

## Parish Timeline 1902-1956

1902 Canon William Stanton, from Ss Peter and Pauls Church, New Brighton, acquired a house and an acre and quarter of land at the property 59 St George's Road, Wallasey. The house, known as 'Wallasey View' had been owned by John Edwin, who died at the age of 50 and who is buried in St. Hilary's Churchyard. Father (later Canon) William Baines, also from the New Brighton parish, celebrated Mass for the first time at the house.

Mass continued to be celebrated at the house for a number of years.

1906 Canon William Stanton, right, moved to St George's Road and became the first resident priest of English Martyrs' parish.

1907 At this time the congregation of Wallasey Village, thought to number about 100, was served by the 'iron' church which was opened on 9<sup>th</sup> June by Bishop Allen. The church, right, in the grounds of 59 St George's Road was constructed of corrugated iron on a timber frame, hence the description 'iron' church.



*Interior of 'iron' church*

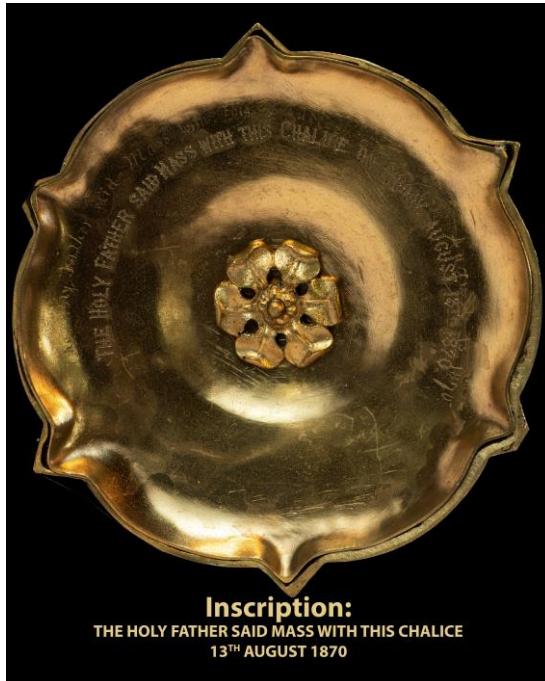
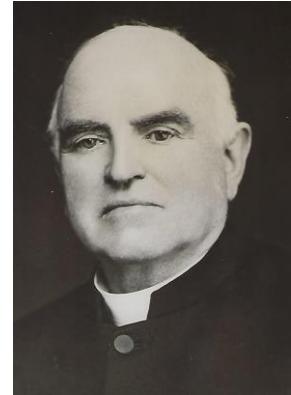
Picture: Leo Da Forno

1908 Canon Stanton retired from parish life and Fr William Reade, right, took over as parish priest.

1910 Fr Reade was appointed to St Mary's parish in Crewe and Fr Edward Byrne was appointed as parish priest and served the parish until his



death in December 1925. Fr Byrne, right, had studied at the Venerable English College in Rome and brought to the parish a chalice consecrated and used in the celebration of Mass by His Holiness Pope Pius IX in 1870. The chalice, pictured below, is inscribed on the underside of the base and became the property of the parish.



- 1926 Canon Charles Fisher, right, was appointed as parish priest and he took the first steps towards the building of a new church. He established a Church Building Fund and several thousand pounds was raised towards the cost of a new church and school which was deemed necessary owing to the increase in population in Wallasey Village and Leasowe.



- 1933 Canon Fisher died and Fr (later Canon) McNally, right, was appointed to the parish. In December Fr McNally purchased the property known as Rocklands, at 41 St George's Road and the adjoining land for £3,225. This was intended as a site for the new church, while the site on which the iron church stood was to be used for an infant and primary school.



Whilst planning for a church and school was progressing, Rocklands was established by Fr McNally as the Parish Presbytery.

Our picture, right, shows an open air Mass being celebrated at Rocklands.

1937 The appointment of Fr Francis Jones as assistant priest is an indication of how the parish was growing. In 1937/38 there were 118 children of school age in the parish and negotiations were held with the local Education Committee, however, owing to the international situation a request was made to defer the building of the school.



1939 Liverpool architect Francis Xavier Velarde, RIBA had been commissioned to draw up plans for a church but with the outbreak of war in September the carrying out of the plans were brought to a standstill. In eight years £12,000 had been raised towards the building of the church.

1941 In April Fr (later Canon) Peter Coughlan, right, became parish priest when Canon McNally was transferred to St Alban's parish in Liscard, Wallasey. Assistant priest Fr Jones had joined the Army and his place was filled in 1944 by Fr James Molloy. Fr Coughlan recognised the need for providing accommodation for the increasingly larger congregations on a Sunday morning and he organised the building of a brick built annexe to the iron church. This gave room for a Sacristy and 50 additional seats.



1945 After the war, in view of the provisions of the 1944 Education Act, it was decided not to build a school and to build the church on the land adjacent to the iron church at 59 St George's Road using the plans drawn up by Francis Xavier Velarde. The delay in building the church on the Rocklands site proved to be fortuitous. Had the church been built on the proposed site, adjacent to the Black Horse public house in Wallasey Village, it would probably have suffered considerable damage, if not complete destruction, when a land mine exploded nearby in the blitz of 12<sup>th</sup> March 1941.

1949 Fr John Mooney was appointed as assistant priest when Fr Molloy was transferred to another parish. In 1951 Fr Mooney was appointed as the Bishop's Secretary and he was replaced by Fr John Daley.

1951 In November building work on the new church started.

1952 Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May, Laying of the Foundation Stone

Extract from Parish Notice Book

*Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 1952*

*Patronal Feast of English Martyrs. Golden Jubilee of Parish May 1902 – May 1952*

*Solemn High Mass at 11 o'clock. Sermon by Mgr Provost Curran. "Te Deum" of thanksgiving after Mass.*

*Ceremony of laying of foundation stone of new church at 3pm. All parishioners are asked to assemble at the site and to follow the directions of the stewards. Benediction will follow the ceremony and afterwards the site will be open to inspection but again please follow directions of stewards.*

The Foundation Stone shows that Bishop John Murphy conducted the ceremony of the laying of the Stone. However, on the day of the ceremony the Bishop was indisposed and the ceremony was conducted by Fr. Peter Coughlan.

The silver trowel being used by Fr Coughlan, right, was a gift to the parish by Councillor W O Hannaford.



Picture: Medley & Bird Ltd

The inscription on the trowel reads:

*PRESNTED BY COUNCILLOR W O HANNAFORD JP  
MAYOR -ELECT ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAYING  
OF THE FOUNDATION STONE CHURCH OF ENGLISH  
MARTYRS WALLASEY  
4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1952*

1953 Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August

Extract from Parish Notice Book

*Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August 1953 14<sup>th</sup> Pentecost*

*There will be 3 Masses in the old church tomorrow at 7. 7.30 & 8am. At 11am His Lordship the Bishop will bless and open the new church; the ceremony begins with blessing of exterior walls and until this is completed, no one is allowed inside the church; parishioners are requested to leave clear passage round the church and not to place bicycles in the way. During Pontifical Mass, Fr P Deery CSSR will preach. The whole ceremony should be over between 12.30 and 12.45pm.*

*There will be devotions and Benediction at 7.30pm and we hope all the Parish will be present.*

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August first Mass celebrated by Bishop John A Murphy.

1954/6 Fr John Daley left the parish and Fr Francis Furlong was appointed as assistant priest.

The new presbytery and link corridor to the church was built.

1956 The Rocklands Presbytery was sold.