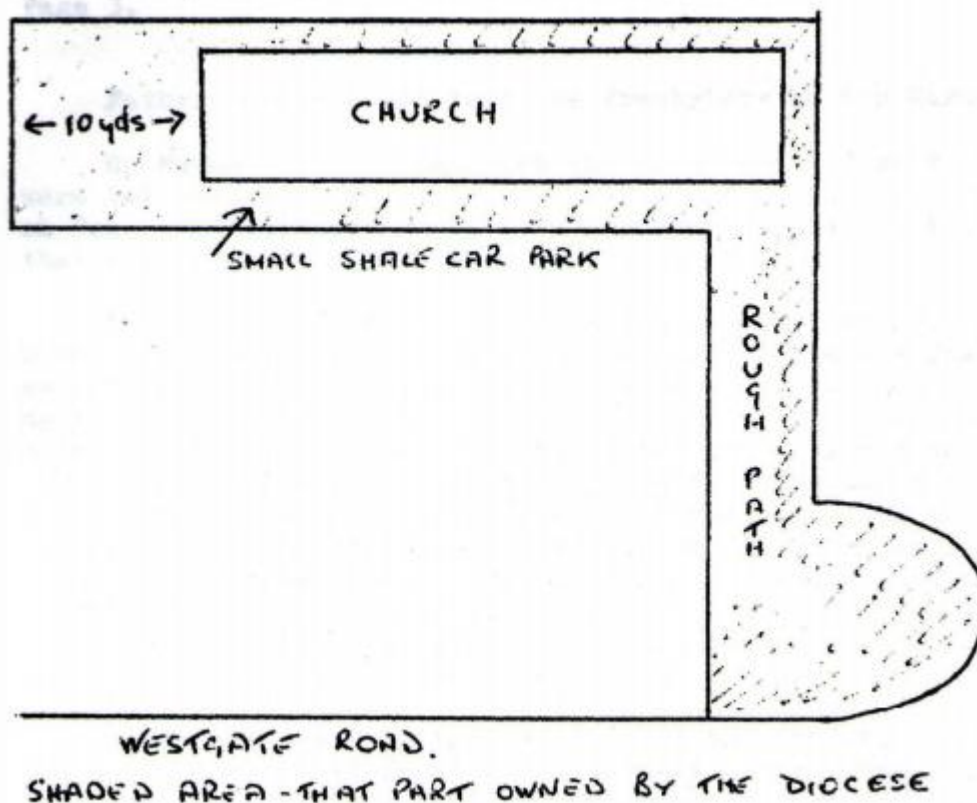


Short History of The Holy Family

In about 1972, because of the housing development in the Westgate area, there seemed to be need of a Chapel of Ease. The Westgate area itself was then within the Parish of the Good Shepherd, Torrisholme; but, because of the age of the Parish Priest, Canon Candlish, Bishop Foley asked St. Patrick's, Heysham to take on the responsibility of establishing a Mass Centre. The owners of Bambury Road Garage were approached and they agreed to allow their showroom to be used on Sunday mornings. The proprietors of the garage were John Wilding Ltd. Every Saturday afternoon they emptied their showroom of cars to make space for Mass to be said. The priests who said Mass in the garage were Father Leo Kelly, Father Patrick Naughton and Father George Pennigton, who were all as then on the staff at St. Patrick. They also said a goodly number of house Masses. Obviously this could only be a temporary arrangement. Through the offices of Monsignor Brimley, of the Cathedral, the Lancaster City Council agreed to sell the Church some land on which to build a Church. At first the Council had refused to sell the Church any land and they virtually were the sole landowners in the district. According to Bishop Foley, Monsignor Brimley's interview with senior estate officer of the Council had to be heard to be believed. Monsignor Brimley accused the officer of being godless etc. It later was determined that in fact he was a good Anglican. Even then Monsignor Brimley always maintained that the land the Council originally agreed to sell was nearer Altham Road than the land they actually sold to the Church. But Bishop Foley is not certain that this was the case. St. Patrick's undertook to erect a temporary Church, but refused to accept any financial responsibility, since Westgate was outside of their Parish. In 1974 the temporary Church at Ss Peter and Paul, Preston ceased to be needed since they had built a permanent structure. About £4,000 was paid to S.S. Peter and Paul and Warren Construction were given the contract to transfer the building to Westgate. The architect was Mr. Livesey. The work was completed in December 1974. Bishop Foley officially opened the Church just before Christmas of that year. The total cost of the land, building and re-erection was £35,000. While it remained a Chapel of Ease none of this money was repayed to the Diocese. Mr. Norman Loynd became the faithful unpaid caretaker of the Church, looking after it until forced to retire from the position in 1981 because of ill health. Below is a diagram of the property as it was until 1979.



Established as a Separate Parish

On the 28th January 1979 Bishop Foley was at the La Sagesse Convent, St. Annes on Sea, concelebrating the Golden Jubilee of two of the Sisters. He asked to see Father Michael Turner. He asked him to go to Westgate and establish an independent parish. He said that he was very hesitant to make the request,

since he was not at all sure that Westgate would ever become viable and he was also not sure that the projected housing development would ever become a reality. He emphasised that the financial situation would be fairly desperate, to begin with at least. He asked Father Turner to go to Morecambe immediately and purchase a house as near to the existing temporary Church as soon as possible. The Bishop included with the new Parish the responsibility of looking after another Chapel of Ease at Overton and also the responsibility of saying Mass at Pontins Holiday Camp during the summer. The next day, which was very wet and windy, Father Turner went to Morecambe in search of property. Fortunately there was a house for sale in Wentworth Crescent with vacant possession. Messrs. Goodiers, Solicitors of Preston, negotiated the sale within fourteen days. Consequently 21 Wentworth Crescent became the first Presbytery. The sum paid was £15,500. Father Turner begged and borrowed from the parishioners of Star of the Sea, St. Annes and furnished and equipped the Presbytery for a total cost of £105. Parishioners from Star of the Sea came down and cleaned the house and made it generally habitable.

Father Turner moved into the Presbytery on 5th March, 1979. On March 11th (Sunday) the parish became independent. There were 145 people at Mass, a good quarter of which were from St. Annes on Sea. The collection was £32.02p. The new Parish Priest thought that the Bishop's forebodings were justified. The state of the temporary Church was depressing. Practically nothing had been done in maintenance work, since the Church was assembled in 1974. The outside paintwork had virtually all blistered away. The driveway was a rutted cart track with large puddles of water. There was no fencing around the property and the local inhabitants treated it as common property. The car park was used as an adjunct to the playing fields at the rear. On the first Sunday, having opened the Church, the new Parish Priest found footballers actually changing in the Church. There was water laid on to the kitchen in the Church and there were toilets. However, although these actually flushed, since there was no sewage on the site, you (in the terms of the trade) got your own back. There was electricity connected to the Church, but no tabernacle and the altar furniture virtually non-existent. The liturgical books were all out of date. No Baptismal Font. Clearly a lot of money had to be spent at the very outset. Someone gave the tabernacle and the font was begged from St. Marys, Morecambe. Bishop Foley gave several artifacts and vestments. Obviously money raising must be a priority. The first money raising venture was a Jumble Sale. This was on 24th March and raised the princely sum of £52.98p. Bishop Foley waived the interest on monies owed for the first five years of the Parish's existence, which was just as well, since the Parish could never have paid them, since the original debt of the Church was £35,000 and the house cost £15,500; and a lot of money would have to be spent very quickly. The following projects were accomplished within the first twelve months. Elsan chemical toilets were obtained for the gentlemen and ladies toilets. These were emptied by Mr. Loynd and the Parish Priest under cover of darkness into the ditch at the back of the property. The outside of the Church was repainted by the firm of Bowen & Leach at a cost of £550. It was found that the sanctuary of the Church was rotten and virtually in a state of collapse. This had to be rebuilt at a cost of about £600. The original installers of the sanctuary, Ormsby of Scarisbrick, refuse to accept any responsibility, and the cost of litigation would have far outweighed the cost of replacement. The rebuilding of the Sanctuary was done by a Mr. Parkinson of Hest Bank.

Planning Permission Problems

Within two weeks of the first Parish Priest arriving in the Parish, a letter arrived from the City Council Planning Office, inquiring whether or not we required an extension on the temporary planning permission on the Church and if we did require such permission, to apply for it. This came as quite a shock, since this was the first indication that the Church was in such a category and in the dubious position of being able to be told by the Corporation to remove the building. Financially it was obvious that a permanent building would not be feasible for many years. An application for an extension to the planning permission was made and it was granted for a further five years. In the meantime the Parish Priest took himself to London to consult an eminent Judge, who was a personal friend. The Judge consulted his books and took the Parish Priest to the office of the Registrar General. He was advised to have the Church Licensed for Worship as soon as possible and this would have to be done by the method of petition, as opposed to the method of application. The signatures of 25 people had to be obtained. This technically makes the Church the responsibility of the Registrar General, a Government Department, and removes the Church from the planning permission jurisdiction of the Local Authority. The Priest came back from London armed with the required forms, obtained 25 signatures and submitted the petition. The Licence was granted immediately. The Licence can only be rescinded by the petition of the parishioners. The Priest did not tell the Local Authority of the new situation, since it might sour relations with them; but it is a lovely card to have up your sleeve. He also thought it best not to inform the Bishop, since the threat of a bulldozer may be useful in obtaining monies for a permanent structure.

In 1984 another letter arrived from the Corporation, similar to the one of 1979. Application for an extension was granted once again, but this time for a period of three years. There the matter rests at the time of writing. By the end of 1979 it became very clear that the services of a professional architect would be needed. The Parish Priest dispensed with the services of Mr. Livesey, because of his poor track record, leaving sewerage unconnected etc. He appointed an architect by the name of Ben Naylor of Naylor and Pritchard, Ormskirk, who had a very good track record. This proved to be one of the best moves the parish made. (The firm later became known as Naylor Associates) Mr. Naylor immediately started arranging for the sewage system to be installed. This was quite some job, because of the great distance involved. The system would have to be connected to the main sewer on the far side of Westgate Road.

The architect arranged for Fleet Builders of Cleveleys to do the work. The owner of the firm was an old parishioner of the Priest a Mr. Cullen of St. Annes. At the time the firm were building the Magistrates Courts in Lancaster. Mr. Cullen promised to do the work at cost. A shorter connection was technically possible to main sewers on the Corporation property next door, however the Council would not, for some vague reason, allow the connection there. Consequently the architect decided to run the sewer down the inside of the driveway, so that, in the event of the Corporation ever wanting to use our sewer, they would have to pay handsomely for the privilege. Work started in the spring of 1980. The connection in the road is some fifteen feet down. It was a big job. The very poor earth condition made it difficult work and practically all the way the sides had to be shored up to prevent collapse. For several days the traffic flow on the road was disrupted. It necessitated the use of night watchmen to prevent accident. The night watchman was called Justin Stovold. He was kept happy up to midnight by tins of beer provided by the P.P. The weather was foul and the poor lad had a wretched week. Some three weeks later the job was complete and Norman Loynd was allowed the first solemn flush. The total cost of the operation was some £13,000. The Diocese footed the bill, but added the cost to the Parish debt.

The Driveway

As has been mentioned earlier, the drive was in a bad state of repair. It was very rough and collected considerable amounts of water. It dipped from the road between four or five feet, rising again at the car park to roughly the same height. Also the installation of the sewerage had aggravated the problem. The Parish Priest approached a local haulage contractor, Keith Higgins, who then lived on Wentworth Crescent. He did a great job. He infilled the whole drive with hardcore, rolling every four inches of depth. It was motorway standard construction. The driveway was levelled off to the road height and car park height. The surface was covered with fine shale. The sides were shored up with infill. The overall effect was of a causeway leading to the Church. The total cost was reasonable £1,547.50. The work was carried out in October 1980 and was paid for out of Parish funds. The following year the Corporation started filling in the adjoining site prior to housing development. The firm doing the work was Cumbria Construction. Their manager, Mr. Louis Mason, came to the Parish Priest, seeking permission for their heavy machinery to run over part of the Church property to ease their method of work. By now the P.P. was learning more of the whiles of the construction industry. He refused permission. Mr. Mason then offered to reinstate any damage. The P.P. refused. Mr. Mason then offered to reinstate any damage and tarmac the whole length of the drive. The P.P. agreed to the deal. Cumbria Construction were good to their word and the driveway was tarmacked at the finish of the operation.

In 1985, work having started on the Corporation housing, the P.P. approached one of the sub contractors, Mr. Peter Barton of Hornby and asked him to widen the entrance to the drive, which was quite narrow. This he did. The work also involved removing part of the grass verge between the pavement and the road and recutting the paving stones and edging stones. Cost £200.

Land

Immediately Mr. Naylor took over as the parish architect, he realised that both the shape of the property and the area of the property was all wrong and completely inadequate for future development. He started negotiations with the Corporation for more land. The area in front of the temporary Church and Presbytery was scheduled for housing development. He got the Council to agree to sell us all the land that is presently owned by the Church and we would agree to sell them the semi circular piece of land which was at the left of the drive going towards the road. The sale and transfer of the land was done through Goodiers, Solicitors. Mr. Naylor requested that Mr. Bernard Lea, a cute agent in Preston, should negotiate the price. Mr. Lea did this and the exchange of land was agreed at a figure of £11,000, which was immediately added to

the parish's debt with the Diocese. The parish debt was mounting rapidly, but all the expenditure was essential for the parish's future. The price of £11,000 was quite remarkable and reflected the skill of Mr. Lea. At the going rate for housing land in the area, it was estimated that the cost would probably be something in the region of £20,000 - £25,000. The next task was to raise the level of all this new land, approximately an acre to a height of 4 - 5 feet. The P.P. went on a tour of the construction sites in the district, asking firms if they wanted free tipping facilities for rubble. At the time John Collis Co. were demolishing Storey's old factory on Moor Lane, Lancaster. They were delighted with the prospect of free tipping. A good deal of the land was filled in from there. So, at the bottom of the land is Storey's old chimney, which was the biggest in the district. Another firm, Goodge of Chorley, were building a new superstore for Booth's in Scotforth at the crossroad of Hala Road and Scotforth Road. The rest of the infill came from there. The Fulage firm involved was Ruttle's of Chorley. While the infilling process was in operation a difficulty arose. The prospect of free tipping was too attractive to several fly-by-night builders, who would wait until the coast was clear and try to dump any old and useless rubbish on the site.

This stopped after one incident which I shall describe. One builder in the process of illegal tipping actually got his overloaded lorry stuck up to the axles in the soft ground. The Parish Priest saw the incident and investigated. The Priest asked what was going on and what the builder intended to do. The builder said he had sent for a J.C.B. to pull him out; to which the Priest retorted that there was not going to be any J.C.B. allowed on the property unless there was Payment Of £25. The builder accused the Priest of hijacking his lorry. The Priest agreed that this was the case and the longer the delay the higher would be the price for allowing entrance for the J.C.B., and further, the J.C.B. must reload the lorry with what already had been tipped. The builder had no other option but to pay the money. From that day on there was no further illegal tipping.

Word went round the trade very quickly. While the bulldozers were on the land flattening the infill, they also on request pulled out the scraggy hawthorn hedge, which bounded the property alongside the road. Metal posts linked with chain were purchased from Michael Crewdson Ltd. of White Lund and these were erected and painted by George Stretch of Overton and his partner Ernie Woods. The finished surface of the land was rather rough. The Priest contacted the Manpower Services, who sent a gang of youths from their Community Enterprise Scheme, who removed a lot of the stones and planted quite a goodly number of trees. They did not do a very good job. The Priest contacted the probation officer in charge of those people that the Courts sentence to so many hours community service. These people were well supervised and did an excellent job. They also planted the grass seed, which was donated by the Thornton Bros., farmers of Heaton with Oxcliffe. They also helped with the redecoration of the Church exterior, which the parishioners were doing themselves. The first repainting by the professional firm did not last very long. The exterior has had to be repainted several times in the course of the first seven years. Most of the work was done by Michael Regan on a voluntary basis. Again a lot of the windows in this time have had to be replaced and large sections of the wooden walls. This work was carried out by Jeff Gamble. Because of the isolated nature of the Church, it was the object of several robberies. Alarm systems and grills were fitted to the windows. The large number of robberies was perhaps fortuitous, since it prompted the Bishop to insist on the next major development.

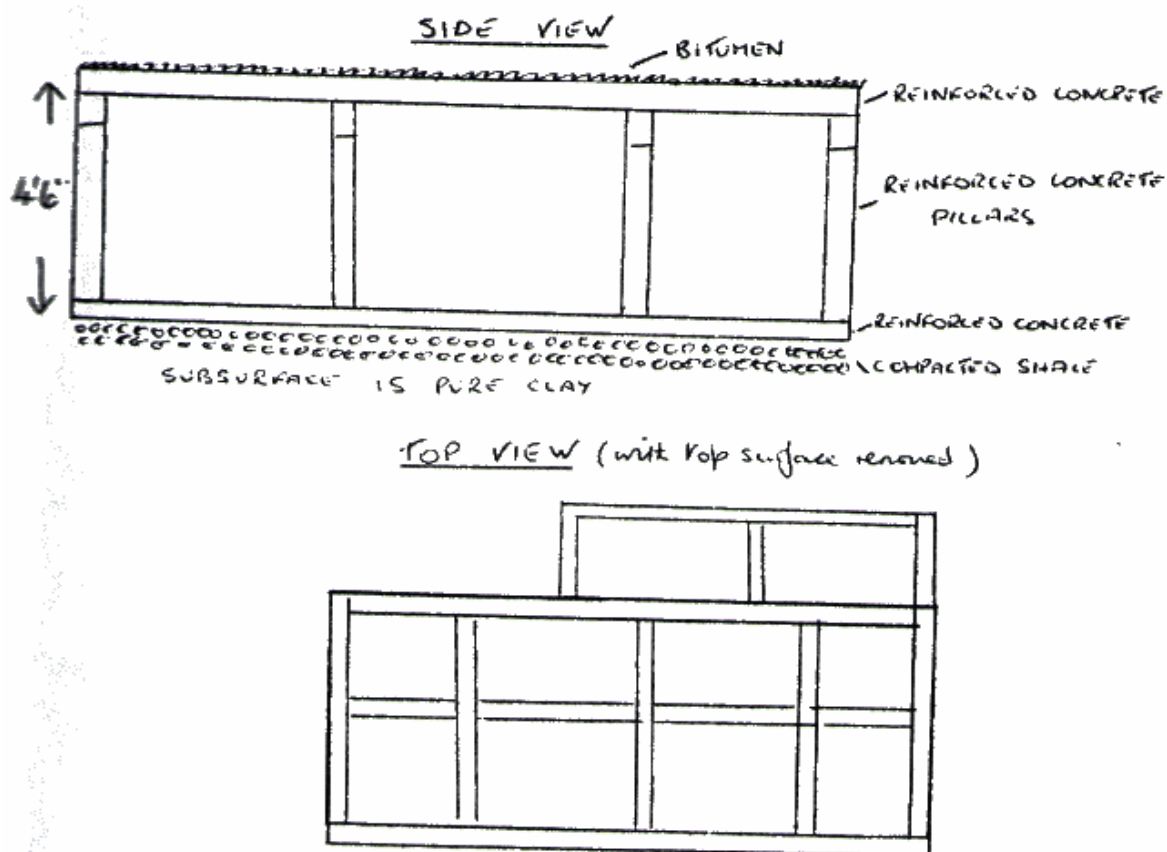
Prior to the next major development, three smaller projects occurred. The car park was extended by Cumbria Construction for a minimal cost. It was finished in shale. A tarmac finish at this state would have been impractical, since obviously the area would be disturbed when work on the presbytery commenced. The three sides of the property were fenced with agricultural type fencing. This was done by Michael Hanafin of Tatham. Cost £540. This was paid for out of Parish funds.

Peter Modley, who is the son of the famous stand up variety comedian Albert Modley, installed an old street lamp at the corner of the drive and the car park. In fact the lamp is imitation, being made of fibre glass. On completion of the Presbytery he installed another lamp at the other corner of the car. The lamps are made to the design of the old Morecambe lights. Apparently every town used to have its own distinctive gas lamps.

The Presbytery

Bishop Foley insisted that a presbytery be built as soon as possible. Consequently Ben Naylor drew up the plans for the house. The local planning office passed the plans and commended the design. The Diocesan Building and Sites Board eventually approved the design after a bit of wrangling. But they would not allow monies for landscaping. Everything was ready to go in the summer of 1982. Tenders were sought and the contract was given to Parkinsons of Lancaster. Mr. Naylor's assistant, Mr. Alan Snape, helped considerably with the work. Mr. Stan Pichard of Overton was appointed as Clerk of Works. Stan lived at the Ship Inn and during construction, several very enjoyable site meetings were held at that pub.

Unfortunately Stan died before the completion the building and, although he was not a Catholic, the Parish Priest was asked to cremate him. Work started in the autumn of 1982. The Parish Priest cut the first sod with a vast mechanical digger. At first was slow because of the peculiar nature of the complicated foundations. Below, a diagram of the foundations



The Presbytery was completed and handed over on the 11th June, 1983. Total cost £55,000. The cost of the foundations included in this price was about £11,500. The house in Wentworth Crescent was put on the market and sold with vacant possession for £23,400. The difference in the two costs was added to the Parish's debt. Wentworth Crescent house was sold by Reeds Rains, Estate Agents. The Parish Priest moved into the new house on 22nd June. It was the hottest day of the year. He was helped by four men of the Parish, who hired a van from ABC motors. The following autumn, Parkinsons tarmaced the car park after a lot of money raising efforts by the parish. The cost of tarmacing and the necessary installation of drainage was £5,000. Most reasonable.

The land surrounding the new Presbytery was a total mess. It was builder's rubble and stone. The P.P. decided to do the landscaping himself. All the rocks and rubble were removed, 40 tons of top soil were obtained from Newton Contractors, White Lund and a semblance of a garden began to take shape. The rough land at the side of the house facing Westgate Road was cleared by Mr. Jim Rhodes, who had a contract for cutting the grass. The P.P. was occasionally helped by Mr. Brian Burns and Mr. Michael Regan. Gradually they landscaped the area at the back of the garage and at the side of the Church. Work was not completed until 1986. In the summer of 1985 it became clear that some sort of wall would have to be built at the back of the property. The new Corporation houses were now being occupied and people were all over the property, treating it as a thoroughfare and even looking in the Presbytery windows at night. Knowing that the Diocesan Finance Board would not countenance any further debt, the P.P. decided to do the work without their permission. He obtained the services of Mr. Chris Glossop. The P.P. bought all the materials and paid Mr. Glossop's wages. Work was completed in the late summer of 1985. Total cost £4,400. This was paid for out of current funds. (Estimate from normal builder was £11,000.) In December of that same year a new sound system was installed in the Church by Cathedral Sounds of Halsall, Ormskirk. In April of 1986 the sanctuary of the Church was reordered and raised up. This work was done by Mr. Jeff Gamble. Cost, £330. The carpets cost £500.

In May of 1986 a bell was given to the Church by a local builder, which in turn had been given to him by the tenant of Heysham Hall Hotel. Heysham Hall used to be the Old Rectory of St. Peter's, Heysham, but the history of the bell is uncertain. The bell was erected by Jeff Gamble.

Important Dates In The Parish History

Confirmations and Visitations

15/03/1981 By Bishop Foles

19/02/1984 By Bishop Brewer

Deacons

June 1983. Terry Fagan was ordained Deacon at St. Mary's by Bishop Foley. He had the dual responsibility of ministering within St. Mary's and the Holy Family.

September 1986. Brian Burns was ordained deacon with the sole responsibility of ministering at the Holy Family. Bishop Brewer did the ordination.

Parish Mission

July 1984. By the Catholic Missionary Society. Father Thomas McHugh. A large marquee was erected in front of the Church for meetings after the Mission Services. The Mission was a great success.

These Societies were founded in the first seven years:-

- 1 S.V.P. First President, Mr. Les Burns Secretary, Mr. Fred Houghton
- 2 Mothers' and 'Babies' Club.
- 3 Keep Fit Club.
- 4 C.T.S. First box keeper, Mrs. Keyhoe.
- 5 Pontifical Missions. First Secretary, Mrs. Margaret Whitcombe.
- 6 Prayer Group.
- 7 Discussion Group
- 8 U.C.M. First Chairwoman, Mrs. Norma Houghton.
- 9 Since the very beginning, there has been an active Social Committee, who arranged numerous events and fund raising activities