



Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Haigh, Aspull and Blackrod 1858-2018 A Parish History



P.M. Livesey and N. West

Forward

It is a privilege and honour to write the forward to the Parish History of Our Lady's Parish, on its 160th Anniversary.

It has also been a privilege and honour, and a pleasure, to serve as Our Lady's Parish Priest since 1997 – following in the footsteps of my twenty-six predecessors.

Saint Peter writes 'He is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house.' (Peter 2:3-5) We are the living stones of this Christian community – commissioned as 'missionary disciples' to be Christ's 'ambassadors' (St. Paul Cor. 5:20) in loving witness, worship and service to our community.

There have been many changes over these 160 years – in the Church, Society, Education and the design of Our Lady's Church. The priests and people of Our Lady's Parish have experienced many joyful family and Parish celebrations but also wars, peace, poverty and economic depressions, through twelve Pontificates and six Reigns – and we too are facing a challenging time for the Catholic Church. Blessed John Henry, Cardinal Newman wrote that 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often'.

And so, building on and celebrating our heritage – the stones of Our Lady's Church, and the 'living stones' of our dedicated, faithful and often courageous priests, parishioners and teachers in our Parish School we can face the future with confidence. We do so knowing that Jesus, Our Risen Lord, has promised to be with his Church forever. (Matthew 28:20)

I commend this publication to be read and enjoyed by everyone.

Many thanks to Phil Livesey and Neil West for their initiative to begin and to bring this book to completion and to all who have collaborated with them, with their own very interesting and often amusing memories!

God bless you all.

Fr Kevin C. Foulkes

<u>Introduction</u>

To celebrate the 160th anniversary of the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, we remember the Priests and parishioners whose Faith and industriousness have contributed to bequeath us a history rich in love, selflessness and humour - the legacy of which shows through in today's parish community.

The following pages include a collection of memories and stories from parishioners, some of whom have an impressively long association with the parish. It may not be wholly accurate as memories fade in the mists of time, but we have shared many laughs and have deepened friendships in the time we spent together. We hope our efforts bring back memories and encourage today's parishioners to emulate those who have gone before.

We would like to thank those parishioners without whose help, creating this book would not have been possible, especially: Ron Banks, Elizabeth Bird, Yvonne Brown, Pat Bunting, John Burns, Anita Caine, Marian Cheers, Dorothy Cottam, Maureen Dittman, Christine Duffy, Karen Duffy, Fr Kevin Foulkes, John Grady, Eileen Hawkins, Shirley Martin, Bob and Claire Massingham, Joan Riley, Kevin and Margaret Riley, Richard and Deirdre Simpson, Anne Speak, Mary Unsworth, Alex West, Pat West.



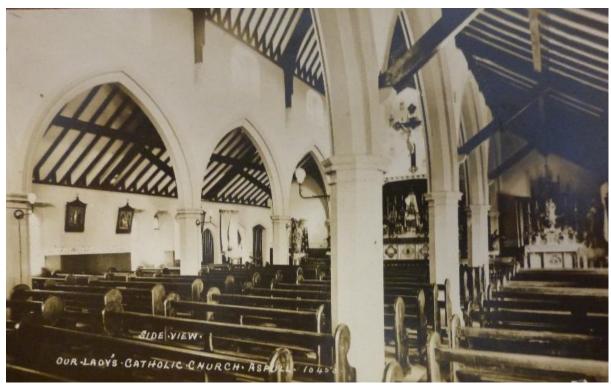
Some of our Parish historians: Dorothy Cottam, Marian Cheers, Elizabeth Bird, Pat West, Pat Bunting and Maureen Dittman.

Parish Priests of Our Lady's

V. Rev. Canon Carter, 1854 – 1855 Fr. Vanderweigh, 1855 Fr Henry Jones, 1855 – 1871 Fr. Peter O'Reilly, 1871 Fr. Thomas Allen, 1871 – 1880 Fr Edmund Crook, 1880 - 1881 Fr Joseph Crilly, 1881 – 1888 Fr. Henry Schurgers, 1888 – 1897 Fr. John Welsh, 1897 – 1906 Fr. Thomas Calloway, 1906 – 1913 Fr. John Farley, 1913 - 1916 Fr Joseph Fitzgerald, 1916 – 1920 Fr Henry Egbers, 1920 - 1926 Fr Victor Mann, 1926 - 1930 Fr George Richardson, 1930 – 1935 Fr. James Holland, 1935 – 1940 Fr. Morgan Walsh, 1940 – 1944 Fr. Thomas Davis, 1944 - 1949 Fr. Eugene McEnery, 1949 – 1951 Fr. Vincent Taylor, 1952-1958 Fr J Newman, 1958-1962 Fr J G Wilson, 1962-1967 Fr G Hartley, 1967-1968 Fr. Albert John Moriarty, 1968-1992 Monsignor Michael Quinlan, 1992-1996 Fr. Mark Hawksworth, 1996-1997 Fr. Kevin Foulkes 1997-Present **Assistant Priests:**

Fr. Francis Murry, 1954, Fr. Bernard Rylands, 1955 – 1958, Fr John Hennessy, 1958





Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Haigh 1905. Note: original altar made of packing cases. Replaced circa 1919 with altar purchased from S. Stuflesser of the Tirol, Austria.

A brief history of Our Lady's Church and school

Our Lady's Church is on the very confines of the Diocese of Salford, being within 100 yards of the boundary line which divides the R. C. Dioceses of Liverpool and Salford. The Mission was founded at Blackrod about the year 1852 or 1853 by the late Very Rev. Canon Carter, of Bolton. A year or so after its foundation Father H. Jones was appointed, and he fixed on the present site of the Church as being most central and likely to serve the greatest population. Father Jones built the Church, Presbytery and a small School, and the Church was opened about the year 1858. It is a Gothic building, consisting of Nave and Side Aisles, with Sacristy. The Chancel is not yet completed. It is capable of seating some 400 worshippers. There is a very handsome West Window filled with stained glass. This window was erected by Lady Stafford to the memory of her mother, the late Mrs. Gerard, of Aspull House.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerard were great benefactors of the Mission, and the Presbytery was built at their cost. On the removal of Father Jones to Colne, he was succeeded by Father P. M. O'Reilly, who died recently at Astley Bridge. He only remained a short time, and was succeeded by the late Father T. Allen, of SS. Peter and Paul's, Bolton. Father J. Crilly, now of Horwich, was the next Rector, and the present incumbent is Father H. H. Schurgers.

Taken from St Patrick's Schools Grand Bazaar Handbook: 1892

Our Lady's Aspull

In 1854 the Catholics of Wigan wished to carry out the idea of the late Father Middlehurst of St. Mary's, Wigan, and to start a Mission at Blackrod. Finding that the locality was in the Salford Diocese, Canon Carter of Bolton was applied to, and with the sanction of Bishop Turner, a three-storied building, which stands to this day at the back of the Forresters' Arms, though devoted to a very different purpose, was rented, benched and furnished as a temporary Chapel. The second floor was used for Divine Service, whereas the third floor was partly cut away to form a gallery for the children attending service. The first floor was divided in two, serving the double purpose of a day school and teacher's dwelling room. Sunday school was open every Sunday under the same difficulties. Quite separate from the building, yet adjoining, was a small outhouse that served the purpose of a vestry. Quite a score of young fellows waiting for confession fell down the unlit steps (that led from the building to the vestry) one Saturday night, Canon Carter remarking "He only wanted one at a time."

From October 1854, to July 1855 the new mission was supplied once a week for Mass and once a month for confession from SS. Peter and Paul's, Bolton. At the latter date the Rev. Henry Jones was appointed the first resident priest and lived some little distance away at the top of Chorley Brow, Blackrod.

On St. Joseph's Feast, 1857, the foundation stone of a new church was laid by the Right Rev. Dr. Turner. On St. Mark's Day, April 25th, 1858, the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was solemnly opened by the first Bishop of Salford, with Pontifical High Mass. The sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Dr. Goss, Bishop of Liverpool; the certificate of registration bearing the date December 1860.

Father Jones now took up his residence in No, 4, Church Street, and straightaway rented No. 5, the adjoining cottage where a school was commenced the same year. In 1861 land for a new school was obtained at a nominal rent from the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. Principally through the exertions of Mrs. Gerard of Aspull House, a school was built and opened free from debt. In 1862 a presbytery was erected and coupled to the church by a vestry.

There came in a very timely gift of £500 from Mr. Johnson as recorded on a Brass Tablet in the Church in the following terms: - " . . . In remembrance of John Johnson of Aspull, donor of Five Hundred Pounds to this Church. He requests that his wife Margaret and himself be prayed for in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." In 1871 the Rev. Henry Jones left Aspull to take charge of a new mission at Colne. His memory is perpetuated in the church by a brass tablet in the Sanctuary bearing the following inscription: "In memory of the Very Rev. Dean Jones 1st Rector of this Church from 1855 to 1871 who died at Padiham November 21st, 1891, aged 69 years, R.I.P." This tablet was erected by the parishioners of Aspull, 1892. His successor for a time was the Rev. Peter O'Reilly, but at the close of 1871 the Rev. Thomas Allen was appointed, and in his time, F. S. Gerrard, Esq. walled and railed the front of the church and presbytery as it stands to-day. Father Allen was succeeded in 1880 by the Rev. Edmund Crook.

In September 1881, the Rev. Joseph Crilly became the Rector of Aspull. He soon discovered that the existing school was anything but adequate and immediately set

about doubling the size of the premises and setting them off by a very pretty and effective porch and cloakroom. The two stone buttresses that remain as a landmark point to the then boundary of the schoolyard. This wall was removed and permission obtained for a nominal rent of one shilling to enclose the moorland, fronting Haigh Road for the purpose of a schoolyard.

In 1883 quite a calamity befell the little mission of Our Lady's, the death of Mrs. Frederic Sewallis Gerrard, one of the greatest and most constant benefactresses. To commemorate her affection for and kindness to Our Lady's, a lovely stained glass rose window was put in the West end of the church, the gift of Lady E. Stafford of Swynnerton Park, Staffordshire.

Fr. Schurgers from 1889 and Fr. John Welch from 1896 served the mission. Fr. E. McEnery is the present parish priest.

Taken from "Salford Diocese and its Catholic past", a survey by Charles A. Bolton, a Priest of the above Diocese. Published 1950 on the First Centenary for the Diocese of Salford.

The 'New' School

The planning of a replacement buildings for Our Lady's School began early in 1968 when Lancashire County Council included a project for the first phase in their Building Programme. This initial phase provided classroom and ancillary accommodation for 120 infants and building began in 1971. A further phase was included to increase the number of places to 200 and to build a hall and kitchen. In early 1973 the proposals were amended to add a further 80 places and thus to complete the school to one form entry size with a total of 280 places. The buildings were finished in September 1976 at a total capital cost of £200,000.

An official blessing and opening took place on Tuesday 7th December 1976 by The Rt. Rev. Thomas Holland DD. PhD. DSC. Bishop of Salford.

At the time of opening the Managers of the school were – Rev. Fr. A. J. Moriarty (Chairman), Councillor A. Singer J.P., Councillor H. Lowe J.P., Mr E. Livesey, Mr J. Sherriff, Mr R. Brewder.

Teaching Staff – Mr J. Keane (Headmaster), Mrs A. Taylor (Deputy), Mrs F.M. Cheers, Mrs C. Green, Mrs M.B. Kerins, Mrs M. Lee, Mrs T. M. Matthews, Mrs A. Morton, Miss M.A. Taubman, Mrs L.M. Vose.

Mrs F. Pilkington (Ancillary Assistant). Mrs F.M. Buckley (School Clerk), Mrs T. Marcroft (Caretaker), Mrs A. Moran (Assistant Caretaker).

Official Blessing and Opening of Our Lady's School 1976



Sketch of Our Lady's 'New' School by Bob Massingham



Bishop Thomas Holland and Fr A. J. Moriarty



Blessing and Opening of Our Lady's School

Extracts from the Parish Log Book

1898 – Alms Boxes – souls in Purgatory and Poor Box are at the Church door. Keys kept in the lowest drawer of small cupboard in the sacristy.

Baptismal Font – key to the Font kept in the aforementioned cupboard in sacristy. No duplicate.

(Later annotation) Both discovered broken open and keys missing Feb 1907. New padlock and duplicate key furnished March 1907.

October 1929 – Church painted throughout by the firm of Fred Pagett of Wigan at a cost of £150. At the same time a new statue of Our Lady and Child was given by Mr & Mrs Unsworth, of the Bungalow, Haigh Road, to replace the former statue which had been broken at a previous May Procession.

1930. 10th April – Rev G Richardson late curate of St Alban's Blackburn appointed parish priest of Our Lady's Aspull and took up residence on Saturday before Palm Sunday. He found everything in good order and the house and church well furnished except for crockery, of which there was sufficient. As the retiring parish priest, Rev. V. Mann had said, there were no bills, no debts, no money.

1931. February. Received, as legacy to the Mission, a chalice and paten that had been presented to Fr Crilly when he left the Mission.

October 1933 - (Fr George Richardson PP) New shrine to St Theresa of the Infant Jesus erected by Mr S Blackwell, the statue being given in memory of Miss M S Whittle, was blessed. The statue cost £75 (the equivalent of about £4500 in 2018) and 305 people were present for the ceremony which took place at 3.30pm.

November 1st, 1935 - Rev James C Holland PP took up residence. Everything was in good order excepting the dampness of the bedrooms. There was a balance in the

bank and a promissory note to borrow £50 from the diocese to pay for the installation of Electric Light in the Church House and Schools.

December 1936 – School belfry blown down during blizzard. Not replaced but brought to a level.

1940 – Owing to the exceptionally severe winter, three radiators and many lengths of pipe in Church, including the front of the heating furnace, and the leading pipes, burst, and rendered the heating system unavailable. On application to the Liverpool, London and Globe insurance company, these were remedied.

At the same time, all the pipes in the bathroom, and the bath itself, burst, thus requiring a new bath. As the mission was formed in 1858 and water was only placed on the main in 1880 – the bath did great service i.e. 60 years - Account Paid.

It may be of interest to note that possibly the lowest attendance was Mass on January 28th owing to the blizzard which paralysed the village. The 8.30 mass numbered 27; the 10.30 mass 52. Many attempted to come but had to return home.

This lasted for six days so no one attended morning mass except two altar boys, who were given cups of tea and cake for their great attempt. The school was closed for a week. May future PPs never have another like it!

May 1941 - (Fr Morgan Walsh) the railings around the ground were painted.

March 1942 – negotiations have been opened with the Wigan Coal and Iron Company as regards repairs to the roof of the Church as a consequence of subsidence due to the mining operations of the past. Despite the fact that subsidence is obvious, as well as being mentioned in the architect's report. They try to deny subsidence; a further interview is to take place at a future date.

July 28th 1944 – (Fr T Harris) the railings round the Church were removed for war purposes.

June 1945 - Re damage to the Church through subsidence – received a letter from solicitors in which they state that there was no prospect (in their opinion) of successful litigation in this regard.

December 4th 1946 – Concerning the new Education Act of 1944, and its effect on Our Lady's. A preliminary factual survey took place on June 27th this year by a sub committee appointed by the L. C. Ed. Comm. in order to discuss the necessary improvements to bring the school into line with the conditions imparted by the Act :- as a Primary School for Infants and Juniors. The general feeling of the committee was that the age and present state of the existing school would not stand improvement and a new school would be necessary.

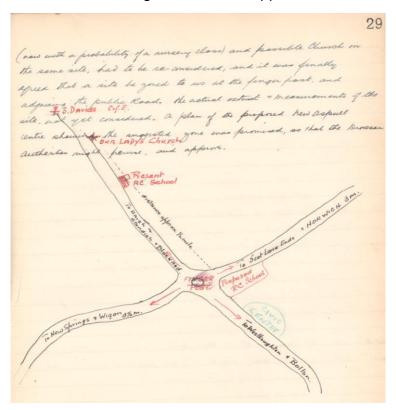
The probability of a new school necessitated the seeking of and zoning a convenient plot of land for the purpose (permission was given by the Diocesan Authorities). The parish priest was of the opinion that a plot as near to the church as possible would be the ideal thing e.g. a site opposite the present school, or immediately opposite the church. He did not think that land on the same side or adjoining the present school

would be suitable on account of the undulating nature of the land and possible future subsidences due to mining.

With these ideas in mind, he attended a meeting at the Aspull Council offices. Present were Mr Abbot (clerk of the Council), Mr Williams, surveyor for Aspull Town Planning, Councillor J Madie, Rev Dr O'Leary, the Diocesan Committee for Education Representative and Rev T Harris PP.

Ideas, as outlined above, had to be revised, when at length and at great pains the whole town planning scheme for Aspull was unfolded before us by Mr Williams and Mr Abbot. In brief the centre of civic activity would be round Finger Post, where all the civic offices, and appurtenances would be built; and radiating from that point, the village's chief public buildings would be founded. Schools and churches had their place in the scheme added to this outline of public planning, information was forthcoming that New Springs would in time become obsolete as a dwelling centre, the inhabitants moving into the new ring at what I might term 'Aspull Proper'.

Thus, the zoning of a suitable site for the Catholic Junior School (with the probability of a nursery class) and possible Church on the same site, had to be reconsidered, and it was finally agreed that a site be zoned to us at the finger post, and adjoining the public road, the actual extent and measurements of the site not yet considered. A plan of the proposed New Aspull centre showing the suggested zone was promised, so that the Diocesan authorities might review and approve.



6th December 1951 – (Fr Vincent Taylor) Arrived here as PP on 24th November. I found the house and church in a shocking state – dirt and neglect – Not even a "SAFE" in the house – which has been standing for nearly a hundred years. I have spent £25 this week to make safe (as far as I can) the key of the tabernacle.

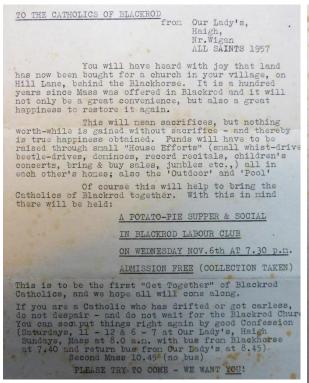
The school is under repair. The boys have no loos – smelly this must be attended to. If it wasn't for the high winds in Haigh there would be SICKNESS in school.

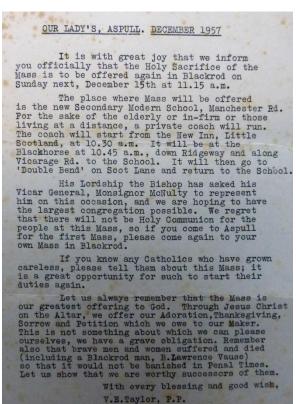
I hope my fond Bishop will approve of all the attention I intend to give to this Church and parish.

March 5th 1952 - Coal Board (Subsidence) - Mr Whitaker - nothing doing.

August 26th 1952 – Work began on Church (repairs).

1958 – Land acquired for a Church on Hill Lane (Blackrod), between the Blackhorse Hotel and the Working Men's Club cost £230.





April 18th 1958 – Grand Centenary Dance held at Rivington Hall Barn.

April 24th – Children's party held in the school.

April 25th – The actual day of the centenary celebrated with a Missa Cantata (sung mass) sung by Fr J Hennessey, the choir composed of school children.

April 27th – Missa Cantata at 11.00 am preacher Fr Lawrence. At 6.30 pm Solemn High Mass followed by Te Deum (hymn of praise). Celebrant Fr G Duffy, Deacon Fr J Unsworth, subdeacon, Fr B J Rylands M.C., Fr J Hennessey, preacher Fr J Lawrence. Present Very Rev. Mgr. A McNulty, V.S. Very Rev. S Delaney R.D., Rev W Leeming, Rev J Melvin, Councillors J Moore (Chairman), John Higham and Mr R Mortimer. The clergy were entertained to dinner afterwards in the Presbytery. Caterers Booths of Westhoughton.

May 7th – death of Fr. V. E. Tayler P.P. at Royal Albert Edward Hospital, Wigan, about 6.50 am.

May 11th – Solemn Dirge after remains brought into Church at 8.00 pm.

May 12th – Solemn Requiem Mass at 11.00 am in the presence of His Lordship Bishop Beck A.A. Fr W Leeming Celebrant, Fr C Egan Deacon and Fr B J Rylands Subdeacon. Present also, Rt. Rev. Mgr. A. McNulty, V. Rev Canons Taylor, Mather, Lynch, Schollick and Praus (of Merevia) also about 90 of the clergy. Fr. Taylor's remains taken immediately after Mass to St Mary's Cemetery. The Bishop, V.R. and Canons entertained to lunch in the Presbytery. the clergy in the school. Caterers Messrs Booth of Westhoughton.

The architects Fairbrother and Williams instructed by His Lordship to begin to put into operation the building of a Chapel of Ease at Blackrod, planned at a cost of approximately £1500.

1958 – Average numbers attending Mass at Blackrod: February 79, March 70, April 68.

Attendance at Our Lady's

	8:00am	10:45am	Benediction
March 23	137	189	51
March 30	165	218	78
April 20	130	220	120
April 27	167	192	240 (Centenary)

June 6th 1958 – Fr J Newman, curate from St James' Pendleton, took up residence as Parish Priest. Found Church newly decorated for Centenary. House also mostly done. Benches, kneelers, Church floor sorely need attention.

Discovered new plans for new Church at Blackrod cost £15,000, already complete, but after consideration found to be very impracticable. Discussion with architects and meeting with Bishop and Finance Board, June 18th, led to prospect of new 'Church Hall' in its place. Canon Mather to reinvestigate whole position.

29th – Letter from Canon Mather – Bishop has agreed to new Church Hall plans to be drawn up.

Miss Unsworth resigns from Christmas as Head of the School. Various meetings. Eventually Mr Keane, Pemberton, appointed over Fr Newman's nominee, Mr Flynn, already on the staff.

1959 Jan 5th – Mrs Green appointed supply teacher to fill vacancy of Mr Keane who cannot take up duty until the Easter term expires.

Masses in the parish:

- 1 Monthly Mass John Johnson & wife Margaret
- 2 Masses Rev Joseph Crilly
- 1 Mass James & Margaret Spencer
- 1 Mass Bridget Giblin
- 2 Masses Mary Elizabeth & Annie Whittle
- 1 Mass John Henry & Elizabeth Brown
- 2 Masses Ann Giblin
- 1 Mass Jane Holden

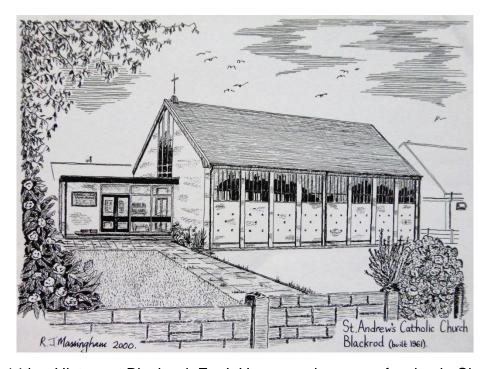
April 9th – Mr Keane took up duties as new Head Master at School.

April 17th – New Confessionals erected in Church.

August 18th – Work started on Blackrod Church Hall.

May 11th, 1961 – Work on Church Hall at Blackrod completed.

May 19th – Above Church Hall, blessed and opened by Mgr. McNulty (Bishop indisposed) 7.15pm. 1st Mass said by Fr. J. Hennessy. Good crowd: collection £34.14.0. Other clergy present Fr. McCabe assisting, V.G. Revs M. J. Reynolds, W. Leeming, B. Reynolds and J. Newman.



October 14th – History at Blackrod. Fr. J. Hennessy hears confession in Church Hall. First time in 100 years.

September 5th 1962 – Fr. J. Newman P.P. leaving tomorrow, September 6th, after 4 years and 3 months. Going as Chaplain to Good Shepherd Convent, Blackley, M/C. His successor is Fr. J. Wilson. As always, departures bring mixed feelings. May the Parish continue to flourish. Good bye and God bless.

September 6th 1962 – Today Fr. J. Newman left Our Lady's to take up his position as Chaplain to the Good Shepherd Convent. Fr. J. G. Wilson became the new Parish Priest.

September 9th – There being one priest here the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered by him at 8am in Haigh, 10am in Blackrod and 11.05 in Haigh.

3rd June 1963 – To record the death of Fr. Joseph Newman who was Parish Priest here 1958 until 6th September 1962...May he rest in peace.

5th November 1963 – Thirty-three students aged between 11 and 15 left Our Lady's School and began at St Joseph's Modern Secondary School in Horwich. This left 129 children in Our Lady's School which is now an Infant and Junior School.

20th December 1963 – A Crucifix of the Traditional Type with the Plaster Figure was placed on the wall over the Altar in Blackrod Parish Hall. It was a gift of Maurice and Gloria Rodriguez who have emigrated to Australia.

April 1965 – Mrs Ellen Martindale a former president of the Children of Mary Society and member of the Parish died this month. She had lived with her husband and conducted a business in Chorley Rd, Westhoughton. By the terms of her will almost all her property and assets amounting to finally £3004.0.6 were left to the Parish.

Mrs Martindale died suddenly the same day that her house and business had been sold for the road widening scheme. Mr Martindale was left without money which may have passed to him had Mrs Martindale lived.

The facts were submitted to his Lordship the Bishop of Salford, Bishop Thomas Holland who ordered that he should be provided for during life. Accordingly, a house – 408 Chorley Rd, Westhoughton and furniture both the property of the Diocese were obtained for the use of Mr Martindale where he will live rent free. The same was painted and decorated outside and in. The pension of Mr Martindale was supplemented by £4 each week. Mr Martindale expressed himself more than well satisfied with the arrangements made.

The estate of Ellen Martindale, may she rest in Peace, was paid over to the Diocesan Trustees on behalf of the Parish about 26th April 1966.

A new Presbytery was envisaged by Fr Joseph Newman now deceased many years ago. The old Presbytery could have been mended or restored but it would have cost about £4500, and was built in 1859 without damp courses, and as it was leaning to one side – the Bishop – Bishop George Andrew Beck ordered that the plans should be got out for a new Presbytery on the land at the other side of the Church.

Arthur Fairbrother and his architects drew up plans for a new three bedroomed house designed in such a way that the accommodation could be increased by rooms build about the garage and waiting room. The house to be built in yellow brick and adjoined to the Church.

The work was entrusted to Messrs Lionel Gray Ltd. builders of Farnworth who began the work in Easter 1965 – To house was to be built at a price of £9400.

The house was occupied 28th September 1965. In order to prevent the house being overlooked a piece of land at the rear of the house was bought for £1000 from a local farmer. The land comprises some four fifths of an acre – in 1966.

27th November 1966 – His Lordship the Bishop Dr Thomas Holland came to the Parish for Visitation and Confirmation ... He expressed a wish that the Church Hall at Blackrod should be put under the dedication of St Andrew the Apostle.

On the day 18th April 1967 Fr Joseph J Wilson went to the Parish of the Holy Family, Limeside, Oldham. His place will be taken in Our Lady's Aspull by Fr George Hartley.

On 9th June 1967 Fr A. J. Moriarty came as second Parish Priest with the special responsibility for Blackrod, with a view to considering the future possibility of a parish there.

March 1968 – Bishop Holland ordained Fr H. Jones for the Diocese here.

WIGAN OBSERVER



1968 – On 20th March 1968 Fr. G. Hartley left Our Lady's!!! The Rev. A. J. Moriarty was appointed Priest in Charge.

January 1968 – Work began to demolish the old Presbytery.

Due to overcrowding at the school on the 9th December 1968 a class of infant children from Blackrod were installed at St Andrew's Church Hall numbering 25 children. Miss Green being the teacher with a trained assistant Miss Darbyshire. All facilities were provided by the LEA who will also pay heating and electric bills.

Plans for the new school on Haigh Rd are well in hand but difficulty is being found in decommissioning the ground.

June 1970 – The altar and sanctuary were re-arranged to comply with the new liturgy and a portable altar was installed.

June 1970 – Our Lady's Parish at the request of the Vicar of St David's Haigh took part in the annual walking day through Aspull as an ecumenical walk. Tremendous enthusiasm shown by the Parish and the attendance was excellent.

July 1970 – The spare land at the back of house was laid out and seeded, also some fruit trees were planted and the area was fenced off at a cost of £200.

November 22nd 1970 – Rev. A. J. Moriarty was appointed Parish Priest.

October 11th 1971 – The contractors arrived on the site to begin the first phase of the new school to be built on the moor at Aspull. Three infant classrooms to start with. A new Catholic school was first mooted in 1944 by Rev. T. Davies RIP then P.P. of Our Lady's.

April 1972 – St Andrew's Church Hall Blackrod ceased to be a temporary school. Plans must now be used to use the Church Hall for social events.

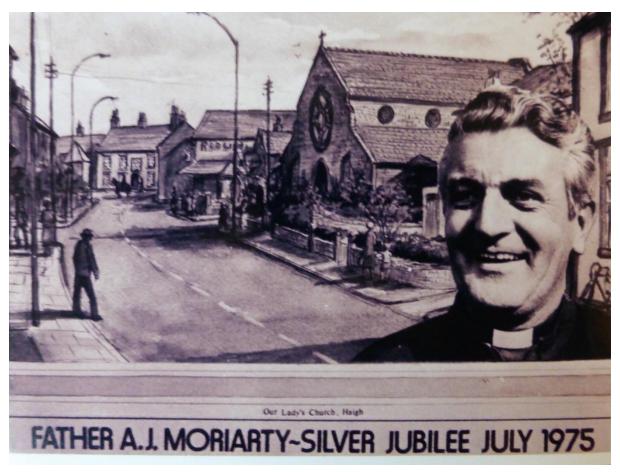
The first phase of the new school opened Thursday 13th April. The children from Blackrod have taken up residence but due to a shortage of school furniture the infant children from Our Lady's old school will move in at a later date. It looks an excellent building and everyone is very pleased.

November 1973 – The 21st November will be a day to be remembered by Our Lady's Parish. A cheque for £20,835-56 was received by the Parish Priest on behalf of the Parish. This was part of a legacy left by Mr. James Fairhurst, formally of this Parish, and who lived on Haigh Rd at what is now the butcher's shop right next to the old school. Mr. Fairhusrt emigrated to the USA in his early twenties but never returned to the old home. Most of his brothers and sisters were not brought up Catholics but James Fairhurst was and went to Our Lady's School. His wife died in 1961, he had no children and so decided to leave most of his estate to Our Lady's Parish. It is estimated at this time that another £10,500 will arrive in a few months. The cheque for £20, 854. 54 was sent this day to the diocese which will pay off our debt now standing at £6500 and the rest will be lodged in the Diocesan Bank for Our Lady's Parish, which no doubt will be used eventually to build a new Church.

September 1974 – Messrs Cassidy and Ashton, Architects have been instructed by the Administration Board of the Diocese to give an estimate of costs for remedial work to the Church. It now looks as if we can keep the beautiful old Church of Our Lady's after extensive repairs – deo gratias.

17th February 1974 – Repair works began on the Church, £10,700 has been passed by the finance board for the repair work. All slates are to be re-nailed. Tie bars are to be placed inside the Church and two buttresses to be built outside to prop up the gable end. The altar rail is to be mended also pulpit to be replaced by a new altar and lectern. The baptismal font is to be demolished and replaced with a portable

font. Damp proofing on the outside of Church and to Sacristy – A new confessional and stations of the cross – The complete Church to be repainted and the outside stonework to be sand blasted. It is estimated that the work will take two months approx.



December 1975 – The Church is finally completed, the work which was estimated to take two months, went on for nearly nine months. Unfortunately, there has been little or no improvement to the drafts and the wind still blows through the Church, dust is still falling from the roof. All in all, I estimate it was a poor job seeing the amount of money spent, and I would blame the architect Mr Ashton for giving wrong advice to the Bishop, in spite of my pleadings. Now he says there is nothing further he can do.

12th December – Mr Albert Martindale died and consequently relieved the Parish of the responsibility of paying him £3 a week and the upkeep of his house, 408 Chorley Rd, Westhoughton which belonged to the Diocese. Canon Sharp has instructed me to sell the house and the matter is in the hands of Mr. Morton, solicitor of Frank, Platt and Fishwick, Wigan. It was sold for £1000 and the money was transferred to the parish A/C in diocese.

15th December – A cheque for £50 was received which was left in the will of William Duffy, formally of the Parish, for ten masses to be said for his soul the sum of £10, the rest to be used for Parish purposes. A new Communion plate and candle stick are to be bought in his memory.

February 1976 – The now outlived Aspull U.D.C bequeathed the Chairman's chair to Our Lady's Church. A beautiful piece of furniture, having the Aspull coat of arms on the back. It has been placed on the sanctuary as the presidential chair. The members of the council made one condition, which is that if I or any of my successors should decide that the chair is no longer useful for this purpose it should be returned and given to another 'body'. I sincerely hope that it will always find an honoured place in Our Lady's Church.

March 1976 – Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord. A new statue in Italian marble of St John Southworth was solemnly Blessed during evening mass. The sermon on the life of St John Southworth was preached by the V. rev. Canon G. Larkin, member of the Cathedral Chapter of Salford. The statue was dedicated to the memory of James Fairhurst for his quiet charity to our Lady's Parish. There was a good congregation attended including many of the Fairhurst family. A brass plate was attached to the base of the statue which cost £300 carved by Alberti Lupton.

September 1976 – A new Pascal Candle Stand was donated by Mrs J. Bowe in memory of her husband Rodney Bowe, recently dead.

September 1976 – The Finance Board granted permission to spend a further £3000 on the roof of the Church to eradicate the fall of dust. The architects Ashton and Cassidy employed a firm John Brown, Preston to carry out the work. It looks a good job, and it is to be hoped that this will solve the problem for many more years to come.

October 1976 – On the 20th October the children moved from the Old School on Haigh Rd to the now completed new school. A Parish farewell dance was held on Friday 29th October in the old building and the demolishers moved in shortly after with the permission of the trustees. A great slice of history has been wiped away in Aspull but progress marches on. The old school has survived for 111 years.

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OUR LADY'S AND ST. ANDREW'S
                                                                                   29th Sunday Year B
17th October 1976
TODAY - Masses at Our Lady's 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. - Mass at St. Andrew's II a.m.
           Rosary and Benediction at Our Lady's at 4 p.m.
MONDAY - St. Luke, Mass at 9 a.m.
TUESDAY - St. Philip Howard, Mass at 9 a.m.
WEDNESDAY - Mass at 9 a.m.
THURSDAY - St. Margaret Clitherow, Mass at 7.30 p.m. - ROSARY CIRCLE
FRIDAY - Mass at 9 a.m.
                            Mass at St. Andrew's 7.30 p.m. - ROSARY CIRCLE
SATURDAY - St. John Capistrano, Mass at 9 a.m.
CONFESSIONS - At Our Lady's Thursday after evening Mass and Saturday II to I2 noom
                   and 6 to 7 p.m.
                   Confessions at St. Andrew's Friday after evening Mass.
NEXT SUNDAY - 30 th Sunday Year B - Men's Confraternity Communion Sunday.
               READERS - 9 a.m. Mass at Our Lady's Mr. H. Carey.
                            II a.m. Mass at St. Andrew's, Blackrod Mr. P.McNab
                            6 p.m. Mass at Our Lady's Miss A. Ball.
CLERICAL WORK TEAM TODAY - Mr. & Mrs. R. Brewder.
PLANNED GIVING LAST SUNDAY.
             Our Lady's 9 a.m. Mass &46.76, II2 adults & 48 children attended. Our Lady's 6 p.m. Mass &33.68, I23 adults & 63 children attended. St. Andrew's Mass &40.35, I23 adults & 87 children attended. Total attendance 556, Collection &I20.79
PARISH NOTES.
OUR SYMPATHY - To the wife and family of the late Leonard Dekin, who was buried with Requiem Mass during the week. He will be remembered in our prayers.
CONGRATULATIONS - To babies John Andrew Puttell, Clifton Drive, Blackrod, Nicola
Jayne Smith, Windsor Crescent, Aspull and Anne Jane Ratcliffe, Meadow Way, Blackrod all Baptissd into the family of God last Sunday.
REMEMBER - To put your clocks BACK one hour next Saturday night before you go to
bed, Summer time ends then, otherwise you will arrive an hour too early for Mass.
JUMBLE SALE - At Our Lady's Old School next Friday the 22th. Doors open at 7 p.m.
MEETING - Requested by the Parent's Committee regarding the reorganisation of St.
Josephös School, Horwich, will be held at the Church Hall, Blackrod next FRIDAY evening the FXXX 22nd at 8.15 p.m. All Parents are requested to attend. Mr. Hester the Headmaster of St. Joseph's will be present at this meeting.
BADMINTON - The need is felt to give the children a chance to learn and play Badmin
-nton, consequently arrangements have been made to enable them to do so as follows
For the 8 to IO year olds on Tuesdays from 3.45 to 5 p.m. cost 5p.
For the II to I4 year olds on Wednesdays from 6 to 7 p.m. cost 5p.

By the way the winning ticket for the tea set is No. 86.
THE SCHOOL - The children will be on holiday from next Friday 22nd until the 2nd
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December 1976 – On the December 7th Our Lady's new school, Holly Rd, Aspull was officially Blessed and Opened by the Rt. Rev. Bishop T. Holland, Bishop of Salford. Two of the Canons of the Diocese, Canon G. Larkin and Canon J. Lakin assisted the Bishop, a few clergy were also in attendance. The Mayor and Mayoress of Wigan, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Blackrod also attended with many officials of the Wigan Education Committee and the Wigan Education Authority, and as many parents and children as we could pack in. It was a brilliant occasion, the school looked really beautiful and all enjoyed refreshments with wine paid for by the

November. After the holidays the children will start in the new school, they will in fact be moving in this week and that will take some organisation by the Head, but all will be ready to start properly after the holidays. But this week they will go to the old school as usual and they will be instructed during the week by the Head when and how they will be moving in, it is not as simple as it seems.

Education Authority. The event got big coverage in the local press, all good publicity for the Catholic Church in Aspull and Haigh.

December 1976 – A solid brass Missal Stand for the altar was donated by Mr and Mrs Jim Fisher to the Church in memory of their son Charles (17) killed in a tragic accident.

September 1977 – The false roof installed in the Church, installed in September 1976 collapsed, fortunately it happened during the night, what a scene of devastation met me when I went in to open the Church for Mass on a Wednesday morning. With the help of the dozen or so people who come to Mass we cleared the debris away and carried on as if nothing had happened. The whole matter was investigated by the Architect Mr. Ashton with the company who installed it, and it was discovered that it was due to faulty workmanship. The whole ceiling was reinstalled, and a written guarantee was given that such a thing could not happen again.

August 1979 – The wall behind the altar was repainted blue at the cost of £80. Previously it was a wine colour, the new blue colour is much brighter and brightens up the sanctuary considerably. The outside of the Presbytery, the Church Hall at Blackrod and all the new school was repainted, all outside painting only.

September 1979 – Our Sacristan Mrs Nellie Blake who has looked after the altar for 43 years has retired, she will be clearly missed.

January 1980 – The first meeting of Our Lady's Parish Council met on the 29th January. It consisted of 20 members, men and women. It is hoped for great things, at least we are complying with Vatican II.

In accordance with the Diocesan ruling ancient registers of Baptism, Marriage and death were deposited in the Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston. Dating 1854 – 1940.

1980 – Five members – four man and one lady of the Parish – commissioned by Bishop Burke at Notre Dame Convent, Blackburn as Lay Ministers of the Eucharist. They were Mr H Carey, Mr J Kinnane, Mr R Brewder, Mr J Ashurst and Miss E.A. Hawkins. They are to help distribute Holy Communion at Sunday Mass both at Our Lady's, Haigh and St. Andrew's, Blackrod. Also, to take communion to the housebound. Miss Hawkins commissioned and appointed for St Joseph's High School

January 1981 – During the night, thieves removed a large quantity of lead from the sacristy roof, water consequently damaged the sacristy. The police were informed and a claim for £420 was made to the Insurance. The lead was replaced by ridge tiles. The sacristy had to be re-plastered and will need painting in due course.

October 1981 – on two occasions lead was once more stolen from the Church and sacristy, the police have been informed. This would seem is due to the fact that dwelling houses in Church Street have been demolished leaving the Church isolated. We can only watch and pray.

November 1981 – At the request of the Bishop a Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul was successfully set up in the Parish. The President, Mr Vincent Whealtley came and spoke on the society. As a result 18 members joined the conference. We wish them every success, and pray God that much good will come to the Parish as a result.

December 8th 1981 – Our Patron's day. A Solemn Mass was held at 7:30pm. A large congregation attended on a bitter evening. A relic of the true cross was solemnly brought into church, now belonging to the parish, having been given to the Parish Priest Fr A Moriarty by his cousin David Daniel Moriarty.

January 8th 1982 – On the afternoon of this day between 2.30 and 3.45, thieves came through the Church, which of course was open, and smashed down the door leading from the Church into the Presbytery. Having got in they smashed a steel filing cabinet and small safe, getting away with approximately £400 in cash, mostly Holy Day Epiphany collection and other monies. They also stole a portable coloured television set from the housekeeper's room, my valuable gold watch, some clothing. They went through the whole house. The police said that it was obvious I disturbed them on my return, otherwise they would have taken much more. Thank God the Church and Blessed Sacrament were undisturbed. Unfortunately, after much thought, the Church regrettably is now locked at all times. A most disturbing happening indeed and one which I shall never forget.

February 1982 – A burglar alarm was installed to cover the Sacristy, Church and Presbytery. It does give a sense of security – it is connected up to the police.

February 1982 – The Holy Father Visit, Pope John Paul II. Three hundred and fifty people from the Parish set out in a double decker bus for Heaton Park at 11.30 p.m. A great occasion, everyone was impressed and enjoyed the occasion. The assessment by the Diocese on the Parish was £2,130.00 towards the expenses of the visit. The Parish, through an envelope collection, contributed £1634.00, the rest was made up of parish funds.

June 1982 – The houses opposite the Presbytery were demolished. Now a beautiful view front and back.

April 25th 1983 – Our Lady's Church celebrated its 125th birthday opened by the first Bishop of Salford Dr. Turner on St Mark's day. A special Mass was offered and a large congregation attended, the Parish Priest gave a short history of the Parish.

September 1983 – At a special Mass, the Bene Merente Medal was awarded to Mr John Hawkins of Toddington, Haigh. A large congregation attended after, all attended an enjoyable evening in the school hall of celebration.

November 1984 – Saturday evening Mass was introduced, time 6pm. The Sunday evening Mass was abolished. It has proved to be very popular. Confessions were altered to 5.15 up to Mass time.

April 1985 – More lay Ministers of the Eucharist were commissioned. They were, for Aspull Mr G. Marsden, Mr T. Morton, Mrs A. Morton, Miss C. McManus, and for St. Andrew's Blackrod, Dr C. Unsworth, Mr A. Hellewell (Headmaster), Mr J. Quinn and Mrs M. Taylor.

A Tabernacle was erected in St Andrews and the Blessed Sacrament is now present, with the permission of the Bishop. The Diocese Administrative Commission reviewed the security. A key is held by the lay ministers. The Tabernacle key is secured in a safe bolted to the floor.

May 1986 – At 3am on Saturday 17th Our Lady's School was found to be on fire. It is suspected by police that it was caused by vandals. Fortunately a family living nearby noticed it and raised the alarm and due to the prompt action of the fire service, it was contained without causing too much damage, though enough, estimated at £13,000 approx. The police are investigating. Later the cost reduced to £5000.

November 1986 – Two more lay Ministers of the Holy Eucharist were commissioned for St Andrew's Blackrod, Mrs M. Cheers and Mrs M. Riley.

March 1990 – The false roof installed in 1977 had to be removed due to its instability, some tiles crashed down, just missing the Parish Priest at Mass, it now remains as the original roof interior, and another solution will have to be found, because of drafts and dust.

July 1990 – The people of the Parish collected to erect a statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception at the Church door, in memory of the 40th Anniversary in the Priesthood of yours truly, Mr John Cottam did the stone work and the statue was made in Italy.

October 1990 - a new type of lining for the inside of the Church roof was installed by Browns of Preston, because of the falling dust and drafts. It looks good, cost £4260 + VAT. It is hoped it is a good and final solution to insulation.

September 1992 – Fr Albert John Moriarty took retirement from this Parish and the Diocese, he spent 25 years at our Lady's Haigh, and retired to return to Ireland, his native land.

1996 – Mgr. M. Quinlan D.C.L, V.G became P.P Extensive work on Church and Presbytery. July 1996 – following the appointment of Bishop Patrick Kelly to Liverpool – Mgr. Quinlan became Administrator to the Diocese. Fr Mark Hawksworth – Priest in Charge 1996-August 1997.

Tuesday 26th August 1997 – Kevin Christopher Foulkes became P.P. (formerly at St Gilbert's, Eccles and Chaplain to De la Salle College and Community.)

Friday 29th – Funeral Mass for Martha Higham aged 99yrs. Formerly of this Parish. (The family chalice adorned with her late husband's M.B.E was used at Mass. R.I.P.)

2001 – October 1st A lovely celebration, in autumn sunshine, of the Sacrament of the Sick within a Sunday afternoon Mass celebrated at the request of the SVP. Refreshments were served afterwards in the parish meeting room.



Our Lady's SVP 2001: Marian Johnson, Pat Tudor, Margaret Riley, Fr. Kevin, Cecilia Mc Manus, Neil West

2002 – Walking Day – remained dry until teatime – a lovely ecumenical walk with our fellow Christians – on this Golden Jubilee Weekend. The Queen was remembered in all our weekend masses (and, I'm sure – the England team in their first game in the World Cup Finals in the Far East – in people's minds and hearts!) with the singing of the National Anthem at the end of all masses.

2003 – New Headteacher appointed at Our Lady's School, to succeed Andrew Hellewell who retired due to ill health. Mrs Susan Derbyshire (acting Head since January 2003) was appointed on 13.10.03.

2004 – Rev. Fr. Albert Moriarty – former Parish priest died, aged 80 years, in the Trinity Hospice in Blackpool. R.I.P. His Requiem was celebrated by Bishop T. Brain on Friday 14th May after a Mass of Reception the previous evening, presided over by the Area Dean, Fr. Harry Jones – (ordained here in 1968) when Fr. Kevin preached.

2005 – Tsunami Sponsored Walk – from Holy Family to St Mary's, Horwich via Our Lady's (the 3 Parish Deanery Cluster) Saturday 5th February. (12,000+ raised).

2005 – Ordination of Rev. Mark Moran formerly of Blackrod and a special Minister of Holy Communion as Priest of the Diocese of Clifton, Bristol, in the Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul. Fr. Mark concelebrated Mass here shortly afterwards and gave his Blessing to the congregation at the 6pm vigil at Our Lady's. Ad multos annos!

2006 – Three parishioners (Dorothy Cottam, Terry Toole and Mike Gray) departed on May 9th, to walk the final 100kn to the Shrine of St James at Compostella, Spain: with other family and friends.

2007 – 12th February – The death, after a long illness, of Andrew Hellewell (Bene Merenti: 2003) former Head Teacher at Our Lady's Aspull. Aged 54 years. Burial at Haigh after Requiem Mass at Our Lady's Monday 19th February. R.I.P.

31st May – The celebration of the P.P.'s Silver Jubilee - a concelebrated Mass at Our Lady's followed by a cheese and wine celebration in Our Lady's School with a series of presentations.

2008 – Jubilee Year: to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of Our Lady's Church. Opening Mass Friday 25th April, Family Social Sunday May 5th.

Farewell to Pat Southworth (for 20 years a member of staff at Our Lady's and Mary Unsworth ("Auntie Mary") R.I.P.

Several wedding anniversaries including the 60th of Rita and Ted Hanley of Whitegates, Haigh Village was celebrated in August (31st).

June 14th – a new route, indoor service, etc... have put new life into Walking Day – Plans are now in hand to commission a new banner for 2010.

2010 – A new banner of Our Lady has been commissioned and purchased from Ormsby's of Scarisbrick, now that the future of Walking Day has been assured.

New Head Teacher at Our Lady's School: John Rushton, former Deputy at Holy Family, Platt Bridge. He is married with three young children. Eric Fogg retired at Easter and the Deputy Elizabeth Eastham was acting Head until September '09.

Sadly, the weekend of 31st January, the last Sunday Mass at St Andrew's – the new times/arrangements come into force on February 7th. Sadness and upset in Blackrod.

Celebration of 29 years of Guiding at St Andrew's, June 21st.

Final celebration of mass here (St Andrew's) June 24th – Nativity of St John the Baptist – much sadness. It is hoped that the altar, lectern and Stations of the Cross will go to Our Lady's School and the vestments to be divided between the two schools.

In the May Council Elections (on General Election Day – May 6th) one of our parishioners (and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist), Ron Conway was elected to the Wigan Council – we wish him well, and are confident that the good example of dedication and public service set by our other local councillors, will continue.

2011 – December, Supper/Dance to celebrate P.P's 60th Birthday.

Dr. Bob Dittman resigns after many years as a Foundation Governor of Our Lady's and St Joseph's H.S. due to ill health: Bob has been a very dedicated Governor for years. Replaced by Chris Bithell and Philip Clarke.

Despite the cold wind and rain, Walking Day took place! No banner, but many braved the elements, and we concluded the afternoon at Aspull Methodists for a short service and refreshments.

Corpus Christi – Blessing of new chalice purchased but only now left to the Parish in the will of the late Joseph Kinnane of Blackrod (died in April) funeral 16th.

Visit of Bishop Brain to Our Lady's School 27th June. A lovely assembly told the story of the Past/Present of the school and the Bishop said a few words. He toured all the classrooms accompanied by Mr Rushton, Headteacher, and was joined by Staff, Governors and Guests at a buffet in the staffroom. Photos were taken by the 'Wigan Post' of the new plaque recording the school's opening by Bishop Holland and the blessing of the extension by Bishop Brain.

2014 – Presentation of the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice to Dr. Robert (Bob) Dittman in recognition of his long and outstanding service as a Foundation Governor of both our Lady's primary School, Aspull and St Joseph's H.S. Horwich. Members of the Dittman family, representatives of the schools and Catenians joined the vigil Mass.

Miss Elizabeth Eastham retired after 20 years in the school. Chris Horridge appointed to succeed her in September.

September 2014 – Miss Elizabeth Eastham retired after 20 years in the school. Chris Horridge appointed to succeed her.

8th December – installation of our new Bishop John Arnold as the 11th Bishop of Salford. (formerly auxiliary at Westminster)

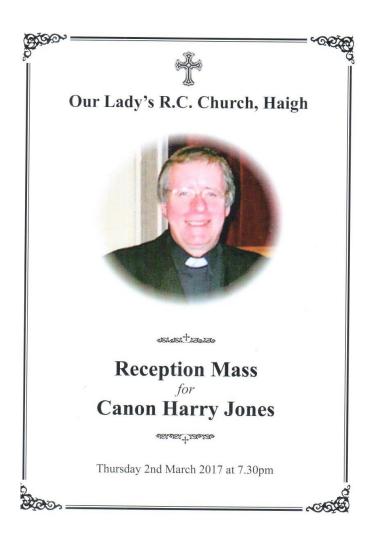
2015 – Our new Bishop invites the invites the participation of the whole Diocese in a consultation. (Available on-line and paper copies)

Visit to Parish Priest 13th December and tour of the Parish by our new Bishop. A man of Intelligence, vision and generosity.

2016 – 29th May, Mayoral Sunday. This week Cllr Ron Conway of Aspull (long serving extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) attended 9.30am Mass at Our Lady's. Feast of Corpus Christi: A First.

Saturday 27th – 80th birthday Mass for Miss Eileen Hawkins J.P., Our Lady's Haigh. Presentation of the Cross: Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice in recognition of her work in the Parish and wider community.

2017 – The death of Canon Harry Jones, brought up and educated in this Parish, where he was ordained by Bishop Thomas Holland on Saturday 3rd March 1968. His body was brought to Our Lady's for a Mass of reception on Thursday 2nd March. Fr. Harry was 74 years of age. R.I.P. Buried in Blackrod.



Fr. Kevin Foulkes appointed Acting Dean of St Joseph's Deanery, Bolton during the period of changes, closures and amalgamations of the Salford Diocese

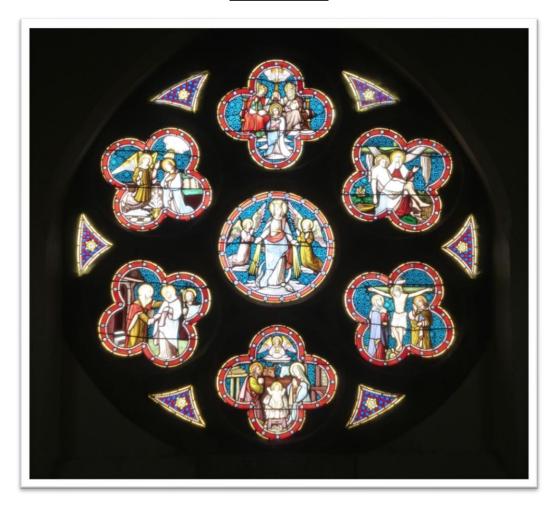
Stained Glass and Interesting Devotional Details of the Church



Grotto to Our Lady

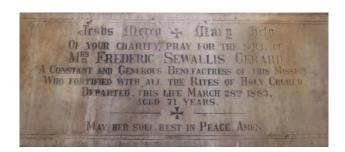
1990 was to be Fr Moriarty's 40th anniversary of his ordination as a priest, and Harry Carey organised a collection so that the parish could do something to mark the occasion. It was decided to erect a grotto to Our Lady. Harry asked John Cottam to build it and he agreed. The stone was donated by a quarry at Appley Bridge. The statue was purchased with the money raised by the parish. The photograph was taken by Joe Sherriff of Haigh Rd and was presented to John on the occasion of completion and dedication on July 23rd 1990.

Rose Window



Rose window – The window was put in place shortly after the completion of the church and depicts scenes from the Rosary. The Annunciation, the Visitation and the Nativity are three of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, followed by the Crucifixion and Deposition of Jesus from the Sorrowful Mysteries then Assumption and Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven from the Glorious Mysteries.

The window is dedicated to Mrs Frederic Sewallis Gerard who generously supported the building of the church. The window was paid for by her daughter, Lady E Stafford in her memory.



Wheel Window



Wheel Window over the Altar

This window was relocated and remodelled to fit Our Lady's from St Edmund's Church at Miles Platting on the way out of Manchester on the Oldham Road, when that church was demolished, as are the baptismal font and the shrine of Our Lady to the right of the altar. The Shrine of Our Lady was made in Austria in 1904 by S. Stuflesser.

The Wheel window depicts the various symbols associated with Mary from the traditional Litany of Loreto which identifies Mary with a Vessel of Honour, a Mystical Rose, the Tower of David, a Tower of Ivory, a House of Gold, the Ark of the covenant, a Gate of heaven and the Morning Star. The Latin inscription is the beginning of the prayer 'Hail Mary...'.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception



Also from St Edmund's is the window closest to the vestry. This window is dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Our parish is one of the first parishes in the country to be named after the Immaculate Conception.

Mary and Infant with her parents Anne and Joachim



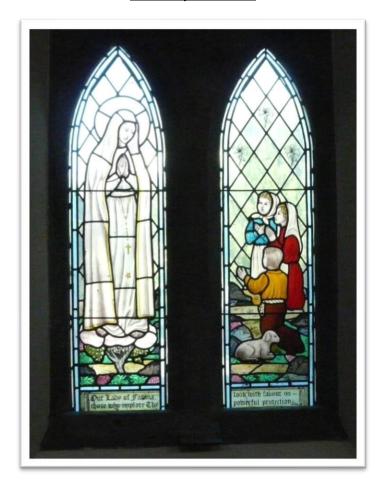
The window opposite, another from St Edmund's, represents Mary and Jesus in the centre with Mary's mother, St Anne and her Father St Joachim. Not recorded in scripture the tradition accepted by the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches originates in the apocryphal Gospel of James which expands backwards in time the infancy stories contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and represents a narrative concerning the birth and upbringing of Mary herself.

Our Lady of Walsingham



The Walsingham Window – dating from October 1996 and donated by Agnes Ball, these windows depict Our Lady of Walsingham and the medieval Slipper Chapel located about a mile from the village. It is so called because of the tradition whereby pilgrims removed their 'slippers' and walked barefoot along the valley from the chapel to the original shrine located in the Augustinian priory. In the image, the infant Jesus is depicted protecting his mother and tells the viewer that any insult or injury against her virtue would also be an attack against Him.

Our Lady of Fatima



The Fátima Window (April 1996) Donated by Monsignor Quinlan - Our Lady of Fátima, is a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary based on the famed Marian apparitions reported in 1917 by three shepherd children at the Cova da Iria, in Fátima, Portugal. The three children were Lúcia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta (Francis and Hyacinth) Marto. The children are caring for a lamb while Mary is depicted on a holm oak tree, a Mediterranean broad leaf tree. The children witnessed six apparitions between 13th May and 13th October 1917. Mary entrusted the children with three secrets involving Hell, World War I and World war II and the 20th Century persecution of Christians. The last of the children, Lucy, died in 2005. A nun in the convent of Santa Teresa in Coimbra, she was 97 when she died. Francisco and Jacinta died in the flu epidemic after the First World War.

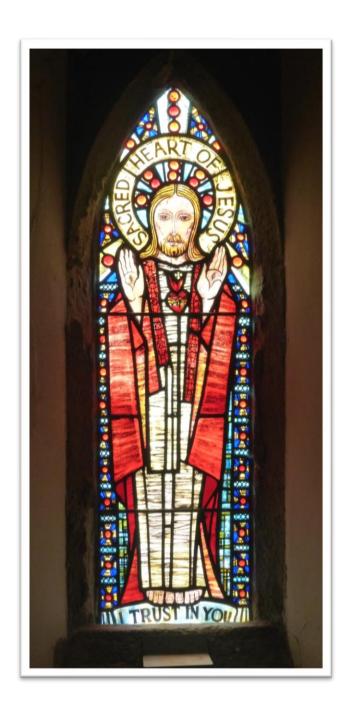
If you visit Fatima today, there stands a marble pillar on the site of the oak with a statue of Our Lady. The statue is housed in bullet proof glass that can be removed so the statue can be carried in procession. The bullet fired in the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II is kept in the crown used to adorn Mary's statue.

Our Lady of Knock



Our Lady of Knock – Presented in memory of Peter Moore. Peter and his wife Rita ran the Beeches restaurant in Standish for many years. In 1879, Mary McLoughlin and a gathering crowd witnessed a vision of Mary, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist (presented as a bishop), at Knock, County Mao, Ireland. The Lamb of God and the Sacred Heart feature in the design with the Holy Spirit in the circular detail above the two main panels. The window was by Linda Walton of Design Lights, Blackrod. The original faces in the window were replaced at the request of the donor.

Sacred Heart of Jesus



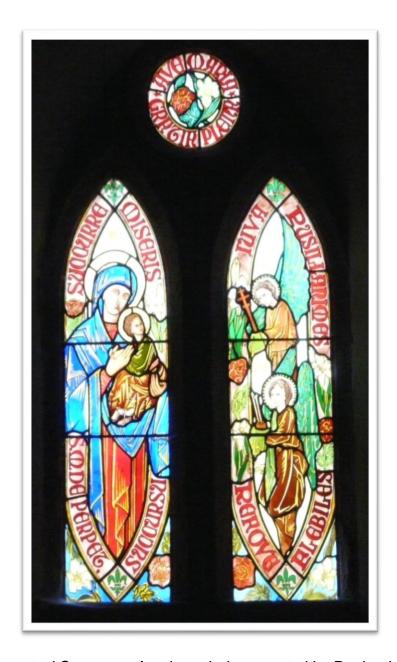
The Sacred Heart of Jesus – (located beneath the organ loft and adjacent to Our Lady of Knock) The window was donated by the Unsworth family in the early 1990s in recognition of their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which takes the heart of Jesus' resurrected Body, pierced on the Cross, as a symbol of God's love for all humanity. The window is by Linda Walton of Design Lights, Blackrod. Made to the same dimensions as the side windows, it was too large and had to be remodelled to fit.

The Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary



The Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary – (behind the stairs leading to the organ loft). Donated by the Kelly family. They had seen the image in a Mission magazine and wished to have it recreated in stained glass. The joint devotion to the hearts was formalised in the seventeenth century. The devotions and associated prayers grew in the 20th century into the Immaculata Prayer of St Maximillian Kolby and in the messages of Our Lady of Fatima saying that the Heart of Jesus sought to be honoured together with the Heart of Mary. In September 1985, John Paul II coined the term The Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour



Our Lady of Perpetual Succour – Another window created by Design Lights, Blackrod in 1997, this image of Mary in blue with the child Jesus is from the eastern tradition. The infant Jesus is represented with a shocked expression and a sandal falling off as he sees the angels carrying an orthodox cross, nails and spear, foretelling his passion and death. The cross is at an angle as a sign of the resurrection. The Latin inscription is from a Litany to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour while the Greek inscriptions refer to the Mother of God, Michael the Archangel, Gabriel the Archangel and Jesus Christ.

St Jude and St Rita of Cascia



St Jude and St Rita of Cascia – A window dedicated to the golden wedding anniversary of Ted and Rita Hanley. St. Jude is the Patron Saint of Hope and impossible causes and one of Jesus' original twelve Apostles. The ship he holds represents the journeys he made spreading a message of hope as well as his profession of fisherman and boat repairer. The weapons of his violent martyrdom feature in the design while the flames around his head represent the gift of the Holy Spirit he received at Pentecost. Saint Rita was born Margherita Lotti in Roccaporena, Italy in 1381. The day after her baptism, Rita was surrounded by a swarm of white bees, which went in and out of her infant mouth without hurting her. Rather than being alarmed, her family believed she was marked to be virtuous and devoted to God. It is said that as she neared the end of her life, Rita was bedridden from tuberculosis. It was then that she asked a cousin who had come to visit for a rose from the garden in her old home. As it was January, her cousin did not expect to find any roses, but there was a single rose in bloom, which was brought back to Rita at the convent. She passed away four months later, on May 22, 1457. Following her death, she was buried at the basilica of Cascia, and was later discovered to be incorrupt. Her body can be found today in the Saint Rita shrine at Cascia.

Millennium Window



The most recent window to be put in place was the Jubilee 2000 window, known as the Millennium Window, donated by members of the Hawkins family and their initial J. H. S and H are the initials and the family (John, Agnes, Spencer, Hawkins) with symbols representing their connection with England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. The window also includes the symbol of the SPUC charity supported by the family and a miner's lamp reflecting the importance of the mining industry to the area and the Hawkins family. Christ yesterday, today and forever was the Jubilee logo included in the design. The window was also created in Blackrod by Design Lights. The main feature of the design is the 'Wiggin' or Rowan tree. The tree is in bud as the Angel Gabriel proclaims the Annunciation with the decent of the Holy Spirit while on the other side of the window, the tree bears fruit alongside the representation of Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. Mary and Joseph wear wedding rings in this representation even though this was not the tradition in the first century. Their married status was more likely represented by the wearing of a belt. A modest representation of the Nativity and Epiphany can be seen in the bottom corner as we see one lamb, a crown and one of the gifts presented to Jesus. Other interesting details include stars and the crescent moon invoking a passage from the Book of Revelations.

Shrine to Our Lady of Fatima



Bishop Holland had a great devotion to Our Lady of Fatima and on his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood he expressed the wish not to have a great ceremony but rather to have a statue of Our Lady of Fatima placed in the Cathedral. When Salford Cathedral was being reordered by Bishop Kelly he wanted a different style of statue and we were fortunate to have this statue relocated to Our Lady's.

Shrine to St Teresa



In October 1933 a new shrine to St Theresa of the Infant Jesus was erected by Mr S Blackwell; the statue being given in memory of Miss M S Whittle, was blessed. The statue cost £75 (the equivalent of about £4500 in 2018).

Magical Memories

The spiritual life of the Parish and the devotion of its people has always been at the heart of our purpose as Catholic Christians, but just as a home without a family is just a house, so a Church without its people is just a building. The rest of our book is dedicated to the fond memories of the people of Our Lady's, some of them, from the distant past, recall the very earliest days of the Mission, others are more recent. Though times may have been tough sometimes and life was not without its hardships, we hope their warmth and humanity will bring a smile to your face and draw you closer to our faith family.

Regina – The Parish Magazine

As Assistant to the Parish Priest from 1955 to 1958, Fr Bernard Rylands took it upon himself to publish a parish magazine which he entitled 'Regina' meaning queen, and a title originally given to the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven.

The following articles have been taken from this magazine.

Regina - First edition December 1955. Price 6d

Miss Whittle Remembers

As I look back on my eighty-four years, my first thought is how much better times are now than they were then. People had to think of their money then – they didn't get so much.

The first Parish Priest I remember was Fr Jones. Now I was only a baby so I suppose I don't rightly remember him. But my father often used to tell me of an accident at the Presbytery to Fr Jones when I was about four. That would be about 1875. My father was the Blacksmith but used to do all sorts of jobs. Well, one day, a stranger came running up to our house – I never heard who he was but he wasn't a Catholic. Anyway he came shouting that Fr Jones had had an accident. My father ran down and found Fr Jones lying unconscious and water all over the place. The hot and cold water pipes had got mixed up some way and there had been an explosion. They got Fr Jones round while my father turned the water off and mended it.

What a lot of snow there was when we were children. We used to lie down in it! Often it was so deep that although we only lived three doors away from the school we could not go home for dinner. Jacket potatoes we had. They were nice, mind you, for they had been well scrubbed by Mrs Hindley. We used to call her 'Old Matty'. I don't think she got paid much, for school funds were low and times were bad. She was wife of the dogman at Aspull House where Mr Gerard lived. Do you know what we used to use for plates? Our slates, rubbed as clean as we could get them. Ah! times have changed since those days.

Miss Chapman was Headmistress, and a good teacher she was, with a head of little curls. She had a little signal which she used to click for silence. If you didn't take notice, she would throw it at you – and she was a good thrower! She married Mr Hayes, a watchmaker at New Springs. Then there was Miss Campbell, a little Scots woman and a nice person. She never married. Then there was Kathy Phillips of Scot Lane Ends – a student teacher she was – and Elizabeth Ann Derbyshire from the Red Lion. We only had about eighty pupils. It was in school that I remember my first Priest, Fr Crilly. He was a great one for coming to the school – was in every day. He was very strict too, but very kind. God rest him.

What a lot of walking we used to do! We thought nothing of walking to Wigan and back. Mind you there was a bus, a horse bus. John Wilkinson at the Balcarres was head of the bus company and used to stable the horses with the fourteen belonging to the Crawford estate at the back of our house. Mr Peter Spencer used to drive the bus sometimes, and Richard. The bus used to run from Haigh to Wigan but not very frequently. How obliging they were! They would buy anything you wanted in Wigan and bring it back on the next journey. When it would snow two or three extra men used to travel on the bus with sacks for when the bus got stuck. Then they used to get out and put the sacks under the horse hooves and the wheels until they could grip. Once it ran away and went over. It was on Ivy Brow and there was at least one bad injury.

There I am talking about snow again! But those are only my very early memories. I'll try to remember some more little things for next time.

Regina – Volume 1 Number 5 April 1956

'Owd Fred' by a parishioner (Aspull House)

From my childhood days I can recall the place as a place of ruin. There was about it an air of decay, of desolation, a brooding melancholy that comes back to me now across the years. As children, we called it the 'Old Hall' and the knowing ones amongst us said that once 'Lord' Gerard had lived there.

The information was misleading; the legend (as is the way of legends) was already gathering accretions. From the memory-card case in the Church porch, one was able to spell out, 'Of your charity pray for the repose of the soul of Major the Hon. Frederic Sewallis Gerard of Aspull House...' and thus get the facts right. He was but a connection of the peerage, and the 'Hall' as we used to call it was the modest establishment of a younger son.

But he bore an honoured name and represented a noble tradition. He was our parish's connection with the 'Resistant Movement' in England.

In our day there has been a great levelling. Social distinctions (for better or worse) have largely gone by the board. This, we are told, is the age of the Common Man. The Squire and his relations (as we so elegantly put it) have 'had it' and few tears are shed at their passing. But it would ill become us to forget the debt we owe to the Catholic landed gentry – especially of our own Lancashire. Under God, the preservation of the Faith was in large measure due to them. Without their power, influence and example, it would not have been possible, humanly speaking, for Betty Howarth (of whom we wrote recently) and other humble folk to survive as Catholics.

These were the recusants; they refused to conform, and true heirs of the Pilgrims of Grace, they strove throughout the Penal days to 'maintain the Mass and Papistry.' And the Mass was maintained – at what peril and at what cost! Let us not forget that or those who made it possible.

Among them were the Gerards of Bryn. Their influence radiated through these parts; and when at long last relief came and the Mass was no longer a 'hanging matter' they were still there to establish the missions. It was largely due to the munificence of that family, in the person of Frederic Gerard, that our own parish was founded. The occupant of Aspull House was true to type.

The extent of his benefactions is known only to God, but there is one interesting detail in the record. The wall round the Church was erected at his own expense. It was surmounted by wrought-iron rails, shattered seemingly needlessly at the end of the war in 1945.

Mrs Gerard was also a constant benefactress. The rose window is a memorial to her, installed by her daughter. But a more eloquent memorial is the School, opened in 1861 and built largely through her efforts. She died at Aspull House in 1883.

'Owd Fred' (as the old man called him for me, years ago, a memory of him as a lone huntsman) 'Owd Fred' did not long survive her. He died the following year – but away from his native Lancashire. Why his house was left desolate and was allowed to crumble into the ruin I remember, is a mystery open only to surmise.

Today there remains no vestige of Aspull House, and about the site it once occupied there is an air, no more of decay, but perhaps of wistful reflection.

Census of Our Lady's Parish Aspull and Blackrod. May 1956

		*			
Church St.	Victoria St.	-	LeyRd.	Crawford Av.	Blackrod
3.Orrell 5.Whittle	2.Hamer 4.Smith	5.Pr:	orth	21.Doogan 23.Kerr	School Cl.
6.Monroe 7.Whittle	Smith St.	01	Torra	16.Walsh 27.Quinn	4.Adams
8.Belshaw	7.Nuttall	The same of the sa	Lane	37. Feilding	Manchester Rd.
Cross St.	13.Whittle	9.Gre	een eencer	43.Mitcheson 48.Trainor 50.Summers	425.Delaney 429.Edgar
2. Moore	St.Eliz.Rd.	58.Wi	llaims	59.Madden	Scot Lane
4.McCormick 10.McLoughlin	2.Ramwell 6.Jones	72.Ca 85.Su		61.Moran	14.Sinclair
28.Ralphs 30.Breckell	10.Keighery	45.Ai	.ken	64.Leigh 68.Birkett	20.Hilton 40.Cunliffe
34.Ralphs	16.Webber 24.Caine	1.Wil	liams		53.Jolley
Haigh Rd.	26.Coleman	Harol	d St.	Duke's Row	57.Kindley
2.Wilson	28.Atherton 62.Atherton	Æcker		7.Gill	New St
4.Dowd	92.Gwinnett	10.Gr	erney	9.Morris	167.Kelly 171.Ronan
5.Duffy 11.Lavin	94.Connolly				131. Turner
17.Seddon	St.Mary'sRd.		n Rd.	Holly Rd.	Blackhorse St.
18.Brazer 20.Smith	1.Burns		shwick		8.Dr.Unsworth
25.Eastham	11.Davis 21.Bailey	88.St	ephens Bailey	97.Brown	22.Turner 26.Catterall
Pub.Moore 30.Whittle	33.MacManus 35.Grady	118.N	aylor	77Nitcheson Manufkin(8)	Station Rd.
47.Higham 49.Owens	4.Whittle	493.S	tafford		Dunstan
51.Duffy	6.Wimsey 106Purcell		'Brien	Moss Pit R. 3. Snailham	106.Whittle
57.Pemberton 61.Prior	St.John'sRd.	Mill	Lane	6.Stott	
71.Giblin	1.Hulse 3.Hulse	"TheF	oplars'	Highfield G.	Chorley Rd.
82.Spencer 86.Ralphs	5.Durkin 25.Aspey	fish	Wick	1)Hammond	34.Hitchen
90.Hibbert 87.Bowden	27.Ralphs	Balca	rresRd	Riley Lane	47.Collier 69.Pilkington
108.0wens	45.Murphy 49.Burke	5.Hog		Benson	78.Cottam
99.Moss	99.Moss 65.Conroy 71.Rigby 72. Might		rker	2.Critchley Hope St. 16.Gregory	Dark Lane
			skell		24.Sharrock
123.Durkin	88.Whistle-	54.Co	uthern	S.David'sRd 131.Webber EphraimFold 8. 5.Connor	Whitehall Lane
131.Unsworth	82.Willets 48.Whittle	58 Mai	tland		96.TrevorJones
161.Sherriffe	46.Winnard	65Pug	h		Ainse Rd.
163.Moore 165.Maddison	36.Crompton 34.Deakin	67.Fi 71.Ke			
Dr.Cooke 165.Maddison	24. Burke 12. Dean	77.Ho	lden		Hill Lane 34.King
309.Ball	RatcliffeRd.	83.Ho 87Fit	gan Trick		14.McNabb
323. Duffy	8. Robinson	89.Do	herty		Church St.
	11.McMahon		herton		93.Hennessey
-		TOTING	31101	l.	Caldwell's Yd.
Blackrod (cto			No. El St		1.Makinson
Ridgeway 10.Font	Vicarage		Little	THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE	
20.Holden 27.Scott	104.Warte	is	7.Rooci 28.Heir		
28.Boardman 31.Turtington	154.Garde	liffe	ffe Blundell L. 22.Lewis		
35.Burns	1/1.W1111				
36.Cunningham	m 137.Barn	es	32.Norm 34.Dem	psey	
	118.Augh	am	55.Bel	1	
Smith (Fa		arm)	Smith :	Brow	
			14.Squ	ires	
					B.J.R. May 1956
ALC: CARTE OF STREET	And the Personal Property lies	100	*		14 4

Regina – Volume 1 Number 7 June 1956

Haigh Day

If you haven't heard about our Garden Party by now, it's not the fault of our publicity dept. But in case you happen to be a Spaceman just in from Mars, we inform you that the great day is Saturday June 23rd. The location, the field behind our school. Our thanks are due to Farmer Pendlebury for the generous way he has put this valuable pasture at our disposal without reserve. This speaks well for the state in which we left the field on the last occasion we had it and puts us on our mettle to do the same again. So, let us remember that every paper or bottle which we drop, someone else will have to pick up before we, as a parish, can be satisfied.

Just having watched the children practising their Folk Dancing, we have no hesitation in saying that you are going to enjoy it. This is not to be confused with Morris Dancing, which, while as often done today has some attraction, cannot compare with these traditional dances of our English Villages, for variety and freedom of movement.

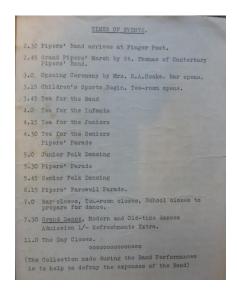
About the Pipers, we don't need to say much. If you live within a thirty-mile radius, you may hear them and will want to see them. They are one of the newest and finest of the Manchester bands. We are grateful to them and to Fr. Ginley, Parish Priest of Saint Thomas of Canterbury in that they brought their fee down to the level of our small resources.

And if you don't enjoy children's sports, either you have never been young, or you are one of the organising teachers!

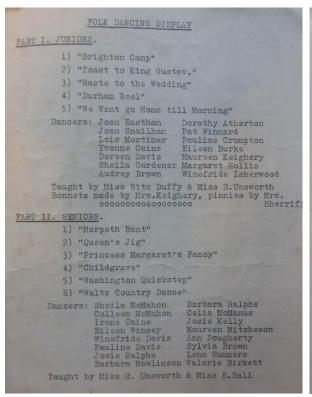
So, we'll see you at the Garden Party – and do please pray for a fine day!

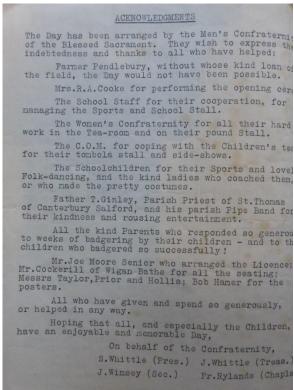






Our Lady's Grand Garden Party – Programme of Events.





St Thomas of Canterbury Pipers Band 1956 Pendlebury's Field Our Lady's Grand Garden Party



Our Lady's Grand Garden Party 1956



Joe Moore (dressed as bishop), Edward Caine (glasses), Mary Hulse and Edward Price. Doreen Hibbert (far left). Maureen McMahon (centre front) Sheila McMahon, Coleen McMahon.

Regina – Volume 1 Number 11 November 1956

<u>'Owd Joe' Remembers</u> (Joe Moore proprietor of the Red Loin)

It was the year 1870 when I was born in the Stocking Houses on Bolton Road. The houses got their name from a man called Stockings, who owned them. He made a living by buying pit ponies. These he used to bring up from Wales and turn loose in the fields – much to the enjoyment of the local boys who used to have good fun trying to ride them.

My father worked at California Pit, and he had many escapes from death there. He was fond of telling of his nearest escape. He regularly came off at 2 o'clock and was always eager to get away for he had a passion for shooting. One day he pushed his way into the cage at the bottom of the shaft, when a lad stopped him, saying, 'Ah'm before thee.' My father replied, 'Ah, lad, thou art,' and he let the boy take his place. But the cage had not gone half way up the shaft when the rope broke and all in the

cage were killed. The first thing my father saw in the awful mess was the poor boy's cap.

We moved to Dr. Fisher's Farm when I was two and then in 1875 to a farm in Little Scotland. There my father worked hard to feed the seven boys and three girls who, with my mother, made up our family. But only four years later, my mother died. May she rest in peace.

In the days before Our Lady's was built, it was a case of walking to St. Mary's Wigan, or to Wellbank in Chorley. My father and mother had been married at St. Mary's and if he was not seen at Mass there, the Priest would soon be round to know the reason why. It was there that father and mother used to meet her great friend Elizabeth Foggs. She lived at the Gate House in Red Rock and had not always been a Catholic. She used to attend lectures on religious topics at Redrock School. One day the lecturer said he could not develop the subject any further, or he would be talking about the Catholic religion. So Elizabeth said if he wouldn't tell her about the Catholics she would find out for herself; which she did and eventually became one. Her father was the main under-manager for Lord Crawford's pits in the days before the Wigan Coal and Iron Co. We used to see the men line up for their fortnightly pay at the Saw Mills at Spring's bridge. When Elizabeth became a Catholic, Lady Crawford came to see why she had stopped attending Haigh Church. As you can probably guess, my father married Elizabeth Foggs, eighteen months after my mother's death and they were married at Our Lady's.

My father was one of the first Outdoor Collectors. He used to say that he got a terrible lot of blackguarding when he went round, for there were a lot of bitter Orangemen in these parts. But the more they shouted at him, the more determined he became. Many years later, when I took over the 'Red Lion' I was warned by the wife of the previous landlord that I would have some terrible trouble through this same bitterness. I assured her that I would not. When they showed signs of fighting, I cleared them out, and that has been my policy to this day.

Other Collectors were Mr. John Unsworth, manager of Scot Lane Colliery and Mr. Derbyshire, one-time of the 'Red Lion'. House meetings used to be held to help the young parish.

My schooling was done at Our Lady's, walking from Blackrod. I was in skirts – Scotch plaid – until the age of six, for nobody thought of putting little boys in pants. I used to sit against the old Brewery and wait for the older boys to take me home. Later, we used to play truant sometimes. I remember bathing in a brook one day, when we spied the School Board coming across the field. We hastily gathered up our clothes and ran almost naked away from him, dropping socks and shirts on the way, while he chased us with a big stick. When we eventually did get back to school, the Parish Priest was waiting for us (I think it was Fr. Jones) and gave us all a good beating with a stick. That cured us. We walked to church three times a day on Sundays, for there was Sunday-school and evening Benediction. 'Come on lads,

here's your penny,' my father would say and off we set. I forgot mine once, and old Mr Livesey the door-man pulled me up. Perhaps he thought I was keeping it to spend at the toffee shop (now pulled down) which he kept in Church Street.

In the next edition of Regina 'Owd Joe' writes: Last month I mentioned the 'Stockings Houses.' Well, some of his relatives came from Blackpool last week. His real name was Simms, and 'Stockings' a nickname, by which we all knew him. The editor also made a mistake – Miss Fogg was Father's first wife and my mother, Sarah Armstrong being the name of my step-mother.

Regina - Volume 3 Number 1 January 1958

Strong Breezes

by a parishioner

One great difference between the Aspull of present days and the past is the change in its aroma. It did not need the keen nose of a child to tell which days in the week were 'brewing days' at the Haigh Brewery. The warm scent of it filled the air right down Haigh Road at least as far as the school and possibly further. Then we could look out for Mr Jack Jones who did the actual brewing and consequently seemed never quite to walk on a straight path. He rolled from side to side, being still under the influence of the powerful fumes. Even on Sundays there was no visible difference in his gait.

On other days the 'barm cart' went by, with its tank of brewer's yeast which was to be poured into the settling tanks away in the fields. There the acrid tang would lie and spread, so that we hurried past the tanks when we were walking that way. It was one of the most unpleasant flavours, composed of beer and barm, much worse than the actual smell of brewing to my childish nostrils.

But the loveliest scent, sweeter than roses, floated up to the Finger-Post from the malt kilns. I still cannot think of a more pleasant appetiser than a walk through a room of half-malted barley. There were two, or perhaps three, large red-tiled floors on which no foot might tread save that of Mr Ralphs the maltster. He spread the layer of barley, moistened it, controlled the heat and finally roasted it. I do not know all the processes he followed, but I could tell the stage reached in each room by my nose. The barley practically said, 'Eat me,' by the time it was ready to be made into, 'Drink me!'

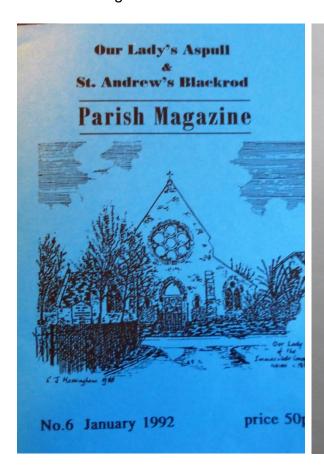
Along the side of each 'floor' was a narrow path where one could walk if sent on a message; and this was a great and infrequent privilege. It was followed by a cup of hot, newly ground coffee. Could one help finding a good appetite after that? It is not only in memory that those days are sweet; they were perfect. Sad was I when modern methods caused the malt-kiln to be closed.

For many years afterwards, the Brewery remained in full production. Mr Rawcliffe its owner, ruled over the village like a benevolent autocrat and was greatly respected by all of us. There was a day, for instance, when some wandering religious sect decided that we ought to be saved! And this at a time when both Our Lady's and Haigh Church were full of worshippers. The sect announced that a service would be held, complete with band, on the open space in front of the Brewery on a forthcoming Sunday afternoon. Mr Rawcliffe, having heard of this, gave orders that a donkey engine, old and long unused, should be oiled and made ready to start at any moment. Great was the amusement among the Brewery staff. We of course, the village children, were in on the secret.

When the eventful Sunday came, the band and the 'hot gospellers' assembled. The leader stood forth and ordered the band to strike up. But with the first note came the first chug of the engine. It roared away, chug, bump, bang, shuffle, rock and roll. And of course it won. No choir on earth could hope to compete with that racket. In fact it might have brought the houses down if the visitors had not taken the hint, packed up and left.

They never returned, though the old engine was kept at the ready for some time, just in case. And the villagers laughed!

The Parish Magazine was resurrected in 1988 and ran until 1993



FROM THE EDITOR

Twelve months seems to go very quickly nowadays. Maybe this has something to do with my age, but the time to produce another magazine has come round again.

Once again we have had a quiet year as a parish, with no major visits or events to report. Parish life has carried on and it is good to see parishioners getting together for occasions such as the Summer Fayre. The weather seemed to treat the two halves of the parish unfairly when it came to the Ecumenical Walks. Aspull was wash-out and Blackrod went ahead in lovely sunshine. One wonders, is it that "the sun shines on the righteous", or is that "God waters His favoured garden".

Last year we celebrated Philip Clarke's call-up to the national squad. This year he has made himself a regular in the Wigan team, taking over the position left by Ellery Hanley. A daunting task for anyone, but Philip has handled it in his customary, modest manner. Gerard Stazicker has moved on to play for Salford and we wish him every success.

My final comment last year was to express a hope for a peaceful solution to the Kuwait problem. It did not quite work out that way. The armed conflict was over very quickly but suffering still goes on over the whole region. My prayer this year is that a lasting, peaceful solution will be found to all the problems of the Middle East. I also pray that inter-ethnic troubles are quickly sorted out as Communist countries attempt to move towards democracy.

Turning our thoughts back to our own parish community, perhaps there are things we can do to help each other. Have you got a spare place in your car to take someone who is housebound along to Mass? Do you know anyone who might need a lift to the library or the doctors or anywhere else? Can you help them? If not, let someone else know, they may be able to help.

Perhaps there is someone who would like to go to confession but cannot get there by themselves.

Once again, a special thank you to those people and groups who have sent in articles for this issue, especially those who have sent something in which has not been used this time. I can assure you that I keep everything and will try to use it in the future. Sometimes I have a lot of pieces on similar themes and I try to keep a balance in the magazine. I think that the magazine should be a chronicle of the parish life. reporting and reflecting all aspects. I do need more articles along these lines. So, its that plea again. Do not be embarassed. If you organise something or just attend an event, a pilgrimage or whatever, put pen to paper. I shall be delighted to receive anything no matter how short. You do not have to be a journalist, or teacher! Do not wait until December, write about it when it happens and send it to me straight away. I can file it until I start to compile the next issue. Are there any parish groups who have not taken the opportunity to give an account of their activities to the parish. Just a lew words here may even increase membership. But I make no promises.

A final thought, remember the lonely, depressed and unemployed in your prayers.

Kevin Riley



Altar Flowers

Small donations of 10p or 5p are very much appreciated towards flowers for the Altar at St Andrews and at Our Lady's.

Josie Rothwell would like to thank St. Andrew's Guides and Brownies for their help at Easter and Christmas with flowers.

THE VILLAGE CENTRE

With the closing of Aspull Secondary School there was a certain amount of confusion as to what should happen about the building, previously known as The Annexe, which is used as a meeting place by several local groups.

After discussion between representatives of the those groups and the Local Authority, it was decided that the building should be repainted, the outer area cleared of brambles and weeds and the inside should be refurbished to become more a meeting place and less of a Home Economics unit.

It has been re-designated "The Village Centre" and is under the management of a committee formed from those groups who already make use of it such as, The Woman's Institute, The Toddlers' Play Group, The Aspull Local History Society, The Autumn Tints and the Rainbows.

This Centre could become an even more vital part of the village life as any organised group may apply to use it

Do you know of any Club or Society that is trying to find a venue that is convenient and inexpensive? The cost per session is less than £10.00 and this includes insurance.

Anyone who is interested can get further information, or make a booking through Mrs. Dootson on Wigan 831204.

- 00 Ooo -

To reflect God in all that is, both here and now, my heart must be a mirror empty, bright and clear.

Angelius Silesius

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER FOR 1989

BAPTISMS

The Parish of Our Lady's, Haigh and St. Andrew's, Blackrod extended a welcome to the following who were baptised into the family of Christ during 1989.

	A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR		A
Jan	KITTS	Edmund Robert Peter	Aspuil
	JONES	Ryan Philip Thomas	Aspull
	CAMPBELL-MOLEAN	Laura Clare	Blackrod
	STEELE	John Joseph	Blackrod
Feb	GASKELL	Mark James	Hampshire
	GWATKIN	Adam Thomas	Aspull
Mar	WILSON	Jemma Louise	Aspull
April	SMITH	Steven David	Aspull
	SUNTER	Jordan Thomas	Blackrod
	LAW	Joseph Patrick	Blackrod
May	McKAY	Alexis Rose	Blackrod
iviay	W-TOAT	Alexis Hose	Biackiou
July	WILKINSON	James Eric	Aspuil
	ECCLES	Patrick Thomas	Blackrod
	COWELL	Christopher	Blackrod
Aug	LAWLESS	Sean Peter Philip	Blackrod
	MAYERS	Rosie Fleur	Blackrod
	ASHFORD	Heath Richard	Blackrod
	MCALLISTER	Joseph Peter	Aspull
Sept	WHISTLECROFT	Ryan James	Whellev
	TAYLOR	Megan	Blackrod
	MAKINSON	Joshua Thomas	Blackrod
		- Tomas	Diackrou
Oct	WOODCOCK	Caroline Elizabeth	Whelley
	HALLAHAN	Michael	Blackrod

Dec

THOMAS

Carl Simon Holly Ruth

Blackrod Aspull

MARRIAGES

Congratulations to the following couples married in Our Lady's Church in 1989. We wish them a lifetime of happiness together Mark FARRIMOND (Wigan) and Susan CANNON (Aspull) Mark CRUMP (New Springs) and Suzanne KAY (Aspull) David BERRY (Aspull) and Susan COYNE (Aspull) Down ASHURST (Aspull) and Lisa Marie ROBINSON (Hindley) Duncan ECCLES (Blackrod) and Alison HAYES (Blackrod) David KNELLER (Goose Green) and Elizabeth COTTAM (Aspull) David RUTTER (Aspull) and Sandra BUCHHOLZ Michael TOOTILL (Blackrod) and Lorna WINSTANLEY (Aspull) Clive ATKINSON (Catterick) and Katherine SPEAK (Blackrod) John WHITTON (Westhoughton) and Alison LAWLESS (Blackrod) Graham GUNN (Bryn) and Lorraine KAY (Aspull) Kevin WEBSTER (Germany) and Angela PILKINGTON (Aspull)

DEATHS

1989 saw the sad loss of several of our parishioners. Condolences and prayers of the parish go out to them and their families.

John WELSBY	Aspull
Elizabeth DARWIN	Aspull
James SPENCER	Aspull
Fred HEINKE	Little Scotland
John SHARPE	Aspull
John Harold JACKSON	Aspull
Mary LEE	Aspull
Ellen PLETZ	Aspull
Albert HYMAN-MIRELSON	Blackrod
Madeleine COUPE	Wigan
Margaret KAY	Aspull
Richard BURKE	Aspull
John FITZPATRICK	Aspull
Robert Hugh UNSWORTH	Aspull
Joseph ANDERTON	Aspull
Jane BAILEY	Aspull
Elizabeth HOUGHTON	Blackrod

Our Lady's Church by 'Old Peg' (Taken from the Our Lady's Church Centenary Brochure 1858 – 1958)

The shade of dusk was sifting through the trees, An owl was hooting from its distant perch; And save the gentle sighing of the breeze, A silence settled round Our Lady's Church. The fast-declining day was soon to die, The pale half-moon peered o'er the tree-tops tall; A long red glow had decked the distant sky, And o'er the fields a mist had spread its pall. A pensive hush had lulled the hill of Haigh, The road was still; no person could be seen. I stood alone upon the pavement grey And looked upon that thought –inspiring scene. I looked upon the houses all around, Whose outline did the fading light besmirch. Till soon my gaze the sight arresting found – The Gothic outline of our stately church. I viewed the pointed roof, the well-worn stone, Whose form stood out so noble 'gainst the sky. I saw that homely grandeur of its own That binds our hearts in its endearing tie. Well have we known this church from childhood day: Did we not kneel therein when we were small To watch the Priest, and in our childlike way To gaze upon the lighted candles tall? How many troubled souls have sought that place To look for peace of mind in God's abode! What countless hearts have there been filled with grace When cleansed therein from sin's oppressive load! How many times upon that Altar's shelf Has there been offered daily by the Priest The Sacred Body of our Lord Himself – When all unite in that Celestial Feast! Consider all the Masses said therein: The Benedictions, prayers the visits made; The antidotes of wickedness and sin, The graces won for souls which long had strayed. What grace and beauty has this edifice! (And as I gazed my heart was filled with sanctifying glow); O how this outpost of our diocese Must fortify God's Kingdom here below! What prayers there have been said within those walls. The pen to write, the tongue to speak must fail; To see the people kneeling in the stalls,

The generous crowds that flock the Altar Rail.
I stood entranced; for long I looked in awe
On that most loved of all familiar scenes.
Such thoughts had never crossed my mind before

- What this Church is, and what it really means.
 - We worship in this place, in Christ's abode,
 - A witness to the triumphs of the Cross.

Here buds the Fruit, whose seed the Martyrs sowed!
Here lives the Faith 'spite centuries of loss!
But soon at length my thoughts I had to break;
'Twas getting late for night had fallen low
And spread about its dark and chilly shape,
While overhead the moon its misty glow.
I thanked the God Who stepped in Peter's barque
For all the things which he that night had shown
To me about the Church; then through the dark
With joyful step I hastened towards home.

Kath Roberts nee Whittle

My grandma was the caretaker at church and caretaker at school and my grandad was before that. They were in and out all day long, you name it they did it.

When the priests came my grandma used to cook for them, darn their socks; did all sorts. Then when Gerard Duffy was a priest the Bishop came; he didn't go straight to church, he went to my grandma's. He said will you show me where this young lad's come from, because we only had a little village; there were so few houses when we were growing up. So my grandma took him across to Duffy's which was in the row straight opposite church and they took the Bishop over and all they could see was washing hanging from the clothes rack! They had to part their way through! Nobody had anything in those days but we were used to it.

My sister moved into Church Street, our Annie, when she got married and she'd twins and she was always with my grandad. He used to be in and out of church and one day the twins went in, they were only about four, and they lit every candle; there was tallow everywhere!

It was half past seven Mass every Sunday morning, we always used to come; and then on Sunday night it was Benediction, which we all came to, and Fr Taylor was the Parish Priest. When we were in our teens we all went to St John's Youth club in Wigan, but the bus was only every hour so we used to come out of Benediction five minutes sooner to catch the bus to go to St John's youth club. Fr Taylor got wind that we were all going out five minutes sooner so he locked the door and wouldn't let us out. So that was us!

When I was getting married Fr Rylands was the Assistant Priest. Now, my husband was a staunch Methodist and I brought him up to see Fr Taylor about getting married

and he said what do you want to get married for? Well of course he didn't know what to say, so he just said well I love her and Fr Taylor said I'll think about it... I don't think I'll marry you. So I went home in tears and said that's it, I'm going to the Methodists. I broke my heart, it was terrible. My dad then told my grandad and he went and had a do with Fr Taylor and he said what's the lad supposed to say? (He was only twenty-one David) and he said he should have said he wanted another sacrament; well he'd not a clue, David. Eventually, Fr Rylands married us, he was lovely.

William C.1040

Whittle Family c.1840

Kath's great-grandfather James Whittle (Jem) and family.

Sketches by Jimmy Whittle (Kath's father)





Fingerpost and view of Walking Day from Whittle's shop (One House and Moor Pit No 5 in the background).





<u>Back row from the left</u>: Tommy Duffy's mother, Mrs Moore from the Red Lion, Miss Whittle, she lived at the top of Haigh, her father worked at the smithy opposite the brewery where Bolton's is now, Mrs Higham, Mrs Hamer, Bob Hamer's wife, he was an artist, Mrs Hawkins, Eileen's mother, Fr Foody, Ellen Whittle, Mrs Eastham, Joan Eastham's mother and one of the last two is Mrs Duffy.

<u>Front row from the left:</u> Second lady in is Mrs Bowden, Ken's mum, she was the midwife, don't remember the next lady, she lived Church Street at the top house, then that's Lydia Whittle (my mum), can't remember the next lady, then Mary Hulse, and I can't think of anybody else (as remembered by Kath Roberts).

Mary Unsworth nee Grady

In my class at primary school there was Frank Ford, Ted Higham, Mrs Southworth (May Spencer), Mildred King from Blackrod, Margaret and Eileen Duffy, Annie Grady and myself. We started school at the age of three and Miss Ireland used to make us Horlicks. I remember the cups, I can see them now. There was a big tin of Horlicks; I remember her stirring it up and we had to wait until it went cool.

There were only three teachers; Miss Ireland, Miss Giblin and Miss Moore - the head. Miss Giblin took us on nature walks; she knew everything and she would take us everywhere. We used to go up the Line and places where we shouldn't have gone really. She took our John's class to Haigh Hall and they shouldn't have been there at all. They saw this fella with a gun (the ranger) and she said, 'Run for your lives!' She must have been able to run too!

My favourite lesson was English. I won a prize once for handwriting from Turog Bread and then another one with Cadbury's Chocolate and I got a load of chocolate – well they were thrilled to bits our lot. I didn't like maths though.

We left school at 14. We didn't know what we wanted to do. My mother didn't want us to work in the mill. My mother took us down to Coop's and we got on.

During the war they built a brick air raid shelter in the field behind the school, it was horrible. There was one near Cross Street but we never went in that. The only place we went was the Brewery because it was warm up there. But my dad only went once because he over-lied for work so he didn't go up again. He used to go out in the pen when he heard the planes going over. We had an Anderson shelter out in the garden but it was always full of water so we never went in that.

The playground was a cinder yard with a cobbled path up to the door; when it rained... We played hopscotch, tiggy, skilleevy.

We did a lot of knitting for the soldiers - yellow and blue the colours, Our Lady's colours. We'd knit socks, gloves and balaclavas. We had to learn the national anthem for France, the Marseillaise. I could sing it but I've forgotten it now.

Miss Moore went on a world trip - she got leave for twelve months before the war. She was always friendly with Aunties and she sent Bob (Unsworth) a little egg cup from Australia made of this wood, I think I've still got it. She used to send us cards wherever she went. They used to put it up at school and we used to read where she'd been. She was very interesting and when she came back she told us all about it.

Everybody had clogs - some used to have rubber irons but we had proper irons because that's all we had when we went skating on Pendlebury's lodge. They'd get clogged and you had to knock the snow off before you got on the ice and everybody was always falling.

I remember Freddie Pearson jumping out of Our Lady's School window because of something Miss Moore had done and he ran up to Haigh School. He said, 'I'm not coming here anymore, I'm going to Haigh School. But Mr Wood (the headmaster)

made him come back. Freddie said I'm not going to the Catholic school any more, I'm coming here!'

It was hard getting jobs then but we were alright at Coop's. And then we had to take Carrie, John Bromlow's Greek wife - Athens she came from. Well, she couldn't speak a word of English. She was a beautiful hand sewer and she used to do lovely buttonholes. John could speak fluent Greek through being in Greece during the war and people said he should have spoken to her in English so she would have learned it but he didn't. All she used to say in English was, 'Bloody English weather!' She was always coming out with that. I said well don't say that when you come here. I went to their wedding at the Running Horses.

My Auntie Mary used to tell me about when it was 'Orange Day'. They used to parade up to Saint David's and there was always one man riding a horse dressed as King Billy with a hat on and all. All the men of the parish would come out and watch. Well it turns out the horse was the bin horse that used to go round emptying the bins; could this man get it up to Saint David's... Well the men were in stiches laughing. The poor man was so embarrassed; he couldn't get the horse to move.

When it was Corpus Christie, June, they used to strew petals all round church. We used to have little baskets full of rose petals, it used to smell lovely. I don't know who had to clear it up after! Red rose petals.

My dad always kept to that fast before Communion from midnight the night before.

We used to have a pump organ. Jimmy Whittle used to come early to get it going. Auntie Maggie (Margaret Unsworth) used to play sometimes and Eileen Lavin. Singing; there would be Tom Taylor and Fred Hank, Tom Spence and Tom Duffy, Clifford Ashurst, Molly Crompton, Minnie Wimsey - she had a nice voice - and Nellie Price (no-one liked standing near her because she had a wobbly voice; she would put you off). I know Joe Moore used to go in but he'd sneak out before Mass was over. Then the organ would make a funny noise and they had to get pumping again. I don't know when it was electrified, but I know they were glad!

There was one lorry that used to go up Haigh Road with all the bones and the drivers used to be grinning because they couldn't smell it (they were at the front and the smell was at the back) and there'd be maggots on the road after it had gone. Then the lads would collect the maggots for fishing.

Our Lady's School just before demolition 1976



Note: airshaft in background.

Memories of Our Lady's School by Barbara Livesey nee Unsworth

I started school on my 3rd birthday, 14th January 1937. My teacher was Miss Ireland and her classroom was a big room with huge fireplace where there was a warm fire. The babies' class sat at tables near this fire.

There were five children in my class, Keith Barker, Lily Smith, Jean Adams, James Pilkington and myself. We learned our tables, did arithmetic and recited nursery rhymes. To learn to read we had tin boxes with different items in such as a button, a buckle, a bead and in one a lead swan. The names were written on cards and we had to match them to the item. Miss Moore, the headmistress, gave me a doll in a cot because I didn't cry on my first day.

As we went up to the next year, we were given blackboards and chalk. Miss Ireland gave us a card with a picture on and a sentence underneath. We had to copy the sentence out on the blackboard then take it to show Miss Ireland at her desk. We had to read it then she would rub it out and ask us to write it again from memory. At playtime we had milk to drink in the summertime but in winter Miss Ireland made Horlicks for us and we drank this from mugs which had nursery rhyme pictures on. Each afternoon, Miss Ireland sat on a tall chair and read us a story.

The schoolyard wasn't paved so it was usually muddy. We all wore clogs and I guess it must have made an awful noise on the wooden floors when we walked about.

The Second World War started when I was in the infant class. The council built a brick air raid shelter in the field and we had to go in it if the siren sounded.

We all took a bar of chocolate to school which Miss Ireland kept in a cupboard. This was in case we were kept in the air raid shelter for a long time and needed something to eat. At the end of the war these were given back to us and since chocolate was rationed it was wonderful to have a whole bar each.

Standard One was the top class of the infants and we sat in double desks. By now there was only Keith Barker and myself of the same age because Lily Smith had moved to Horwich, Jean Adams had gone to Maryport in Cumbria and James Pilkington had also left.

In Standard One we had books to write in instead of a blackboard. I also remember being taught to knit with thick wooden needles and cotton yarn. It was very hard to push the needles into the stiches.

After infant class we went up into Miss Giblin's class. She taught the juniors. Keith and myself went straight into Miss Moore's class. We were both terrified but once in class enjoyed it.

It was summer 1941 when we moved into the 'Top Class'. This was the senior class and taught by the headmistress - Miss Moore.

The senior classroom was a large room with desks, two children to each desk. There was a large fireplace and a gas stove.

A typical school day

Miss Moore travelled from Birkdale near Southport and Miss Ireland from Parbold. They came by train to Wigan then by bus to Aspull. They arrived at school at 8:45am and as they got off the bus we had to make two lines by the side of the path in the school yard – the boys on one side and the girls on the other. As they walked up the path we had to say, 'Good morning Miss Moore' and, 'Good morning Miss Ireland'.

School started when Miss Giblin rand the bell and we stood in lines ready to go into school. Miss Moore stood by the door and we had to have clean clogs, a clean handkerchief, clean hands and our identity disc.

The first lesson was morning prayers then it was Religion. We had to learn the Catechism and each morning we had to recite what we had learned the night before.

After Religion it was Sums, now called maths. We learned tables, number bonds and mental arithmetic. This lesson lasted until playtime.

After play it was English – Comprehension, Composition and Grammar. Some mornings, Miss Moore would say, 'I have marked your comprehension and there will be gnashing and grinding of teeth!' This meant we hadn't done very good work.

In the afternoon we were taught Geography and History. We had history lessons from the radio and we learned about the Kings and Queens of England. In summer,

Miss Giblin would take us out for nature walks so that we could learn about flowers and birds.

Miss Moore taught sewing and embroidery and I remember making a blouse for myself.

Discipline

If we were naughty, Miss Ireland smacked us with a ruler but if we talked too much she hung a long red flannel tongue on our forehead and we had to stand in a corner.

Miss Moore had a cane which she hung on a hook near the cupboard. During the war, because it was difficult to get new canes, when the last one wore out she bought a leather strap. This didn't hurt as much as the cane so we were pleased. One day she arrived with six new canes. She said a kind gentleman who she travelled with on the train had given them to her.

Miss Moore was also very keen on manners and politeness. We were taught to say please and thank you and to stand if anyone came into the classroom.

School meals

At dinnertime we went home for our meals but the children from Blackrod brought their own meals. If they had brought a pie then Miss Moore would heat it up in the gas stove. She would also make them a warm drink.

Later, school meals were made in a hut near where Aspull Clinic is today. We all had to walk down to the hut every day to get our dinner. I can only remember hot pot and rice pudding but there must have been other meals as well.

Sport

We didn't have a hall for PE so on nice days we went outside for 'Drill' and to play games like rounders. When it was raining we would do skipping on mats inside, trying to keep on the same spot.

All the classes did country dancing. In addition, the boys did sword dancing using sticks.

On Sports Day we had competition races such as the wheelbarrow race and sack race.

In January 1944 Keith and I were entered for the County Scholarship. She promised us £1 towards our books if we passed and I still remember being sent home by Miss Moore with £1 to give to my mother.

In summer 1944 I left Our Lady's School to start at the Convent in Wigan. It was hard work in the lessons and the teachers were strict but I must have enjoyed it because I subsequently became a teacher myself.

John Burns Born 1938 Lived at 44, Bolton Road (Higher Gullet)

Something that's always stuck in my mind about Miss Ireland; she used to sit on a big stool every day and read to us Wind in the Willows. I can see it like it was yesterday.

The school yard was cinder, there were bricks and allsorts, and we used to have a raffia mat for doing exercises. You'd put it down on the floor and there'd be a big brick in the middle of your back when you were lying down peddling.

Joe Almond, from Blackrod, used to come to school on his pony. He'd come up Tucker's Hill and up Toddington and then he'd come down the old line into the school. He used to tie it up at the back of the school wall and we all used to get on it.

When I got to the top class I used to have to get coal for all the fires. I had to lift a trap door up near the fireplace in Miss Ireland's classroom and go down to the cellar and fill these buckets then fetch them up and take them round, a bucket for each fireplace.

They used to deliver milk; it was left outside the front of the school near the door and in winter the tops used to be coming off because it was frozen. We used to have to put the crates near the fire to thaw them out. They had cardboard tops which you could pull up to put straws in.

We used to do potato picking; with the war there were no men. What the spud machine used to do was turn the ground and throw them out. You'd get an old sack, put it round your waist... We'd try and stamp a few in so we didn't have to pick them up!

We used to have to learn the Catechism until you knew it off by heart and the Latin Mass, all the responses, a little brown Catechism it was.

If you knew you were in for having the cane, then there used to be horses in the back and you used to try and get a horse hair; they reckoned that if you put a horse hair across your palm it wouldn't hurt. But it did! When you'd had the cane, you used to go back and hold the metal leg of the desk to cool the pain.

We used to make darts out of pen nibs. We used to split the nibs at the end and make a flight, stick it in, and throw these pen nibs at one another. Well, Mr Flynn could see them flying about and he'd turn round and throw the board duster at us. Happy days!

I'll tell you what we used to have... carbide. Carbide was used for lamps. We used to go to the chemist and say, 'can I have some carbide?' and he'd say, 'what do you want it for?' - because it's explosive and gives a gas off, they knew what we were doing! You'd get a syrup tin or treacle tin and knock a hole in the bottom, and we used to be able to find steel hawsers from the pit - steel wire with rope in the middle - it used to burn slowly if you lit it. We'd put some carbide inside the tin, spit on it so it was giving gas off, then put your clog over the top of it and then hold the burning rope until it exploded and blew the lid off! Or put it in a bottle with water in it and

throw it in the pond and it'd explode and kill the fish! Or drop it in an ink well; it fizzes like hell - you can't stop it - you'd put your hand over it to try and stop the ink bubbling up!

Dinners would include tapioca, semolina, and prunes. After you'd had your dinner and you went outside we'd sit at the side of the road with the prune stones and keep rubbing them until you wore it away on one side and it was like a little boat. Easily pleased!

I used to say, 'I've now't do Mam,' there was no telly. 'Here,' she'd say, and give me a potato, 'go and make a hedgehog.' And I used to go to the Fingerpost picking all the matchstalks up and sticking them in the potato. Also, we'd collect bus tickets - all different colours for different prices — and you'd pick them up and make a concertina out of them; double each end over one, then do another, and another until you had a little concertina.

I remember my First Holy Communion. I remember coming back to the school - you had to take your own eggs then. And I can remember now having an egg and jelly. I can see us all now, white shirt and a red sash. I remember being frightened to death when I went to confession.

I remember the priests visiting the houses at least once a year; and this priest came and he was signing something and my dad said that's funny, no nib. And he said yes my last parish bought me this when I was leaving; and it was a Biro - they'd just come out.

We used to go playing in the Brewery and the cellar walls were covered in cork and I used to rip it off and put it in a bag and fetch it home for lighting the fire.

The benches in church had name cards on them – Mr Higham, Dr Cooke - and I remember my dad taking me to church when I was a kid and the kneelers then were wood. I used to say, 'It's hurting my knees dad.' He'd say, 'Kneel on your cap.' Well there was a button on my cap and when I knelt I'd be kneeling on the button.

Church would be full, and all the women would wear scarfs and all the blokes would always come with caps on, everybody wore caps then. And after Mass the blokes used to stand by the wall in Church Street until the Red Lion opened and they went in. It'd be 3 o' clock when we got back. Cliff Ashurst singing, Joe Moore on the piano - on the back a row of pints all lined up for him. They'd sing 'Rottenstall Annual Fair' and 'Mother Kelly's Doorstep'. Then Jack Parks - you couldn't get Jack up until he'd had a few pints, but when he started he was just like Al Jolson, he was brilliant. Harry Gorner would sing and whistle. Norman Winnard used to sing all Jim Reeves songs. Jack Whistlecroft would sing 'Ghost Riders in the Sky'. Charley Hulse would play the mouth organ.

Our Lady's rugby team in 1952



Clockwise from top left: Derick Coyle, John Burns, Ronnie Kerr, Gerald Atherton, Brian Kelly, Frank Fitzpatrick, Raymond Summers, John Mather, Billy Grady, Kevin Dowd, Alan Whittle, John Bailey, and Jack Scott. (John also pointed out John Mathers clog toe; he'd forgotten to bring his boots for the photograph!)

Anita Caine

One of our punishments from Miss Unsworth was, 'Go up to Our Lady's and kneel there, don't come back until 3 o'clock.' So we used to go to Haigh Hall... But Miss Giblin would often be in church so sometimes we got caught. There was me, Edgar Boardman, Eileen Wimsey and we came back black, we'd be climbing trees...

They were quite strict school teachers then, today they're nothing like what they were. She had a big duster for the board, she thought nothing of throwing it at you. It never hit me thank goodness, if it had hit you it would have hurt.

Yvonne Brown nee Caine

My great grandad lived at 57 Haigh Road. It was a two-bedroom terrace with an outside toilet. In 1891 he was living with his wife, three sons and a baby daughter. He also provided lodgings for five miners! Times were indeed hard.

1891 Census 57, Haigh Road, Aspull, Wigan							
Name	Status	Age	Occupation	Where Born			
Matthew	Head	36	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			
Caine							
Sarah Ellen	Wife	30		Darwen			
Edward	Son	13	Miner	Aspull			
Matthew	Son	7	Scholar	Aspull			
James	Son	2		Aspull			
Anne	Daughter	2 months		Aspull			
James	Lodger	35	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			
Flannery							
Thomas Caine	Lodger	20	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			
Henry Grady	Lodger	24	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			
Patrick Grady	Lodger	23	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			
Peter Grady	Lodger	22	Miner	Co Mayo Ire			

Alan Brown and Yvonne Caine



Note: Number 57 Haigh Road is one of the terraced houses in the background. Also, John Higham's shop last house on the right.

Fr Wilson performing the Wedding Ceremony of Alan Brown and Yvonne Caine 22nd October 1966.



Note: altar installed c.1919 made by F. Stuflesser, Tirol, Austria.

First Communion Class c. 1953



Audrey Baron, Yvonne Caine, Maureen Keighery, Sheila Gardiner, Doreen Davies, Margaret Hollis.





Note: Church Street in background, where our Fr. Henry Jones first took residence in number 4, renting number 5 for the school.

Marion Cheers

In 1969 I came to the old Our Lady's school and Mrs Lee and I shared a class; she did two days and I did three days. As we got more children coming from Blackrod, where there'd been a lot of building work, we needed more space. So the new school was planned and built. At the time Mr Keene was the head and Mr Flynn was the deputy. Mrs Vose had the reception class, Mrs Taylor had top infants/lower juniors, Mrs Lee and I had the middle juniors, and Mr Flynn had the top juniors. There were no seniors since St Joseph's was in use then. We had our own kitchen, meals were cooked on the premises. It was a happy school but space was very limited. We used the television programmes quite a lot, but getting the television on its high trolley from one classroom to another was difficult. We had these folding partitions between the classes so it disrupted everyone when the television had to be moved from one room to another. Also, the toilet facilities were at the bottom of the yard; of course that was another unpleasant site. In 1978 I left because I had my son Paul and Mr Ward was appointed to the new school.

In the early seventies we did a sponsored walk from school to Rivington. We walked through the fields to Blackrod and then across to Horwich where the Squirrel Pub used to be and then across to Rivington Barn. I've no idea how we got back. It was in aid of an evening club for special needs children in Wigan.

Karen Duffy

I remember going on a sponsored walk to Rivington and everybody got very excited. It was a real novelty for the time, I remember that. Mr Keene was the headteacher, then there was Mrs Vose and Mrs Taylor. Alexander Simpson is on the photo, also Martin Ashurst, Pat Cottle, Philip Crompton, myself and Kevin Duffy (my cousin, he's now living in North Carolina), Cecilia Unsworth who plays the organ, and Stephen Gwinnett.





Nativity Play. Christmas c.1970



Back Row: Christine Duffy, Deborah Williams, Diane Rigby, Lynne Topping, Elaine Carroll, Sandra Vaughan, Suzanne Kay, Doreen Mc Mahon, Jeanette Mc Mahon, ?? Diane Mc Mahon, Gail Roberts, Manuel Flores, David Greenhall, James Fisher. Front Row: Andrew Taylor, ??, James Webber, Beverley Flanagan, Celia Hyland, Christopher Talbot, Stephen Slater St. Joseph and Mary: Ian Cooke and Lynne Goulden



Our Lady's School shortly before the new school was built c.1975. Joan Duffy (right) highlighting concern regarding the need to buttress the school due to mining subsidence.

Memories of the 'May Queen'

Every May the children of the parish would parade through the streets in fancy dress. Different streets would choose their 'May Queen Day' and with the help of our

parents, we would dress up and process around the village. Locals would show their appreciation with a few pennies which we would, more often than not, spend on sweets.

May Queen c.1935

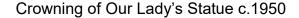


Front Row: Michel Whittle, Mary Winrow, Stuart ??. Second Row: Joan Makinson, Kath Whittle, Helen Whittle, Josephine Unsworth, Tommy Whittle, Joan Winrow. Third Row: Rose Gaskell, Helen Gaskell, Yvonne Breckell, Rita Whittle. Back Row: Molly Whittle, Michelle Mather.

The Crowning of Our Lady as 'Queen of the May'

Organised in school, a girl's name would be drawn out of a hat to crown the statue of Our Lady. She would be accompanied by several other girls and a page boy. Later on, in the 1980s, all the First Holy Communion names were put into a bag, boys and girls, and a child would be chosen. This was then kept secret. No-one knew until the Sunday afternoon when we went to church and whomever's name had been selected would be called up to crown.

Names of children chosen include, Samantha Bird, Janice Cain, Rose Gaskell, Marie Marcroft.





Helen Whittle (crowning), Kevin Dowd (Page boy), Rose and Helen Gaskell



Margaret Brindle and Billy Whittle, other children include Agnes Ball and Dorothy Dickinson (circa 1920)



Margaret Brindle, Billy Whittle (Train bearer) 1920s



Margaret Brindle Crowning c.1930



Janie Warters, Lily Moss, Mary Pemberton, Freda Ralphs

Corpus Christie Procession – Strewing

Each year on the feast of Corpus Christie there would be a Eucharistic Procession where the Blessed Sacrament would be carried in procession preceded by children strewing flower petals. We used to chant, 'Jesus my Lord, my God, my all.' Then there would be the ringing of a bell and we would dip into the basket of petals, kiss them then turn and throw the petals on the floor.

Our Lady's Tennis Club – Eileen Hawkins

In my Mammy and Daddy's day, the four courts were on the corner of Riley Lane to the left of the road as you go out of Aspull. The cricket club was across the road where my house is today. Years later, we used the two courts originally belonging to the Rawcliffe family and situated behind Culraven House. I remember we weren't allowed to play at Benediction time, we had to come to Benediction. Members of the club included Frank Fishwick (Alice Moore's husband who lived in the gatehouse on Copperas Lane), Kevin Grady, Evelin McCallister, Barbara Unsworth, Derick Cusarni, Terry Chadwick, Lawrence Anderton and Norman Morton. I used to play with Terry Chadwick and we played against all the clubs in Wigan. When it closed I then joined the Bellingham, that was in 1954.

The Church Altar - Eileen Hawkins

The altar was put in when my father was sixteen and he was born in 1903. Before that it was an altar made with packing cases by the Unsworths. (Each parishioner was asked to give a day's wages to help pay for the new altar.) The altar was made by F. Stuflesser, St Ulrich in Groden, Tirol, Austria and had statues of Saint George

and Saint Patrick on either side. There were also two carved images depicting the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt.

Confession - Betty Bird

The confessional was at the back of church. I remember I went in one day and Fr Moriarty said, 'Mrs Bird, where's number 24 Holly Road?' I thought he wasn't supposed to know who was in the confessional! The next time I went I'd been talking to this woman outside. She said, 'I feel like jumping in the canal.' I said, 'You mustn't do that love, it's a sin. If you do that, you'll never go to Heaven.' Then when I went in the confessional he said, 'Don't give her any money because I've given her money twice today for bus fare home and she's gone back in the pub!' I thought, if that's my confession I'm not coming again.

I remember at school having difficulty with long division using old money - farthings and half-pennies.

Confession – Maureen Dittman

I used to write my sins down - well I still do - and I went into the confessional and closed the door and it was dark, there was no light. I asked if I could open the door. 'Oh,' he said, 'do you get claustrophobia?' I said, 'Well, not really but I can't read my sins.' 'That's a bit dicey isn't it, writing your sins down?' he said. 'It's okay,' I replied, 'I write them in shorthand!'

Attendance man – Yvonne Brown nee Caine

Mr Greenhalgh would come and look at the registers to check who'd not been attending then he'd do house visits. He wore a big mac and it gave you a feeling of terror. He had a little moped and he used to ride around the streets.

John, Kevin, Eileen and Mary Grady

We used to walk down to the Fingerpost for school dinners, to the hut (where the clock stands today). Miss Gibson was the cook. There was one dish and if you say the name now I'm heaving, never mind looking at it - it was semolina. We shared the hut with the Methodists and used to get greeted with this song, 'Catholic bulldogs pepper and salt, can't eat a dinner with a knife and fork'. And there was a hole, and if you didn't like your dinner they used to say pass your plate and it used to go down the hole. It must have been awful under those floorboards.

I'm sure my dad loved us getting good hidings. They used to send word from school, 'Gave John the cane today...' and you'd think he'd sympathise with you. He'd get his pen... take that back with you; on it was, 'Please give him the same again. Thank you.'

School Inspection Reports

Report by H.M.I. Mr C.A. Richardson September 13th 1933

The 70 children in this school are arranged in two classes under a Head Mistress and two assistants. The top class is divided into five groups, taken jointly by the Head Mistress and one of her assistants. To some extent the teaching is specialized (e.g. in English, Music, Dancing, Geography, Handwork, Nature Study and Physical Training). Otherwise the Head Mistress takes the upper groups of the class.

The fundamental subjects are soundly taught. Reading and Recitation show expression and careful speech. Composition improves from group to group and reaches a good level at the top. Satisfactory results were obtained from a test set in Mechanical Arithmetic.

The History and Geography schemes might with advantage give the children themselves more to do in the top group. Expression work in these subjects needs more development. A detailed scheme of Drawing has been recently projected, and the girls are now to have lessons in this subject as well as boys.

The teaching is on the liberal lines, and the children's knowledge of Nature Study shows that they are encouraged to look about them. The wireless, which used to be a feature, has unfortunately had to be given up owing to expense.

The Infants' class is in the hands of a capable teacher and much good work is done there. Improvement could be made in two respects, namely by the keeping of individual records of the children's progress, and by the renewal of apparatus, some of which has evidently seen long service. The above points were discussed with the Head Mistress.

Report by H. M. Inspectors Aspull Roman Catholic Primary School, Lancashire Inspected on 21st and 22nd May, 1962

This school has 146 boys and girls between the ages of four and fifteen years, including 30 pupils over eleven years and 50 children in the Infants' class.

Recent redecoration has much improved the main room which has also had a new floor. The Infants' room will be redecorated this summer. A new kitchen was added recently and meals are served in two classrooms. On the day of the inspection braised beef and onions, potatoes and cabbage, followed by a steamed pudding and custard made a good meal. The service from one hatch was rather slow and the tables were too close together for comfort. It is suggested that some re-arrangement and the introduction of family service would improve the organisation and provide the

opportunities for social training. It was a wet day and the children could not go outside. This imposed an added strain and emphasized the inadequacy of the buildings. In difficult circumstances the pupils settled down to read and talk and their behaviour was very good indeed.

The Infants' class presents a big problem. At the beginning of the school year there were forty six pupils including sixteen under five years of age. During the year, five more have been admitted and the class now has fifty pupils with an age spread of three years. A part-time teacher gives help during the mornings but, in the afternoons, a good Infants' teacher struggles with an almost impossible task. It would be better to keep the class at a smaller level at least during the first two terms. In the circumstances entry before the term in which the pupil attains the age of five cannot be justified.

In the two junior classes there is much honest work and the pupils' attainments in the 3R's are generally satisfactory but rather too much time is spent on formal language exercises and copied notes. Teaching methods were discussed during the inspection.

The Headmaster has the onerous task of teaching all the senior pupils in a small part of the main room, divided from a junior class only by a curtain. Some welcome relief is provided by arrangements for instruction in Handicraft and Housecraft at local centres and swimming at Wigan Baths. Books from the County Library provide opportunities for wider reading. The Headmaster and his staff perform a difficult task with patience and devotion. Next year the opening of a new Roman Catholic Secondary School at Horwich will ease, to some extent, the extreme pressure on accommodation and the school will be re-organised for juniors and infants. The managers will no doubt consider how the school may be improved and equipped for its new role.

Drowning of John 'Jack' Brindle - 1926

Jack Brindle was the great uncle of Neil West, he drowned at Top Lock when he was just 10 years of age. He was the son of Robert and Margaret Brindle. Robert was a road sweeper. Jack had three sisters, Margaret (later Gregory), Ann (later Fearnley) and Lillian (Lily, later West) Brindle. This article appeared in the Wigan Observer on Saturday 9th October 1926:

The Royal Humane Society has just made the following parchment awards for heroism in life-saving. Leonard Rigby (13) of 253 Bolton Rd, Aspull for attempting to save from drowning at Aspull on August 9th, John Brindle (10) of 107 Dicconson Lane, Westhoughton who got into difficulties while bathing. Brindle was drowned.



From the back, John 'Jack' Brindle, Margaret Brindle, front row, Ann Brindle, Lilian Brindle

The story was revisited by the Wigan Observer on the 22nd October 1976:

Leonard's Heroism Award Ticks On!

Mr Leonard Rigby, a hero of the 1920s, was in touch with us the other day to tell us that the silver watch he received for heroism fifty years ago is still ticking away soundly.

All of which proves two things. Firstly, that Mr Rigby himself is still going strong and secondly, that our weekly 'in the past' column is still as popular as ever with you readers.

Mr Rigby of Atherton Rd, Hindley Green, became a hero on August 9th, 1926, when he gallantly tried to save the life of a boy in who drowned in the canal at Aspull.

Mr Rigby received the Royal Humane Society Parchment. Later, Mr John Allan Parkinson, then M.P. for Wigan, presented him with the watch paid for by the Carnegie Fund.

It is very nice to hear that a very gallant gentleman of yesteryear is, like his watch, very much alive and ticking.

Parish Life in Photographs



Our Lady's School c. 1900

Back row: ??, Kitty Burgess, Harry Unsworth, Ted Walsh, James Owens. Next to back row: Jonnie Leigh, Jimmy Leigh, John Owens, Jack Morris, Joe Unsworth, John Moore, John Ball, Frank Halpin, Miss Burgess. Second row: Kitty Morris, Kitty Walsh, Ada Walsh, ??, Annie Morris, Maggie Spencer, Nellie Doran, ? Naylor, Martha Spencer. Front row: Tommy Hawkins, Kitty Owens, ? Owens, Margaret Unsworth, Alex Moore, Charlie Leigh, Tommy Owens.



Walking Day c.1900 Haigh Road. Note: Wall Hey air shaft in background.







Our Lady's Dramatic Society 1924





Our Lady's School 1933

Back Row: Cyril Sinclair, Bob Owens, Wilf Gill, Gerard Ralphs, Paul Eckersley, John Morgan, Francis Ball, Bill Whittle, Norman Ralphs, Gerald Monks, Albert Caine, Jack Ball. Next to Back Row: Jimmy McMahon, Mary Eckersley, Lily Brindle, Margaret White, Agnes Ball, Mary McMahon, Annie Gill, May Sinclair, Mary Caine, Annie Parr, Margaret Broomhead, Winnie Caine, Margaret Ralphs, Gladys Caine, Bill Dickinson. Middle Row: Robert Sinclair, Jim Spencer (behind), Leonard Smith, Minnie Dickinson, Mary Morgan, Freda Ralphs, Annie Brindle, Lily Owens, Mollie Pemberton, Bridget Acton, May Smith, Lily Moss, Tom Ford, Billy Morgan, Fred Piertney, Desmond Ramwell, Tom Spencer (behind). Second Row: Gerard Duffy, Kevin Grady, Jack Higham, Jimmy Acton, Ken Ramwell, Betty Ball, Frank Ford, Joe Morgan, Ellis Fitzpatrick, Robert Unsworth, Mildred King, May Spencer, Cissie Pilkinton, Annie Grady, Mary Grady. Front Row: Harold Smith, Harold Tierney, Edna Tierney, Ted Higham, Eileen Morris, Joe Moore, Margaret Duffy, Mary Unsworth, John Fitzpatrick, Tom Duffy.



Crowning c.1938 ??, Edna Tierney, Peter Higham, John Duffy



Wedding of John (Jack) Moore to Margaret Burns 1957. Fr John Unsworth's first wedding ceremony. Note Communion rails and decorated sanctuary wall.



Councillor John Moore, Annie Moore, Joe Moore, John (Jack) Moore, Margaret Burns, Evelyn Ashurst, Lily Burns, Frank Burns. Note: original presbytery in background. 1957

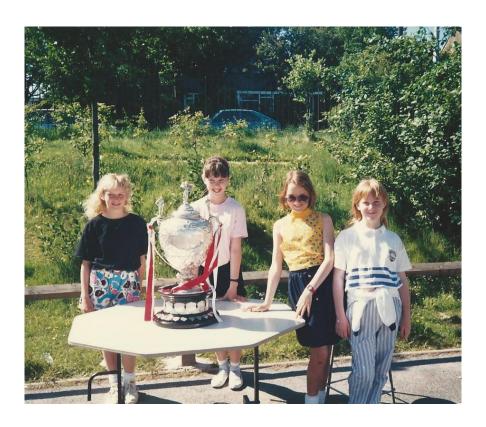


Crowning c.1965 Vera Woosnam, James Hank, Margaret Mitchinson, Mary Unsworth





St Andrew's Brownies 1983 – Wendy Unsworth, Kirsten Riley, Lisa Hirani, Leonora Deakin, Elaine Taylor and Hayley Hurst



Our Lady's School Fair, showing off the Challenge Cup Trophy in 1988. Stacey Roberts, Kirsten Riley, Alison Southern and Katie Hulme



First Communions May 1987 at St. Andrew's



Confirmation Class 2004

Back Row: Bishop Terence Brain, Fr. Kevin Foulkes. Third Row: Thomas Collins, Chantelle Coyne, Alex Lawless, Jason Cox, Adam Clossick, ?? Second Row: Emily Roberts, Hannah Unsworth (behind), Alex Baines, Olivia Jones (behind), Rebekah Laithwaite, Leona Philpot, ??, Megan Cullen, Chloe Cameron, Ryan Wood, Matthew Lavelle. Front Row: Ryan Webster, Shannon Carney, Isabel Thomas, Amelia Thomas, Georgina Thomas, Eleanor Brown, Jack Pearson.

Appendix

The Opening of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church, Haigh Taken from 'The Tablet' 1st May 1858

We have the pleasure of presenting to our readers an account of the opening of the above edifice for Divine worship on Sunday last, with all the devotional solemnities prescribed by the rubic, by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Turner, Bishop of Salford, assisted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Goss, Bishop of Liverpool.

The following clergymen were present: The Very Rev. Provost Croskell V.G., Fr Seed S.J., the Rev. Fr. Corlett O.S.B., the Rev. Fr. Grant S.J., the Rev. J.V. Meany, the Rev. D. Vandenweghe, the Rev. Fr. Margison O.S.B., the Rev. G.B. Clegg and the Rev. Henry Jones the Pastor of the mission.

The building had been previously blessed at 7 o'clock that morning by the Rev. H. Jones, after which he celebrated the first Mass in it. The second Mass at 9 o'clock by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Goss attended by the children of the congregation. At 11 o'clock the Pontifical High Mass was sung by His Lordship the Bishop of the Diocese, at which also officiated Provost Croskell as Assistant Priest, Canon Seed as Deacon, Canon Carter as Sub-deacon, Frs. Corlett and Seed as Deacons of the Throne and Fr Clegg as Master of Ceremonies.

The morning sermon was preached by the Bishop of Liverpool from the Epistle and Gospel of the day; but referring also to the sign elsewhere indicated by the Redeemer of His Mission – that the poor shall have the Gospel preached to them; and in the course of His address, His Lordship commented with singular perspicuity on the four essential marks of the Catholic Church, and on the aids to salvation afforded by her Sacraments, showing at the same time, how the preaching to the poor and the exercise of unbounded charity had always been her zealous and universal practice.

His Lordship was listened to with the greatest interest both by the congregation of the church and a numerous Protestant audience.

Haydn's Mass No. 3 was beautifully rendered by Mrs Scarisbrick (late Miss Whitnall), Miss Wynne (pupil of Mrs Scarisbrick), Mr and Mrs Bolton and Mr Scarisbrick, accompanied by several instrumentalists of high merit, consisting of Messrs Ward, Baetens, Buel, Edwards, Jukes and Crabbe. We never heard our sublime service more exqusitly performed. Mrs Scarisbrick sang 'Cantate' with full chorus and band accompaniments with thrilling effect and with the 'Alleluias' so appropriate to the occasion.

In the afternoon, the second Vespers of St. Mark were sung, the Bishop of Salford capitulating, and Dr. Goss and Clergy attending them. The Chant of the Psalms was the old Gregorian, and other sacred music was introduced. Fr. Grant S.J. delivered

a lucid and eloquent sermon from the text in that day's Gospel, 'And into whatsoever city you shall enter and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, and heal the sick that are therein, and say to them: the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,' explaining that His Kingdom was not of this world, and demonstrating the strong contrast between the transient and limited power of earthly kingdoms maintained by arms and by human laws with the mild and universal empire of the Catholic Church which is independent of them, and concluding with an exhortation to his hearers practically to establish within their breasts the Kingdom of Christ. The discourse was most convincing and impressive.

At morning and evening services the church was quite filled. We noticed there Sir Robert and Lady Gerard of Garewood; Mr. and Lady Emma Anderton, of Euxton Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Gerard and family of Aspull House, and other leading Catholics of the neighbourhood, with with great numbers from the towns of Bolton, Wigan and Chorleyand more remote districts. Their Lordships the Bishops and many of the Clergy with Sir Robert and Lady Gerard Mr. and Lady Emma Anderton and other friends were entertained between the morning and evening services at lunch by Mr. and Mrs. Gerard at Aspull House.

This beautiful church is of stone and od the decorated early English style, consisting at present of a nave and aisles 104 ft. long, the total width being 40 ft. The Sanctusry is not yet built. It is eminently due to Thos Goodman Esq., the architect, to state that it is pronounced by competent judges to be remarkably chaste and appropriate in its architectural design. Mr Fairclough of Wigan, the spirited builder, has not only bestowed to the utmost in the construction his acknowledged skill, but has brought to the exercise of it truly religious liberality.

The collection, exclusive of money received at the church door, amounted to the handsome sum of £54.17.0. There is still a considerable debt due to the building. The Sanctuary and Presbytery remain to be erected and schools are grievously wanted.

We cannot close this narrative without adverting to the excellent Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Jones, whose ardent and unwearied zeal and assiduity, aided by great exertions of many of the flock, have originated and brought to its establishment this much needed mission.

Regina – Volume 2 Number 10 November 1957

Ann Whittle R.I.P.

'She wasn't much trouble to anyone,' said one of the parishioners after the body of Ann Whittle had been laid to rest on Saturday October 19th and those words were a brief epitaph which would have appealed to that most upright and independent of characters.

For over eighty years Miss Whittle had been part of Our Lady's parish and her death is a break with its history. Possessed of a deep and living Faith, our church was an essential part of her life – as in later years she was to be an essential part in church life, helping with Sacristy work, organising social efforts and managing Confraternity affairs. Among her treasured possessions were the account books, neatly kept in her bold handwriting, with full statements to the smallest halfpenny. And this was done with a great sense of duty to God and the Priest of the time – her life's memories were ordered according to 'When Father X was here.'

Strong in body and forthright in character, she was slow to ask - or even allow anyone to do anything for her, and was yet most grateful for any small kindness shown. This especially in the last months when we noticed her slowly failing. Still her senses remained remarkably keen; she could read the smallest print and it was a neighbour taking her the 'Universe' on the Sunday morning after her 86th birthday, who decided she was not well. Priest and doctor were called, bronchial pneumonia was diagnosed and Miss Whittle was Anointed and taken to the Infirmary for expert nursing. She had received Holy Communion on her birthday – when she prepared her own little altar for the last time.

On the Tuesday we found her weak but quite content and thinking of her sister; they were obviously going to be together soon. After Absolution and a prayer we said, 'Goodbye'. Her dear soul went to God the next morning. May she rest in peace.

Regina – Volume 3 Number 2 February 1958 (Last edition)

Old Parish Memories by A.S.

Mother never tired of telling me of the generosity of Mrs Gerard of Aspull House, not only to the Church but to the Catholic children who were her neighbours. But let me quote her own words as she told me by the fireside:

'The cottage where we lived is now pulled down. We were left without a mother very young, but Mrs. Gerard was kindness itself to us. She not only provided for the needs of the local Catholic children, but gave then affection. She lived at Aspull House at the top of Hindley Lane and was a great benefactress of our Church. Sarah and Annie Rigby were our playmates and their father was Mr. Gerard's dogman, looking after his hounds. After a Hunt, their mother used to wash the hunting clothes. When they finally finished with the hounds, the dogs went to Holcombe. My father told us that once one of the horses broke its leg and had to be shot. It was later cut up for the hounds and my father was given a piece. He took it to the Packet House where the landlady cooked it and the customers all said how good it was.'

'There was rather a big porch to the House with a table and chair and Mrs. Gerard never turned a beggar away without a good meal. She used to grow geraniums and she sent us to the church many a time with the best of her plants. When there had

been a hunt she sent us to the Priest with pheasants or hares. We used to walk to the church with our shawls on our heads and our hats under our shawls to keep them neat. Somehow the winters seemed wilder then. When we got to church we put our hats on and left the shawls at the back of church. Mrs. Gerard used to stand at her gate nearly every afternoon and wait until we came home from school; when she saw that we were safe she would go back into the house. At Christmas-time there were presents for us from Mrs. Gerard off the tree, but if there were dolls for some, there would be a dozen yards of calico or a dress length of material for us. After tea on Sundays, my father, who was the messenger, used to walk to Wigan with the post from Aspull House and he usually got a shilling for it. Occasionally he walked as far as Ashton. Sometimes he would buy a sixpenny racing ticket out of his shilling. Occasionally Mrs. Gerard took the children to Wigan to buy us a mantle to keep us warm going to church and school. My sister, who later died abroad, was sometimes sent for to sit in the drawing-room with Mrs. Gerard and do fancywork.'

'The Gerard's had a carriage in which they rode to church. They were very devout and had a library of good Catholic books. John Gerard was one of the same family. His life was published and was a best seller of that year. He escaped from the Tower of London and sought refuge with Catholic Families. Mr Gerard played the big bassoon in the choir and sang as well. I used to sing at his knee; Mrs. Gerard gave us sweets, usually humbugs. His brother lived at Wrightington Hall and he started the lovely church there. The Hall was where the hospital now is. His eldest brother was Lord Gerard of Ashton and Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith, whose holy hand is preserved at St. Oswald's, was a relative.'

Further poems by 'Old Peg' (J.D.) (Written exactly as printed in Regina magazine.)

<u>Haigh Brewery – an elegy</u>

While waiting for the bus at top of Haigh, The ruins of Haigh Brewery caught my eye, The monstrous pile which once in bygone day Stood out – a landmark 'gainst our local sky.

That rugged heap of bricks and stone and slate, That masonry which now lies on the ground Was once a business enterprising, great, And served the Public Houses all around.

Behind the Brewery's windows, dark and barred For months the drink fermented, then was sold, And loaded waggons daily crossed the Yard, While empty barrels to the cellars rolled.

With store-rooms packed with sugar, hops and malt

Therein ensued a quick and lively trade.

Machinery sounded through each room and vault
As diverse alcoholic drinks were made.

But when Haigh Brewery's trade was at its height, When no-one could have dreamed its end was near, The buildings, stable, yard – the entire site Was closed and sold with all its trim and gear.

The site, for long an empty disused place Was useful in those War years – long and tense; The buildings served the Home Guard as a base And helped to play their part in our defence.

But soon the fabric rotted like a hulk, And since it was unsafe in its decay (And furthermore a most unsightly bulk) The Brewery's greater part was cleared away.

What contrast in Haigh Brewery's start and end!
Once prosperous trade now but a heap of stone!
- My bus appeared around the Riley Bend,
And with these sombre thoughts I moved off home.

The Finger Post

Some Londoners will boast to you about Trafalgar Square, Mancunians will talk of Piccadilly with an air; But we who come from Aspull, can we not make a boast? Of course we can, the place we talk about is called 'The Finger Post'.

The Finger Post, the Finger Post – what do these two words mean? To folk from Aspull they recall a very pleasant scene – The centre of this township's doings, be it peace or be it strife The mighty throbbing heart of Aspull's complex daily life!

We have no traffic problems here in Aspull's sunny clime (For on the roads we rarely see two motors at a time!)
But visitors must think the Finger Post's the sight of sights
The only cross-roads in the land that needs no traffic lights!

Although there sits in Aspull an official local board,
There also sits (with no less zeal) a rival Golden Horde
Whose eagerness for eloquence I'm sure no power can quench
- I mean the gaffers' parliament that sits there on the bench.

These learned old-age pensioners, they talk the whole day long, A chatting, croaking coughing, smoking argumentative throng They talk of every single thing that's under sun, I own What's not discussed at t'Finger Post is not worth being known!

The long wait at the Finger Post for buses into Town Gives rise to an amenity, with something of renown; The Council could not see its subjects stand around In vain, So hence the wond'rous shelter there, that lets in all the rain.

Now London boasts about Big Ben, renown of public clocks, Yet Aspull too can boast of one (but what a paradox!)
This clock is at the Finger Post – the only one – but 'Oh!'
It's sometimes stopped, and if it's not it's very often slow!

But still and all, these other towns can keep their famous sights. Let other places in the world attain their splendid heights. And yet of any other spot – of all that mighty host Of places, you can still give me THE ASPULL FINGER POST!



Our Lady's School

I'll no more sit on the bench so hard In Our Lady's School with the cindery yard, Or twist and grin in the classroom grim Or tease little girls with their dress so trim Or change my mood at the teacher's whim, In the school with the cindery yard.

As the years slip by in my dim mind's eye, And I muse on the days with a plaintive sigh, And I think of the books with the backs so worn Of the pens and the ink and the pages torn, Of the sun-sweet air on a summer's morn And the school with the cindery yard.

I think of the time when at break of day
I trembling trudged my weary way;
On those lovely mornings, bright and fine
As that wretched clock ticked on towards nine
I would dally my journey up the line
To the school with the cindery yard.

When we got to the place our play was marred By the dull-toned bell which clanged and jarred, And finished our sportive shout and bawl As it rang all around its warning call And summoned the pupils one and all To the school with the cindery yard.

All silent we stood in single file (There were plenty of frowns, but never a smile) Then fearing what terrors ahead did loom We marched to our classroom's dismal gloom, Like heroes going to meet their doom, In the school with the cindery yard.

We ate our lunch round the stone-flagged door, All fresh from the classroom tired and sore, Yet we'd run round the yard like things insane Till that horrible bell would peal again, Then back to the books and the teacher's cane, In the school with the cindery yard.

Oh how many times did I trembling stand
To receive that stick with my outstretched hand!
With my eyes closed fast and my teeth clenched tight
As a cold sweat poured in black bead's fright —
I shrink to recall that withering sight
In the school with the cindery yard.

What toil and pain did we suffer there
As they made us men, fit to grin and bear;
As we chanted a doleful, 'Three times three,'
And we wondered how long, how long it would be
Ere the home-time bell would set us free
From the school with the cindery yard.

Now one of the pranks at school we learned, Was that when the teacher's back was turned, When the long afternoon was nearly past Her clock on the desk we'd turn on fast, And so to our joy, we'd be out at last From the school with the cindery yard.

And still as I saunter along Haigh Road And gaze on that one-time dreaded abode, Though its yard is now with tarmac lined, Wherever I go I shall always find Such fearsome memories haunt my mind, Of the school with the cindery yard.

But now they are happy and love the place, I see there's a smile on each childish face; They roll to the door in a bus in the sun, To their milk and their dinners and games and fun, And the day has passed 'ere it's just begun In the school with its tarmac yard.

And I wonder if they will be men like we Who schooled it hard from our mother's knee? There is nought which is gained without struggle and pain And nature is tougher if worked 'gainst the grain; Yet if smooth is the tarmac, their teachers are sane, If they teach them that falling is still just as hard As it was in the school with the cindery yard.

The Heritage of Blackrod

When taking walks, I've often stopped to lean Upon the wooden bridge at Toddington; And there I've gazed across the fields, and seen The face of old-world Blackrod in the sun.

Though new estates of houses have been built, Which tend to give the place a modern cast, Within its bounds the thought is always felt That this small town holds strong links with the past.

Pre-eminent of all the buildings there, The Parish Church is seen from all around; Of England's ancient days, a relic fair, When Mary's dower was our own English ground.

Most of the walls have been renewed of late, And of the former Church the Tower alone Can still be seen – 'tis of much earlier date, Its age is witnessed by its rugged stone.

This Church was once a Priory; at a time When Haigh and Aspull were but fen and moor; 'Tis now long since its bells have ceased to chime – Long dead its monks who daily fed the poor.

For in the reign of Henry Tudor's son, Aye, by that monarch's own impetuous hand, The Priory was dissolved, its lands o'er-run, The Monks were forced to leave and to disband.

Forgotten are their prayers and penances; 'Tis probably unknown to Blackrod's ken That in their town was sung for centuries The 'Opus Dei' by these holy men.

And that same King, all Papal power denied, So that his famous breach with Rome took place; And not long after bluff 'King Hal' had died, His action led to greater falls from grace —

For new 'reformers' preached new heresies – The Eucharist and the Mass were blasphemy – The land was swept with gross uncertainties, And men gave way in base tepidity.

At Blackrod Church, new Ministers appeared – As did they everywhere – 'mid great dismay The people to this heretic faith adhered...
What could they do, when Bishops led the way?

Yet in this sad and soul-destroying scourge, New Champions of the Ancient Faith arose; And such a one from Blackrod did emerge – A Priest and Confessor – one Lawrence Vause.

I Mary's reign he held a Warden's post, And served the Parish Church at Manchester. Compelled to flee, he sought the Belgian coast, And there became a Canon Regular.

Abroad, he wrote an English Catechism,
The first to be compiled in our own tongue;
And many copies reached this land of schism
Where Priests were hunted, captured, tortured, hung.

But on returning to his native land, For which his noble steps had bravely trod, In dungeon foul he met a ling'ring end – A Saint and Martyr, in the eyes of God...

Such are the thoughts that in my mind arise Whene're I think of Blackrod and its past; Moving and deep are Blackrod's ancient ties, Linked with a Faith which we ourselves hold fast.

Consider then the Blackrod of today,
Within whose bounds the Mass is said no more –
But surely we should ever hope and pray
That God will all its ancient Rites restore.

Then let us pray – our prayers are not in vain – And let us for the highest blessings yearn, That Blackrod will receive the Mass again. And then, please God, our Old Faith might return.

Aspull Revisited

Aspull now is a quiet place from what it used to be, For once this local clime did throb with much activity. But now the Moor in the wide expanse is silent, wild and free, For no more turn in this small town, the wheels of industry.

At half-past four on early morns not very long ago
The roads of Aspull echoed, and the stony pavements rang
With noisy feet and chattering in one endless flow,
As pitmen tramped to work to their own pit-clog's iron clang.

No more the landscape can reveal the hulk of the pithead, No more do blackened chimney-stacks rise up against the sky. We see no more the pithead buildings, office, yard and shed And where they stood, a few dark stones o'ergrown with grass do lie.

And some of us a vivid tale about those pits can tell, And most of us with clarity their memory can revive, Of 'Crawford Pit' and 'Billy Pit' and 'Meadow Pit' as well, Of 'Kennel Pit' (or 'Pumping Pit') and also 'Number 5'.

The stillness of our Aspull morn no longer can retain
The piercing sounds which yesterday were so well known to us.
The rattling of the pit waggons and shunting of the train,
The hooting of the whistles and the pithead' siren buzz.

Our Aspull noon is quieter than what it was of yore, The sight is gone of black-faced men who chatted in a bunch, The wives with wrapped up handkerchiefs we now can see no more, The women who went to the pits to take the men their lunch.

Besides the mines, Haigh Brewery did also play its part In this small town's industrial life, a business-like concern; But when its trade was witnessing its most successful start The business stopped; the buildings went to ruin in their turn.

And as we look around the Moor in these more recent years
The shafts have been filled up, we see, and buildings all pulled down.
And should our thoughts be more inclined to laughter or to tears?
Or do we just regard them with uninterested frown?

At least 'tis good to think the Moor is healthy, wild and free, Free from the towns, the grimy towns and their industrial smirk. But if the place in days gone by, had had no industry, Then most of us, I fear to say, would have been out of work. But think, whenever Industry besets a certain place That spot its former character can never more retain; And Industry had surely besmirched our Aspull's face, But now this place at last has found, its rural state again.



November 1912 – The Golden Wedding of James and Margaret (nee Moore) Spencer celebrated with Mass, attended by all their family – 12 children, wives, families, friends – and afterwards in the School. A Papal Blessing from Rome - Cardinal Merry de Val – was given to the couple, 9th Nov 1912.

1989 – October 5th. John and Agnes Hawkins celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary with Mass and Papal Blessing, attended by all their family, friends and Parishioners. Afterwards at the School.

August 2016 - Saturday 27th. 80th Birthday Mass for Miss Eileen A. Hawkins J.P. attended by all her family and friends. Presentation of the Cross: Pro Ecclesia el Pontifice in recognition of her work in the Parish and wider community – 39 years serving as Foundation Governor of Our Lady's School and 25 years as a Magistrate in the Makerfield County Court and the Wigan and Leigh Magistrates Court.

Further Memories of Miss Eileen Hawkins

Our Lady's had a vibrant Sporting Community – Crown Green Bowling, Cricket, Tennis, and in winter, Curling. Many of the Public Houses had Bowling Greens – Our Lady's Bowling Team along with Fr. Fitzgerald were renowned. Members included Thomas Ford, Michael Ford, James Spencer and his son Peter, John Hawkins and his sons Thomas, John, Hugh and Osmund, Thomas Dixon and Charles Spencer.



Our Lady's Bowling Club

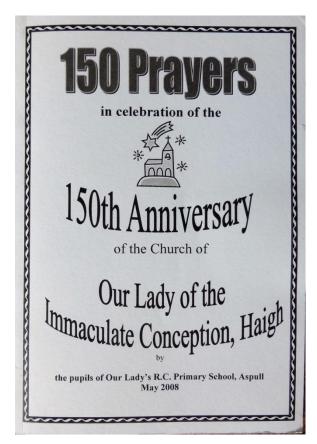
The Cricket Pitch and Club House were on Toddington Lane – opposite Sea View and Riley House. My grandfather, Peter Spencer, was a keen cricketer.

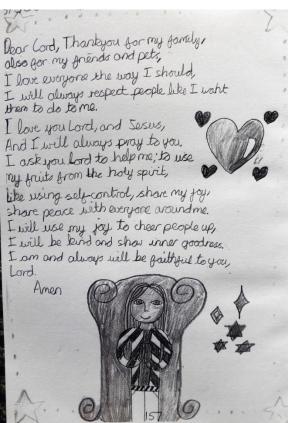
The original Tennis Club was sited on the corner of Haigh Road and Riley Lane (4 shale courts and a club house). Both my parents, John and Agnes, played there as did Miss Gertrude Moore and her two sisters – Mammies cousins. The club then moved to the two shale courts behind Culraven House. My sister Cecilie and myself were members in the mid 1940's along with our cousins Ted, Jack and Peter Higham, Francis Fishwick, his wife Alice Moore (the Moores of the Red Lion who lived at the gatehouse on Copperas Lane), Kevin Grady, Evelin McCallister, Barbra Unsworth, Deric Cusarni, Terry Chadwick, Lawrence Anderton, Norman Morton, Harry Cary, Lily Moss, Margaret, Rita and Monica Duffy, Frank Vose and Roland Bithell (father of Chris Bithell). At 3:00pm every Sunday the Club had to close whilst we all attended Benediction. Terry Chadwick partnered me and we played all the Wigan Tennis Clubs – Scout's Hill Methodist Club, St Catherine's Whelley, Keystone Parish Ince and Clubs in Southport. When Our Lady's closed I joined Bellingham Tennis Club, Wigan 1954.

Curling and Ice Skating. When the lodges froze over, Curling was played on the Curling Pond on Copperas Lane. My grandfather, P. Spencer, was a keen player and skater – I still have his skates!

Our Lady's also had a thriving Theatrical and Dramatic Society. Both my parents, John and Agnes Hawkins, along with my aunt, Margaret Spencer, Daddy's brothers Hugh and Osmund Hawkins, John Lundy (Margaret Clarke's grandfather), Jimmy Wimsey (Karen and Christine Duffy's grandfather) and Sidney Owens were members.

The shop which used to be opposite Our Lady's was originally Spencer's Grocery Shop, later becoming Higham's General Store and finally Boardman's Tobacconist and Sweet Shop. The rest of the row were domestic homes - the Duffy family (Margaret, Gerard (Fr. Duffy) Rita and Monica), the Gradys, the Owens the Whittles and Mannie Shepherd. Also living in the row was George Sixsmith, a great dancer, he always wore his brown and white Brogues at the Parish and Tennis Dances which were held in the Parish Hall (where the Presbytery is today) and in the Old School.





This prayer book was compiled by the pupils of Our Lady's R.C. Primary School, Aspull in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the church, Our Lady's, Haigh.

We have tried to collect together 150 prayers which will help us to participate in the Liturgy of the Word; to pray collectively with traditional prayers; and to use our own words of prayer in quiet thought and reflection.

We hope this prayer book helps you to celebrate this milestone in the history of our church.

May 2008