal care and attention to which they were accustomed. The Carmelite Provincial therefore decided, with the approval of Bishop McGrath, that a full-time Parish Priest should be appointed. Fr. Bonaventure Fitzgerald, born in Dublin in 1908 and ordained at the Carmelite International College, Rome, in 1933 was chosen for this office. Although, he had little experience of pastoral work, he possessed great personal initiative and organising ability. From the beginning, he gave special attention to parish visitation and soon acquired a good working knowledge of the area. No major development could be contemplated at Aberystwyth while the Parish was burdened with fund-raising on behalf of Lampeter.

The replastering of the interior of the Church was, however, completed in March, 1939, by Mr. Glyn Davies, Aberarth. Six defective Church windows were replaced and the Electricity System was rewired by Mr. Evan Jones.

### *A New Church at Lampeter, 1940*

Although Britain was now at war, a remarkable chapter in Parish annals opened at Lampeter where Fr. Malachy's vision of a new church became a reality on the 16th July, Feast of Our Lady of Carmel, 1940. The Church and Priory designed by the London architect, Mr. T. B. Scott, had been completed by Mr. Davies of Aberarth, just before the suspension of all construction work under wartime regulations. Fr. Malachy's Building Fund which began with small contributions from Irish schoolchildren eventually reached the required total of about £5,000. The Solemn Dedication ceremony was performed by Dr. McGrath, Archbishop of Cardiff, who had recently succeeded to the Catholic Metropolitan See of Wales. His Grace was assisted by a large representation of Secular Clergy and by Carmelite, Passionist and Redemptorist Fathers. Prominent members of the Welsh Catholic laity, including Mrs. Nannette Wynne of Garthewin Hall, who had generously helped Fr. Malachy, were also present.

### *The Parish during the Second World War, 1939-45*

Soon after war was declared, a flood of evacuees from English cities began to pour into Cardiganshire and the pastoral resources of "Our Lady

of the Angels" were stretched to the limit. New mass-centres were hastily established at Llannon, Llanarth, Cilcennin, Newquay, Aberaeron and Llanddewi Brefi. The first group of Catholic evacuees came to Borth in 1939 and a Mass-centre was established at the Memorial Hall where it remained until the new church came into use in 1969. Similar arrangements were made at Aberaeron where the Memorial Hall served as a Mass-centre until 1958. Contingents of the Army and Royal Air Force were stationed in and around Aberystwyth, while students and members of the Academic Staff of London University were also evacuated to the town. Fr. Malachy Lynch, Prior, St. Mary's College, devoted himself to the spiritual welfare of University personnel and Catholic members of the R.A.F. Fr. P. L. Geary, O.Carm., who succeeded Fr. Bonaventure Fitzgerald as parish Priest was available at the Presbytery for advice and consultation by members of the Army.

The restoration of peace in 1945 posed serious problems at Aberystwyth where the Parish was disturbed in 1946 by apparently well founded rumours that the Sisters of St. Padarn's Convent were to be withdrawn from the town. This threatened calamity was fortunately averted by pressure of public opinion and the timely intervention of the Diocesan authorities. The fate of St. Mary's College also hung in the balance until the decision to re-open it for the training of Late Vocations was taken in 1947.

### *A New Parish Hall, 1950*

Fr. Bernardine McGreevey, O.Carm., born in Belfast in 1911 and ordained in Rome in 1934, came from Whitefriars Street, Dublin, to take charge of the Parish in 1949. He found that the time had come for further development, especially for the provision of a long overdue social centre. This problem had been under discussion for some years and parishioners eagerly awaited a solution. Post-war restrictions ruled out a costly permanent building. Plans and estimates for a prefabricated structure were, therefore, approved by the Parish Committee and Fr. McGreevey threw all his characteristic energy into raising the estimated outlay of about £2,000. Work began in September, 1949, under the supervision of Fr. Columba Flanagan, O.Carm., Prior. A new landmark in Parish history was reached when Bishop Petit of Menevia officially opened the new building on the 10th May, 1950. Henceforth, the Hall became the centre of all social, cultural and fund-raising activities of the Parish.

## *Restoration Work at Parish Church, 1954-55*

Of all the Parish Priests who have presided over the destinies of the Parish since its foundation in 1867, Fr. T. C. Gallagher, O.Carm., is the only one, as far as we know, who has left a personal memoir of his experiences at Aberystwyth. Fr. Gallagher, born in Celbridge, Co. Kildare, in 1908 and ordained at Rome in 1931, had been Bursar at Terenure College and the Irish Carmelite House of Studies. When he reached Aberystwyth in January, 1953, an important programme of church reconstruction awaited him.

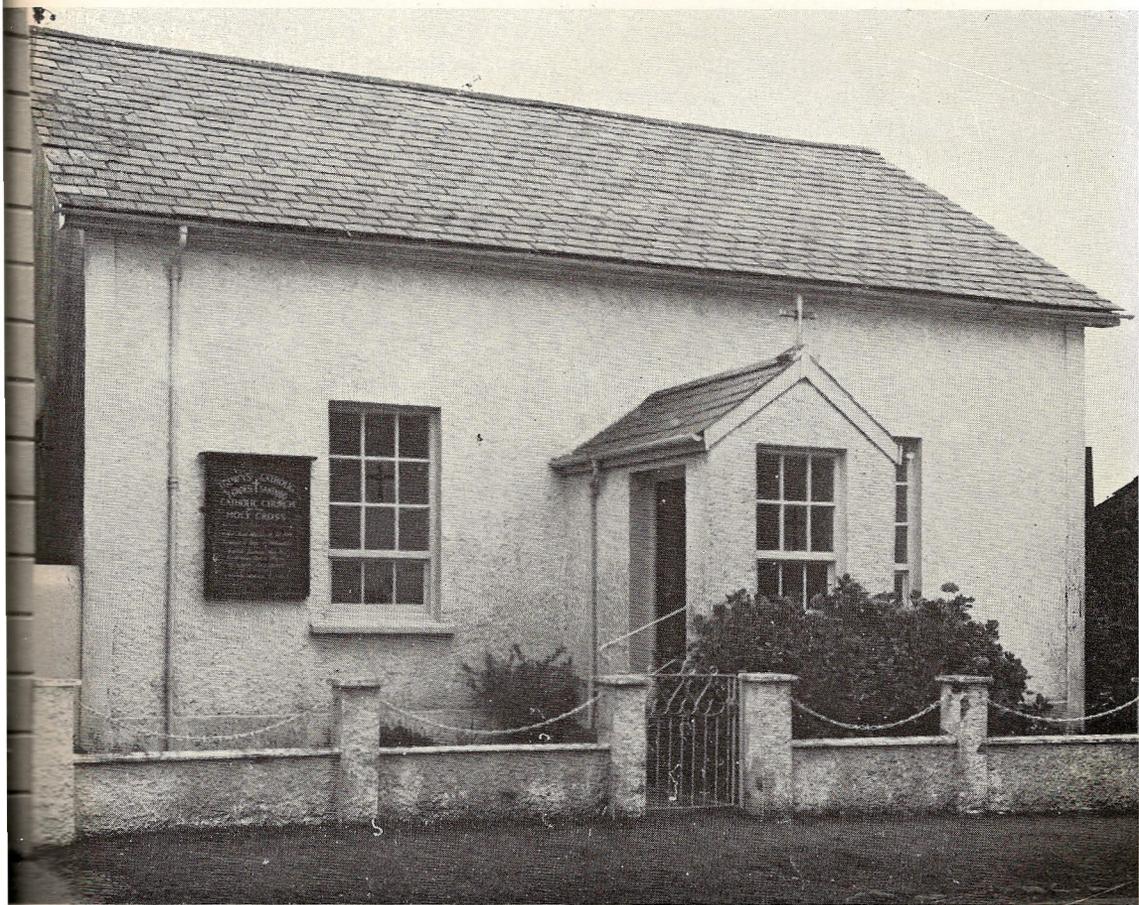
Plans for the extension of the church and the replacing of the old Sanctuary by a semicircular Apse had been submitted in 1938 by Mr. T. B. Scott who designed the new Lampeter Church. Although Fr. Malachy had accepted the plans, the whole scheme was cancelled by the outbreak of the Second World War. Increasing post-war building costs, meanwhile, made the implementation of these plans impractical, but urgent church repairs were still necessary. A detailed report on the state of the building was drawn up in 1953 by Messrs. Bates, Architects and Surveyors of Newport and the Aberystwyth architect, Mr. Bonsall, advised Fr. Gallagher that both the Sanctuary and West gables of the Church should be taken down and rebuilt from the foundations. The work of reconstruction was efficiently carried out by Messrs. T. Jones and Sons, Dole, Llandre. In replacing the Sanctuary wall, Fr. Gallagher took the opportunity of inserting a stained glass lancet window of the Assumption over the High Altar.

*Photograph on page 14 shows the interior of the Parish Church after restoration.*



## *A New Church at Aberaeron, 1958*

Fr. Gallagher, in due course, revealed his plans for a new Church at Aberaeron which had been a Mass-centre since the Second World War. A former Wesleyan Chapel in Victoria Street which had been converted into a dwelling was bought for about £800. The formidable task of reconverting it to a place of worship was undertaken by a competent Belfast craftsman who was assisted at all stages by Fr. Gallagher himself. The building was ready for Dedication by Bishop Petit of Menevia on the Feast of the Holy Cross in May 1958. A Carmelite delegation from Ireland joined the Fathers at Aberaeron where hundreds of Catholic laity from far afield also assembled.



A charming stained glass window of "Our Lady of Ireland", a gift from the artist, Richard King, adorns the little church. The "Welsh Gazette" carried a report of the ceremony under the arresting headline "Old Wesleyan Chapel New Roman Catholic Church".

### *First Catholic Mayor of Aberystwyth, Alderman Wm. Kitchin, 1961*

Fr. Gallagher was succeeded at "Our Lady of the Angels" in June, 1958, by Fr. Bellarmine O'Neill, O.Carm., who was born in Dublin in 1910 and ordained at Rome in 1933. Fr. O'Neill had travelled widely in Australia during the early years of his pastoral ministry. He also had previous experience of the Welsh Mission as Parish Priest of Lampeter from 1948 to 1952 when the parish was separated from Aberystwyth. Undoubtedly, the outstanding event of 1961 was the election of Alderman William Kitchin as the first Catholic Mayor of Aberystwyth. Mr. Kitchin had served in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers for 18 years and was commissioned Captain during the Second World War. He then served with distinction on the Borough Council and both he and his wife were active members of many voluntary bodies in the town. The "Mayor's Sunday" Service was staged in the King's Hall, as the Parish Church could not provide adequate accommodation. The Service consisted of a "Missa Cantata" sung by Fr. Berchmans Hearne, O.Carm., Prior, with full Parish Choir. Bishop Petit presided and give an appropriate address, while Fr. O'Neill, Parish Priest, attended the Mayor as official Catholic Chaplain.

### *The "Parish Newsletter", 1962*

Fr. O'Neill devised a useful means of communication with his parishioners when in November, 1962, he published the first issue of the "Parish Newsletter" under the auspices of the "Legion of Mary". The "Newsletter" fully reported current parochial affairs and welcomed a variety of magazine articles from parishioners. A special section was devoted to research into the historical development of the Parish. Fr. M. B. Kiely, O.Carm., who was seconded to this department, soon discovered that, apart from Parish Registers, practically no Parish annals or chronicles were available. Research, however, among the files of the three local newspapers in the National Library of Wales, enquiries among the townspeople and a course of correspondence gradually enabled him to reconstruct the historical background of the Parish.

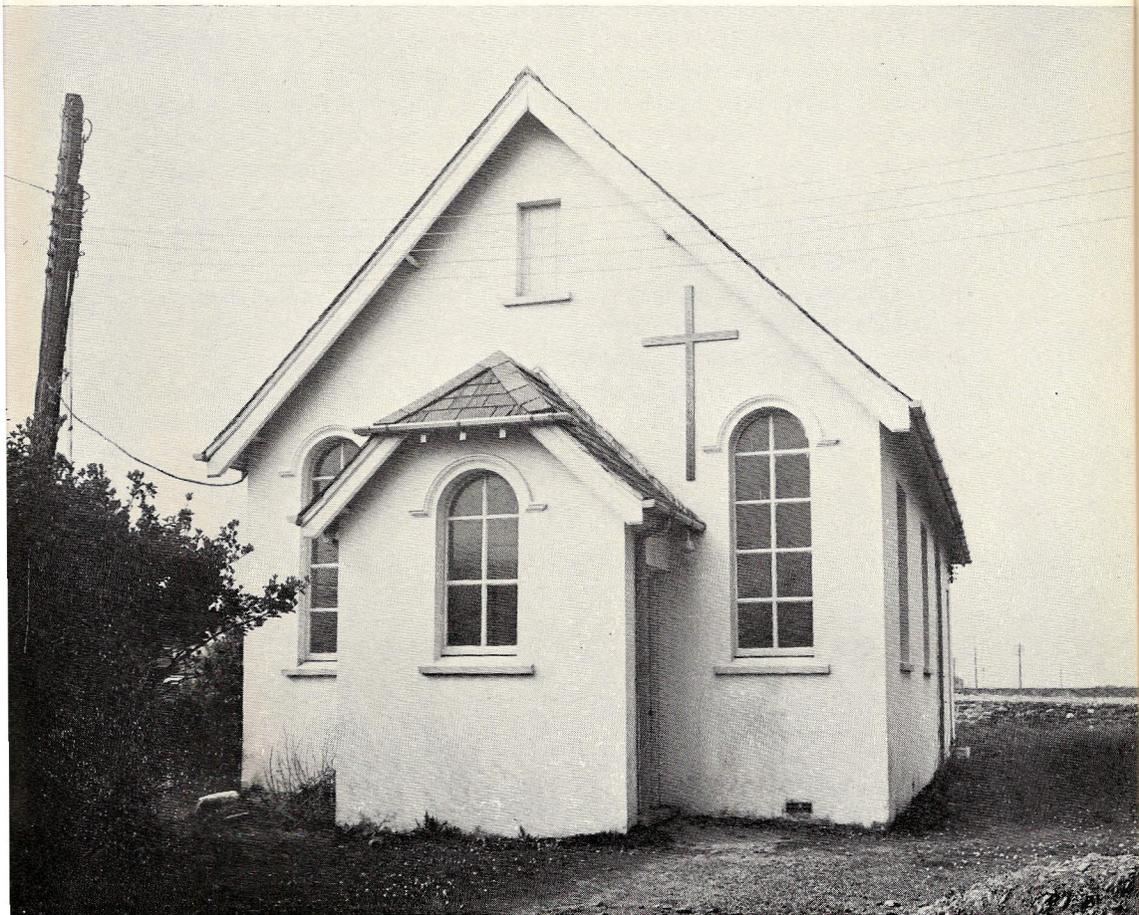
## *The Election of a Parish Council, 1967*

An important development in Parish administration took place at "Our Lady of the Angels" at the beginning of 1967. Fr. Titus Hoekstra, O.Carm., born in Friesland in the Netherlands in 1934, had studied in Rome before his ordination at Groningen in 1961. He was formally inducted as Parish Priest in October, 1966, in succession to Fr. O'Neill who had recently been transferred to Whitefriars School, Cheltenham. Fr. Hoekstra soon became convinced that the solution of current pastoral problems could be facilitated by implementing the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council at Parish level. The Council had strongly recommended that the talents and skills of the Catholic laity should be made full use of in the service of the Church. Fr. Hoekstra, therefore, decided that a Parish Council of 15 members fully representing the Parish should be elected by a Ballot of all parishioners. Such a Council, he believed, would be a valuable source of advice and assistance in Parish administration. The Poll, on the 12th January, 1967, resulted in the election of representatives from Aberystwyth, Penparcau, Waun Fawr, Borth, Aberaeron and Goginan. The first meeting of the new Parish Council was held on St. David's Day when Professor Ellison was elected Chairman and a general discussion on the Council's role followed. Mr. T. McGuire was elected Secretary and Mr. K. Bailey Vice-Chairman at the second meeting on 29th March, 1967, when three Committees dealing with Finance, Social and Welfare activities were also elected. A request for representation on behalf of the University Catholic Society was favourably received by the Council.

## *St. Padarn's Catholic Primary School, 1968*

When the St. Padarn's Sisters ("Daughters of the Holy Ghost") arrived in Aberystwyth in 1903, they found temporary accommodation at a house in Penglais Terrace. Later, through the agency of the well known Solicitor, Mr. W. P. Owen, they bought Salisbury House in Llanbadarn Road (now the Urdd Centre). Here, they opened their first St. Padarn's Convent School and, after a precarious existence for some years, they experienced a "breakthrough" in 1908 and thereafter applications for admission became a steady stream. New classroom accommodation and considerable extensions became necessary. Mr. W. P. Owen negotiated the sale of Salisbury House on behalf of the Sisters in 1922 and St. Padarn's Convent School moved to the old Vicarage, Llanbadarn Road. The new Boarding-Day school catered for pupils from all parts of Wales, as well as from Cyprus, Trinidad and the British Colonies. The Senior Department of the school closed, however, in

July, 1965, much to the regret of parents and pupils. Fortunately, this was not the end of St. Padarn's Convent School which had served the Parish so efficiently for over 60 years. Preliminary reports began to appear in the local Press in September, 1965, concerning changes which would influence the future of Catholic education in Aberystwyth. Negotiations, meanwhile, were in progress between the Diocesan and Local Education Authorities, with the happy result that St. Padarn's was accepted by the L.E.A. on the 1st May, 1968, as a Voluntary Aided Primary School with accommodation for, at least, 120 Catholic pupils.



*The new Church at Borth*

## *A New Church at Borth, 1969*

The problem of a church at Borth had become more acute through the years following the Second World War when the Mass-centre was located in the Memorial Hall. Meanwhile, a Church Building Fund had been established and more than one eligible building site had been inspected. Sir George Pryse of Gogerddan who had provided free sites for various Chapels in Borth offered to do the same for Catholics during Fr. Malachy Lynch's Priorship. The site, however, was later found to be unsuitable. A large field near the Cliff was negotiated by Fr. Columba Flanagan, O.Carm., Prior, on behalf of the Diocesan Trustees and bought for the comparatively reasonable price of £750 in June, 1951. As building costs continued to soar, no action was taken until an unexpected solution of the problem came into view. Soar Welsh Presbyterian Chapel was offered for sale by Private Treaty, with vacant possession by North Cards. Presbytery at the beginning of 1969. The Presbyterian Association, however, expressed the hope that the Chapel would remain a place of worship. Fr. Hoekstra, Parish Priest, therefore, seized the opportunity at once and brought the matter to the notice of Bishop Petit of Menevia. He was supported by a Joint Letter from the Catholics of Borth urging His Lordship to act swiftly. The property included not only the large stone built detached Chapel, but also a solidly built brick Schoolroom. Bishop Petit authorised the purchase on the 14th March, 1969, and Fr. Hoekstra was delighted to inform his parishioners on the 10th April that he had received a message from the Presbyterian Minister, Rev. G. T. Williams, announcing that the Presbytery had accepted the offer of £3,250. Voluntary workers made all necessary preparations and by Sunday, 26th October, 1969, Soar Chapel, under its new Dedication "Our Lady Star of the Sea" was ready for the concelebration of its first Mass.

## *Opening of the Church of the "Welsh Martyrs", Penparcau, 1970*

"ANNUS MIRABILIS"

In the annals of the Parish of "Our Lady of the Angels", the year 1969 was certainly an "ANNUS MIRABILIS". Not only had a satisfactory solution been found for the Borth Church problem and the foundations laid for a new church at Penparcau, but also substantial alterations were in progress in the Parish Church. The original High Altar which had been consecrated by His Eminence Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, was found to be out of keeping with modern liturgical practice. Fr. Hoekstra



hoped that the necessary alterations would not involve the total demolition of the original structure. During the period December, 1969 to January, 1970, the difficult and delicate task was successfully performed by a local builder and a Monumental mason. The Consecration of the new High Altar was performed by Bishop Langton Fox on Sunday the 5th April, 1970. The building of a new church at Penparcau had been high on the list of Parish priorities since Mass was first celebrated there in Neuadd Goffa on Sunday, 20th January, 1952. A suitable church site was purchased by Bishop Petit of Menevia in 1962. The purchase money had accrued from part of the Truscott Estate which had been bequeathed to the Bishop of the Diocese

for the benefit of the Parish of " Our Lady of the Angels ". The Truscotts were one of the oldest Catholic families in Aberystwyth. The provisions of the Will made by Miss Truscott, the last direct descendant of the Pier Street family of Jewellers, became operative in 1949. The purchase of the Penparcau Church site naturally encouraged the fund-raising efforts of parishioners and hastened the day when actual building could begin. Planning permission was secured in 1968 and Bishop Petit gave the scheme his blessing. Parishioners were informed on the 22nd of June, 1969, that the Bishop had approved the appointment of the Architect, Mr. Tom Price, and the placing of the building Contract with Mr. T. Alun Evans, Rhydyfelin.



The new church, dedicated to the "Welsh Martyrs", was completed and furnished by the end of July, 1970, and the first Mass for parishioners and benefactors was celebrated on Sunday, 16th August. The Solemn Blessing and Dedication took place on Sunday, 4th October, when Bishop Petit at Solemn Pontifical Mass was assisted by Fr. P. L. Geary, O.Carm., Prior and Fr. Edward Maguire, O.Carm., Whitefriars, Cheltenham. The Chancellor of the Diocese and a representative gathering of Secular and Regular Clergy were present, as also were the Mayor and Mayoress and the Town Clerk of the Borough. In the 1974 Centenary Year, parishioners may rightly feel that they have made provision for future development, just as their predecessors so nobly did in the past.

"Put this on record for the next generation, so that a race still to be born can praise God". PSALM 102.

## *Epilogue*

### *A Note on Parish Ecumenism*

"Reunion among all Christians is a cause which the Second Vatican Council has set itself to promote as one of its principle aims."

(Ecumenism Int. 1)

This booklet would be incomplete without some reference as to how St. Winefride's has implemented, at parish level, this desire of the Second Vatican Council. During the last eight years, St. Winefride's parish has taken one of the leading parts in all the ecumenical activities in the Aberystwyth area. St. Winefride's now has full membership of the local Council of Churches, the Christian Aid Committee and the World Development Group. Such local ecumenical interactions most certainly foster a better understanding and a greater appreciation of each other among all the various Christian traditions in this town.

In 1967, the Parish was first invited to join the Christian Aid Committee; in 1972 Father Hoekstra had the honour of being Chairman for that year. The following year, 1968, the parish was invited to become a full member of the Aberystwyth Council of Churches; this was unanimously encouraged by St. Winefride's Parish Advisory Council on the 10th of May. The 9th of September of that year saw the Parish attending their first meeting of the Council of Churches, which was held in the English Presby-

terian Church. Later, Father Hoekstra would also have the privilege of being elected its Chairman for 1973. It is also of interest to note how, before this, the Council of Churches had invited the Auxiliary Bishop of Cardiff, the Rt. Rev. Daniel Mullins, to preach during Church Unity Week in 1972. In his sermon, given at Salem Welsh Presbyterian Church, Bishop Mullins recalled how, as a young man fresh from Ireland and about to begin studies at St. Mary's College in 1944, he had given the traditional Irish salutation upon passing every church he saw in the town. He had wrongly presumed that all the churches in the town were only of the Catholic tradition; he soon became aware though that there was division in the Christian Church. However, it was a matter of great historical interest, he pointed out, for a Catholic Bishop to be preaching for the first time in a church of the Presbyterian tradition in Aberystwyth. Bishop Mullins could not fail to notice a new spirit at work—something which could only be explained by the action of the Holy Spirit.

It is in the same ecumenical spirit of openness and renewal that we close this short pamphlet. In this Centenary Year, 1974, St. Winefride's was honoured by the presence of the First Moderator of the United Reformed Church in Wales. The Moderator, the Rev. W. J. Samuel, gave the sermon during a Special Service for Christian Unity on the 25th of January, and, during which, he realistically outlined both the possibilities and some of the difficulties of once again achieving Christ's wish "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). It is in this spirit of genuine Christian goodwill and sincere co-operation that we close this pamphlet. From our humble beginnings we look to the future, in a state of hopeful anticipation, that one day there will be a fuller unity among all christians. This, we hope too, will be the desire of all who read this booklet.

TITUS HOEKSTRA, O.Carm.  
*Parish Priest.*

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# THE FUTURE?

After reading this booklet, perhaps you are now wondering what it is like, today, running this large rural parish of 650 square miles? The answer is simple: it is hard work and difficult—but nevertheless it is most rewarding to see a constant growth.

Again the overheads are much higher than that of a normal, one church, compact town parish. Transport costs, as you can appreciate, are heavy; these costs are also inflated by having to provide, and maintain, a mini-bus to bring many of our children to our Catholic primary school in Aberystwyth. On top of this, our **ONE PARISH** OF ABERYSTWYTH HAS TO PROVIDE FOR THE COST OF RUNNING **FOUR CHURCHES**. Overcrowding during the holiday season presents a problem in all of our churches, and some provision is being made to do something about this too. When we think of maintenance, it always has to be multiplied by four.

The story of this parish, is rather like Christ's story of the mustard-seed; it grows slowly through the years—but it does grow. Its growth and development has been aided throughout these many years by the generosity of many ordinary people like you. People who can see a problem and want to help. So we would ask you to please remember the work of this parish in your prayers. Secondly, another way you can aid the present and future development of this parish, is by offering a donation or by signing a covenant. However small your help, it will be gratefully acknowledged by the Parish Priest. His address is:

**The Presbytery,  
Queen's Road,  
Aberystwyth,  
Cardiganshire,  
Wales.**

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# TIMES OF MASSES

## 1. ABERYSTWYTH

### Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride's

Tel.: 2549 (Just off the Prom., behind the Marine Hotel)

- SUNDAY MASSES:  
8.00 a.m., \*9.30 a.m. (\*July and August only), 11.00 a.m., 7.00 p.m.
- DAYS OF OBLIGATION:  
7.30 a.m., 9.00 a.m., 12.30 p.m., 7.00 p.m.
- WEEKDAYS:  
Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7.00 p.m.;  
Tuesdays, Thursdays 12.15 p.m.; Saturdays 10.00 a.m.
- CONFESSIONS: Saturdays 12.00-1.00 p.m.; 6.30-7.30 p.m. Daily at call.

## 2. PENPARCAU

### Church of the Welsh Martyrs

Piecefield Lane (behind Tollgate Hotel)

Tel.: 2549—Served from Aberystwyth.

- SUNDAY MASS: 10.00 a.m.
- DAYS OF OBLIGATION: 7.30 p.m.
- CONFESSIONS BEFORE MASS.

## 3. BORTH

### Our Lady, Star of the Sea

The Reed. Tel.: 2549 (Near Old Fire Station).

- SUNDAY MASS: 9.00 a.m.
- DAYS OF OBLIGATION: 9.00 a.m.
- CONFESSIONS BEFORE MASS.

## 4. ABERAERON

### Church of the Holy Cross

Victoria Street. Tel.: 2549 (near Bus Station)

Served from Aberystwyth.

- SUNDAY MASS: 11.00 a.m. (*Extra Mass 9.00, July and August*).
- DAYS OF OBLIGATION: 11.00 a.m.
- CONFESSIONS BEFORE MASS.